

Judicial Commission of Inquiry told:

There's a syndicate illegally selling emaSwati's properties

By Bahle Gama

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OUTSPOKEN Mbabane businessman and former Senator Walter Bennett has told the Commission of Inquiry probing the Master of the High Court that there is a syndicate that allegedly sold and continues to sell emaSwati's properties illegally in the different major towns around the country. According to Bennett, the alleged syndicate is made up of top lawyers, Master of the High Court officers, auditors and accountants, municipal officers and fund managers responsible for investing among others.

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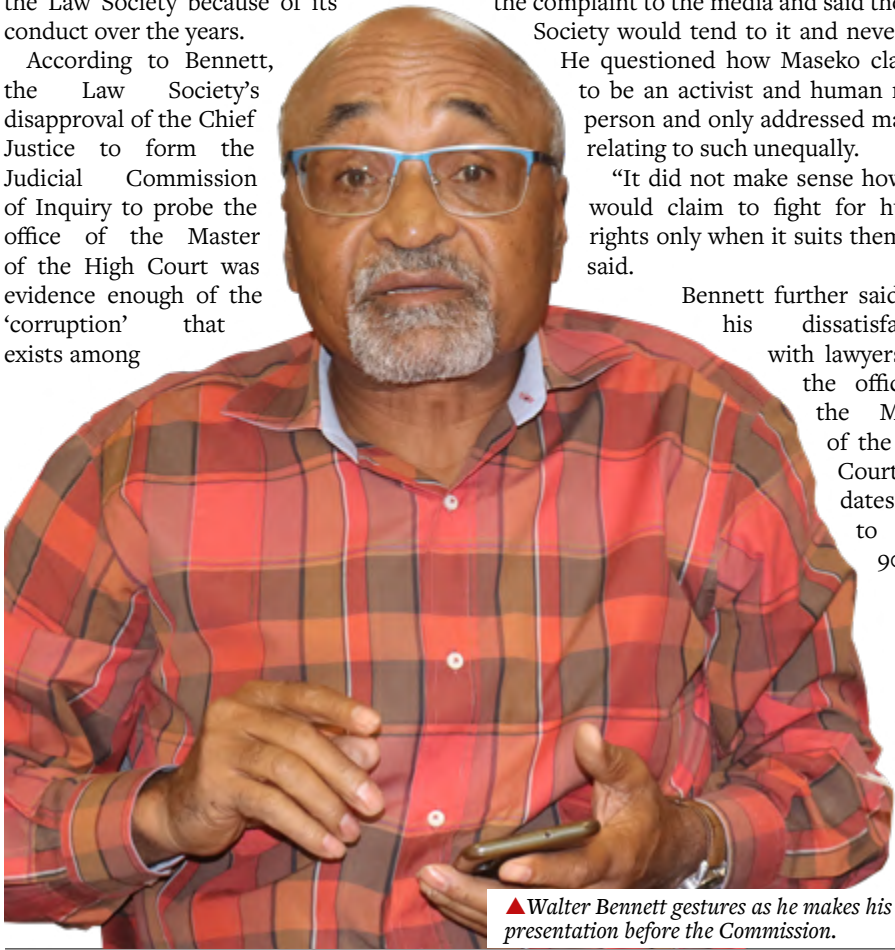
By Bahle Gama
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OUTSPOKEN Mbabane businessman and former Senator Walter Bennett has told the Commission of Inquiry probing the Master of the High Court that there is a syndicate that allegedly sold and continues to sell emaSwati's properties illegally in the different major towns around the country.

According to Bennett, the alleged syndicate is made up of top lawyers, Master of the High Court officers, auditors and accountants, municipal officers and fund managers responsible for investing among others.

Before requesting the media to step out, Bennett told the Commission that he hoped there would be a solution for curbing criminality among lawyers in the country. He stated that he had a bone to chew with the Law Society because of its conduct over the years.

According to Bennett, the Law Society's disapproval of the Chief Justice to form the Judicial Commission of Inquiry to probe the office of the Master of the High Court was evidence enough of the 'corruption' that exists among



▲ Walter Bennett gestures as he makes his presentation before the Commission.

lawyers.

"The Law Society only acknowledges the Rule of law when it suits them. I don't know who will resolve this matter with lawyers in the country because they are not clean," Bennett said.

He stated that he once complained to the Law Society in 2020 which was received by late activist and human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko, but was never tended to. He did not disclose what the complaint was about.

Bennett stated that what 'agitated' him was that Maseko acknowledged receipt of the complaint to the media and said the Law Society would tend to it and never did.

He questioned how Maseko claimed to be an activist and human rights person and only addressed matters relating to such unequally.

"It did not make sense how one would claim to fight for human rights only when it suits them," he said.

Bennett further said that his dissatisfaction with lawyers and the office of the Master of the High Court dates back to the 90s.

There's a syndicate illegally selling emaSwati's properties — Bennett



▲ Members of the Commission of Enquiry into the Master of the High Court list taking notes as businessman Walter Bennett makes his presentation on Monday.

He said it was surprising that there was the inquiry, and the Law Society was jumping to stop it to the extent of roping in the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs Prince Simelane.

Bennett further stated that the country has had several Commission of Inquiries which birthed no results, instead, corruption has continued ever since. He made an example with the Municipality Council of Mbabane which he said to date, there have been issues that persist and alleged that the Cabinet refuses to enforce the necessary changes in the Municipality.

'Estates sold, lawyers, municipalities pocket the money'

Mbabane Businessman Walter Bennett says there is a report that was suppressed after findings showed that people's estates and properties were being sold and they did not receive the proceeds of the sales.

Instead, their money would go to lawyers and the respective municipalities in these towns. Bennett said when he was a Senator, he once called for a commission to inquire

about the illegal sale of people's properties.

This was after he received a letter from a widow who sought assistance with her late husband's estate. At the time, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development was now Senate President Lindiwe Dlamini who approved the inquiry and the then Auditor General and a judge were appointed as part of the Commission.

After the inquiry, Bennett claimed to have visited the office of the Director of Urban Government at the time and asked about the report.

"He said to me, that report was found to be highly defamatory to the extent that it was not wise to release it. When he made that statement, I went back to the Commission made up of an auditor general and the other one was a judge both looking over this report, including the PS in the Ministry at the time. They all suppressed the document," he said.

According to Bennett, the document contained the fundamentals found by people who had expertise and could influence legislation and make the environment a better one. He said the report was suppressed because of the alleged corruption that was and continues to happen in the country.

Prime Minister, Eswatini delegation reports back from AU Summit

By Ncaba Ntshakala

ESWATINI'S delegation to the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) returned to the country on Monday and reflected on the successful discussions from the summit.

Prime Minister Russell Dlamini was accompanied by Cabinet Ministers including the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu, Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Mancoba Khumalo, and Minister of Health Mduduzi Matsebula briefed the media on the discussions from the summit upon their arrival at the Ngwenya border post.

During the press briefing, the Prime Minister highlighted that one of the key moments of the Summit was the unveiling of a statue of former Tanzanian President

Julius Nyerere, a pivotal figure in the fight for African independence and a strong advocate for African unity. He said the move serves as a lasting tribute to his legacy.

The Premier further shared that the Summit also saw the launch of the AU theme for the year which is "Educate an African fit for the 21st century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality and relevant learning in Africa."

He added that all Member States reaffirmed the critical role of education in driving development across the continent and committed to enhancing their education systems to meet the needs of the 21st century and empower Africa's future workforce.

Prime Minister Dlamini said that Eswatini actively participated in discussions on climate change, emphasizing the need to balance economic growth with the transition to clean energy, particularly for smaller nations like Eswatini.

He further expressed Eswatini's strong support for the adoption of the



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini during a press briefing upon arrival in Eswatini from the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU).

AfCFTA Additional Protocol on Digital Trade, recognizing its potential to unlock continental e-commerce opportunities and benefit Eswatini businesses of all sizes, including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

The Eswatini delegation led by the Prime Minister also visited Ethiopian Airlines to discuss implementing the Bilateral Air Services Agreement signed between Eswatini and the airline in December 2023. The Prime Minister added that they were impressed by the growth of the company. Ethiopian Airlines further expressed its intention to commence operations in Eswatini soon, fostering improved connectivity and potential economic benefits.

The Premier also asserted that they were not only impressed by Ethiopian Airlines' core operations but also by their extensive and diversified portfolio. He remarked on their impressive scale, boasting over 100 aircraft, 17,000 employees, and generating billions of dollars in revenue.

However, what truly stood out for the Eswatini delegation was the airline's ventures beyond traditional aviation. The Prime Minister specifically mentioned their ownership of one of Africa's largest hotels, offering over 1,100 rooms, and their cutting-edge aviation university.

By Ncaba Ntshakala

King calls for strong decisions to advance the AfCFTA

PRIME Minister Russell Mmiso Dlamini, representing His Majesty King Mswati III at the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, emphasised the need for Africa to take decisive action to advance the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The Prime Minister conveyed King Mswati III's message, urging for "pragmatic and strong political decisions" to accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA. He stressed that these decisions must be made without compromising "legitimate policy objectives in building the Africa we want."

Beyond trade, Eswatini also actively participated in discussions on climate change. The Prime Minister reflected on the report of the Committee on Climate Change, highlighting Africa's potential to build a sustainable and resilient future. He emphasized the need for collective effort and redoubled efforts to address climate challenges while ensuring continued economic growth for the continent.

Eswatini further acknowledged the continued importance of utilizing fossil fuel resources for energy generation in many African nations, including Eswatini. The Prime Minister stressed that responsible utilisation of these resources remains crucial for achieving economic growth while pursuing sustainable development goals.

The 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini making his address at the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government on behalf of the King.

AU had several agendas, which include continental peace and security, trade and integration, education and skills, agriculture and climate change, governance, and human rights, as well as gender and youth empowerment.

The King's message emphasised economic growth through trade relations across the

continent. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is an agreement aiming to create the world's largest free trade area by uniting 54 African countries under a single market. Established in 2018, the AfCFTA seeks to eliminate tariffs and trade barriers. This will facilitate the free movement

of goods and services across the continent, fostering increased trade and economic integration. AfCFTA will also boost intra-African trade. The Trade area is expected to significantly increase trade between African nations, unlocking economic potential and promoting regional development.

Further, the AfCFTA will attract foreign investment. A unified African market presents a larger and more attractive investment destination, potentially leading to increased job creation and economic growth. Moreover, the AfCFTA creates a more level playing field for businesses of all sizes, allowing them to compete more effectively and expand their reach across the continent.

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Eswatini further acknowledged the continued importance of utilizing fossil fuel resources for energy generation in many African nations, including Eswatini.
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Eswatini, Ethiopia strengthen ties, explore deeper trade cooperation

THE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu shared a productive meeting between Eswatini's Minister of Commerce, Manqoba Khumalo, and His Excellency Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie, Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

This engagement took place after the recent 37th Ordinary Summit of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where Minister Pholile Shakantu accompanied Prime Minister Russell Dlamini who represented His Majesty King Mswati III.

The Minister highlighted that they had a "fruitful meeting" where both ministers explored various aspects of bilateral issues critical to strengthening the partnership between Eswatini and Ethiopia. The discussions emphasized a mutual desire to deepen diplomatic ties where both nations expressed their commitment to fostering stronger diplomatic relations, solidifying the foundation for continued collaboration.

Their meeting also touched on enhancing trade cooperation. The ministers explored avenues for expanding trade partnerships between Eswatini and Ethiopia, aiming to unlock mutually beneficial economic opportunities.

Eswatini and Ethiopia, this year commemorates 54 years of establishing diplomatic relations. The formal relations commenced on January 1st, 1971, when the first Eswatini Ambassador to Ethiopia, Martin Ndiniso, presented his credentials to Emperor Haile Selassie. Since then, both countries have fostered strong ties rooted in mutual respect, cooperation, and a shared commitment to



▲ Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu with Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Taye Atske-Selassie.

Pan-Africanism.

Over the past five decades, Eswatini and Ethiopia have collaborated on various fronts, including political cooperation, and maintaining regular dialogue and engagement on issues of regional and international importance. The two nations also enjoyed economic collaboration where they have been exploring avenues for trade and investment partnerships to benefit both nations. The Kingdom of Eswatini and Ethiopia also share cultural exchange.

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‘Gawzela’ asylum an advantage for the government to extradite him – Alpheous

By Nokunceda Magagula
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ESWATINI government spokesperson Alpheous Nxumalo is of the view that the reports of Mduzuzi ‘Gawzela’ Simelane being granted asylum in the United Kingdom (UK) put Eswatini in an advantageous position.

Nxumalo communicated this in a statement released on Monday, saying, “The asylum status given to Simelane only changes his status of staying in the UK, however it doesn’t change his status of being a fugitive of the law who fled from Eswatini at a time when he was required to appear in court and prove his innocence over the charges he was facing.”

He added that the former member of parliament status in the UK also gives Eswatini an advantage in knowing exactly the location of Simelane in case the government may be required to apply for his extradition in the future, they now know exactly where to go with their application papers.

Nxumalo emphasized that the responsibility now lies with the Government of the UK to ensure that Simelane does not violate the rules and regulations provided for by international law that govern the conduct of refugees. He further stated that it is not a significant concern for the Eswatini Government that Simelane has been granted asylum in the UK.

He highlighted previous instances where individuals from Eswatini were granted asylum in the UK, such as Prince Dumisa and Joy Maziya, the former spouse of the late Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini. Nxumalo also mentioned the cases of

members of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) from Zimbabwe and individuals from Hong Kong seeking asylum in the UK.

“There’s nothing out of the ordinary for Emaswati residing in other countries for various reasons.

The national security law introduced by Beijing established four crimes which are secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign organizations. Granting asylum status to Simelane or anybody else, for that matter, is not a headline or front-page news item for any fundamental reason. It is just business as usual.” Nxumalo emphasized.

Reacting

Nxumalo was reacting to an article published by the local media, which stated that after having fled the Kingdom of Eswatini over two years ago, Simelane has been granted a refugee asylum stay in the UK for the next five years, which will allow him to work.

Simelane fled the Kingdom of Eswatini in July 2021, shortly after news of an arrest warrant against him made rounds. His warrant of arrest was issued along with those of incarcerated former MPs Mthendeni Dube and Mduzuzi Bacede Mabuza. The two were arrested on July 25, 2021, and charged under the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008.

