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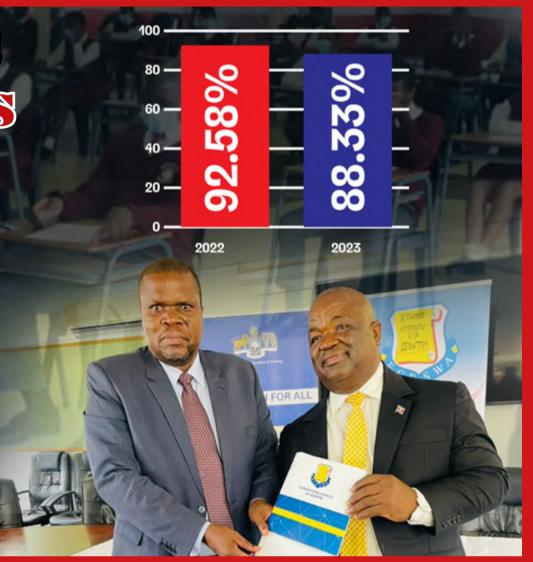




By Ncaba Ntshakala

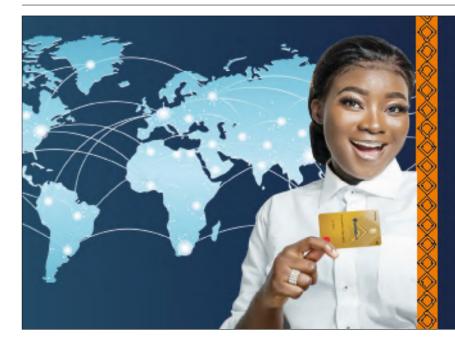
THE 2023 Form 5 pass rate has declined by 4.25 per cent from 92.58 per cent in 2022 to 88.33 per cent, the Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo announced on Tuesday. Speaking at the ministry's offices in Mbabane on Tuesday, the minister further stated that the national pass rate has generally declined for EGCSE, EPCSE, and IGCSE examinations. Nxumalo attributed the flop to the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and political unrest.

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St Mark's tops them all in Form 5



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Focus on Form 5 Results

Form 5 pass rate tumbles by 4.25% compared to 2022

By Noaba Ntshakala

THE 2023 Form 5 pass rate has declined by 4.25 per cent from 92.58 per cent in 2022 to 88.33 per cent, the Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo announced on Tuesday.

Speaking at the ministry's offices in Mbabane on Tuesday, the minister further stated that the national pass rate has generally declined for EGCSE, EPCSE, and IGCSE examinations.

Nxumalo attributed the flop to the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and political unrest.

The minister also expressed that schools had predicted lower performance this year due to the learning disruptions faced by the learners.

The ministry acknowledged the challenges and the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) took steps to mitigate the impact on students. Notably, a reset exam was offered for seven leaked papers in November 2023.

However, the minister said that the decline

in performance extended beyond the reset subjects, affecting even unaffected papers and the internationally administered IGCSE exams. This unexpected trend suggests deeper issues beyond the immediate disruptions.

Despite the overall decline, the minister stated that ECESWA's decision to hold reset exams provided some students with the opportunity to improve their grades. He also highlighted instances where pupils achieved good results in the reset session.

On another note, Nxumalo applauded ECESWA for presenting the results accurately, allowing for data-driven analysis of the decline and potential interventions.

Nxumalo highlighted the rigorous grading process, conducted with guidance from Cambridge University Press and Assessment and observed by international observers. This adherence to international standards ensures the credibility of the results and year-on-year consistency.

The minister offered a crucial perspective by outlining the unique challenges faced by the 2023 cohort, pointing out that these pupils were in Form 2 during the initial Covid-19 outbreak in 2020, which led to school closures and limited learning opportunities. Additionally, they experienced



▲ECESWA Registrar Mandlenkosi Dlamini and Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo shaking hands after the results announcements.

disruptions due to political unrest in 2021, further impacting their education. This context sheds light on the potential factors contributing to the decline in performance.

The minister also explained that even in

Form 4, the 2023 cohort had a compressed academic calendar due to a late start. This resulted in less instructional time than ideal, potentially hindering their preparation for the examinations.

Manzini tops in Form 5 results

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo

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THE Manzini has outshined the other three regions in the 2023 EGCSE, EPCSE, and IGCSE Form Five results.

This was announced by the Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo during a press conference held at the ministry's offices on Tuesday.

According to Nxumalo, Manzini achieved a 29.12 per cent credit pass rate, followed by Hhohho with 24.66 per cent credit pass rate, Shiselweni attained a credit pass rate of 24.40 per cent, and Lubombo realised a credit pass rate of 21.82 per cent.

Regarding pass rate, the minister said Manzini attained a pass rate of 29.81 per cent followed by Hhohho with a pass rate of 25.64 per cent, Shiselweni achieved a pass rate of 23.53 per cent, and Lubombo got a pass rate of 22.70 per cent.

Nxumalo went on to say that the 2023 candidature increased significantly compared to the 2022 cohort, and much of this growth was due to 'out of school' candidates reentering the system to continue education and taking the examinations.

He said it was observed that many of these candidates had not been in formal schooling for at least two years, because of the Covid-19 pandemic which led to the changes



▲ (From left to right) ECESWA Registrar Mandlenkosi Dlamini, Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo, Ministry's US Naniki Mnisi and Acting Director of Education Lungelo Nhlengetfwa.

n the calendar.

The minister also stated that the government is proud that Eswatini youth continue to take education seriously and are taking opportunities to better themselves even after leaving formal schooling.

"However, the missed education and limited opportunities for these candidates to prepare for examinations have had a downward effect on the overall outcomes this year compared to the previous years," he said.

The minister further congratulated the Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) for conducting and managing the 2023 examination so professionally despite the challenges that came with ordering a resit examination.

"The ministry appreciates the hard work

done by head teachers, teachers, learners, and parents during the 2023 academic year. Teachers worked tirelessly to cover the syllabus," he said.

Nxumalo highlighted that the ministry is grateful to teachers, head teachers, and parents for their joint effort in preparing learners for the 2023 external examination. "I would also like to express the Ministry's appreciation to all markers and headteachers who availed marking space. Without their contribution, ECESWA would not have

He further wished all learners well in their future endeavours and encouraged the current learners to work hard this year to achieve good results.

achieved its mandate," he said.

"Moving forward, candidates, centres, teachers, and parents must note that

ECESWA is committed to maintaining assessment standards in line with other assessment organisations/examination boards across the world," he said.

Minister appreciates stakeholders' efforts, emphasizes standards

Concluding his press conference, the Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo expressed gratitude to various stakeholders who contributed to the 2023 academic year, despite the challenges.

The minister acknowledged the dedication of head teachers, teachers, learners, and parents throughout the year. He specifically commended teachers for their tireless efforts in covering the curriculum and preparing students for the examinations. He also extended his appreciation to parents for their support in their children's education.

Nxumalo recognized the crucial role of markers and head teachers who provided spaces for marking the examinations. He emphasized that their contribution was essential for ECESWA to fulfil its mandate.

The minister concluded by wishing all learners well in their future endeavours and encouraging current students to work hard for success. He emphasized ECESWA's commitment to upholding assessment standards that align with international organizations and examination boards. "Maintaining these standards is crucial for ensuring the global recognition and credibility of EGCSE and EPCSE qualifications, benefitting Eswatini youth in seeking employment and higher education opportunities," expressed the minister.

Focus on Form 5 Results

By Bahle Gama

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ST Mark's High School is the 2023/24 top-performing school in the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), and the Eswatini **Prevocational Certificate of Secondary** Education (EPCSE) in the country.

The school produced five best pupils, of which three obtained six A*, and the other two obtained five or more As. These are Mandisa Khetselo Khumalo, Junior Felihle Magagula, Temavulane Minehle Mnisi, Bayanda Mukelo Mhlambi, and Alswel Joy Chara Darteh. St Mark's was followed by Evelyn Baring High School with two pupils who attained two six A* and another two who attained five or more As, then Manzini Nazarene High School with two pupils who obtained six A* and one with five or more As.

KaBoyce High School had two pupils who obtained six A* and one five or more, followed by St Theresa's High School, St Michael's High School, and Ngwane Park High School with pupils who each attained six A*. Siteki Nazarene High School, Swazi National High School, and Charles Wesley High School each had a pupil who obtained five or more A* only. St Mark's has always been rated amongst the top schools in Mbabane and the country as a whole along with schools like KaBoyce, Evelyn Baring, and Manzini Nazarene who continue to fight for the top spot each year.

St Mark's tops them all in Form 5



St Marks pupils in this undated picture.

School	No of pupils who obtained 6 A*	No of pupils who obtained 5 As or more
St Mark's High School	3	2
Evelyn Baring	2	2
Manzini Nazarene High School	2	1
KaBoyce High School	2	0
St Theresa's High School	1	1
St Michael's High School	1	-
St Francis	1	1
Ngwane Park High School	1	0
Siteki Nazarene High School	0	1
Swazi National High School	0	1
Charles Wesley High School	0	1
Total	13	9



▲ Mandisa Nkosephayo Mabuza from Manzini Nazarene obtained six A* grades.

Manzini Nazarene Principal on performance:

'Our exceptional results were intentional'

Stories by Nokunceda Magagula

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MANZINI Nazarene High School Principal Phindile Makhanya says the school intended to yield the excellent results obtained.

Makhanya made this statement during an interview with Eswatini Daily News after the school's two students, Mandisa Nkosephayo Mabuza and Mkhonta Amazing Nkhomotabo, secured the first and second positions, respectively, with both students achieving six A* grades.

Makhanya explained that in 2022, the school developed a strategic plan to ensure the attainment of good results.

"It has been our goal to consistently rank among the top five schools in the country, and during a strategic meeting, we agreed among ourselves that it must be intentional for us to have a top-performing student every year," Makhanya said.

She added that they began working towards achieving good results early on. Their secret, she mentioned, is ensuring the completion of the syllabus in the first term, so that in the second and third terms, they can focus on the revision process with the students. The principal emphasized that, after the Covid-19 era, they made sure not to let students study on their own



▲ Manzini Nazarene High School Principal Phindile Makhanya.

during exams.

"As a school, we learned that allowing students to study by themselves during the exam period was one of the factors that hindered their performance. So, we ensured that even during exams, we continued to teach and guide them through the revision process,"

Makhanya mentioned that fortunately, most of the students admitted to their school have a receptive mind, making it easier for the teachers to tap into their potential.

"We also have the advantage of our Form

Staying at the hostel played a big role - top student

MANDISA Nkosephayo Mabuza, who is the number one student in Form 5 and obtained six A* grades, said that residing at her school hostel in Manzini Nazarene contributed to the results she obtained.

In an interview, Mabuza expressed her extreme excitement about her outstanding results. She shared her secret to success, stating that it is all about hard work. She mentioned that she used to study late into the night and continue until morning.

Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of being a member of a study group, saying, "Study groups were very helpful because we shared ideas, and everything became much simpler."

Mabuza advised others who aspire to perform like her to join study groups and help each other as classmates, which she believes is very beneficial.

She shared her aspirations, stating that she wants to study Actuarial Science because she wants to become an Actuarial Scientist or Data Scientist.

Amazing Mkhonta, the second-ranking

student from Nazarene, said that beginning studying early helped her a lot. "I started studying early, actually I began studying when I finished Form 4 and used my notes to prepare myself for my Form 5 journey," she said.

She mentioned that once in Form 5, she never relaxed and always worked hard, staying ahead of schedule. "I told myself that anything related to pleasure would come after my exams," she stated.

Reading

Mkhonta explained that there were times when she felt lost and didn't understand what she was reading, but she made sure not to give up. She continued to study until she grasped the concepts.

She encouraged others to begin studying early and not to give up, even if they feel drained, because, in the end, they will achieve results that will make them and their families happy.

Mkhonta expressed her wish to study abroad, where she can pursue her dream of becoming a cardiac surgeon.

5 students living in our hostel, allowing the teachers to conduct afternoon and weekend lessons," she said.

She added that her team of teachers is extremely dedicated, and she feels humbled to work with teachers who are committed to making teaching their core business.

Makhanya further mentioned that even after Covid-19, they continue to use blended teaching methods, including teaching students through their cell phones when they are studying at home. She congratulated the students who made it to the top brackets, stating that they had made the school proud.

Focus on Form 5 Results

Top student has always outshined others - St Theresa principal

Stories by Nokunceda Magagula nokuncedam@rubiconmedia.group

ST Theresa High School Principal Albert Sihlongonyane has stated that their student, Andiswa Mdluli, who obtained six A* grades, has always been an exceptional pupil.

Sihlongonyane mentioned that ever since Mdluli joined the school, she consistently emerged as the top student during the mark reading sessions when the school announced the names of those who performed well in their subjects.

"Andiswa has always been a hard worker, and I expected her to be number one. However, I believe the rewriting of the exam may have affected her performance a little bit," he said.

The principal said that the school was extremely proud of Mdluli's achievements. He shared the school's secret to producing good results, which involves a programme inviting consultants to assess the students, evaluate their potential, and find ways to support those who may be struggling.

The school also provides motivational speakers to inspire the students to

Sihlongonyane added that they address issues at the beginning of the school year to ensure that everyone performs well. "I would also like to express my gratitude to



▲ Andiswa Mdluli from St Theresa High School obtained six A* grades.

the team of teachers who did an extraordinary job," he stated.

St Theresa's top student a Whizzkid

SPEAKING to this publication, Andiswa Mdluli, who achieved six A* grades, mentioned that she previously held second position in Grade 7 and third position in Form 3.

Mdluli emphasized that she has always been a diligent student, stating that she utilized every available moment to study.

"I made the most of my time by studying diligently. Whenever I had the chance, I would open my books and read," Mdluli said.

shared her study technique, explaining that when she got home, she would make notes on everything she class that day. She would then refer to her textbooks on the specific topics and make corrections. Her goal was to store everything she had learned in her long-term memory.

Mdluli encouraged Form 5 students to devote more time to reading their books, assuring them that they would be satisfied with the results. She added that her dream is to study medicine.

Mdluli's mother, Thulisile Dlamini, expressed her overwhelming excitement about her child's results. She stated that Mdluli has always been focused primarily on her studies.

"I always knew she would pass, even though sometimes during her exams, she remembered from what she had learned in would come back feeling uncertain about her performance," Dlamini said.





▲ Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo.

New committee to assess, education improvements

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo silindzwelen@rubiconmedia.group

IN three weeks, the Ministry of Education and Training will appoint a committee, approved by Cabinet,

to assess schools and recommend education improvements.

The Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo said this team will take over from what was observed by the cabinet during visits to the different schools in the country in January.

He stated that Cabinet approved that he makes the appointments of the members of this committee which he will announce in three weeks.

Nxumalo said that this committee will look at all issues related to the education sector identified from their tours and those that will be raised by the nation to the ministry.

"I encourage the nation to participate in this exercise and report all the education issues they encounter at schools to the relevant officers," he said.

The minister said that the same committee will also look at the issues of policies within the education sector, the recent top-up issues in the different schools, and the change of the curriculum.

"This committee will be able to put all these issues into perspective and assist us in making the right decisions. Let us unite as a country and engage on all the issues that will take the ministry forward and transform the sector in the country,"

He also said that this exercise will require everyone to be consulted before the committee takes the full report to the cabinet and gets approved.

He further encouraged parents of pupils to report the schools' withholding results and those requiring top-up fees to the different REOs at the different regions of the country who would then report to the

"This committee will look at such issues and those that include funding of OVCs, standardisation of school fees as we can see that the current methods or models are not working for the ministry," he said.

Nxumalo added that some of the issues that the committee will look at and raise will be implemented as policies in the long

"I will request the committee to record these consultations and inform us who consulted looking at all the stakeholders of the sector," he said.



Form 5 exam leak costs ECESWA millions, Registrar reveals

Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

THE Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) incurred significant financial losses due to the reseat exams necessitated by the 2023 exam leak scandal, according to ECESWA Registrar Dr Mandlenkhosi Dlamini.

While addressing the press alongside Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo during the release of the Form 5 results, Dr Dlamini confirmed the financial impact of the reseat exams. He stated that the exact cost is still being determined but will reach the millions due to the logistics and resources involved in conducting additional exams for a substantial number of students.

The scandal involved the unauthorized access of seven exam papers by students before the scheduled exam dates. These papers included Mathematics (Papers 2 and 4), Physical Science (Papers 2 and 4), Siswati Paper 3, and Religious Education (Papers 1 and 2). To ensure fairness and uphold exam integrity, ECESWA ordered reseat exams for these affected subjects, incurring significant additional costs.

Ngcebo Hlophe, a teacher at Mkhuzweni High School applauded ECESWA for the reseat and expressed that it showed that the institution is committed to giving out credible results. He also said that the financial repercussions of the leak highlighted by ECESWA show the seriousness of exam malpractice and its ripple effects. Hlophe further said that he wishes that ECESWA would get to the bottom of this and charge those responsible for the leak.

Regarding this malpractice, minister Nxumalo raised his grave concern regarding the leak and detailed the steps taken by



▲ Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo 4th from left with the different education stakeholder's after the results announcements

ECESWA. "Upon receiving credible reports, ECESWA initiated a comprehensive investigation, initially focusing on a specific region but expanding nationwide due to emerging findings." stated the minister. The seriousness of the matter warranted collaboration

with law enforcement agencies, who actively participated in identifying suspects and conducting a thorough probe," he said.

While the minister refrained from disclosing the schools' names or individuals involved at this stage, he assured the public that due legal processes would follow the conclusion of the police investigation and submission of the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions. He emphasized that ECESWA has established protocols to handle such cases of malpractice.

Education recovering despite Covid -19 pandemic, unrest – Minister Owen

THE Ministry of Education and Training has acknowledged a decline in overall performance in Form 5 compared to pre-pandemic years, Minister Owen Nxumalo has highlighted positive trends and applauded the resilience of Eswatini youth.

Nxumalo was speaking on Tuesday at the ministry's offices in Mbabane following the release of the results for pupils who sat for the 2023 Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), and the Eswatini Prevocational Certificate of Secondary Education (EPCSE).

The minister drew attention to the fact that 2023 marked a significant return to normalcy for Eswatini's education system. "After years of disruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and political unrest, the school calendar resumed its regular schedule." the minister said. He went on to say that this coupled with a notable increase in candidature, particularly among out-of-school individuals seeking to re-enter the system, offered a glimmer of hope for the future.

However, Nxumalo admitted the impact of missed education and limited preparation time on this year's overall results. He expressed that many returning candidates had been out of formal schooling for at least two years, putting them at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

Despite the challenges, the minister commended the unwavering spirit of Eswatini's youth who continue to prioritize education and seek opportunities for self-improvement. "The ministry remains committed to supporting pupils and educators as they navigate the post-pandemic landscape and work towards further improvement in the years to come," he added.



▲ Minister Owen Nxumalo has highlighted positive trends and applauded the resilience of Eswatini vouth.

Tocus on Form 5 Results

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THE Eswatini Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) has advised pupils to collect their result symbols at their respective schools because there is no option to send an SMS this year. ECESWA Registrar Dr Mandlenkosi Dlamini said the Council was engaged by schools who requested that the option to receive results via SMS' be removed this year.

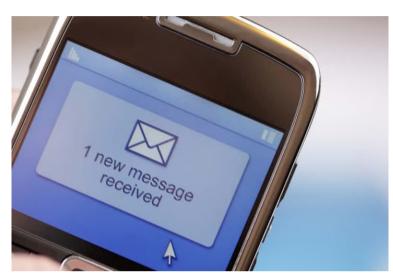
Over the years, pupils in different classes writing external exams have had the opportunity to know about their results before receiving the actual paper from their school through SMS from either or both of the service providers in the country.

However, this according to Dr Dlamini would result in some pupils not collecting their symbols at their school causing a pile-up.

He further stated that concerns raised were that some pupils would not know which subjects they performed well and which they underperformed because the SMS only sends the grade and does not include the subject.

This would also delay the pupil from fixing any subject that would have the opportunity to do so in time, if they would pick up their symbols at their school, hence the

Collect your symbols, no SMS' this year - ECESWA



▲ Removing the option to get results via SMS will ensure that pupils collect their symbols and we do not have to deal with a pile-up.

decision

"Removing the option to get results via SMS will ensure that pupils collect their symbols and we do not have to deal with a pile-up," said the Registrar.