After fleeing the country, Simelane stated that he was in the UK in a quest to spread the word about the human rights violations in Eswatini. He said he was on a global advocacy drive, fighting for freedom.

Last Monday, the former MP, who is the President of the Swaziland Liberation Movement (SWALIMO) addressed his followers on a late-night show dubbed ‘Family Meeting’, where he revealed that the Government of Eswatini cancelled the diplomatic passport that was issued to him.



▲ Eswatini government spokesperson Alpheous Nxumalo is of the view that the reports of Mduzuzi ‘Gawzela’ Simelane being granted asylum in the United Kingdom (UK) put Eswatini in an advantageous position.

The passport was given to Simelane as a working tool in his capacity as an MP. During the late-night show, Simelane told his followers that he was happy that in 2024 he would travel the whole world speaking about the plight of emaSwati.

“The UK ordinary passport travels to 153 countries including world superpowers without the need of a visa while the Eswatini diplomatic passport only covers 86 countries; I guess none of the superpowers included. Therefore, forcing me to take the UK stay propelled the calling to higher dimensions,” he said.



▲ Eswatini students are thrilled and frightened by the release of their Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) results today

Form 5 results out today

Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

ESWATINI students are thrilled and frightened by the release of their Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) results today (Tuesday).

This development was confirmed by the Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) Communications Officer Hlengiwe Ndlovu.

The announcement brings an end to weeks of anticipation for students who sat for the national examinations in October and November 2023.

School reports transformation after World Vision Korea’s E1 Million intervention

MANZANA Nazarene Primary School, once plagued by challenges like water scarcity, inadequate sanitation, and overcrowded classrooms, has undergone a remarkable transformation all thanks to the intervention of World Vision Korea which donated to the refurbishment of the school. The school, located in Mliba, Eswatini, faced significant obstacles that hindered learning and student well-being.

The school’s Principal expressed that before the intervention, the school suffered. “Our teachers would even struggle to move around whilst teaching,” recounted Nozipho Magagula, the school’s Principal, during a celebratory event held recently. “These challenges really affected us as a school.”

World Vision Eswatini asserted that; guided by its mission to ensure every child experiences a fulfilling life in a safe and nurturing environment, partnered with Dong Tan Zion Methodist Church from World Vision Korea to support Manzana Primary. In 2019, the school received a generous donation of E1 million specifically designated for its development.

This intervention proved to be a turning point for the school. Through World Vision’s support, Manzana Primary witnessed significant improvements, including the construc-



▲ A team from Wolrd Vision Korea who came to assess the transformation at Manzana Nazarene Primary School.

tion of three new electrified classrooms, the provision of 135 study desks and 135 school chairs, the donation of learning materials like chalkboards and bulletin boards, the installation of two 3,000-liter water tanks, construction of hygienic toilets for students and teachers, installation of handwashing facilities and provision of dustbins and personal protective equipment.

According to World Vision Eswatini, the impact of these interventions has been profound. Notably, Manzana Primary achieved a remarkable 99% pass rate in 2023, a feat never achieved before. Additionally, the school has witnessed a significant decline in the rate of contagious illnesses and has embraced water harvesting practices.

“World Vision has been of great help,” further expressed Principal Magagula with immense gratitude. “We are truly grateful and promise to ensure that this change will last for a very long time.”

LIDWALA Insurance would like to remind all motorists to exercise caution while driving.

The combination of wet roads and foggy visibility poses increased risks on the road, and it is imperative for drivers to prioritize safety.

Driving in wet weather requires heightened attention and adaptability.

Reduced tyre traction on wet roads can lead to an increased risk of hydroplaning and loss of control. It is crucial for motorists to reduce their speed and increase their following distance to allow for adequate stopping time. Additionally, using headlights and windshield wipers can greatly improve visibility for both the driver and other road users.

Fog presents its own set of challenges for drivers. Reduced visibility in foggy conditions requires drivers to use low-beam headlights and fog lights, if available, to improve their own visibility without creating glare for other drivers. It is important to resist the urge to use high-beam headlights, as this can reduce visibility by reflecting light off the fog.

Lidwala Insurance strongly advises all motorists to refrain from using cruise control in wet or foggy conditions. Cruise control can increase the risk of losing control of the vehicle on slippery roads, as it may not respond appropriately to changing traction conditions.

Maintaining full control of the vehicle is essential in adverse weather.

In addition to adjusting driving behavior, it is also crucial for motorists to ensure that their vehicles are properly maintained. This includes regularly checking tire tread depth and inflation, as well as ensuring that windshield wipers are in good condition. Proper maintenance contributes to overall road safety, especially in challenging weather conditions.

It is also important for drivers to stay informed about weather conditions and road closures before embarking on a journey. Keeping abreast of weather updates and road advisories can help drivers make informed decisions about whether to travel, and if so, which routes to take.

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The concept of excess in insurance is an important aspect to understand. Even though the premium has been paid, a small portion of the claim will be required from the insured, known as an excess. This serves to manage small claims and it also acts as a risk mitigate by sharing some of the costs with the client. There are different types of excesses to be aware of: Basic Excess, Compulsory Excess, and Voluntary Excess. The Basic or compulsory Excess is a

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standard form of excess that applies to all claims made. It is designed to deter small claims and is typically set at a percentage or a fixed amount, such as 3% of the loss or a minimum amount of E1,500.00, whichever is higher.

Conditional Excess applies to specific incidents or policies. An example would be a driver under 21 years with a driver's license of less than 2 years. Voluntary Excess, as the name suggests, is an excess voluntarily chosen by the insured. Opting for this excess allows for a lower premium, but at the time of a claim, the insured will need to make a higher contribution to the claim.

Excess buyback is a product that allows the client to have zero excess or contributions to a claim. The insurer pays 100% of the payment. It is important to note that the Excess Buyback option is applicable for Basic/compulsory and Voluntary Excesses, except for Conditional Excesses and is available at a nominal cost.

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▲ Maintaining full control of the vehicle is essential in adverse weather. In addition to adjusting driving behavior, it is also crucial for motorists to ensure that their vehicles are properly maintained.



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Stories by Nokunceda Magagula
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A 24-YEAR-OLD man has been arrested in connection with an alleged rape of a 21-year-old female at the Eswatini College of Technology (ECOT).

The suspect, identified as Mark Zwane from Mkhuzweni, was apprehended in connection with the matter and appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court.

The charge sheet states that Zwane is accused of contravening Section 3(1) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018. According to the charge sheet, the alleged rape occurred in November 2023 at ECOT in the Hhohho region.

It is alleged that Zwane engaged in unlawful sexual intercourse with the 21-year-old victim without using a condom. However, it was not specified in court whether both the accused and the complainant were students at the tertiary institution.

"On November 22, 2023, at ECOT in the Hhohho region, the accused engaged in a sexual act with Zandile* without using a condom, thereby committing the aforementioned offence," reads part of the charge sheet.

The charge against Zwane is also accompanied by an aggravating factor, as he allegedly did not use a condom during the

21-year-old allegedly raped at ECOT

commission of the offence, thereby exposing the victim to the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS.

During the court proceedings, the accused represented himself. The

prosecution requested that Zwane be remanded into custody until March 1, 2024, pending his committal to the high court.



◀ Bswatini College of Technology where the alleged rape occurred.



Drunk driver arrested after knocking down child (9) in Manzana

▲ Samuel Madoda.

A 50-YEAR-OLD MAN, Samuel Madoda has been arrested for allegedly knocking down a nine-year-old child while driving under the influence of alcohol in Manzana.

Madoda appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court on Monday. He is facing two charges, one for operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and another for negligent driving.

According to the charge sheet, on February 17, 2024, Madoda was driving his VW Polo sedan at Manzana with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.89 milligrams per litre when he struck a pedestrian, a nine-year-old female from Nkwadini.

As a result of the accident, the child sustained serious head injuries and a fracture in her left shoulder. She received medical treatment and was admitted to Mbabane Government Hospital.

The first count on the charge sheet states that on "February 17, 2024, around 4 pm in Manzana,

Hhohho region, Mbabane, Madoda wrongfully and unlawfully operated a VW motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicating liquor".

The charge sheet further states that Madoda failed to exercise proper care while driving, resulting in a collision with the pedestrian. It also mentions that he failed to take measures to avoid the accident, which a reasonable driver would have done.

The second count states that on the same day, around 4 pm, in or near Manzana, Hhohho region, Mbabane, Madoda, the driver of a VW Polo sedan, wrongfully and unlawfully struck the pedestrian on Manzana Public Road.

During the court proceedings, Madoda conducted his defence. The prosecution requested that Madoda be remanded into custody until they obtain information about the condition of the complainant. Bail was not opposed.

Madoda then successfully applied for an E5,000 bail. He is expected to appear in court on March 1, 2024, for the determination of the trial date.

ATM bombing case: Second bomb technician confirms explosives caused ATM damage

A BOMB technician from the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) has reported that explosives were the definite cause of the ATM's explosion.

Police officer and bomb technician Constable Zama Khumalo, who is working at the bomb squad unit at the Mbabane Magistrate Court, made this confirmation during the trial of Sicelo Msibi, Muziwandile Lukhele, Given Mavuso (all South African nationals), and Lindani Zitha (a Swati citizen).

The four defendants are facing a total of 17 charges, including robbery, malicious damage to property and kidnapping among others. These individuals are alleged to have stolen over E2 million and caused extensive property damage.

It is important to note that among the 17 charges, there is also the use of explosives to bomb the FNB ATM located in the Mbabane Industrial Site, resulting in property damage worth E785,000. The accused were apprehended by the police on August 21, 2022.

During the trial, the prosecution presented bomb technician Constable Zama Khumalo as a witness and his testimony comes after the first bomb technician Colane Shongwe told the court that commercial explosives were used in the ATM bombing.

Echoing his colleague's words, Khumalo testified that around 4 am, he received a call from his superiors informing him that there had been an explosion in Mbabane.



▲ The four men charged with bombing ATMs.

Acting on the information along with other members of the bomb squad, they proceeded to the scene at the Mbabane Industrial Site.

Upon arrival, they conducted a thorough assessment to ensure there were no unexploded devices present. Once the area was deemed safe, they proceeded with their work. Khumalo confirmed that the FNB ATM had indeed been bombed. He described the components of the bomb, including a firing line, which is a set of cables used to transmit power to the explosive or charge.

He mentioned the presence of a battery at the scene and explained that he disconnected some of the still-connected cables. Khumalo said the ATM suffered extensive damage, with its components displaced.

"The explosion caused shockwaves, resulting in the ATM bursting, fragmentation, and burning effects. Some of the money notes were partially burnt as a

result. Additionally, a detonator residue and 18 components were found, with some components discovered 50 meters away from the ATM," Khumalo affirmed.

"To open the ATM, a bomb bust was used to pull the iron door, revealing another detonator inside," Khumalo said.

The ATM components were presented in court as evidence. He said after completing their on-site investigation, dry and water swabs were taken from the explosion site and the nearby components for further analysis in a laboratory. The findings confirmed the use of explosives in the incident.

"Our in-depth findings confirm that an explosive was used to damage the ATM," Khumalo asserted.

The crown council Sivesonkhe Ngwenya chose not to cross-examine the witness and the matter will return in court on March 4 2024.

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Oil steadies as demand jitters

LONDON — Global oil benchmark Brent crude was little changed on Monday, hovering around \$83 a barrel as festering demand concerns were offset by continuing conflict in the Middle East. Brent crude futures eased by 9 cents to \$83.38 a barrel by 1434 GMT. The March contract for U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude, which expires on Tuesday, was up 20 cents at \$79.39 in tepid trade while the WTI April contract slipped 12 cents to \$78.34.

Telkom Q3 profit flat, revenue rises

JOHANNESBURG — Telkom South Africa's third-biggest telecom company, reported flat third-quarter core profit on Monday, as cost-reduction initiatives partially offset inflationary pressures, expenses due to power cuts and increased bad debt provisions. The earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) was stable at 2.5 billion rand (\$132.45 million) in the three months ended Dec. 31, the company said in a statement.

Rand firms as markets await budget speech

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand firmed in early trade on Monday as investors awaited the finance minister's budget speech on Wednesday. The rand traded at 18.8725 against the dollar by 0700 GMT, 0.12 per cent stronger than its previous close. The dollar was last trading down about 0.067 per cent against a basket of global currencies.

We are ready to assist women MSMEs — Commerce Ministry

Stories by Silindzelwe Nxumalo
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THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Trade says it is ready to assist women who are willing to start businesses and become Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

This follows the advice given to women by Her Majesty Indlovukazi where she encouraged women to venture into entrepreneurship during the second day of the Buganu Ceremony at Buhleni Royal residents.

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade Director of MSMEs Mluleki Dlamini said as a Ministry they fully support the call by Her Majesty also being aligned with the speech from the Throne during the opening of parliament that MSMEs are the heartbeat of the economy.

He stated that MSMEs need to be nurtured for their growth and particular emphasis needs to be on women and youth-owned Enterprises.

"The Informal Traders Revolving administered by Fincorp is one initiative by the government to support budding enterprises. A new initiative is the Women's Business Start-Up Micro Finance Revolving Fund currently being jointly implemented by Govt and RoC



▲ Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade Director of MSMEs Mluleki Dlamini.

Taiwan," he said.

Dlamini stated that other initiatives are the MSME Revolving Fund at Eswatini Bank and that women are also provided with training on business development and management under the capacity building project for women in rural areas.

"The list is endless suffice to say that

the Department is available to assist all entrepreneurs' women included on business information and opportunities as we continue to fulfill the mandate of Government as directed by their Majesties," he said.

During the main day of the Buganu Ceremony at Buhleni, Her Majesty Indlovukazi encouraged the women to venture into entrepreneurship especially farming to boost the local economy.

Her Majesty stated that women can make a better living through their businesses and ensure their families are fed.

Her Majesty further urged women in Eswatini to utilize the Mpaka factory to produce more emaganu products for the country.

Indlovukazi introduced the Swazi Secrets project where the marula fruit is used to make cosmetic products in its factory at Mpaka. Indlovukazi noted that the factory was underutilized, referencing last year's production, which she said was not satisfactory.

"The factory is ours and meant to be used by all women from all the regions of the country. It is our duty to keep it alive and growing." Her Majesty said.

The Queen Mother reiterated the roles emaganu have apart from making beer which is the production of oils and soaps.

She said that these provide job opportunities for women and encouraged emaSwati to refrain from laziness for this is employment.

Mbabane Municipality working on strategy to curtail migration of businesses from the city

FOLLOWING the noticeable increase in the number of corporate companies relocating from Mbabane City to open shop in other towns, mainly Ezulwini, the City Council has acknowledged this is a cause for concern, saying that there is an urgent need for innovative decision-making models and collaborative networks between the city governance structure and industry.



▲ Mbabane Municipality City Economic Development Officer Winile Dlamini.

Municipal Council of Mbabane's Local Economic Development Officer (LED) Winile Dlamini said the Council is aware of the increasing number of companies which are living in the capital city and the council has responded by undertaking a study on the exodus of corporates in Mbabane in a move to understand why the reasons behind their relocation.

Dlamini stated that through the study, the council discovered that some of the reasons borders around business growth, resulting in the need to build offices to avoid rentals that have escalated over the years.

She said they have also noted that the companies are merely migrating their headquarters, leaving behind their service centres and branch offices.

She stated that they have also noted that there is a lack of industrial space because Mbabane is predominantly administrative. Dlamini went on to say that due to their expansion of services, some companies have found themselves with not enough space hence they decided to construct their own offices to cut down on rental bills.

"We also found that some businesses prefer Manzini and Matsapha because they have dense populations and are the busiest towns in the country. Regarding the other towns, we have discovered that businesses prefer them because they have plenty of land for construction and parking while Mbabane city council is perceived to be tough business regulations," she explained.

To reduce the number of businesses migrating from the city, Dlamini said the council has put in place programmes to strengthen business support, industry information to partners, and deliberate investment in infrastructure and technology, to support development.

Dlamini highlighted that what is in the council's pipeline for the coming year, is the reviewing of the Integrated Development Plan and the development of the Smart City Framework which they hope will make Mbabane an investment destination again.

In the past five years, several companies have relocated from the capital city to settle in Ezulwini, Matsapha or Manzini where they built their offices.

These include African Alliance which relocated to Matsapha, Eswatini Revenue Service which migrated to Ezulwini, the First National Bank (FNB) which constructed its head offices in Ezulwini, Tibiyo Insurance which built its offices in Ezulwini and the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) which is also at Ezulwini. The Central Bank of Eswatini recently announced that it is also relocating to Ezulwini where it will construct its head offices as well.

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|--------------|---------------|---------|
| FX RATES | | |
| Notes/Cash | Buy | Sell |
| U.S. Dollar | 18.5653 | 19.0403 |
| G.B. Pound | 23.3506 | 24.0346 |
| EURO | 19.9879 | 20.5940 |
| 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 | |



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▲Army soldier miniatures and stock graph are seen in this illustration.

Oil steadies as demand jitters counter Middle East conflict

By Natalie Grover

LONDON — Global oil benchmark Brent crude was little changed on Monday, hovering around \$83 a barrel as festering demand concerns were offset by continuing conflict in the Middle East.

Brent crude futures eased by 9 cents to \$83.38 a barrel by 1434 GMT.

The March contract for U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude , which expires on Tuesday, was up 20 cents at \$79.39 in tepid trade while the WTI April contract slipped 12 cents to \$78.34.

Front-month Brent and WTI futures last week gained about 1.5 per cent and 3 per cent respectively, reflecting increasing risk of Middle East conflict widening.

Capping those gains was slowing demand forecasts from the International Energy Agency and a bigger than expected increase to U.S. producer prices in January, amplifying inflation concerns.

“WTI and Brent eased on Monday morning as investors re-adjust to demand-side fears after a significant jump in U.S. producer price index numbers,” Phillip Nova analyst Priyanka Sachdeva said in a note.

South African rand firms as markets await budget speech

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand firmed in early trade on Monday as investors awaited the finance minister’s budget speech on Wednesday.

The rand traded at 18.8725 against the dollar by 0700 GMT, 0.12 per cent stronger than its previous close.

The dollar was last trading down about 0.067 per cent against a basket of global currencies.

Investor focus this week will be on Wednesday’s budget presentation, which

Demand jitters were magnified on Friday when U.S. Federal Reserve policymakers signalled the need for “patience” over expectations of cuts to interest rates.

Markets are also awaiting indications of the direction of demand from China after it returns from a week-long Lunar New Year holiday while Presidents’ Day in the United States is set to keep trade relatively muted.

The conflict in the Middle East continued over the weekend as Israeli raids put the Gaza Strip’s second-largest hospital out of service. On Saturday Yemen’s Iran-aligned Houthi fighters claimed responsibility for an attack on an India-bound oil tanker.

A British-registered cargo ship was deemed to be at risk of sinking in the Gulf of Aden on Monday after a Houthi attack. Another cargo ship, this time U.S.-owned, reported two missile attacks in the Gulf of Aden on Monday and called for military assistance.

Houthi forces have carried out attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November in what they say is support of Palestinians in the war between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) would be able to cover “most levels of disruption”, ANZ Research analysts said in a note, citing spare capacity at an eight-year high of 6.4 million barrels of oil per day. (Reuters)

will lay out the government’s spending priorities, revenue collection measures and updated economic forecasts for the coming year.

“Given the economy’s weak performance, we anticipate further fiscal slippage ... The finance minister will try to appease markets, but he will more than likely disappoint,” Oxford Economics said in a note.

South Africa’s benchmark 2030 government bond was marginally stronger in early deals, with the yield down 1 basis point at 10.085 per cent. (Reuters)

South Africa’s Telkom Q3 profit flat, revenue rises on value propositions

JOHANNESBURG — Telkom South Africa’s third-biggest telecom company, reported flat third-quarter core profit on Monday, as cost-reduction initiatives partially offset inflationary pressures, expenses due to power cuts and increased bad debt provisions.

The earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) was stable at 2.5 billion rand (\$132.45 million) in the three months ended Dec. 31, the company said in a statement.

But the resulting EBITDA margin at 21.9 per cent decreased, largely affected by product mix at its information and communications technology, or ICT, business BCX, higher-than-expected credit losses on trade receivables as retail and enterprises customers remained under pressure from the weak macroeconomic environment.

Overall group revenue ticked up 2 per cent to 11.3 billion rand, driven by compelling data-connectivity propositions from the operator’s mobile and fixed networks.

Mobile revenue was up 4.8 per cent at 5.9 billion rand, while Openserve - its fibre



▲ A logo is seen at a branch of South Africa’s mobile operator Telkom at the Trade Route Mall, in Lenasia outside Johannesburg, South Africa.

business - fixed data next generation revenue growth was at 6.2 per cent.

“Higher recharges by prepaid mobile subscribers, ongoing rollout of fibre network to homes and enterprises by Openserve drove revenue growth, supported by Swiftnet’s commercialisation of the masts and towers portfolio,” the company added.

Telkom said that enterprise demand for hardware and software remained healthy and grew in double digits at BCX but overall revenues were impacted by the continued decline in traditional voice and data revenues as customers migrate to next generation products such as fibre. (Reuters)

World shares flattened by stubborn inflation and slow China growth



▲ The German share price index DAX graph is pictured at the stock exchange in Frankfurt, Germany.

By Nell Mackenzie

LONDON — World shares struggled to climb on Monday after the chances of early interest rate cuts globally receded and Chinese markets recorded modest gains on their return from the lunar new year break.

A holiday for U.S. markets made for thin trading, and results from AI star Nvidia on Wednesday could challenge the latest surge in tech stocks.

MSCI’s broadest index of world shares and Europe’s broader index of stocks both traded around 0.05 per cent as of 13:53 GMT.

“The mixed economic data released lately has put us in a transition period and we are waiting for the data to tell a consistent story,” James Rossiter, head of global macro strategy at TD Securities, said.

A red-hot U.S. CPI print on Tuesday followed by another upside surprise in producer prices on Friday left investors anxious inflation will persist. A weaker retail sales report, suggesting slower economic momentum augmented their concerns.

However, U.S. labour market numbers

have continued to show plentiful jobs and elevated wage growth.

In Asia, Japan’s Nikkei ended flat on Monday, pressured by chip-related shares following a slump in their U.S. counterparts late last week.

Chinese blue chips tab finished up just over 1 per cent, after tourism revenues during the Lunar New Year holiday surged by 47 per cent compared with a year earlier as more than 61 million rail trips were taken.

The country’s central bank skipped another chance to cut rates on Sunday, limiting downward pressure on the yuan, but as deflation looms, analysts see scope for further policy stimulus.

The same cannot be said for the United States as high readings on producer and consumer prices led markets to scale back pricing for rate cuts.

“The risk to the rally is a stronger pick-up in inflation leading to higher yields,” said Alain Bokobza head of global asset allocation in a Societe Generale note.

Non-recessionary rate cuts pushing up yields and a slowing of Nasdaq growth might drive volatility, which the note said was likely in the second half of this year.

Futures dropped, implying a 28 per cent chance rates will be cut in May. (Reuters)

European Commission set to fine Apple

ABOUT 500 million euros (\$539 million) over alleged breaches of EU competition law, the Financial Times reported on Sunday, citing unnamed sources with knowledge of the matter.

Brussels first launched an investigation into allegations that Apple hindered third-party music services on its devices and favored its own Apple Music service, after Spotify filed a formal complaint to regulators in 2019.

Rules

In most regions, Apple's App Store rules prohibit companies such as Spotify from billing users for subscriptions directly within the app, making them instead use Apple's App Store billing service, which takes a cut of up to 30%.

Brussels formally charged Apple in an anti-competitive probe in 2021, but narrowed the scope of the investigation last year, abandoning a charge of pushing developers to use its own in-app payment system.

The latest version of the probe focused on whether Apple had restricted apps from informing users about cheaper subscription alternatives outside of its native App Store and thus violated EU competition laws.



▲Nvidia, the biggest winner of the AI boom, revealed its new stakes in the firms as of Dec. 31 in a 13-F filin with the U.S. SEC late on Wednesday.

The findings of the investigation will lead to the Commission accusing Apple of abusing its powerful position and banning its "unfair trading conditions" regarding its music service subscription policies, sources told the FT.

If imposed, the fine would be one of the most substantial financial penalties the EU has imposed on a major technology company. It

follows a series of large contested fines against Google

While Apple has faced fines for antitrust behavior before — such as the €1.1 billion penalty in France that was later reduced to €372 million on appeal — this would mark its first such fine from Brussels.

The reported fine is part of a broader crackdown in the EU and comes ahead of the enactment

of the bloc's landmark Digital Markets Act set for March. The new law aims to address anti-competitive practices from big tech players deemed as "gatekeepers," including companies such as Apple, Amazon and Google.

Smaller internet firms and other tech businesses, such as Spotify, have long complained of being unfairly limited by these tech giant's business practices.

In Apple's case, the Digital Markets Act will require it to allow third-party developers to distribute apps outside the iOS Store and for those apps to bill their customers directly.

Apple has made moves to address EU regulations by announcing changes to its iOS, Safari and the App Store in the EU, and announced that it will soon allow software developers to distribute their apps to Apple devices via alternative stores.

In a separate antitrust case, the European Commission is looking into the way Apple restricts rivals from accessing its Apple Pay mobile system. Apple has already made concessions in relation to the case.

The timing of the Commission's announcement on the fines has not yet been set, but that will not change the direction of the antitrust investigation, according to the FT report.

Apple has the right to appeal the decision in EU courts. The tech giant declined to comment on the report, referring CNBC to a previous statement that it was pleased regulators narrowed the focus of the probe.

(Reuters Tech)

US awards \$1.5 bln to GlobalFoundries for domestic semiconductor production

WASHINGTON - The U.S. government is awarding \$1.5 billion to GlobalFoundries to expand semiconductor production, the Biden administration said on Monday, in a bid to strengthen domestic supply chains.

GlobalFoundries, the world's third-largest contract chipmaker, will build a new semiconductor production facility in Malta, New York, and expand existing operations there and in Burlington, Vermont, according to a preliminary agreement with the Commerce Department.

The grant will be accompanied by \$1.6 billion in available loans, with the funding expected to generate \$12.5 billion in overall potential investment across the two states.

The projects, funded under the CHIPS and Science Act, would generate more than 10,000 jobs over a decade, said Biden administration officials, adding that the positions will pay fair wages and offer benefits like childcare.

"The chips that GlobalFoundries will make in these new facilities are essential chips to our national security," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo told reporters at a briefing.

The chips, as small as a fingernail, are used in satellite and space communications and the defense industry, the officials said, in addition to everyday applications



▲GlobalFoundries, the world's third-largest contract chipmaker, will build a new semiconductor production facility in Malta, New York, and expand existing operations there and in Burlington, Vermont.

such as blind spot detection and collision warnings in cars and electric vehicles, along with wifi and cellular connections.

"As an industry, we now need to turn our attention to increasing the demand for U.S.-made chips, and to growing our talented U.S. semiconductor workforce," said Thomas Caulfield, president and CEO of GlobalFoundries in a statement.

Raimondo said this is the government's third CHIPS announcement and her department planned to make several funding awards within the coming weeks and months from the government's

\$39 billion program to boost semiconductor manufacturing.

"We're just getting started," she said.

The Malta facility expansion will secure a stable supply of chips for auto suppliers and manufacturers, including General Motors (GM), Raimondo added.

GlobalFoundries and GM on Feb. 9 announced a long-term deal for the automaker to secure U.S.-made processors that will help it avoid factory-halting chip shortages that kept millions of cars from being manufactured during the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Reuters Tech)

OpenAI, Meta, other tech giants sign effort to fight AI election interference

A group of 20 tech companies announced on Friday they have agreed to work together to prevent deceptive artificial-intelligence content from interfering with elections across the globe this year.

The rapid growth of generative artificial intelligence (AI), which can create text, images and video in seconds in response to prompts, has heightened fears that the new technology could be used to sway major elections this year, as more than half of the world's population is set to head to the polls.