No suspension, or transfer for educators breaking the law

Teachers or educators who will be found on the wrong side of the law will not have the chance of being suspended or transferred as has been the case over the years.

Instead, they will be taken to disciplinary and instantly fired.

This was said by the Minister of

Education and Training Owen Nxumalo during the announcement of Form 5 results at the Ministry's boardroom on Tuesday.

Nxumalo was responding to a question on where parents could

report any issues related to the schools that their children attend. This was about principals withholding results as well as teachers' conduct.

The Minister emphasized that cases that involve educators or teachers' conduct at schools will be dealt with according to the law without the option to be suspended or transferred to another school.

"This time around things will be done differently, no transfer or suspension will happen, a person will just go home," he said.

Nxumalo advised that there is a structural genogram that parents can use which includes reporting to the Regional Education Officer (REO) who is expected to be the Director of Education.

"The Director of Education is encouraged to work on these cases involving teachers and further liaise with the media and give updates on the disciplinary process to the end," Nxumalo said.

The Minister further disclosed that currently there is a teacher who is suspended and yet to go to disciplinary.

Principals warned not to hold pupils' results

The Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo has warned principals to refrain from withholding pupils' results.

Nxumalo said the Ministry noted that some principals were doing as they pleased in the schools and not adhering to the law.

"We urge principals to give results to pupils and stop causing problems," Nxumalo said.

He further stated that the Ministry also noted with dismay that despite receiving the OVC grant, some principals refused to admit pupils and still demanded top-up fees to the extent that they received reports that some had been staying at home for two years because of such.

Nxumalo warned principals to desist from such conduct and further advised that they engage parents and reach a consensus to ensure that every child is given the opportunity and their right to education is exercised.

Low enrollment on Prevoc despite equivalence, potential

Stories By Noaba Ntshakala

The Eswatini Prevocational Certificate of Secondary Education Programme (EPCSE) continues to face low enrollment despite its recent accreditation and potential to address youth unemployment.

This concern was raised by the Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo during the release of the 2023 Form 5 national examination results.

In 2023, the EPCSE program underwent its third examination under its accreditation agreement with Cambridge, officially placing it on par with the EGCSE programme. This equivalence allows EPCSE graduates to compete equally with their EGCSE counterparts for entry into tertiary institutions.

However, Nxumalo stated that the program continues to struggle with low participation. "Only 304 candidates registered for the 2023 exams, and 296 ultimately sat for them," shared the Minister.

He further stated that the overall pass rate declined from 99.81 per

cent in 2022 to 96.73 per cent in 2023, marking a drop of 3.08 per cent.

Despite these challenges, some teachers believe the EPCSE program holds significant potential in addressing the Kingdom's youth unemployment issue. The program equips students with practical skills and vocational training, potentially making them more employable in various sectors.

Only 16 schools in the country teach an EPCSE syllabus in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The Minister of Education and Training further shared that they are working towards expanding the program. Nxumalo said that the Ministry will work on a new syllabus that will eliminate modern subjects within EGCSE to incorporate the EPCSE or prevocational subjects.

"The low enrollment and decline in pass rates raise concerns about the program's effectiveness and call for action and this can help with the current unemployment issue," shared Sebenzile Simelane a teacher in one of the schools in Lubombo region.

"Further investigation into the reasons behind low participation and a focus on improving the program's appeal and effectiveness are crucial to unlock its full potential."



lacktriangle Teachers during a picket calling for the hiring of teachers.

Hiring of teachers continues - Minister

MINISTER of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo addressed the ongoing teacher recruitment process and acknowledged the specific challenges faced by rural schools during a recent press conference.

The minister assured the public

that teacher recruitment and contract renewals are still ongoing.

He highlighted that recent school visits helped identify vacant positions, informing the recruitment process.

Schools

The Minister of Education also acknowledged the particular

difficulties faced by rural schools. He mentioned that the committee he plans to appoint to assess the education system will also examine teacher recruitment issues, including the lack of proper accommodation and long commutes for teachers in rural areas.

South African President announces election date

By Karabo Ngoepe

SOUTH Africans are going to the polls at the end of May to elect a new government.

President Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday announced that the country would vote on May 29. Ramaphosa's office released a statement saying he has in accordance with section 49(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, read with section 17 of the Electoral Act of 1998, determined May 29 2024, as the date for the 2024 General National and Provincial elections.

"The President has also in line with section 17(2) of the Electoral Act 73 of 1998, consulted with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) on the election date. Furthermore, the President convened a meeting with all 9 Provincial Premiers and the IEC to discuss the state of readiness for the General elections," his spokesperson Vincent Magwenya said in the statement.

The 2024 elections coincide with South Africa's celebration of 30 years of freedom and democracy. Ramaphosa called on all



▲ South African president Cyril Ramaphosa interacts with youth during his door-to-door election campaign where he visited voting stations and homes encouraging citizens to register for the upcoming elections, in Soweto, South Africa

eligible voters to fully participate.

"Beyondthefulfilmentofourconstitutional obligation, these upcoming elections are also a celebration of our democratic journey and a determination of the future that we all desire. I call on all South Africans to exercise their democratic right to vote and for those who will be campaigning to do so peacefully, within the full observance of the law. We also urge unregistered voters to use the online registration platform to register", said Ramaphosa.

Political parties in South Africa have welcomed the announcement. The official opposition, Democratic Alliance (DA) leader John Steenhuisen said the date allows the nation to rescue itself from 30 years of ANC failure, corruption, and state capture.

"This election is a turning point for South Africa, and it comes at a time when our nation needs it the most in three decades. The DA is fully prepared for the challenge ahead, and we are all-systems-go for the May 29 date. The DA is ready to fight this election, so South Africa can win," he said.

Steenhuisen added that his party was committed to bringing an end to 30 years of ANC failure, corruption, and state capture.

"The upcoming election is an opportunity for the people of South Africa to choose a path of progress, transparency, and accountability. As the May 29 date approaches, the DA calls on all South Africans to join us in this historic moment and be a part of the effort to rescue our country," he said.

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) also welcomed the announcement. Spokesperson Mkhuleko Hlengwa said the IFP views May 29 2024 as a day of freedom for the country, to finally free itself from the clutches of an ANC government that has only delivered, poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, and widespread corruption.

"The IFP stands ready for this election! The IFP National Campaign Committee will now streamline all our plans and programmes of action to ensure the IFP's electoral support. We also encourage every South African to register to vote online once the President promulgates the Election Day officially, the voter's roll will close. Let us together, embrace this date as a pivotal moment in symbolising an opportunity for the nation to liberate itself from the grips of a failed government once and for all," he

It's important for parastatals to collaborate — YERF

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo

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YOUTH Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mandla Nkambule says government parastatals must collaborate for the growth of the country's economy.

Nkambule said this during the renewal of their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Small Enterprises Development Company (SEDCO) aimed at ensuring that YERF beneficiaries get business mentorship through SEDCO. The duration of the agreement is three years. The CEO said through this MoU they will

EswatînîBank **FX RATES** Notes/Cash 19.0689 U.S. Dollar 18.6032 23.3964 24.0804 G.B. Pound 20.0671 20.6727 **EURO** (July 2023) 7.50% Bank Rate Prime Rate (July 2023) 11% Inflation (July 2023) 4.5% Petrol E20.50/Litre

Diesel E21.80 /Litre Paraffin E16.75/Litre

be able to fulfil their mandate of supporting youth in businesses that provide employment and contribute to the economic development of the country.

He stated that this MoU signing was triggered by the observation they made in the past 15 years of existence, as a fund in terms of what have they done, where the businesses they support are, and whether they are surviving.

"One of the things we have noted are business failures which we have noted to be common in the MSME sector, which then lead to us thinking of ways to change them," he said.

The CEO stated that other issues they noted are the high loan default rate, which is constantly increasing, and the issue of ensuring that the supported businesses are creating employment.

We have also tried to look as to are the MSMEs are contributing to the country's economy. Yes, it's said they are the drivers of the economy, but are they really?" he questioned.

He added that through the partnership they would be able to ensure that they sort out these challenges they have encountered and provide entrepreneurship knowledge as they start their businesses.

"We are planning on changing the system, which will ensure that business training is mandatory before we give out funds, and this will be done by April 1, 2024," he

Nkambule further highlighted that the two entities will use their



different regional officers to work together and become a team.

"We are not competing, we will be able to work we each other and grow these businesses as a government investment which will lead to them paying taxes to the government," he said.

He added that as a team the two entities will be able to assist the youth entrepreneurs in ensuring that they get the right markets.

"A lot of the MSME businesses struggle with finding markets for their products which will in turn assist us achieve all the objectives of this MoU," he said.

He added that it was important for both YERF and SEDCO to utilize the Citizens Empowerment Bill to their advantage and ensure it benefits the MSMEs. He further encouraged the different business coaches in the two entities to get capacitated and upgrade themselves.

"Some business coaches are old and need to move with the times so that they do not limit the youth as they develop their businesses,"

SEDCO CEO Khethiwe Mhlanga said having the two entities together was encouraging for them because as they educate the youth, they will also be able to

She stated that they needed to sort out the issue of the youth's mindset change as they are always expecting things to happen quickly for them.

"This is mainly because of the digital world we now live in as there is instant gratification in other economies, we have to encourage the youth to be more innovative, make strides in their businesses and perceiver," she said.

Mhlanga said they have noted

with pity that the youth is not willing to have the business coaches, as they feel manipulated and sharing power.

"We appreciate that YERF has foreseen that there must be mentorship, and more than anything accessibility by availing them. For us as SEDCO we will work together with you to ensure businesses don't fall," she said.

She said it is important for youth to ensure that these businesses grow and upscale in the country.

"We need to make the youth understand that the country's economy can grow if the youth MSMEs are putting in the efforts. It is also comforting to know that the YERF will also be providing incubation offices at Tinkhundla level which will ensure that the youth contribute to the economy," she said.





▲Job seekers wait beside a road for casual work offered by passing motorists in Eikenhof, south of

South African labour market recovery stalls months before election

By Kopano Gumbi and Anait Miridzhanian

PRETORIA — South Africa's unemployment rate rose in the fourth quarter of last year, bucking a trend where jobs tend to be added around the holiday season as a labour market recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic ground to a halt.