Signatories of the tech accord, which was announced at the Munich Security Conference, include companies that are build-

ing generative AI models used to create content, including OpenAI, Microsoft and Adobe. Other signatories include social media platforms that will face the challenge of keeping harmful content off their sites, such as Meta Platforms, TikTok and X, formerly known as Twitter.

The agreement includes commitments to collaborate on developing tools for detecting misleading AI-generated images, video and audio, creating public awareness campaigns to educate voters on deceptive content and taking action on such content on their services.

Technology to identify AI-generated content or certify its origin could include watermarking or embedding metadata, the companies said. (Reuters Tech)



▲Volunteers watch for voters to arrive shortly after the polls open as Democrats and Republicans hold their presidential primary election in Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S earlier this month.

DR Congo: US accuses Rwanda of supporting M23 rebel group

THE United States has accused Rwanda of backing the M23 rebel group in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, prompting a backlash from Kigali.

In a statement on Saturday, U.S. State Department condemned the worsening violence and called on M23 to cease hostilities immediately and withdraw from its current positions around Sake and Goma.

It called on Rwanda to immediately withdraw all of its military per-

sonnel from the DRC and remove its surface-to-air missile systems.

The comments have provoked a backlash from Kigali, with the foreign affairs ministry saying that the US statement distorts the reality and that Rwanda reserves the right to self-defence against the DRC's actions in the area, which it claims threaten Rwandan security.

Kigali also expressed "deep concern" over what it terms the abandonment of the regional peace processes" and said that the international community is indifferent to

DRC's "dramatic military build-up".

It comes amidst an escalation of violence in eastern DRC in recent weeks, with clashes between the M23 rebels, army forces and self-defence groups that support them. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee, many of them now in Goma, as M23 advances on the city.

Last week, South Africa said it would send a contingent of 2,900 troops as part of its contribution to a force deployed by southern African regional bloc SADC to help Congo fight rebel groups. (Reuters)



▲ The United States has accused Rwanda of backing the M23 rebel group in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, prompting a backlash from Kigali.

Morocco intercepts a boat with 141 immigrants

THE Moroccan navy said it intercepted 141 people attempting to traverse the Atlantic Ocean as migration from West Africa to Spain's Canary Islands has spiked since the beginning of the year.

Morocco's Royal Armed Forces said in a statement Sunday it was able to rescue all passengers on a boat off the coast of the Western Sahara, a disputed territory with a coastline that Morocco has controlled since 1975.

It said the 141 people all came from sub-Saharan Africa and likely embarked more than a week earlier from Mauritania — Morocco's southern neighbor and the primary point of departure for migrants attempting to reach Spain's Canary Islands.



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

according to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

Spain's Interior Ministry reported 11,704 migrants had arrived to the Canaries as of Feb. 15 — more than a sixfold increase from a year earli-

er. The majority have departed from Mauritania, which recently signed a 210 million euro agreement with the European Union that included funding for migration patrolling and humanitarian aid.

(Reuters)



▲ Imprisoned Tunisian opposition leader Rached Ghannouchi went on hunger strike on Monday in solidarity with other anti-government figures waging a protest fast to demand their immediate release

Tunisia opposition leader Ghannouchi begins hunger strike in prison

TUNIS - Imprisoned Tunisian opposition leader Rached Ghannouchi went on hunger strike on Monday in solidarity with other anti-government figures waging a protest fast to demand their immediate release, a team of opposition lawyers said.

Ghannouchi, 82, a fierce critic of President Kais Saied and head of the Ennahda main opposition party, was jailed last year on charges of incitement against police and plotting against state security.

Earlier this month in a separate case a judge sentenced him to three years in prison on charges of accepting external financing.

"While he is fighting the 'empty stomach' battle, Ghannouchi calls on Tunisians to adhere to a democratic Tunisia that includes everyone on the basis of freedom ... and the independence of the judiciary", the lawyers said in a statement.

The opposition says Saied's

sudden shutting down of the elected parliament in 2021 and moves to rule by decree amounted to a coup.

Saied, who enshrined his new constitutional powers in a referendum with a low turnout in 2022, has denied his actions were a coup and said they were needed to save Tunisia from years of chaos.

Six opposition leaders arrested last year in a crackdown began an open-ended hunger strike last week to protest at their imprisonment without trial and demand their immediate release.

They called for an end to judicial prosecutions against all politicians, journalists and civil society activists and for intimidation and threats to judges to stop.

The leaders -- Jawher Ben Mbarak, Khayam Turki, Ghazi Chaouachi, Issam Chabbi, Abdelhamid Jalasi, and Rida Belhaj -- were detained on suspicion of plotting against state security.

(Reuters)

U.N. in Libya urges probe into Tripoli shooting deaths

TRIPOLI, - The United Nations mission in Libya has urged authorities to investigate the shooting deaths of 10 people in a Tripoli neighbourhood, with city security chiefs saying the victims included two members of a powerful armed faction.

The U.N. said in a statement released on social media that the authorities should "prevent any actions that could lead to escalation and further violence".

Libya has had little peace since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising and it split in 2014, with rival factions taking over different parts of the country. Although major warfare has paused since a 2020 ceasefire, different groups still wield control over various govern-

ment and security departments.

Flashes of conflict have repeatedly flared in Tripoli since 2020, with brief bursts of conflict between rival groups, sometimes linked to the country's wider political contest over ultimate control of government.

The Tripoli security directorate said the 10 people had been killed by "an unidentified armed group" late on Saturday night and included two members of the Stabilisation Support Apparatus, one of the biggest and most prominent forces in Tripoli. The SSA mourned two of its members in a Facebook post, saying they had been "struck by the hand of treachery" without giving further details of the incident.

(Reuters)

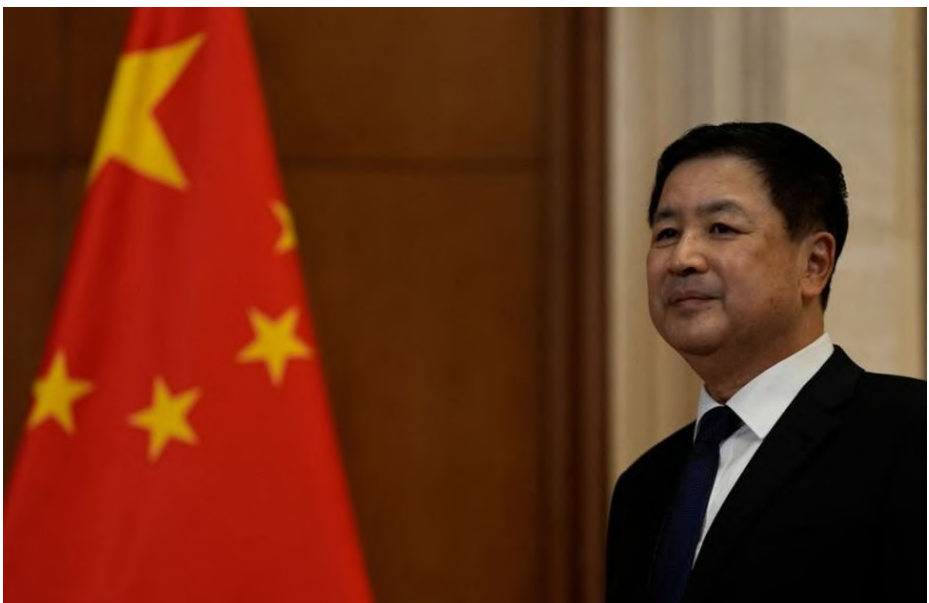
In unusual move, China offers to back Hungary in security matters

BEIJING - China offered to support long-time strategic partner Hungary on public security issues, going beyond trade and investment relations, during a rare meeting with Prime Minister Viktor Orban, just as NATO struggles to expand its network in Europe. China hopes to deepen law enforcement and security ties with Hungary as the two mark their 75th year of diplomatic relations, Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong told Orban last week, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Relations

During a visit to Budapest, Wang said he hoped such efforts would be “a new highlight of bilateral relations” in areas such as combating terrorism and transnational crimes. They would also encompass security and law enforcement capacity building under President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to link China with the world through trade and infrastructure links. Chinese state media have called NATO

a “grave” challenge to global peace and stability. The security pact with Hungary represents a diplomatic win for China in the European Union, as the bloc weighs its ties with the world’s second-largest economy over differences on human rights, trade imbalances and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The central European country’s growing affinity to Beijing has already put a wedge in the EU’s collective front. **Rights** On several occasions, Hungary has stood aside or opposed EU positions critical of China on issues such as human rights, and welcomed Chinese investments despite the EU’s call for members to align relations with China in line with those of the bloc. Hungary is home to Huawei Technologies’ largest logistics and manufacturing base outside China, despite European Commission warnings that the telecom giant poses a risk to EU security. Since 2016, Huawei has partnered with Shanghai-based artificial intelligence firm



▲ Chinese Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong waits for the arrival of U.S. Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Homeland Security Advisor Jen Daskal for a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, Tuesday. Yitu Technology to work on solutions for smart cities to enhance public safety and policing with the use of AI and surveillance. Hungary will soon host Chinese carmaker BYD’s first European factory. (Reuters)



▲ Yulia Navalnaya, wife of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, attends the Munich Security Conference (MSC), on the day it was announced that Alexei Navalny is dead by the prison service of the Yamalo-Nenets region where he had been serving his sentence, in Munich, Germany.

Germany seeks more EU sanctions against Russia over Navalny’s death

BRUSSELS - Germany will propose new sanctions against Moscow over the death of jailed Russian activist Alexei Navalny, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said ahead of an EU foreign ministers’ meeting to be attended by his widow. The ministers were already due to discuss the bloc’s 13th package of sanctions against Russia since Moscow invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Hungary is the only EU state yet to approve the proposed restrictions against nearly 200 firms and people. Yulia Navalnaya told a Western security conference on Friday that Putin and his allies would bear responsibility “for what they did to our country, to my family, to my husband”. Baerbock said she hoped the 27-nation bloc would agree on new sanctions against Russia soon. “We have seen the brutal force with which the Russian president represses his own citizens who take to the streets to

demonstrate for freedom or write about it in newspapers,” she said. “We will propose new sanctions in light of the death of Alexei Navalny.” Navalny died in an Arctic prison last week, just days before the two-year mark of Moscow’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. “(EU) member states will propose sanctions for sure against those responsible,” said the chairman of Monday ministerial talks, foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. “The great responsible is Putin himself.” “We can go down the institutional structure of the penitentiary system in Russia,” he said indicating whom the bloc would add to its list of people subjected to asset freezes and travel bans. “But don’t forget who is really responsible for Navalny’s death.” Navalny, a 47-year-old former lawyer, rose to prominence campaigning against corruption in Putin’s Russia. He was known for his fiery rhetoric at public protests and in court rooms, vocal presence on social media, and his team’s elaborate video investigations into state graft. (Reuters)

Spain to impose sanctions on violent settlers if no EU deal

MADRID - Spain will impose sanctions on violent Israeli settlers in the West Bank unilaterally if its European Union partners fail to reach an agreement on the issue, Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said on Monday. He said Spain, which has also been critical of Israel’s military offensive in Gaza, will push for the approval of such sanctions during a meeting of EU’s foreign ministers held in Brussels on Monday. “If there’s no agreement, Spain will proceed individually with these sanctions against the violent settlers,” Albares told reporters before the meeting. Irish Foreign Minister Michael Martin said earlier on Monday he hoped the EU

countries would unanimously approve these sanctions. Last week, French authorities banned 28 Israeli settlers from entering the country, accusing them of attacking Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. U.N. figures show that daily settler attacks have more than doubled since Hamas’ surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7 and the ensuing assault on the Palestinian enclave of Gaza. While international attention has focused on that cross-border assault and Israel’s subsequent war there, European officials have also expressed concern about rising violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. (Reuters)



▲ Palestinians check a damaged car following an Israeli settlers’ attack in Asira Al-Qibiliya near Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

M Nation confirmed for Mozambique Afro Swing Exchange

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

FRESH from representing Eswatini at the Mela Festival in India, M Nation is confirmed to grace the stage at the Mozambique Afro Swing Exchange.

This musical extravaganza, set to captivate audiences from March 11-17, 2024, promises a week filled with joy and learning.

Hailing from the town of Pigg's Peak in Eswatini, Wandile Ndlovu, better known as M Nation, has been making waves in the music industry since his debut in 2015. Last year, M Nation's exceptional talent was recognized when he emerged as one of the top ten winners of the prestigious MTN Bushfire Firefly competition.

The Mozambique Afro Swing Exchange promises to be an unforgettable experience, featuring a vibrant blend of traditional and modern dance classes. Attendees will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich cultural heritage of Mozambique, with dance styles ranging from Afro Swing to Amapiano and Afro House.

The event will also showcase the power of music and poetry, with parties



▲ Eswatini artist M Nation confirmed for Mozambique Afro Swing Exchange.

featuring live bands and talented DJs. What sets the Mozambique Afro Swing Exchange apart is its international appeal.

Participants from all corners of the globe have already confirmed their attendance, including representatives from

Mozambique, France, Germany, China, the United States of America, Belgium, Australia, England, Mexico and Holland, among other countries. This diversity promises to create a melting pot of cultures and a truly unique experience for all.

Miss Eswatini, Miss Cultural Heritage to grace Makoti Festival

THE stage is set for a spectacular showcase of Eswatini's rich culture and modern femininity as reigning Miss Eswatini, Tania Nunn, and Miss Cultural Heritage, Melinda Mavuso, prepare to grace the Makoti Festival.

This highly anticipated event, renowned for its celebration of tradition and empowerment of women, is scheduled to take place on April 27, 2024, at Malkerns Country Club.

With a star-studded lineup that includes Maskandi maestro Mthandeni SK, Gospel sensation Ntokozo Mbambo, legendary group Lodanda neMalangeni and local music sensation M Nation, the Makoti Festival promises an unforgettable experience for attendees. Music enthusiasts are urged to secure their tickets early, with prices starting at E200 and available through Howler, Computickets, and Galitos outlets.

Beyond musical performances, the Makoti Festival offers a multifaceted experience that celebrates Eswatini's cultural tapestry. From vibrant fashion displays to delectable culinary delights, guests will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a world of creativity and innovation. Local entrepreneurs will



▲ Miss Eswatini Tania Nunn and Miss Cultural Heritage Melinda Mavuso.

showcase their talents through an array of fashion and food stalls, adding a unique flavour to the festival ambience.