Analysts said the rise in the official unemployment rate to 32.1 per cent from 31.9 per cent in the third quarter painted a dismal picture months before the country is due to hold national and provincial elections.

The rand extended losses on the data in cautious trade before Wednesday's 2024 budget. A presentation by the statistics agency showed community and social services, construction, agriculture and trade sectors contributed to the unemployment increase and that the fourth quarter followed eight consecutive quarters of job gains.

The head of labour statistics at Statistics South Africa, Desiree Manamela, said the drop in employment in the trade sector in the final quarter of 2023 was unusual.

"In previous periods we saw employment being created and mainly because of what happens in trade during the festive season,"

High levels of unemployment and weak economic growth are perennial hot-button issues at the polls, denting support for the governing African National Congress (ANC) in recent elections and boosting opposition

Analysts widely expect the ANC will lose its parliamentary majority for the first time since it came to power at the end of apartheid three decades ago.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC's leader, is expected to announce the election date this week.

In particular the ANC has struggled to win over younger voters, who continue to experience the highest levels of unemployment and many of whom have not registered to vote.

Job cuts announced this week by mining companies Anglo American Platinum and Kumba Iron Ore suggest there could be further upward pressure on the unemployment rate in 2024. (Reuters)

Rand firms ahead of budget speech

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand rose against a softer dollar on Tuesday, as traders awaited domestic inflation figures and the finance minister's budget speech due on Wednesday.

As of 1605 GMT, the rand traded at 18.9100 against the dollar , over 0.2 per cent stronger than its previous close.

The dollar index was last down around 0.3 per cent.

Economists predict Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana's budget to show some slippage from last year's mid-term budget, with weaker mining tax receipts contributing to wider budget deficits, a Reuters poll published last week showed.

Inflation numbers are expected to show a slight increase to 5.4 per cent year-on-year in January from 5.1 per cent in the prior month. The central bank has said it wants to see a clearer disinflation trend before cutting interest rates.

Data from Statistics South Africa showed on Tuesday the country's official unemployment rate rose in the fourth quarter of last year to 32.1 per cent from 31.9 per cent in the third quarter.

"Given the country's structural issues, still subdued global demand, and low commodity prices, employment in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing will likely decline further in 2024," Nedbank analysts said in a note.

On the stock market, the Top-40 and the broader all-share indexes closed around 0.9 per cent lower.

Shares in miner Kumba Iron Ore fell around 2 per cent following the announcement of its plans to cut about 490 jobs amid South Africa's persistent rail bottlenecks. (Reuters)

Oil dips as demand outlook remains uncertain

By Paul Carsten

Oil prices fell on LONDON — Tuesday, with an uncertain outlook for global demand knocking value off crude futures contracts, despite some risk premium from the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Brent futures dipped 22 cents or 0.26 per cent to \$83.34 a barrel by 1450 GMT. The six-month spread for Brent on Tuesday was also at its highest since October, in a sign of a tighter market.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for April delivery fell 26 cents, or 0.33 per cent, to \$78.20 a barrel, after earlier paring \$1. The March WTI contract gained 36 cents or 0.45 per cent to \$79.55 a barrel ahead of its expiry during the session.

There was no settlement for WTI on Monday due to a U.S. public holiday.

Crude markets were "marginally lower" in "quiet trading over the Presidents' Day holiday in the U.S. and as demand concerns offset ongoing Middle Eastern geopolitical tensions", IG market analyst Tony Sycamore

Various countries are increasing efforts to secure a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza as the threat of an Israeli assault on the city of Rafah looms. The U.N. has warned an assault "could lead to a slaughter".

Shipping has suffered as the conflict in the Middle East threatens to escalate, with energy markets particularly vulnerable. In support of Palestinians, Iran-aligned Houthis



▲ Oil rig pumpjacks, also known as thirsty birds, extract crude from the Wilmington Field oil deposits area near Long Beach, California.

have increased attacks on shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait, with at least four more vessels hit by drone and missile strikes since Friday.

But the conflict in the Middle East, one of the world's major oil-producing regions, has not been enough to counter crude investors' worries about flagging global demand.

A bearish International Energy Agency (IEA) report last week revised the 2024 oil demand growth forecast downward, to almost a million barrels a day less than producer group OPEC's outlook.

The IEA estimated global oil demand will grow by 1.22 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, while OPEC's growth forecast is 2.25 million bpd.

The two are clashing in part over the shift to renewable and cleaner energy, with the IEA, which represents industrialised predicting oil demand will peak by 2030 while OPEC expects oil use to keep rising for the next two decades. (Reuters)



▲Haul trucks are seen at Kumba Iron Ore, the world's largest iron ore mines in Khathu, Northern

Kumba Iron Ore to cut 490 jobs as rail crisis hits output, shares fall

KUMBA Iron Ore shares fell more than 5 per cent on Tuesday after it announced plans to cut about 490 jobs, following a reduction in production as it struggles to overcome South Africa's persistent rail bottlenecks.

In December, the Anglo American Plc unit said it was curbing production to match the limited capacity of state-owned rail operator Transnet, hit by shortages of locomotives and spares, as well as rampant cable theft and vandalism.

Stockpiles of iron ore stood at 7.1 million tons in December and the persistent challenge in moving the commodity to ports for exports has forced Kumba to cut output to between 35 million tons to 37 million tons from this year to 2026.

Kumba CEO Mpumi Zikalala said during a conference call that the proposed job cuts, combined with the restructuring of head office roles which started last September, would affect 10 per cent of the company's

workforce. The company employed about 7,000 full-time staff, according to its 2022 annual report.

The restructuring is "necessary" for Kumba to remain competitive, the company

Job losses across South Africa's mining sector due to weaker commodity prices and infrastructure challenges add pressure for the government ahead of elections due later this year.

South Africa's official jobless rate, measured at 31.9 per cent in the third quarter of 2023, is among the highest in the world.

On Monday, Anglo American Platinum announced plans to cut 3,700 jobs in South Africa after a sharp decline in metal prices slashed annual profit by 71 per cent.

Kumba's headline earnings per share rose 26 per cent to 70.80 rand in the year ended Dec.31, up from 56.19 rand the previous year as its high grade iron ore continues to fetch prices 15 per cent above the benchmark rate. (Reuters)

Nigerian digital bank FairMoney in talks to buy Umba in \$20M all-stock deal

FAIRMONEY, a digital bank based in Lagos and headquartered in Paris, is in discussions to acquire Umba, a creditled digital bank providing payroll and financial services to customers in Nigeria and Kenya, in a \$20 million allstock deal, sources tell TechCrunch.

The move signals FairMoney's interest in growing its customer base by expanding into more countries, specifically Kenya. But it also underscores the challenges facing fintechs in Africa amid a challenging market for startups globally: a \$20 million all-share deal would be roughly equivalent to the amount Umba raised from outside investors.

Acquisition negotiations are still in their early stages, according to the sources, who requested anonymity due to the confidential nature of the details. FairMoney and Umba did not respond to requests for comment ahead of publication.

Umba, founded by Tiernan Kennedy and Barry O'Mahony in San Francisco in 2018, was launched as a credit-led digital bank targeting emerging markets. It provides banking services such as loans, current accounts, savings accounts, fixed deposit accounts and bill payments to customers in Nigeria and

To date, the digital bank has secured around \$20 million in funding, per PitchBook data. Its investors include Costanoa Ventures, Monzo co-founder Tom Blomfield, Lachy Groom,



▲ The move signals FairMoney's interest in growing its customer base by expanding into more countries, specifically Kenya.

ACT Ventures, Lux Capital, Palm Drive Capital, Banana Capital and Streamlined Ventures.

Meanwhile, FairMoney has been backed by the likes of Tiger Global, DST, Speedinvest and others and has raised just over \$57 million, according to PitchBook. It was last valued at between \$400 million and \$500 million following a bridge round last year.

FairMoney, best known for its lending services in Nigeria, has been looking for more avenues for expansion. In 2020, FairMoney ambitiously entered India as its second market, but beyond a momentum update in 2021, it has not made any more recent disclosures about how that business is doing.

FairMoney has also been expanding its product. The startup's eponymous app originally launched as a digital lender in Nigeria six years ago. Since then, it has added other financial services, such as debit cards, transfers and payments. It says that it has over six million retail customers.

FairMoney's previous acquisitions have

included PayForce, a sub-brand of YCbacked Nigerian merchant payment service CrowdForce, which it picked up in a cashand-stock deal worth \$15-20 million.

"We see ourselves as a retail bank, but the line between merchants and retail is often blurry," FairMoney CEO Laurin Hainy told TechCrunch in an interview last year around the PayForce acquisition. "We've thought about the merchant space more and more, and we see a lot of potential synergies between what PayForce and we have built independently."

Umba also started as a retail-focused digital bank in Nigeria before diversifying its offerings to include merchant financing and business banking products in the West African country as well as Kenya. Google Play indicates over 1 million installs of its app, but the number of registered and active users is not disclosed.

FairMoney's potential acquisition of Umba may not solely hinge on user numbers or product offerings. For one, Umba launched merchant and business-facing products within the last four months, so it's improbable to have garnered significant traction and volumes in that time frame. FairMoney could likely be more interested in Umba's microfinance license, obtained in 2022 through acquiring a majority shareholding in Daraja Microfinance Bank. (**TerchCrunch**)

(Tech Crunch)

How Elon Musk's SpaceX was boosted in Indonesia by a Chinese rocket failure

JAKARTA - When a Chinese rocket malfunctioned shortly after launch in April 2020, destroying Indonesia's \$220 million Nusantara-2 satellite, it was a blow to the archipelago's efforts strengthen its communication

But it presented an opportunity for one man. Elon Musk - the owner of SpaceX, the world's most successful rocket launcher - seized on the failure to prevail over state-owned China Great Wall Industry Corp (CGWIC) as Jakarta's company of choice for putting satellites into space.

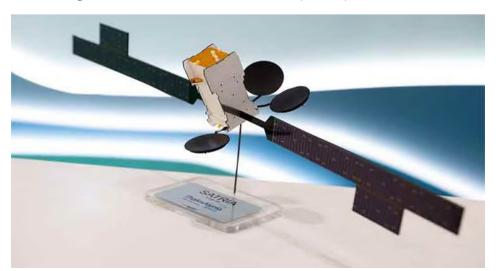
The Chinese contractor had courted Indonesia - Southeast Asia's largest economy and a key space growth market - with cheap financing, promises of broad support for its space ambitions and the geopolitical heft of

A senior government official and two

industry officials in Jakarta familiar with the matter told Reuters the malfunction marked a turning point for Indonesia to move away from Chinese space contractors in favour of companies owned by Musk.

Nusantara-2 was the second satellite launch awarded by Indonesia to CGWIC, matching the two carried out by SpaceX at that time. Since its failure, SpaceX has launched two Indonesian satellites, with a third set for Tuesday; China has handled

SpaceX edged out Beijing through a combination of launch reliability, cheaper reusable rockets, and the personal relationship Musk nurtured with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Reuters found. Following a meeting between the two men in Texas in 2022, SpaceX also won regulatory approval for its Starlink satellite internet service. (Reuters)



▲ A model of 4.5-tonne Satellite of the Republic of Indonesia, which was launched into orbit by



▲ LockBit has become one of the world's most prolific cybercrime gangs, targeting victims around the world and netting millions of dollars in extorted ransom payments.

Authorities disrupt operations of notorious LockBit ransomware gang

COALITION of international law enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.K.'s National Crime Agency, have disrupted the operations of the notorious LockBit ransomware gang. LockBit's dark web leak site - where the group publicly lists its victims and threatens to leak their stolen data unless a ransom demand is paid — was replaced with a law enforcement notice on Monday.

Since it first emerged as a ransomware operation in late 2019, LockBit has become one of the world's most prolific cybercrime gangs, targeting victims around the world and netting millions of dollars in extorted ransom payments.

Hattie Hafenrichter, a spokesperson for the U.K.'s National Crime Agency, confirmed to TechCrunch that "LockBit services have been disrupted as a result of

international law enforcement action." A message on the downed leak site confirmed that the site is "now under the control of the National Crime Agency of the U.K., working in close cooperation with the FBI and the international law enforcement task force, 'Operation Cronos'."

At the time of writing, the site now hosts a series of information exposing LockBit's capability and operations, including backend leaks and details on LockBit's alleged ringleader, known as LockBitSupp.

Operation Chronos is a task force headed by the NCA and coordinated in Europe by law enforcement agencies Europol and Eurojust.

The ransomware takedown operation also involved other international police organizations from Australia, Canada, France, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. (Reuters)



lacktriangle South Africa on Tuesday urged the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue a non-binding legal opinion that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal, arguing it would help efforts to reach a settlement.

South Africa asks World Court to find Israeli occupation illegal

THE HAGUE - South Africa on Tuesday urged the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue a non-binding legal opinion that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal, arguing it would help efforts to reach a settlement.

Representatives of South Africa opened the second day of hearings at the ICJ, also known as the World Court, in the Hague. The hearing follows a request by the U.N. General Assembly for an advisory, or non-binding, opinion on the occupation in 2022. More than 50 states will present arguments until Feb. 26.

On Monday, Palestinian representatives asked the U.N.'s highest

court to declare Israel's occupation of their territory illegal, also saying the court's advisory opinion could contribute to a two-state solution and a lasting peace.

Israel is not attending the hearings but sent a written statement, saying an advisory opinion would be harmful to achieving a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.

"A clear legal characterization of the nature of Israel's regime over the Palestinian people can only assist in remedying the ongoing delay and achieving a just settlement," Vusimuzi Madonsela, South Africa's ambassador to the Netherlands told the judges.

The latest surge of violence in Gaza, promoted by the Oct.7 attacks

in Israel by Hamas, has complicated already deeply-rooted grievances in the Middle East and damaged efforts towards finding a path to peace.

The ICJ's 15-judge panel has been asked to review Israel's "occupation, settlement and annexation ... including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures."

The judges are expected to take roughly six months to issue an opinion on the request, which also asks them to consider the legal status of the occupation and its consequences

(Reuters)

Guinea's military junta dissolves govt as transition set to end this year

Guinea's ruling National Council of the Rally for Development (CRND) has dissolved the interim government in the west African nation.

A decree was read on state television on Monday by the presidency's secretary-general, who was surrounded by other military officials and several armed and masked soldiers.

The decree provides that directors of cabinet, secretary generals and their deputies will be in charge until a new government is formed.

Amara Camara didn't not say when a new administration would be appointed.

Ibrahima Sory Bangoura, chief of staff of the armed forces, said in a communiqué dated Monday that members of the dissolved government had to return their vehicles and passports as soon as possible. Their bodyguards also had to end their service and the ministers' bank accounts were frozen, he added.

The government was in office since July 2022.

The military junta is headed by general Mamadi Doumbouya took power by force in September 2021.

Under pressure, the then colonel agreed with ECOWAS to end a transition by late 2024.

(Reuters)



▲ Guinea's junta leader Col. Mamady Doumbouya salutes during an independence day military parade in Bamako, Mali

Lion kills zookeeper at Nigeria's Obafemi Awolowo University

A zookeeper at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in Nigeria has lost his life in a fatal encounter with one of the lions under his care.

Olabode Olawuyi, who had been working at the university zoo for close to a decade, was attacked during a routine feeding session, according to the university.

Despite the efforts of his colleagues to intervene, Olawuyi sustained fatal injuries inflicted by one of the lions, leaving them unable to save him from the vicious attack.

University response

University authorities have since euthanized the lion involved in the tragic event, ensuring the safety of both staff and visitors at the zoo

The zookeeper, a veterinary technologist, had been "taking care of the lions since they were born on campus about nine years ago".

"We never knew what came over the male lion that it had to attack [him]," the university's public relations officer Abiodun Olarewaju said in a report by the BBC.

However, The university students' union leader, Abbas Akinremi, told Nigeria's Vanguard newspaper that the attack was caused by "human error" after the zookeeper had forgotten to lock the door after feeding.

Social media reactions

On social media, the issue has been leading trends with many sharing Nigerians on graphic images of the incident at the university in Osun state in the south-west.

The news of the incident is said to have sent the university community into mourning.

The university sent a team to the family of the deceased to console them.

Its vice-chancellor, Prof Adebayo Simeon Bamire, said he was "saddened" by the incident and ordered a thorough investigation "into the immediate and remote causes of the incident".

(Africa News)



▲ A zookeeper at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in Nigeria has lost his life in a fatal encounter with one of the lions under his care.

Palestine accuses Israel of colonialism and apartheid at International Court of Justice

"THE Palestinians have endured colonialism and apartheid... There are those who are enraged by these words. They should be enraged by the reality we are suffering," Al-Malki said.

The ICJ is holding hearings all week on the legal implications of Israel's occupation since 1967, with an unprecedented 52 countries expected to give evidence.

Nations including the United States, Russia, and China will address judges at the Peace Palace in The Hague, seat of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

In December 2022, the UN General Assembly asked the ICJ for a nonbinding "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."

While any ICJ opinion would be non-binding, it comes amid mounting international legal pressure on Israel over the war in Gaza sparked by the brutal October 7 Hamas attacks.

The hearings are separate from a highprofile case brought by South Africa alleging that Israel is committing genocidal acts during the current Gaza offensive.



▲Riyad al-Maliki said the only solution consistent with international law is for this illegal occupation to come to an immediate, unconditional and total end.

The ICJ ruled in that case in January that Israel must do everything in its power to prevent genocide and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, but stopped short of ordering

On Friday, it rejected South Africa's bid to

impose additional measures on Israel, but reiterated the need to carry out the ruling in

The General Assembly has asked the ICJ to consider two questions.

Firstly, the court should examine the legal

consequences of what the UN called "the ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination".

This relates to the "prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967" and "measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem".

In June 1967, Israel crushed some of its Arab neighbours in a six-day war, seizing the West Bank including east Jerusalem from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Israel then began to settle the 70,000 square kilometres (27,000 square miles) of seized Arab territory. The UN later declared the occupation of Palestinian territory illegal. Cairo regained Sinai under its 1979 peace deal with Israel.

The ICJ has also been asked to look into the consequences of what it described as Israel's "adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures."

Secondly, the ICJ should advise on how Israel's actions "affect the legal status of the occupation" and what are the consequences for the UN and other countries.

Fentanyl use spreads deeper into Mexico, on heels of US epidemic

MONTERREY, Mexico - The teenager who arrived at Jose de Jesus Lopez's drug rehab clinic in the industrial Mexican city of Monterrey in December had unusual symptoms.

The 17-year-old's family had taken the boy to hospital a few days earlier when he'd had trouble breathing and then passed out after supposedly consuming cocaine, the director said. Now he was sweaty and nauseous. He'd been vomiting and couldn't sleep.

"Something doesn't add up," thought Lopez, who is also the head of an addiction center network in Nuevo Leon state, where Monterrey is located.

The boy's symptoms looked more like opioid withdrawal, even though Monterrey lies hundreds of miles to the southeast of Mexico's few heroin and fentanyl hotspots in northwestern border cities like Tijuana and Nogales.

Just in case, Lopez administered a urine test. It came back positive for fentanyl.

Although Mexico is a major trafficking hub for the highly potent synthetic opioid, it has so far avoided a consumption epidemic within its own borders.

But interviews with over two dozen drug researchers and health officials, as well as data obtained by freedom of information requests, reveal that use of the drug is creeping further into Mexico, even though the scale of consumption is clouded by a lack of data and testing.

The fear among some researchers and officials is that use of fentanyl could follow the trajectory of methamphetamine over the past decade, six of the sources said. Meth started as a U.S.-bound product, but transformed into a domestic drug problem over the last decade.

Mexico's mental health and addiction



▲Activist Julian Rojas from the NGO Programa Companeros, which implements programs and projects aimed at vulnerable social groups, shows a vial of Naloxone used to rapidly reverse opioid overdose, in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

commission (CONASAMA) has classified fentanyl as an "emerging drug" because of an uptick in users seeking treatment, even though opioid users make up less than 2% of the some 168,000 people who sought drug treatment in 2022, the most recent year for which data is available.

"Fentanyl is not a public health problem at this moment," said Evalinda Barron, the general director of CONASAMA. Still, she said, "it's a concern."

Unlike in the United States, where potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl cause tens of thousands of deadly overdoses per year, Mexico officially logged less than two dozen opioid-related deaths in 2021, the latest year for which government data is available.