Embracing the diversity and strength of women from all walks of life, the Makoti Festival is a platform that honours the



essence of womanhood. From traditional attire that pays homage to the country's heritage to contemporary fashion trends that reflect the spirit of modernity, the festival encapsulates the beauty and resilience of Eswatini's women.



▲ Trend Twins to release debut single.

Trend Twins to release debut single

ESWATINI'S dynamic DJ duo, Trend Twins, gear up to unleash their much-anticipated debut single, 'Fruits of Life,' onto the music scene.

The talented pair, consisting of two young female DJs, have been making waves in the Afro House genre and are ready to captivate audiences with their electrifying sound. In an exclusive interview, their talent manager, Mbekezeli Dlamini, confirmed the upcoming release, expressing pride in the duo's hard work and dedication. Trend Twins shared their genuine excitement about the upcoming milestone, emphasizing that this song is a culmination of their relentless efforts and sacrifices.

Scheduled for release on March 29, 2024, with pre-orders available from March 15, 'Fruits of Life' is set to be a musical masterpiece that will leave listeners in awe.

Passion

Collaborating with Brothers of Cue and Loony-tech, Trend Twins have crafted a track that is not only a celebration of their journey but also reflects their musical prowess. Describing the song as a reflection of their growth and passion for music, the duo encouraged fans to expect the unexpected and prepare to be swept away by the infectious beats and soulful melodies.

"If you are a House lover, this is one for the books," they teased, hinting at a sonic experience that transcends boundaries and sets the stage for a new era in Afro-House music.

With influences ranging from industry titans like Shimza, Cairo, and Da Capo, Trend Twins have carved out a niche for themselves, blending genres seamlessly and pushing the boundaries of creativity. The duo has risen from their humble beginnings in a dance group to their meteoric rise as sought-after DJs.

66
If you are a House lover, this is one for the books

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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ESWATINI'S beloved saxophonist, Zwile Bhembe, has embarked on a new chapter in his life following proposing to his sweetheart, Nombulelo Nhleko, marking a significant milestone in their relationship.

The joyous occasion unfolded on the past Sunday morning. Zwile took to his social media platforms to share the delightful news with his fans and followers. With a caption that exuded pure happiness and gratitude, Zwile's post read, "What a lovely Sunday. I cannot contain my happiness. God is amazing. I love you, my fiancé."

The announcement sent ripples of excitement across social media, with an outpouring of heartfelt congratulations and well-wishes flooding in from all corners of the digital realm.

In an exclusive interview, Zwile expressed elation at taking this momentous step in his journey. Describing the engagement as a pivotal moment in his growth as a man, Zwile emphasized the significance of this decision in shaping his future. While known for keeping his romantic life private, Zwile felt compelled to share this special moment with the world, allowing glimpses of his joy to resonate with his fans and supporters.

Hailing from the Kingdom of Eswatini, Zwile Bhembe has made a name for himself as a versatile saxophonist, songwriter, and performer, enchanting audiences with his vibrant and eclectic musical style. Renowned for his soulful melodies and captivating performances, Zwile's talent transcends boundaries.

Music Video: Uncle Waffles hosts dancer auditions

RENOWNED Eswatini-born artist, Uncle Waffles has presented a rare breakthrough opportunity for dancers as she hosted a dazzling dancer audition for her highly anticipated music video.

The talented artist, known for her electrifying performances, is gearing up for the release of her 'We Love Waffles' video, and she is leaving no stone unturned in her quest for perfection.

Taking to her Instagram page, Uncle Waffles announced the call for dancers to audition for a chance to be part of the spectacular 'We Love Waffles' music video. The auditions, held at DS Dance Studios in Johannesburg, saw a flurry of talented dancers showcasing their skills in hopes of securing a coveted spot in the video.

Dressed in sleek all-black attire, dancers over 18 years old brought their A-game to the auditions, impressing Uncle Waffles and judges with their talent.

Those selected to join the project will embark on a rigorous rehearsal schedule, with the first week of rehearsals scheduled for February 21-23, 2024, comprising four hours of intense preparation each day.

The second week of rehearsals from February 26-28, 2024, will further refine the dancers' performances, leading up to the grand dress rehearsal on February 29, 2024.

Zwile off the market

... engages sweetheart



▲ Saxophonist Zwile and his sweetheart Nombulelo Nhleko.



▲ Young Zesh and Lyrikal Busta are both featured on the Uncut DJs' latest project.

Young Zesh, Lyrikal Busta featured on Nigerian DJs' project

ESWATINI artists Young Zesh and Lyrikal Busta have been featured on Nigerian Uncut DJs' latest project, 'Good Vibes.'

The project was dropped last Friday across all streaming platforms. Young Zesh and Lyrikal Busta, both signed to Upscale Live, brought their unique flair to tracks 2 and 5 of the 6-song 'project,' showcasing their versatility. Both artists are featured on track 2 titled 'Pusha Panda,' which is an Afro-infused track, and track 5, 'Pianos,' which is an Amapiano sensation. Both records bear the signature touch of producer, Tru Hitz.

In an exclusive interview, Young Zesh expressed excitement about the collaboration, praising the Uncut DJs for their exceptional talent and boundary-pushing approach to music. He said the serendipitous collaboration took shape during a show in Johannesburg, where they crossed paths with the DJs, sparking a creative connection that led to this remarkable workmanship.

Talented

Looking ahead, Young Zesh hinted that there are plans to return to South Africa for the filming of music videos for the featured tracks.

Young Zesh is a talented Eswatini artist, and the reigning Eswatini Creators Awards 'Artist of The Year.' He is well known for song covers for established artists in the industry. Notably, he will release his sophomore album titled 'Lwandiso' in May. Likewise, Lyrikal Busta's artistic prowess knows no bounds, as he effortlessly traverses genres, seamlessly blending Afrobeats with Hip Hop. His music serves as a powerful vessel through which he addresses the societal issues that plague his beloved homeland. With each note, he sheds light on the struggles and triumphs of his people, using his platform to ignite change and inspire hope.

● Young Zesh expressed excitement about the collaboration, praising the Uncut DJs for their exceptional talent and boundary-pushing approach to music.



▲ Eswatini- born DJ Uncle Waffles will host a dance audition for her upcoming music video.

The final off-site rehearsal on March 1, 2024, will ensure that every move and step is perfected for the music video shoot.

Notably, Uncle Waffles recently hosted

dancer auditions in London, United Kingdom, for the acclaimed 'We Love Waffles London' show which took place last month.

NATASHA Thahane, a former Skeem Saam actress, has announced her separation from her baby-daddy, football player Thembinkosi Lorch.

The actress announced the news on Instagram on Monday morning in a brief statement, stating that this marks a new chapter in her life.

In spite of their break-up, Thahane, who also portrays Wendy in the Netflix series Blood and Water, said she will stay friends with Lorch while they raise their son.

The actress and the football star have a one-year-old son together.

“A brief update: Thembinkosi Lorch and I have mutually decided to part ways romantically. Despite the change in our relationship, we will remain friends and co-parents,” said Thahane.

“I am looking forward to this new chapter of my life.”

Problem

In one of her Instagram stories recently, the actress wrote: “If all your exes complain about you and they all complain about the same thing, you are the problem.”

Lorch, who recently joined Mamelodi Sundowns from the Orlando Pirates, has been making headlines for all the wrong reasons.

In November 2023, he was convicted and handed a suspended jail sentence and a fine of R100 000 for assaulting his ex-girlfriend, Nokuphiwa Mathithibala.

He was found guilty of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm for strangling and hitting Mathithibala three years ago.

Following the conviction, the Orlando

Natasha Thahane and Thembinkosi Lorch call it quits

Pirates management resolved to suspend the star player from club activities.

On Saturday, Lorch made it to the starting lineup for the Mamelodi Sundowns against the Bucs at the Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria.

The action-packed DStv Premiership match ended in a 1-1 draw.

During a media briefing on Thursday last week, Lorch expressed his gratitude to his former employer.

“I remember signing for the club when I was 22 years old and leaving at the age of 30,” he said.

(Sunday World)



▲Actress Natasha Thahane and soccer player Thembinkhosi Lorch have ended their relationship.

Pearl Thusi makes her deejay debut

ACTRESS and presenter Pearl Thusi is making strides in her music career and has even had her first performance as a DJ.

Last year, Thusi revealed that she was shifting her focus to the music business and she has now hit the DJ decks, exploring her new talent. “I’m actually making music,” she told DJ Fresh on his YouTube podcast, ‘What A Week (WAW)’.

Over the weekend, Thusi played her first gig at the Makhelwane Festival, where her celebrity friends such as Nadia Nakai and her daughter Thando Mokoena came out in support.

Dreams

Thusi thanked God for carrying her through the hour of her set as she reflected on making her dreams happen and overcoming the fear of judgement.

“I was always so worried about what everyone would say about this decision - for nearly a decade.”

Thusi explained that she doesn’t care about what people have to say, after all the practise she put in.

“Angisanandaba nezinkulumo zabantu... I practised until I couldn’t stand anymore ... I’m so happy because I overcame the fear of judgement - forgetting that only God has the right to judge me.”

Thusi also shared a highlight reel of her moment on her Instagram page and reflected on how the day was perfect.

“Thank you to everyone who made yesterday perfect! Thank you

God! Thokozani!

“Thank you to my team from @lmrelations & Thaha Music. Thank you to the Makhelwane organizers for trusting me !”

Itumeleng7214 who was in attendance for Thusi first ever set had nothing but praise for the personality. “I loved the way you showed us love yesterday, I respect you Pearl God bless you baby.”

Rapper Nakai commented on Thusi’s post that did great and wouldnt have missed the performance.

“You killed it Sis!!! Wouldn’t have missed it for anything!” she wrote.

“Go get them. Take all the bags,” wrote actress Amanda du Pont.

In an interview with Galore magazine that she expects her music release to break new ground in a way she has never seen anyone do before.



▲Multi-talented personality Pearl Thusi.

In the past few years, South Africa has seen an influx of women DJs, from Cyan Boujee, Gogo Skhoteni, Thuli Phongolo and Dineo Ranaka. (IOL)

‘Bob Marley: One Love’ sings its own tune in spectacular box office debut

Bob Marley: One Love exceeded box office expectations with a \$80 million global opening.

Despite mixed reviews, the film has strong audience ratings and a promising theatrical run ahead.

The movie set records at the Jamaican box office and is expanding to additional markets internationally.

Giving a much-needed boost to the struggling theatrical marketplace, Paramount’s music biopic, Bob Marley: One Love, reported strong numbers both domestically and worldwide in its opening weekend of release. Starring Kingsley Ben-Adir as the reggae icon and directed by King Richard’s Reinaldo Marcus Green, One Loveexceeded expectations in its domestic debut and appears to have been equally well-received internationally.

According to Paramount’s estimates, One Love is poised to generate around \$51 million in its six-day domestic opening — from Valentine’s Day on Wednesday to President’s Day on Monday. The film was originally expected to gross around \$15 million less in the same frame, but positive word-of-mouth is believed to have played a huge part in its stunning debut. One Love also grossed \$29 million from overseas markets, for a cumulative global opening of \$80 million.

With this, the film has already recovered its reported \$70 million budget, setting the stage for a theatrical run that’ll be interesting to observe. Recent music biopics have done exceedingly well at the box office, even if critical reception has been mixed.

(Collider.com)



▲Bob Marley (Kingsley Ben-Adir) playing the guitar in a stadium on the poster for Bob Marley: One Love.

NEVER have more than two eggs a day. Stick to wholegrain bread - and avoid white. And avoid sugary sodas at all costs.

These are just three of the hundreds of the supposed diet ‘rules’ that we’ve been fed over the years, and led to believe are key to optimum health.

But increasing evidence suggests that in fact, a healthy diet is far more simple - consisting of a balance of all food groups, with little sugar and junk, and plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Now, dietitians have revealed the most common diet beliefs that are totally bogus.

Many of them may come as a surprise; for instance the age-old idea that too many eggs are harmful due to high levels of cholesterol - the fatty substance that damages arteries.

You may also be shocked to hear that low calorie doesn’t necessarily mean healthier.

Read on to discover the seven most-believed nutrition myths that leave dietitians most exasperated.

‘NATURAL’ SUGAR IS HEALTHIER THAN TABLE SUGAR

Honey and maple syrup may have antioxidant, antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

But exactly how this impacts our health remains unknown. What has been proven, however, is that ‘natural’ sugars have the same calories as table sugar- and a virtually identical effect on our blood.

‘At the end of the day, your body digests and views all of these foods as sugar,’ Dietician Alyssa Pacheco told Yahoo Life.

Excessive sugar intake of any kind is bad for you, and can raise the risk of weight gain, leading to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, metabolic disorders, depression and cognitive impairment.

Instead of worrying about what kind of sugar you choose, Pacheco advises choosing whichever you prefer and having it in moderation.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than six teaspoons of added sugar a day for women and nine teaspoons for men.

SEA SALT HAS ‘HEALING’ PROPERTIES

Similarly to sugars, sea salt, Himalayan salt and table salt are ultimately all salt, containing roughly 40 percent sodium, which is the compound that impacts blood pressure.

Sea salt has minimal processing and might contain tiny amounts of magnesium, calcium and potassium.

Table salt, on the other hand, is processed to take away impurities and usually has added iodine for thyroid health.

But so long as your diet is well balanced, there is no need to get your minerals from sea salt. ‘Excessive sodium consumption is linked to high blood pressure and other health issues so it’s important to limit overall sodium intake regardless of the type of salt used,’ said Michelle Rauch, a dietitian for the Actors Fund.

EAT NO MORE THAN TWO EGGS PER DAY

Yet another mistaken belief is that eggs are bad for you and will raise your cholesterol.

7 nutrition LIES we’ve all been told

- From the dangers of eating late to the benefits of ‘natural’ sugar
- If something is low calorie and low fat, it is not automatically healthier
- Another common misconception is that sea salt is healthier than table salt



● Eggs can be part of a healthy diet and support muscle maintenance, overall well-being, help meet your daily protein needs and are a versatile protein source that can be added to many different meals

Because of their cholesterol content, eggs have long been the subject of fierce debate around their role in causing heart problems.