Mexico's health ministry has publicly acknowledged gaps in the data.

The ministry did not respond to a request for more recent statistics.

The president's office did not respond to questions for this story. The security ministry referred Reuters to public comments by minister Rosa Icela Rodriguez that Mexico was working with the United States and Canada to stop synthetic drug trafficking.

Mexico is far less predisposed than the United States to a fentanyl epidemic, some health officials and experts say, because it does not have the same history of prescription pain medication abuse and heroin consumption.

(Reuters)

Nvidia topples Tesla as Wall Street's most traded stock

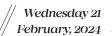
CHIPMAKER Nvidia is replacing Tesla as Wall Street's most traded stock, adding to its prominence after becoming the third-most valuable U.S. company and showing more evidence of how central AI-related bets have become to in-

Nvidia's outsized representation in day-to-day stock trading could leave investors more vulnerable should the chipmaker's revenue growth fail to meet investors' high expectations and puncture a Wall Street rally that has been fueled by euphoria about artificial intelligence.

The Santa Clara, California chipmaker's quarterly report on Wednesday will be one of Wall Street's most watched events of the week. Some strategists believe anything short of a blowout report could reverse a rally that has sent Nvidia's stock soaring 47% in 2024. About \$30 billion worth of Nvidia shares changed hands daily on average over the past 30 sessions, pulling ahead of Elon Musk's electric car maker, which averaged \$22 billion per day over the same period. Tesla since 2020 had dominated daily U.S. stock trading, according to LSEG data, with turnover -- a stock's share price multiplied by the number of shares exchanged -- peaking above \$35 billion several times in recent years. On Friday, combined trading in Nvidia and Super Micro Computer, another company benefiting from the boom in AI, accounted for over 40% of all turnover of the 10 most traded U.S. stocks, including Tesla, Meta Platforms, Apple, Amazon and Microsoft. (Reuters)

Eswatini <u>Daily News</u>

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Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini

siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

MANZINI will witness a night of divine melodies and uplifting worship as the highly acclaimed South African Gospel singer and songwriter, Collen Maluleke, is set to headline the much-anticipated Love in Worship event at the Rest In Christ Auditorium.

Scheduled for April 5, 2024, starting from 6 pm until the late hours, this event promises to be an uplifting experience for all attendees. Tickets to this affair are priced at E200, offering a gateway to an evening filled with spiritual enrichment and musical bliss.

For those in need of transportation, worry not, as buses will be available to ferry guests to the venue at a nominal fare. Joining Collen Maluleke on stage will be a stellar lineup of talented artists including Thapelo R, Nozipho Phiri, Khaya Sibanyoni, saxophonist Zwile, Sihle Makhanya, and Nothando Dlamini. Together, these artists are set to create an atmosphere of worship and

Renowned for his cross-cultural contemporary style that seamlessly blends elements of Gospel, Jazz, Rock, and Reggae, Collen Maluleke has garnered multiple award nominations and has shared the stage with some of the industry's most revered figures.

From Bishop TD Jakes to Pastor Marvin Winans, his ministry has touched the lives of many across borders and cultures, spreading a message of

Collen Maluleke to headline Love in Worship event



▲ South African artist Collen Maluleke.

love, hope, and faith through his music.

He has ministered alongside some of Gospel greats such as Bishop Eddie Long, Bishop Tudor Bismark, Dr. Juanita Bynum, Dr. Myles Munroe; Pastor Paula White, Donnie McClurkin, as well as some of South Africa's top Gospel artists.

Collen started his music career in 2012 when he founded the group Vertical Experience. Uncompromising in his approach to Praise and Worship, he has led thousands of souls to the throne room of the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing and ushering the presence of God to many.

Thobile Makhoyane joins Makoti Festival line-up

THE Makoti Festival line-up continues to dazzle and delight with the latest addition of the versatile local artist, Thobile Makhoyane, to its stellar roster of performers.

Hailing from Eswatini, Thobile Makhoyane's musical prowess is a blend of influences from her homeland and beyond, all woven together under her unique 'hypno-rock' style.

Her commanding vocals effortlessly over acoustic melodies, accompanied by a live band that often features a fusion of traditional and Western instruments.

Drawing inspiration from iconic African voices such as Jabu Khanyile, Smiles Makama, Busi Mhlongo, Suthukazi Arosi, Youssou N'Dour, and Oumou Sangaré, Thobile's artistry is a testament to her deep-rooted connection to her heritage and her innovative approach to music. As a co-founder of the Spirits Indigenous duo and a member of the all-female collective SheKings, Thobile has collaborated with artists across various artistic disciplines.

The Makoti Festival, renowned for its celebration of tradition and empowerment of women, is set to take place on April 27, 2024, at Malkerns Country Club. This highly anticipated event promises a day filled with soulstirring performances, cultural showcases, and a vibrant celebration of Eswatini's rich heritage.

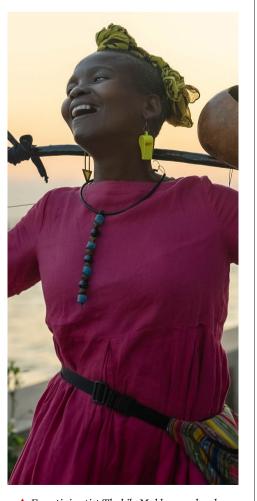
Joining Thobile Makhoyane on stage will be a lineup of esteemed artists including Maskandi maestro Mthandeni SK, Gospel sensation Ntokozo Mbambo, legendary group Lodanda neMalangeni, and local music sensation M Nation.

With tickets starting at E200 and available through various outlets, including Howler, Computickets, and Galitos, music enthusiasts are encouraged to secure their seats early.

Extravaganza

Beyond the musical extravaganza, the Makoti Festival offers a holistic experience that celebrates Eswatini's cultural diversity. From captivating fashion displays to delectable culinary delights, guests will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a world of creativity and innovation. Local entrepreneurs will showcase their talents through fashion and food stalls, adding a touch of local flair to the festival atmosphere.

Embracing the strength and beauty of women from all walks of life, the Makoti Festival stands as a tribute to the essence of womanhood. Through a blend of traditional attire and contemporary fashion trends, the festival pays homage to the resilience and spirit of Eswatini's women, creating a platform for empowerment and celebration.



▲ Eswatini artist Thobile Makhoyane has been added to the Makoti Festival.



▲ DJ Chomzin will headline the Afro-House event, at Zhumiao Lounge.

Afro-House Reloaded to ignite **Zhumiao Lounge**

FUN lovers will be mind-blown as the highly anticipated Afro-House Reloaded event descends upon Pigg's Peak, Zhumiao Lounge and Lifestyle Centre.

Taking place on February 24, 2024, the 'Chomzin and Friends' event will captivate fun lovers with a lineup that is nothing short of electrifying, creating an unforgettable night of music, dance, and pure excitement.

Headlining the event is the sensational Chomzin, who will be joined by a stellar cast of performers including the dynamic Stixdagod, the incomparable DJ Mshayi, the sensational DJ Phara, the magnetic DJ Biggie, and the charismatic MC, Gorbachev.

Guests are encouraged to dress to impress in an all-black ensemble, adding a touch of sophistication to the already buzzing atmosphere.

And here's the cherry on top - entry to the event is free, ensuring that everyone can partake in the festivities. However, outside food is a no-go, but fret not as delectable food will be available for purchase on-site. For those looking to elevate their experience, vapour rentals will be available for E100.

Interview

In an exclusive interview, Chomzin expressed excitement for the upcoming event, promising a night filled with nonstop entertainment and the hottest beats courtesy of the talented lineup of DJs.

"Just like all the other shows we host every weekend at Zhumiao, this event will be one for the books. I have a good set ready. Patrons will have a time of their lives," Chomzin said. He further extended a warm invitation to all music enthusiasts and groove lovers, assuring them that this will be an experience like no other.

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI'S music sensation, M Nation, along with the cultural troupe, has returned home after a remarkable 21-day journey to India for the prestigious Surajkund International Craft Mela Festival, leaving an indelible mark on the global stage.

The talented group from Eswatini etched their names in the annals of history as they mesmerized audiences at the Surajkund International Craft Mela Festival in India, showcasing the vibrant music and culture of Eswatini with unparalleled finesse and passion.

In an exclusive interview, M Nation shared his profound experiences from the festival, expressing gratitude for the warm reception they received in India.

"It was an incredible stay with beautiful performances," he remarked.

Reflecting on the impact of the trip, M Nation highlighted his plans to leverage the newfound knowledge gained to elevate his brand, noting a significant increase in his following to over 35,000 people. Describing the hospitality of the Indian people, M Nation emphasized the genuine interest they showed in Eswatini and its rich traditions and festivals. He commended the festival's impeccable organization and the overwhelming support from the enthusiastic attendees, underscoring the festival's immense popularity. "The people of India embraced my dance moves with enthusiasm," M Nation shared, highlighting the cultural exchange that took place during their visit. Immersing himself in the vibrant Indian culture, he delved into their traditional dances, music, and cuisine, further enriching his artistic repertoire.

M Nation back from India



▲ M Nation is back in Eswatini.

The 37th edition of the Surajkund International Craft Mela Festival, held from February 2 to 18, 2024, at Surajkund, Faridabad, provided a platform for M Nation and the cultural troupe to captivate audiences and foster cultural connections on a global scale, showcasing the diversity and talent of Eswatini.

Wandile Ndlovu, known by his stage name

M Nation, a proud native of Pigg's Peak in Eswatini, has been a rising star in the music industry since his debut in 2015.

His soulful voice has resonated with fans, and his recent success as a top ten winner of the MTN Bushfire Firefly competition has propelled him to new heights, granting him opportunities to perform at prestigious events worldwide.

Love N Laughter After-Party at Sibane Sami

EXCITEMENT is in the air as the Love N Laughter After-Party gears up to enchant fun-loving revellers at the vibrant Sibane Sami Hotel.

The event unveiled a star-studded line-up, a mixture of comedy and entertainment. Set to take place on February 23, 2024, following the Love N Laughter event earlier in the day, the after-party is poised to keep the festivities alive with a stellar roster of performers, including M Nation, duo Bongiswa and Darren, the comedic genius Mdura, and the resident DJs of Sibane Sami Hotel. Best of all, entry to the event is free, ensuring a night of joy and merriment for all attendees.

The Love N Laughter event, scheduled for the same day at Happy Valley Hotel, aims to kick off the year with a delightful fusion of comedy and entertainment. Leading the charge is the renowned Simunye Church Boy, a sought-after comedian renowned for his distinctive blend of humour infused with his Christian beliefs, promising a night of laughter and inspiration for the audience.

Adding to the comedic charm of the evening are Eswatini's beloved comedy duo, Bongiswa and Darren, whose uproarious social media skits, and witty banter pay homage to the legendary radio personalities Jim Gama 'Mbhokane' and Bongani S'gcokos'yancinca Dlamini,



▲ Comedians Bongiswa and Darren are set to perform at Love N Laughter After-Party.

ensuring a rollicking good time for all in attendance.

Another act for the event is Mdura, well-known for his undeniable talent and humour. He burst into the Eswatini comedy scene who burst onto the scene in 2015 and quickly made a name for himself with his standout performances in the "LOL" comedy competition, captivating audiences with his unique brand of humour and charisma.



🔺 Musician Sands who will perform at Eswatini Rising Festival.

Eswatini Rising Festival to unite communities against GBV

IN a powerful stand against gender-based violence (GBV), the Eswatini Rising Festival is set to ignite change and empower the nation to combat this pressing

Scheduled for this Saturday at Mavuso Trade and Exhibition Centre, the festival aims to raise awareness and inspire action against violence towards women. With a line-up of 18 talented artists from Eswatini, including big names like Sands, Nomalungelo, and Velemseni, the Eswatini Rising Festival promises to be a captivating event. From DJs to poets, cultural dancers, and community groups, the diverse range of performers will come together to advocate for an end to violence against women. Leading the charge as program director is the renowned KrTC, setting the stage for a day of impactful performances and heartfelt messages.

Under the theme "RISE! Be the New World-End Violence Against ALL Women," the festival aims to address the global turmoil of violence and oppression. Eswatini, like many nations, faces socio-economic and political challenges, with escalating levels of violence against women being a pressing concern. Through art, music, dance, and poetry, the festival seeks to spark collective imagination and envision a future free from violence.

Expressions

Central to the festival is the "rising through art" segment, where creative expressions will take centre stage. From workshops to discussions and a symbolic planting ceremony, the program encourages growth, renewal, and community engagement.

By bringing people together in solidarity, the Eswatini Rising Festival sends a powerful message that GBV is a life-threatening issue that demands urgent action. Drawing inspiration from the global One Billion Rising Campaign, which has been advocating for freedom and justice for a decade, the Eswatini Rising Festival is a localised response to a universal problem. By uniting artists, activists, and community members, the festival aims to create a platform for change and a vision for a brighter, violencefree future.

Jazz icon Abdullah Ibrahim to perform in Pretoria, Cape

... in April after five-year Mzansi hiatus

ONE of South Africa's greatest jazz icons, Abdullah Ibrahim, is expected to perform in Pretoria and Cape Town this April after a five-year hiatus.

The legendary jazz maestro will perform a series of landmark concerts in Gauteng and Western Cape.

Ibrahim is set to evoke nostalgia as he performs at the Cape Town City Hall, where he first professionally performed aged just 16.

"As I embrace my 90th year, I am delighted to be undertaking these concerts... for me, they are a deeply personal dream - envisaged first many years ago," said Ibrahim in a media statement.

The concerts which will celebrate his legacy, give the Germany based musician a chance to come home again.

"Perhaps when as a free South African I bought land, or perhaps so many years before that when I was forced to exile?

"But certainly, I was thrown into sharp

relief during the Covid pandemic, when I wondered if, or when, I would see 'home' again."

Over the course of his illustrious career Ibrahim has performed with the greats, including Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba, Jonas Gwangwa, Kippie Moeketsi and many more

"To be launching my M7 Foundation in Johannesburg, playing concerts in Pretoria's new state-of-the-art arena and uniquely returning to performing inside City Hall – an illustrious venue I first played at aged 16 for a segregated audience – is something that at one time was unimaginable. I am honoured and thrilled to have the opportunity."

He may be in his 90s now, but that hasn't stopped the composer from working. In January he released an album, entitled '3' a recording of two sets from London's Barbican Hall.

Cleave Guyton Jr (on flute and piccolo), Noah Jackson (on bass and cello) make up the trio and are featured on both sets



▲Jazz legend Abdullah Ntshakala.

with Ibrahim. '3' includes the much-loved tracks 'Nisa', 'Barakat' and many more and comprises both the London performances.

The concerts in South Africa form part

of a world tour for Ibrahim as he performs around the world, visiting cities and cultures that in their time were pivotal in his exiled life. (IOL)

Bafta addresses Matthew Perry's omission from 'In Memoriam'

THE British Academy Film Awards have explained actor Matthew Perry's exclusion from the In Memoriam segment.

The glitzy prize giving - hosted by David Tennant - took place in London on Sunday night and featured a moving tribute to film industry figures who have died over the last year to the sound of 'Ted Lasso' star Hannah Waddingham singing a version of Cyndi Lauper track 'Time After Time'.

It featured stars including Jane Birkin, Carl Weathers, Tina Turner and Sir Michael Gambon but 'Friends' star Perry was left out, and now BAFTA bosses have insisted he will be remembered at the upcoming British Academy Television Awards instead.

They said in a statement: "We confirm he will be honoured in our forthcoming BAFTA television awards in May, and on the in memoriam section on our website."

Perry - who died in October aged 54 - was best known for his role as Chandler Bing in hit sitcom 'Friends' but he also enjoyed a successful movie career with roles in films such as 'Fools Rush In', 'The Whole Nine Yards' and '17 Again'.

The actor will be remembered at the BAFTA TV awards alongside director Roy Battersby after his stepdaughter Kate Beckinsale campaigned for his inclusion following his death in January.

After losing her step-dad - who directed episodes of shows such as 'A Touch Of Frost', 'Inspector Morse' and 'Cracker' - Kate got in touch with BAFTA bosses to ask for him to be included in the In Memoriam segment at the TV event.

She was told via email that all names in consideration for inclusion have to be brought before the Obituaries Committee, and the actress declared the "cold" response left her feeling "sickened"



▲Late actor Matthew Perry.

especially as Battersby previously received a BAFTA for his outstanding contribution to television back in 1996.

In a post on Instagram, she wrote: "Today BAFTA told me they 'could not guarantee' he would be included in their "in memoriam" tribute, to honour the industry members we have lost.

"So a man dead less than a week somehow has to audition in front of a committee after a decades long career (in which he has been awarded from said organisation the highest accolade they have) to decide IF his death is worth mentioning ...

"That ... has broken my heart all over again. I am paralysed,s ick and sickened and I will honour him and his work every day of my life ... So thanks again, BAFTA for your horribly cold email."

 $(Bang\ Showbiz)$

Truck promoting Ice Spice's new music vandalised

▲ Rapper Ice Spice.

ICE Spice's marketing strategy for her new song appears to have hit a snag in Atlanta.

A video began circulating on social media of a truck traveling through the streets of Atlanta, featuring emojis that spelled out the title of Ice Spice's new song, "Think U The S**t (Fart)." A track that some deemed a diss towards Latto.

A photo surfaced on X, formerly known as Twitter, of

what appears to be the same truck promoting Ice Spice's song, but her emoji branding had been defaced to promote Latto's latest release, "Sunday Service." A red line was drawn through Ice's emojis and the words "Stream Sunday Service" were spray painted on the side of the

post.

For context, the mild tension sparked between the Bronx and Atlanta rappers last month. Latto uploaded a TikTok clip featuring Ice Spice's "Pretty Girl" music video playing in the background while on a sprinter van.

Ice Spice's response to this

truck, as seen in the pho-

tos at the bottom of this

was her new song as well as an explanation that was shared on Spaces via X, formerly known as Twitter. Ice said the track was targeted at someone who had her music play-

ing in the background of a "weak-a*s" snippet, adding, "I put it out because b****es were being funny that day."

A week after Ice Spice re-

leased her single, Latto deliv-

ered a track of her own, which fans concluded the song contained a jab directed at Ice. On "Sunday Service," Big Latto raps, "Think I'm the s**t, b***h, I know it, h* (Hot)/Jesus walked on water, I got ice boilin' though (Hey-hey)."

A portion of Latto's video for "Sunday Service" was also shot in Ice Spice's home-

town: the Bronx.

Latto later addressed the aforementioned snippet, saying that there was no malice intended. She shared during an interview with Million Dollaz Worth of Game that she didn't purpose-

ly have Ice's video playing in the back-ground of her "Sunday Service" preview. However, since Ice Spice thought it was intentional, Latto's sentiment

So it appears that the ladies have a thing for doing promo in each others' respective cities.

echoed so be it.

(XXL Magazine)

HYPERTENSION, or high blood pressure, happens when blood pressure levels remain elevated. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), roughly 47 percent of adults in the United States have hypertension.

Although high blood pressure can affect adults of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, hypertension is more common in African Americans.

In fact, the American Heart Association estimates that more than 40 percent of Black men and women in the United States have hypertension.

In this article, we'll discuss the risk factors of hypertension, why it's more prevalent in Black people, and how to treat and prevent this condition.

What is the prevalence of hypertension in Black people?

In 2017, the American College of Cardiology and other major health organizations released guidelines for the prevention, diagnosis, and management of high blood pressure in U.S. adults.

According to statistics released within the guidelines, roughly 54.9 percent of non-Hispanic Black adults in the United States met the criteria for high blood pressure.

In comparison, only 47.3 percent of non-Hispanic white adults met the criteria for hypertension, followed by 36.7 percent of non-Hispanic Asian adults and 34.4 percent of Hispanic adults.

In addition to having higher rates of hypertension, non-Hispanic Black adults were also found to have higher rates of uncontrolled hypertension.

Even among adults who were taking high blood pressure medications, roughly 63 percent of non-Hispanic Black adults still had blood pressure levels above treatment goals — versus only 50.6 percent of non-Hispanic white adults.

Why is hypertension common in Black people?

Hypertension is believed to be more common in Black Americans due to disparities in social, economic, and health factors.

In 2010, the CDC published a review of the psychosocial factors that contribute to the increased rate of high blood pressure levels in Black men.

Although the report itself widely references Black men specifically, many of these factors affect the Black population in general.