But scientists have said there is no link. Studies show that the cholesterol in eggs doesn’t seem to raise cholesterol levels the way some other foods, such as those high in saturated fats.

In a 2020 study, a US team headed by a Harvard researcher found no association between egg intake and risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) - which can lead to heart attack or stroke.

‘Eggs can be part of a healthy diet and support muscle maintenance, overall well-being, help meet your daily protein needs and are a versatile protein source that can be added to many different meals,’ said sports dietitian Umo Callins.

DON’T EAT ANYTHING AFTER 6PM

‘Your body doesn’t have an internal clock that yells to your cells, “It’s 6pm, time to store this food for weight gain!”’ said Katie Schimmelpfenning, dietitian and founder of

Eat Swim Win.

‘Energy is energy no matter when it is consumed.’

People who are exercising late in the day, for instance, need a post-workout something for muscle repair and growth.

And people who do night shifts will need to eat while they are awake, said Schimmelpfenning.

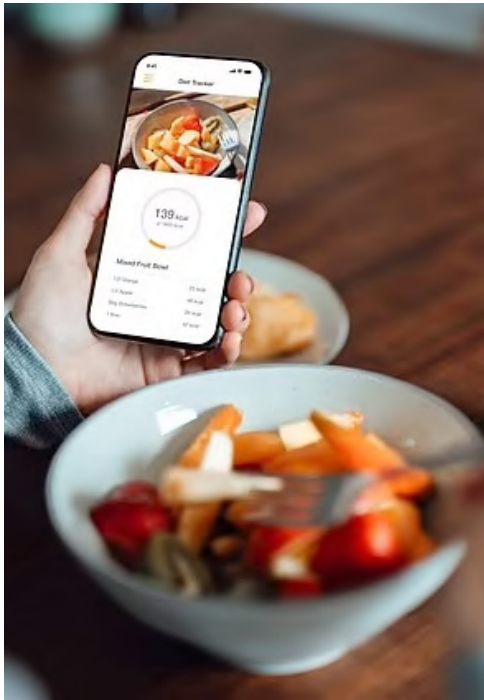
Studies have shown that it is not when you eat that potentially causes weight gain, but what you eat.

Eating more earlier in the day can help manage hunger later on and stop you from eating too much.

Dietician and author Rhyen Geiger said: ‘It all comes down to the types of foods you choose.

SKIP BREAKFAST AND HAVE COFFEE INSTEAD TO AVOID OBESITY

Most of us rely on our morning up of coffee. But it is not a meal replacement or breakfast substitute.



While a cup of coffee may be rich in antioxidants, it only contains around five calories and no protein, fat or carbs.

Dietician Patricia Kolesa said: 'While [some] coffee includes protein and fats from milk, it will not leave you full and energized the same way a conventional breakfast does.'

Nutritionists have also warned that coffee is acidic and therefore tough on an empty stomach.

STICK TO FRESH PRODUCE ONLY

Some people think you should stick to the outer areas of the store when food shopping as this is where the fresh produce is concentrated, but dietitian Lauren Harris-Pincus said this would be a mistake and is a 'damaging' myth.

'The center aisles contain a treasure trove of nutrient-dense and cultural foods including frozen fruit, veggies and seafood, canned beans, fruit and vegetables, as well as dried beans, whole grains, nuts, seeds and spices,' she said.

Ms Harris-Pincus recommends shopping across all areas of the supermarket that have high-quality whole foods.

But just because something is frozen doesn't make it worse than fresh, experts have said.

'Actually, frozen fruits and vegetables can contain higher levels of nutrients,' said UK based nutritionist Kim Pearson.

That's because they are frozen at their peak — right after being picked — and put through minimal processing before freezing, meaning they keep a lot of their nutrients, explained Ms Pearson.

In contrast, fresh produce can be in a supermarket for days or weeks after being picked, meaning they may have lost more nutrients by the time they are consumed.

Dietician Alyssa Pacheco said: 'Opting for the lowest calorie options possible will usually leave you feeling hungry and unsatisfied, causing you to eventually overeat.'

'Additionally, not eating enough calories can backfire in the long run because it can lower your metabolic rate.'

Some high-calorie and high-fat foods such as nuts, avocados and oils, are full of nutrients.

As with calories, low fat isn't necessarily better than full fat. Fat is needed to help us feel full, better absorb fat-soluble vitamins and give flavor.

MailOnline

'There's no such thing as healthy chocolate'

- Nutritionists warn chocolate contains very few 'healthy' flavonols
- They say it is overblown to describe chocolates as healthy

THE idea that one chocolate bar can be 'healthier' than another is a 'fallacy' - regardless of how dark it is, a top nutritionist has claimed.

In recent years, newfangled products have popped up on the snacks market brandishing labels such as 'raw', 'better-for-you' and 'no added sugar'.

There's also varieties costing up to \$20 per pack such as cacao (cold, pressed raw cocoa beans) and 'raw' chocolate - which usually means little sugar has been added.

Some dark chocolate bars claim to be 'better-for-you' because they contain more flavonols — which studies suggest ward off heart issues.

But Dr Marion Nestle, a professor emeritus at New York University and nutritionist, has told DailyMail.com there is so little of this nutrient in the bars that someone would have to eat 'immoderate' amounts in order to get enough.

This, ironically, would put them at risk of weight gain, diabetes and heart disease — because of the inevitable excess calories.

Some nutritionists suggest you would need to eat as many as seven chocolate bars a day to get enough flavonols to experience any benefit at all — or 750 calories worth of dark chocolate, roughly half the daily recommended intake.

Dr Nestle told DailyMail.com: 'It is a fallacy to describe chocolate as healthy, but a great marketing ploy.'

'Chocolate is a candy and should be enjoyed as such, in moderation of course.'

'As a plant extract, cocoa has antioxidants that might promote health. 'But these are in such small amounts that you would need to eat chocolate immoderately to get benefits.'

Extra bar of chocolate per day raises stroke risk by 10 percent

She added: 'And it's important to watch those calories!'

Suggestions that chocolate may be healthy have focused on flavonols — which have even been linked to improvements in brain function.

But when cacao — raw beans from cacao plants — is heated and crushed to make cocoa powder, this causes many of the flavonols to degrade.

To make processed chocolate, the powder is then mixed with sugars, cocoa butter and vegetable oils - which involve more calories, sugar and fat.

Companies need to mix the powder with other substances



▲ Researchers found that foods highest in toxic metals like lead, arsenic, and cadmium included baby food, root vegetables like beets, rice, and dark chocolate.

because unprocessed cocoa beans have a very bitter taste. In milk chocolate bars, a majority of the bar is made up of sugars and fats. But many dark chocolate bars also contain added sugar and fat to improve taste. For instance, Hu, a brand that claims to make 'better for you' chocolate, makes 60g bars that contain around 190 calories and 8g of saturated fat per half.

A Hershey's bar, weighing 43g, contains 210 calories and the same amount of saturated fat - the type that can harm blood vessels.

Careful

And a Snickers bar, which weighs 52g, contains half the saturated fat and around 250 calories - so only slightly more, per gram.

Other products, such as Skin Glow's 'vitamin infused' chocolate, contains as much as sugar as two packs of Sour Patch Kid candies.

Nutritionists are careful not to completely demonize chocolate - saying it can still make up a part of a healthy balanced diet.

Dr Carolyn Williams, a nutritionist based in Alabama, told DailyMail.com: 'If a little chocolate brings you satisfaction and pleasure from food, then that can be a part of a healthy diet.'

'So, eating tons of chocolate every day

is not going to improve your health and I would never recommend it.

'But if it is something you enjoy, then eating a little can be of benefit.'

There is no official guidance on how much chocolate someone should eat every day.

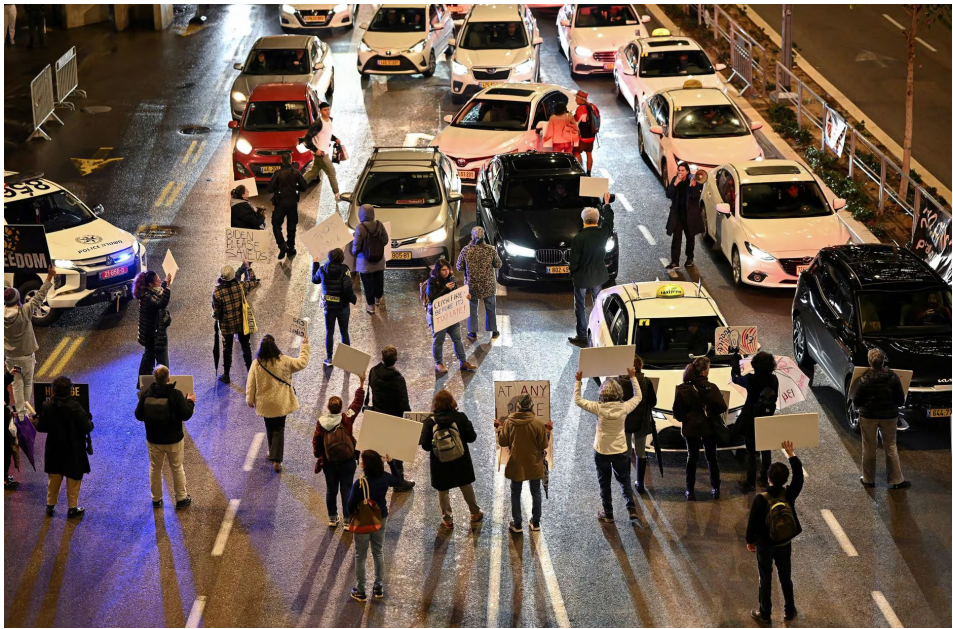
But the American Heart Association suggests consuming no more than 100 calories worth of chocolate per day.

About 268 million Americans are self-confessed chocolate lovers according to polls, which is around every two in three people in the country.

MailOnline

● In milk chocolate bars, a majority of the bar is made up of sugars and fats. But many dark chocolate bars also contain added sugar and fat to improve taste

Around the world in pictures



▲ Demonstrators hold signs while blocking traffic, as they attend a rally calling for the release of hostages kidnapped in the deadly October 7 attack on Israel by the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Tel Aviv, Israel.



▲ A drone view shows a “mat” of water lettuce covering the Vaal River and expanding quickly, impairing the water’s quality by blocking the air-water interface and sharply lowering oxygen levels at the Luciana Country Estate, Parys, South Africa.



▲ People release sky lanterns ahead of the Lantern Festival in New Taipei city, Taiwan.



▲ Britain’s Prince William reacts as he meets EE Rising Star Award nominees, actors Phoebe Dynevor, Ayo Edebiri, Sophie Wilde and winner Mia McKenna-Bruce after the BAFTA Film Awards 2024, at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, London, Britain.



▲ Republic of Korea Air Force’s Black Eagles perform during aerial display in Singapore.



▲ Displaced Palestinians shelter at a tent camp at the border with Egypt, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.



▲ A model presents a creation at the Bora Aksu catwalk show during London Fashion Week in London, Britain.



▲ Billie Eilish attends the 49th People’s Choice Awards in Santa Monica, California, U.S.



▲ Candles, flowers, a picture of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and a sheet of paper that reads: “Love is stronger than fear”, lie on the ground, at the the Trocadero near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France.

Broos on Cameroon exit:

‘They accused me of asking players for money to be in national team’

BAFANA Bafana coach Hugo Broos has given his version of what went wrong when he was let go as coach of Cameroon in December 2017, 10 months after winning that year’s Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) with the Indomitable Lions.

Broos detailed alleged shenanigans around his departure, including being accused on a TV show of extorting money from players to be in the national team.

The coach admitted there are some similarities to his present situation where Bafana have exceeded expectations, winning the Afcon bronze medal in Ivory Coast this month and continuing a 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign in a group that includes nemesis Nigeria.

Bafana have friendly games in Algeria against Andorra (March 21) and Algeria (March 26) and then meet the Super Eagles and Zimbabwe in their next two Group C World Cup qualifiers in June.

In 2017, Afcon champions Cameroon lost 4-0 against Nigeria and then drew 1-1 at home as the bottom fell out of their 2018 World Cup campaign.

‘It’s a bit similar to the situation

in Cameroon. You won it [Afcon] and then played for the World Cup,’ Broos said.

‘We won the first game but then lost twice against Nigeria, [including] 4-0 in Nigeria, and, I don’t know, but I had the feeling there was something happening. I didn’t recognise my team [in that game].

‘There were two hotels where we played [in Uyo]. The best hotel was for Nigeria and we were in a very bad hotel. The chances of qualification were very slim after that game.

‘Four days later we played Nigeria in Yaounde [in Cameroon]. Win that game and we had a chance, but we drew 1-1, and qualifying for the World Cup was over.

‘The problems were already there then because they accused me of asking for money from players to be in the national team. It was on television.

‘I was in the hotel with the staff, I forget before which game, and there was a sports programme [on TV]. There were two guests, and one of them said, ‘I know the coach, team manager and team doctor asked for money for players to be in the national team. €5,000 (R102,000 at current exchange rates) if they want to play’.

‘We were all in front of the TV saying, ‘What is this guy saying?’. The team manager and the doctor went to court. They stopped the programme and the guy got a fine. That’s Cameroon.

‘From then on I could deny it but I could see they didn’t believe me. So it went bad. And my contract ended and was not renewed.’

Broos added, chuckling: ‘Let’s hope that it is not the same scenario [here]. But I don’t think something like that can happen in South Africa.

‘But also, when you get a good result in Afcon, people expect more than they did two months before.

‘So the games against Nigeria and Zimbabwe are very important.’

Broos won the 2017 Nations Cup with a young Cameroon after many of the team’s established stars turned their backs on the national team, or were excluded over commitment issues.

Nigeria’s shock opening draws against Lesotho and Zimbabwe in November have given Bafana a chance in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers, though Broos’ team were also unable to capitalise fully on that opportunity as they beat



▲ Bafana Bafana coach Hugo Broos

Benin at home (2-1) but then lost away to Rwanda (2-0).

The winners of nine six-team groups in Africa reach the 48-team 2026 World Cup automatically.

The four best runners-up go into a mini tournament to decide one side to contest an intercontinental playoff.

(The Citizen)

‘Money has complicated McGregor’s UFC comeback’

UFC chief Dana White has claimed that money has ‘complicated’ Conor McGregor’s long-awaited return to the organisation.

The 35-year-old’s last bout ended in disaster as he broke his leg in the first round of his trilogy showdown with Dustin Poirier in the summer of 2021.

Despite suggestions that he’d return to the octagon in 2023 to face lightweight contender Michael Chandler, McGregor is yet to make a comeback.

White previously teased that the return of ‘Notorious’ is being earmarked for autumn this year however, after his latest comments, that may not be the case.

Speaking during Saturday’s UFC 298 post-fight press conference, White said: ‘First problem was that he broke that shin bone.

‘He was recovering from that. That was one of the reasons. The other problem is he’s f***ing rich.’

White then went on to hint that McGregor’s role in the upcoming film ‘Road House’ where he’ll have obligations to promote the film in the build-up to it’s release.

He continued: ‘I don’t know. Conor McGregor’s got a lot of money. Any time we get Conor, we’ll be happy. You know, we’ll be thrilled when he comes and fights.



▲ UFC chief Dana White has claimed that money has ‘complicated’ Conor McGregor’s long-awaited return to the organisation.

‘Money complicates a lot of things. He just filmed a movie. He’s got to do the press for the movie, and he’s got obligations with that. He does want to fight this year, but we’ll see what happens’.

The UFC was also involved in the movie’s production as Gyllenhaal’s character appears to be an ex UFC fighter. The film shot fight and weigh-in scenes through UFC 285 in March with McGregor heavily involved in the marketing efforts.

The movie was shot in the middle of McGregor’s hiatus after breaking his leg against Dustin Poirier in July 2021. The former two-division champion is yet to see the Octagon since.

In a video posted on New Year’s Eve, McGregor announced that he will be fighting Michael Chandler at 185 lbs in Las Vegas however White shut that down.

The UFC chief continued: ‘Conor McGregor has probably been one of the best business partners we’ve ever had.

‘Getting Conor to show up to sh*t on time is a problem. But Conor, as far as the business goes, everybody talks about how Conor used to be on the dole and all this stuff.

‘For a guy that was on the dole, Conor McGregor is a very good business man, and Conor McGregor has always been a great partner to us.

(Daily Mail)

Man City not feeling any extra pressure – Guardiola

MANCHESTER City head into Tuesday’s Premier League clash against Brentford four points adrift of leaders Liverpool, but manager Pep Guardiola said on Monday that his side do not feel any extra pressure as the title race intensifies.

City, unbeaten in their last nine league matches, are third in the standings with 53 points, four behind leaders Liverpool and two adrift of Arsenal, but with a game in hand.

After missing the chance to go top of the table following their

1-1 home draw against Chelsea on Saturday, City can now climb to second with victory over 14th-placed Brentford, who handed them their last home defeat in November 2022.

When asked if treble winners City are under pressure, the Spaniard told reporters: ‘No. We have the same pressure each game.

‘In general, we were more than decent against Chelsea but I know our standards — it is not easy to sustain those for a long, long time, but we have done it.

(Reuters)



▲ Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola.

Itu Khune could take coaching role at Chiefs

A source close to Kaizer Chiefs goalkeeper Itumeleng Khune has revealed that the shot-stopper is ready to take another role at the club should there not be a contract extension for him. The Chiefs 'keeper is in the last few months of his contract with the club, and word is the team is not planning on renewing his stay.

Khune, who is 37-years-old, is Amakhosi's longest-serving member of the current squad.

The former Bafana Bafana goalkeeper was suspended by Chiefs late last year after he allegedly reported to training under the influence of alcohol.

Khune is said to not be considering joining another club and he just wants to continue to be part of the Amakhosi family, but things might change.

Gold and black blood

"With the way things are looking at the moment, it doesn't seem like he will be given a new contract, that is why he is thinking about taking a new role at the club, like to get into coaching in the development teams. That guy has been at the club for a very long time and his blood is gold and black, that's why it will be difficult for him to play for another team," said a source.

"He has previously stated that he wants to play for many years



▲ Kaizer Chiefs goalkeeper Itumeleng Khune.

and probably go until he is in his 40s, but it doesn't seem like it will happen, especially at Chiefs. I feel bad for him because deep inside, he wants that new contract.

"But he seems like has has accept-

ed the situation and wants to focus on the way forward for him and his future. Another thing is that some clubs are trying to sign him, and they are closely monitoring his situation at the club." (The Citizen)

Andile Jali's case against Swallows only 'postponed'

ANDILE Jali's agent Mike Makaab has shot down reports that his client has had his case against Moroka Swallows struck off the roll by the Premier Soccer League's

The former Bafana Bafana midfielder anchor approached the DRC in an effort to try to force the club to settle monies owed to him and to return to work for the remainder of the 2023-24 season. Reports have emerged that Jali's case to claim for monies owed as well as to be reinstated has been dismissed with costs by the DRC.

But Makaab refuted the reports, saying that information is totally wrong.

"We applied for the matter to be urgent but were denied on the grounds that it was not urgent. No costs are to be paid for that sitting because there has not been a ruling or decision. "What we have since done is to apply for a new date, where we hope things will be in our

favour," he said.

Makaab made it clear the 33-year-old former AmaTuks, Orlando Pirates, Mamelodi Sundowns and K.V Oostende midfielder wants to be rein-



▲ Andile Jali.

stated and continue with his football.

The Matatiele-born player was among a host of players who embarked on what Swallows described as an "illegal strike" in December, as they demanded early payment before Christmas and boycotted a fixture when there was a delay.

This forced the cancellation of their matches against Mamelodi Sundowns and Golden Arrows, which led to a fine and docking of six points for the outfit. (Sunday World)

Rassie Erasmus calls up 43 players for first Bok camp of 2024

SPRINGBOK coach Rassie Erasmus has called up 43 players to attend a national alignment camp in Cape Town in the first week of March ahead of the 2024 international season.

Nineteen of the 43 players were part of the 2023 Rugby World Cup winning team, while 39 of the group play their rugby in South Africa. The other four men play their rugby in Japan, meaning no players involved in rugby in Europe will be part of the camp.

The group will gather in Cape Town for two days from Tuesday 5 March, where Erasmus will detail the team's plans for the season.

First time call ups

Among the new players are Sanele Nohamba, Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, Suleiman Hartzenberg, Jan-Hendrik Wessels, Quan Horn, Neethling Fouche and Marnus van der Merwe. Also, Ruan Venter, Celimpilo Gumede, Jordan Hendrikse, Henco van Wyk and Morne van den Berg have been invited to the camp.

The new-look coaching, which now also includes Tony Brown and Jerry Flannery, will be together for the first time at the camp.

"The focus at this camp will be to get everyone on the same page for the 2024 season and we believe this will lay a good foundation for us looking forward," said Erasmus.

"Jerry (Flannery) and Tony (Brown) are going to play vital roles in this coaching team, and we are excited to see them along with our other coaching staff put proper steps into action as we prepare for the challenging season ahead."



▲ Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus has called up 43 players to attend a national alignment camp in Cape Town in the first week of March ahead of the 2024 international season.

Experience and youth

This camp will be the first of three alignment camps before the Boks put the building blocks in place on the field for the international season, which, first-up, includes two Tests against Ireland and a first internation-

al against Portugal in July.

Regarding the players invited to the camp, Erasmus said: "This bunch of players includes several individuals who have been part of our structures in the last six years, and their experience and familiarity with the

way we do things at the Springboks will be invaluable in guiding the younger players, while others have been exposed to it before by representing the SA 'A' team that faced Munster and the Bristol Bears in November 2022.

"There are also a few new players in the mix, who have proven their worth at provincial level and we are excited to see them receive this opportunity."

(The Citezen)

Squad

Forwards:

Eben Etzebeth, Neethling Fouche, Johan Grobbelaar, Celimpilo Gumede, Cameron Hanekom, Andre-Hugo Venter, Vincent Koch, Elrigh Louw, Wiloo Louw, Frans Malherbe, Bong'i Mbonambi, Malcolm Marx, Ntuthuko Mohunu, Salmaan Moerat, Ox Nohe, Ruan Nortje, Evan Roos, Kwagga Smith, Gerhard Steenekamp, Marnus van der Merwe, Ruben van Heerden, Maroo van Staden, Ruan Venter, Jan-Hendrik Wessels

Backs:

Lukhanyo Am, Kurt-Lee Arendse, Faf de Klerk, Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, Suleiman Hartzenberg, Jaden Hendrikse, Jordan Hendrikse, Quan Horn, Herschel Jantjies, Jesse Kriel, Willie le Roux, Manie Libbok, Makazole Mapimpi, Canan Moodie, Sanele Nohamba, Morne van den Berg, Henco van Wyk, Grant Williams, Damian Willemse.

MTN LEAGUE REVIEW ... WEEK 17

Buffaloes put their noses in front

By Lwazi Dlamini

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WEEK by week, the MTN league continues to be a maze of twists and turns worse than the Manzini Golf course interchange circle commonly referred to as 'spaghetti'.

One week it's Green Mamba on the summit of the log; the next is Royal Leopard and now we have Young Buffaloes being the latest team to watch the rest of the teams from the privileged pole position.

On a week when the league recorded many draws, it was the army side's fortuitous 3-2 win over winless Moneni Pirates which helped Mandla 'Stofu' Dlamini's charges to put their noses in front.

While the battle for honours is slowly snowballing into a four-horse race, the relegation tussle is equally intriguing.

While three security forces are in the league title chase while three Manzini sides are in the relegation battle in the enthralling 2023/2024 season.

Sports Editor, Lwazi Dlamini reviews WEEK 17 of the exciting MTN league as he best knows how.

1. Buffaloes' never-say-die spirit could be the decisive factor.

The army side might be on the summit of the log due to a +10 goals advantage on joint leaders, Royal Leopard on 32 points but the manner they grinded the 3-2 win over Moneni Pirates is a character that could define their season. Mandla 'Stofu' Dlamini's charges have a never-say-die spirit which came to the fore as they snatched a late winner through substitute Lizwe Zwane at Mavuso Sports Centre. Twice they went ahead, Pirates would drag themselves back. Then in the dying minutes of the match, they scored the decisive goal which saw them climb to the top of the pile for the first time this season and with nine games remaining. To win the league, you need character.

2. Highlanders put the brakes on the Leopard title hunt but lost further ground.

While Mbabane Highlanders fans celebrated wildly at the equalizer by Philani Mkhontfo, a contender for the goal of the season, had there been any, the reality is that the 'Black Bull' lost further ground on the league title hopes. Five points behind joint leaders, Buffaloes and Leopard, Highlanders are slowly lagging in the quest to end the 23-year wait for the league crown. Yes, they dented Leopard's title chances, but they remain just title pretenders in the bigger scheme of things.

3. 'Saviola' Gamedze is in Nando's Peri Peri hot form.

With an alleged rape case charge hanging around his neck like an albatross, the former Sihlangu Semnikati has knuckled down to work and boy, he is scoring goals for fun. He is in Nandos Peri Peri hot form as he scored in his fourth game in a row, netting the opener against Moneni Pirates in the 5th minute at Mavuso Sports Centre. As the army side chases a league and Cup double, the maverick striker could be the difference after regaining his sizzling form.

- Three security forces are in a title chase while three Manzini sides are in a relegation battle.
- Even with a +10 goal difference margin, the army side toppled Royal Leopard at the summit to create a four-horse race with nine games remaining.



▲ Young Buffaloes are top of the league after their 3-2 win over Moneni Pirates on Saturday at Mavuso Sports Centre.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders dented Leopard's title chances, but they remain just title pretenders in the bigger scheme of things.

4. Nsingizini recorded ten draws in 17 games.

If Nsingizini Hotspurs were to turn five of the ten draws into wins, they would be run-away leaders in the MTN log standings. The Shiselweni-based outfit recorded their tenth draw of the season in the 1-all draw with Mbabane Swallows on Sunday at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium. 'Insingi ya-Zulu' has lost only two games, won five and drawn a massive ten games. They are seven points behind log leaders, Young Buffaloes and mathematically still very much in it with nine games remaining but they need to turn those draws into wins pronto.

5. The Nsingizini Hotspurs/Swallows brawl is a bad picture for the league.

The scene could have been taken from those Wild, Wild, West movies of ancient times. Nsingizini Hotspurs and Mbabane Swallows players and officials brawl at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium was not a good advert for Eswatini football and the Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) must take drastic punitive measures against all those involved. Just imagine if this fracas was shown live on Super-sport TV as our football leaders wanted to. We hope this is the last despicable scene we will witness this season. Unmitigated nonsense!



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs and Mbabane Swallows players and officials brawl at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium was not a good advert for Eswatini football and the Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) must take drastic punitive measures against all those involved.



▲ Sandile 'Saviola' Gamedze



▲ Mbabane Swallows playing against Nsingizini Hotspurs on Sunday at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium. The game ended with a 1-all draw.

Bronze for Bongliwe, ‘Swazi Bolt’ in SA

Stories By Ntokoza Magongo
ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

SPRINTER Bongliwe Mahlalela set a new national record in the 150m when she clocked 17:06 seconds to finish second.

This was during the Simbine Curro Classic Shoot-Out in Pretoria, South Africa, on Saturday where Sibusiso ‘Swazi Bolt’ Matsenjwa also finished second, clocking 15:33 seconds. They both won the bronze medals for their achievement.

The duo is part of the local athletes that will represent the country in the African Games billed for Ghana next month.

Happy

Mahlalela said she was happy with her performance and the preparations for the African Games going well. She added that even last week she also performed well during the preparation competitions.

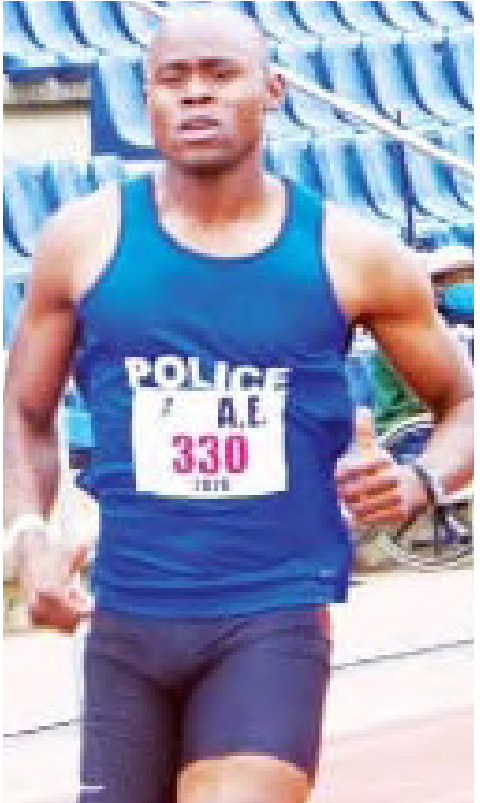
“High Performance Centre-based duo, Sibusiso Matsenjwa and Bongliwe Mahlalela managed podium finishes in their respective races in South Africa over the weekend. Both athletes set new national records. We are certain this is motivation enough as they

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| BONGIWE’S WOMEN 150M RESULTS: | |
| 1. Jinhqi Viwe NWU | 16:93 seconds |
| 2. Bongliwe Mahlalela Eswatini | 17:06 seconds |
| 3. Nekhubui Shirley UJ | 17:28 seconds |
| 4. Coetzee Miranda ARB | 17:41 seconds |
| 5. Banele Shabangu TUT | 17:49 seconds |
| 6. Bieldt Taylon TUT | 17:50 seconds |
| 7. Sekese Karabo Masai | 18:01 seconds |
| 8. Mawela Mikateko WIB | 18:79 seconds |

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| ‘SWAZI BOLT’S 150M RESULTS: | |
| 1. Akani Simbine BCK | 15:04 seconds |
| 2. Sibusiso ‘Swazi Bolt’ Matsenjwa Eswatini | 15:33 seconds |
| 3. Nicholas Ferns Tuks | 15:37 seconds |
| 4. Lehlogonolo Maseko WIB | 15:55 seconds |
| 5. Eokhrt Potgieter Tuks | 15:57 seconds |
| 6. Matthew Van Rooijen FFA | 15:62 seconds |
| 7. Tjaart Van Der Walt Madiba | 15:63 seconds |
| 8. Ruan Oosthuizen Tuks | 16:09 seconds |

head for the All Africa Games to be held in Accra, Ghana,” said the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association.

Matsenjwa was up against top South Africa’s athlete Akani Simbine who won the 150m race 150m in 15.04 with Matsenjwa coming second on 15:33 seconds.



▲ Sprinters Bongliwe Mahlalela and Sibusiso ‘Swazi Bolt’ Matsenjwa both bagged bronze in their 150m races. Mahlalela also set a new national record for the distance.

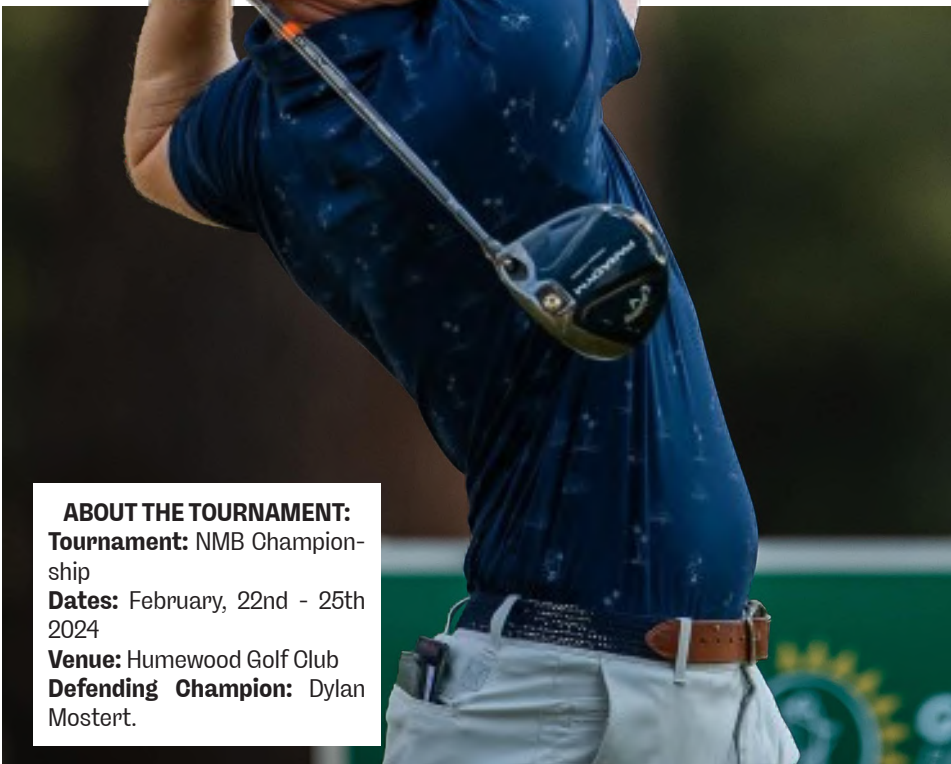
Pennington to tee off at 7:40 am in NMB Championships Qualifier

PROFESSIONAL golfer, James Pennington will tee off at 7:40 am in the NMB Championships Qualifiers. He will tee off alongside the duo of Clancy Waugh and LB Boshoff to earn a spot in the main tournament to be played from February 22 to 24.

Qualifiers

The qualifiers will be played at the PE Golf Club. There are about 70 professional golfers that have entered for the qualifiers while only 10 will make it to the tournament sponsored to the tune

of E6.6 million. The qualifiers will be played in a one-round format at the PE Golf Club. Missing out in the qualifiers will be the duo of Brandon-Jude Rennei and Mandla Dlamini Jr. The duo also missed out on the Dimension Data Pro-Am qualifiers. According to sunshinetour.com, the Humewood Golf course has been designed with wide and undulating fairways, fast greens and thick coastal bush. A round is a must for any golfer visiting the ‘Friendly City’ of Gqeberha. Humewood is still one of only a few genuine seaside links courses found outside of Britain. It is situated on the dunes on the shores of Algoa Bay, Gqeberha.



ABOUT THE TOURNAMENT:
Tournament: NMB Championship
Dates: February, 22nd - 25th 2024
Venue: Humewood Golf Club
Defending Champion: Dylan Mostert.

▲ Eswatini professional golfer James Pennington.

‘Birds’ Kwakhe Thwala apologetic for chaos against Nsingizini

MBABANE Swallows left back Kwakhe Thwala has taken accountability for his actions and apologised for the chaotic scenes witnessed during the game against Nsingizini Hotspurs on Sunday at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium.

Thwala was at the centre of the controversy after he squared up with Nsingizini Hotspurs defender Meshack Lushaba leading to players, officials and supporters engaging in an open brawl.

They pushed and quarrelled over each other something that forced the match to stop for over 15 minutes. Thwala was shown a red card by the referee Thulani Sibandze.

The MTN Premier League game ended with a 1-all draw.

“I would like to sincerely apologize for my actions that contributed to the unfortunate altercation between the team officials during the last game against Nsingizini Hotspurs at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium on Sunday.

My behaviour was unacceptable and did not reflect the respect and sportsmanship that I strive to uphold as a player. To my teammates, I apologize for letting you down and creating a distraction from our focus on the game. I understand that my actions have consequences for the entire team, and I take full responsibility for them,” he wrote on his official FaceBook page.

The former Young Buffaloes played also sent his apologies to Nsingizini Hotspurs, Meshack Lushaba.

“To the Mbabane Swallows supporters, I am deeply sorry for the negative impact my actions have had on your experience and enjoyment of the game. I understand that you look up to us as role models, and I regret that I have let you down.

To the team stakeholders, league



▲ Mbabane Swallows’ Kwakhe Thwala was at the centre of the controversy after he squared up with Nsingizini Hotspurs defender Meshack Lushaba leading to players, officials and supporters engaging in an open brawl.

sponsors and the wider soccer fraternity, I apologize for the negative attention that this incident has brought to our team and the sport. I am committed to learning from this experience and ensuring that similar incidents do not occur in the future.

I will strive to regain your trust and respect through my actions and performances on and off the field. Once again, I sincerely apologize for my behaviour and the consequences it has had on all those involved,” he concluded.

Meanwhile, Lushaba also apologised and declared that it was all over now.

Tricky draw for Sihlangu in AFCON 2025 qualifiers

... Sihlangu Semnikati is in the eight lowest ranked teams and placed in Pot 2, likely to face either Somalia, Djibouti, Sao Tome or Chad in Morocco 2025 AFCON preliminary round qualifiers set to be staged between March 18-26, 2024.

By Lwazi Dlamini
lwazid@rubiconmedia.group

THE national team, Sihlangu Semnikati's downward spiral in the FIFA World rankings has come back to haunt Dominic Kunene's charges as they will now face a tricky clash in the AFCON 2025 qualifiers preliminary round.

Eswatini, ranked 149 in the latest rankings, has been placed under the eight lowest-ranked teams together with Mauritius, South Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Sao Tome, Chad and Liberia. The nation's pride is likely to face either Somalia, Djibouti, Sao Tome or Chad in the bid to qualify for the group stages in the quest to proceed to the main tournament to be hosted by Morocco in January 2025.

According to the CAF website, Sihlangu has been placed in Pot 2 which has Liberia, South Sudan and Mauritius. Pot 1 is made up of Somalia, Djibouti, Sao Tome and Chad which is where Sihlangu's preliminary round opponents will come from.

The AFCON 2025 qualifiers preliminary round matches will be during the FIFA week from March 18-26.

The eight lowest-ranked teams in the FIFA ranking will play the preliminary round and the remaining 44 teams will be exempted and will play directly in the group stage.

The draw procedure states that the first



▲ Sihlangu Semnikati.

ball drawn from Pot 1 will play against the first ball drawn from Pot 2.

"The teams of Pot 1 will play the 1st leg at home. The same process will be repeated for the remaining teams in pot 1 & 2," reads the draw procedure on the CAF website.

The draw will be conducted today and it's a knockout system home and away for the

preliminary round stage.

Amongst the countries Sihlangu is likely to face is Djibouti, who booted the nation's pride in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers on away goal rule while Dominic Kunene's charges managed to beat Somalia in the AFCON 2023 preliminary round qualifiers to qualify for the group stages.

'Birds', Leopard' clash in MTN Premier League week 18

By Ntokozo Magongo
ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

MBABANE Swallows will face Royal Leopard in the MTN Premier League Under week 18 to be played this weekend.

This is one of the biggest matches as both teams are chasing the title. Another mouth-watering clash will see other title chasers Young Buffaloes playing Nsingizini Hotspurs who are from a 1-all draw against Mbabane Swallows.

Royal Leopard failed to maintain the top-table position after playing a 1-all draw against Mbabane Highlanders on Saturday while Mbabane Swallows also settled for a draw against Nsingizini Hotspurs. The Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) is yet to release the fixtures with venues and kick-off times. The MTN Premier League will continue this weekend over the Ingwenyama Cup semi-finals. Young Buffaloes are at the summit of the table with 32 points after 17 matches while Leopard is second with the same number of points but second on goal difference inferior. Defending champions Green Mamba are now third with 31 points and fourth is Mbabane Swallows on 30 points. Mbabane Highlanders who are fifth will play Illovo while bottom placed Moneni Pirates will be hoping to record their first victory when they face treasure-hunting Green Mamba.

THE MTN PREMIER LEAGUE WEEK 18 FIXTURES:

| | | |
|-----------------|----|---------------------|
| M. Swallows | vs | R. Leopard |
| Y. Buffaloes | vs | Nsingizini Hotspurs |
| M. Highlanders | vs | Illovo |
| Rangers | vs | D. Sundowns |
| M. Sea Birds | vs | Madlenya |
| Ezulwini United | vs | M. Wanderers |
| Green Mamba | vs | Moneni Pirates |

Nsingizini, 'Birds' in hot soup after brawl

By Ntokozo Magongo
ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

THE brawl that ensued between Nsingizini Hotspurs and Mbabane Swallows on Sunday at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium will not go unpunished.

The two teams will face charges that may carry a fine of over E100 000 if they are charged and found guilty by the Disciplinary Committee. The brawl ensued on Sunday during the week 17 of the MTN Premier League. The chaos started when Mbabane Swallows left back Kwakhe Thwala and Meshack Lushaba for Nsingizini Hotspurs, head-butted each other, and hell broke loose. Officials, supporters, and players from both teams were engaged in a brawl that led to Police Officers intervening to calm down the situation.

The two teams may be charged based on article 38 under misconduct. Some of the charges may include 38.3.1: By the home Member Club if it fails to provide adequate security at its

Home Venue or at any ground at which a home match is played. In this regard, it will be presumed that a Member Club failed to provide adequate security where



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs and Mbabane Swallows players were involved in a skirmish that turned into a full on brawl for both sides during their match on Sunday.

the spectators at this venue, irrespective of their affiliation, are responsible for improper conduct.

38.3.3. Improper conduct includes but is not limited to invading or attempting to invade the demarcated area, throwing or attempting to throw projectiles or bottles, damage or attempted damage to property, letting off or attempting to let off incendiary devices, displaying insulting or

political slogans, uttering insulting words or sounds, smoking or contravening any statute, regulation or by law;

38.3.5. By a Member Club or its Member Club Officials or Players in the event of their insulting or assaulting Players, physically or verbally abusing other Member Club Officials, Match Officials, or any other person at a match.

38.3.6. By a Member Club, or its Member Club Official, or Players, should any of them commit or fail to take reasonable steps to prevent -

The following sanctions may be imposed warning, reprimand a monetary fine on any terms decided on by the Disciplinary Committee with a maximum of E100 000 (one hundred thousand Emalangeni) and minimum of E10 000 (Ten thousand Emalangeni).



**Man City not
feeling any
extra pressure**

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**Birds,
Nsingizini in
hot soup**

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Sport



**Tricky draw
for Sihlangu
in AFCON 2025
qualifiers**

... Sihlangu Semnikati is in the eight lowest ranked teams and placed in Pot 2, likely to face either Somalia, Djibouti, Sao Tome or Chad in Morocco 2025 AFCON preliminary round qualifiers set to be staged between March 18-26, 2024. *Page 23*