Social factors

Research has suggested a link between racism and race-based discrimination to high blood pressure levels.

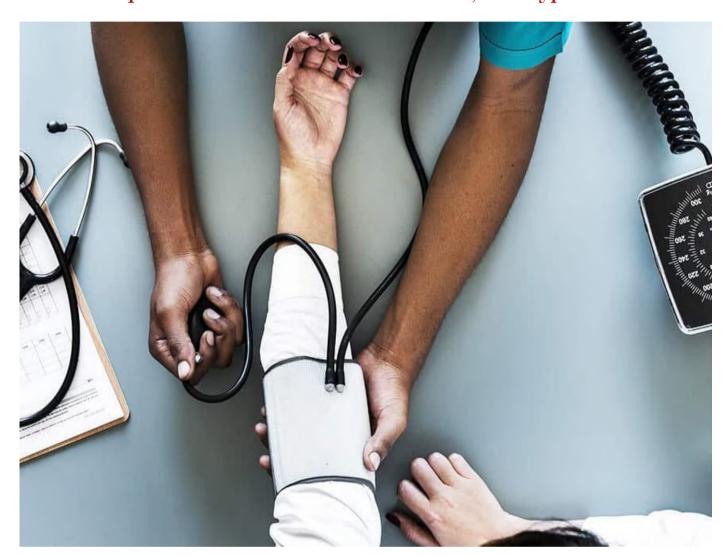
Perceived racism often leads to both increased stress and lower self-esteem, both of which can lead to higher blood pressure levels.

In addition, personal beliefs and attitudes about health conditions can impact the diagnosis and treatment of conditions like hypertension.

Factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and education level all have an impact on the health outcomes of Black Americans with hypertension.

Hypertension

Social, economic, and health-related factors all play a role in the increased prevalence of chronic conditions, like hypertension



Hypertension is one of the most common health conditions in the United States. It affects millions of adults across the country. While hypertension can affect anyone of any race or ethnicity, it disproportionately affects African American men and women.

Economic factors

Socioeconomic differences have a known impact on healthcare outcomes, especially for people with lower socioeconomic status.

In one 2004 study, researchers found that socioeconomic status was more strongly associated with hypertension in Black Americans than white Americans.

Economic inequality can also lead to poorer healthcare outcomes, which have a significant negative impact on disease and death rates.

Lack of health insurance coverage, healthcare accessibility, and cultural understanding may all play a role in the increased rate of hypertension in Black Americans.

► Health factors

Some other health conditions you may have can put you at higher risk of chronic conditions such as hypertension.

For example, an increased rate of obesity in African American men is strongly linked to an increased risk of developing high blood pressure.

Ultimately, many factors play a role in the increased rates of hypertension in Black Americans, especially Black men. However, more research is needed to determine how to better identify and address these risk factors for current and future populations.

How is hypertension treated?

Hypertension can often remain undiagnosed for years without producing symptoms. This is why it's important to have your blood pressure checked regularly.

In rare cases, severe hypertension may cause the following symptoms:

- ► severe headache
- severe anxiety
- dizziness
- ► chest pain
- ▶ vision changes
- ▶ shortness of breath
- ▶ nosebleed

Get immediate medical care if you have these symptoms.

If you've received a diagnosis of high blood pressure, treatment options may include lifestyle changes, medications, or a combination of both.

Medications

Many medications for hypertension treat elevated blood pressure levels by helping dilate, or relax, the blood vessels.

Here is an overview of some common medications for treating hypertension:

- **Diuretics.** Diuretics work to reduce both blood volume and blood pressure by helping the kidneys excrete water and salt.
- ▶ Alpha- and beta-blockers. Betablockers reduce the speed and force of the

HEALTH / lens

heart, which reduces blood flow and pressure. Alpha-beta-blockers prevent the blood vessels from narrowing, which improves blood pressure levels.

- ► Angiotensin inhibitors and blockers. Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors reduce the production of the hormone that narrows blood vessels. Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) block the receptors that accept this hormone, which helps improve blood flow and blood pressure.
- ▶ Alpha-blockers and agonists. Alpha-1 blockers prevent the blood vessels from narrowing by blocking the receptors from accepting certain hormones. Alpha-2 receptor agonists prevent blood vessel narrowing by blocking the production of adrenaline.
- ► Calcium channel blockers. Calcium channel blockers reduce the strength of the heart's contraction and allow blood vessels to relax, which in turn lowers blood pressure.
- ► **Vasodilators.** Vasodilators help dilate the blood vessels to allow for increased blood flow, which helps keep blood pressure levels low.

► Lifestyle factors

Certain lifestyle habits are often used in combination with medication to treat high blood pressure. In some cases, these changes may be enough to lower blood pressure levels without medication.

These changes include things like:

- eating a balanced, heart-healthy diet
- weight management

Can Black people prevent hypertension?

Although there are many factors that affect your risk of developing hypertension, the following habits can help reduce your risk of developing high blood pressure:

- Maintain a moderate weight. Weight is not the only indicator of health. However, overweight and obesity can increase the risk of developing hypertension.
- ► Eat a balanced diet. Eating a diet filled primarily with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and potassium-rich foods can help reduce the risk of hypertension.
- ▶ Watch your salt intake. Sodium has a negative effect on blood pressure, so the American Heart Association recommends limiting sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams per day. Increasing potassium can also help excrete excess sodium from the body.
- Increase your physical activity. When possible, aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week to reduce the risk of hypertension.
- Limit your alcohol intake. If you drink, avoid having more than one to two drinks per day. If you smoke, consider working with a doctor to help you quit.

The bottom line

Hypertension is one of the most common health conditions in the United States. It affects millions of adults across the country.

While hypertension can affect anyone of any race or ethnicity, it disproportionately affects African American men and women. Social, economic, and health-related factors all play a role in the increased prevalence of chronic conditions, like hypertension. If you're concerned about your own risk of hypertension, schedule an appointment with a healthcare professional to discuss your concerns and create a prevention or treatment plan.

Healthline

Diet mimicking effect of fasting could add years to your life

- The five-day diet is high in unsaturated fats and low in calories, protein and carbs
- Participants eating the diet reduced their biological age by 2.5 years on average

A diet that mimics the effect of fasting without starving yourself can extend your life by years, a study suggests.

Researchers found that people who followed the fasting-mimicking diet (FMD) for 15 days reduced their biological age by over two years on average.

Tests also showed they had a lower risk of diabetes, heart disease and stroke, based on biomarkers in their blood.

The FMD diet involves eating around fewer than 1,000 calories - made up of low-fat foods, soups, energy drinks and

It is said to trick the body into thinking it is fasting, releasing enzymes and other chemicals in the body that have been linked to longevity.

Professor Valter Longo, a biologist from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, who developed the diet in the new study and is the lead author, said: 'This is the first study to show that a food-based intervention that does not require chronic dietary or other lifestyle changes can make people biologically younger.'

The diet used in the study involved three cycles of five days on the FMD

Day one saw the participants eat 1,100 calories, while days two to five saw them consume eat around 720 calories daily.

Their diet during these days also consisted of healthy chip snacks and tea.

The diet is made up of 34 percent carbohydrates, 10 per cent protein and 56 percent fat for the first day, and then seven per cent carbohydrates, nine percent protein, and 44 percent fat for the other days. Participants then got to eat their usual diets for 25 days.

Both groups contained men and women aged between 18 and 70.

After three months, researchers analyzed blood samples from participants, which showed that patients in the FMD group had lower diabetes risk factors, including less insulin resistance and lower blood sugar

Chronological age is how long you have been alive, whereas biological age is how old your cells and tissues are. It is a significant metric because it shows how susceptible you may be to disease.

MRI scans also showed a decreased in abdominal fat and fat in the liver, which are associated with a reduced risk of metabolic syndrome, which increases



▲ Participants ate a FMD made up of plant-based soups, energy bars, energy drinks, chip snacks, and tea portioned out for five days, as well as a supplement providing high levels of minerals, vitamins, and essential fatty acids.

the risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Previous research has suggested FMD cycles can even lower risk factors for cancer. The FMD cycles also appeared to increased participants' lymphoid-tomyeloid ratio, which is an indicator of a more youthful immune system.

Analyses

Further analyses revealed that FMD participants had lowered their biological age - a measure of how well one's cells and tissues are functioning, as opposed to chronological age - by 2.5 years on average.

Researchers believe the FMD has 'rejuvenating effects on the immune system'. In previous studies in mice, the diet caused a 'rejuvenation of the blood

The FMD diet also switches cells throughout the body to a protected 'antiaging mode' - an effect which endures beyond the fast. The body has what is known as 'nutrient-sensing' pathways, which control autophagy - kind of 'housekeeping' of the body's cells. It is constantly going on in the body and removes unwanted byproducts of cell

The more autophagy that happens, the better you feel and the lower the risk of future health problems.

The FMD diet accelerates autophagy, so more byproducts and 'bad' cells in the body are disposed of that cause disease

The study was published in the journal Nature Communications.

It is supposed to mimic the effects of a water-only fast while still offering essential nutrients.

A water-only fast is where you only drink water for a period of time and ingest no other food or beverages. People water fast for weight loss or to lower blood pressure. MailOnline

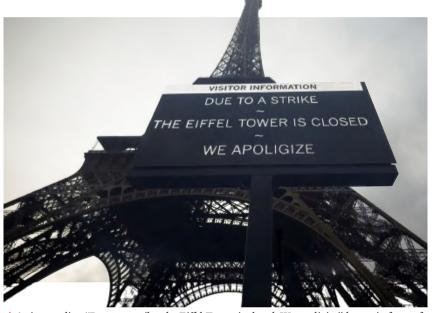
Around the world in pictures



▲ Models present creations at the Burberry catwalk show during London Fashion Week in London, Britain.



▲A climate activist demonstrates outside the high court in London, Britain.



▲ A sign reading "Due to a strike, the Eiffel Tower is closed. We apoligize" hangs in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France.



▲ Palestinians carry bags of flour they grabbed from an aid truck near an Israeli checkpoint, as Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City.



lack A worker removes labels from used plastic bottles as he works in a plastic bottle recycling factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



▲A wounded Palestinian is assisted at the site of an Israeli strike, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip.



▲ Firefighters work as smoke billows at a site that was hit by an airstrike on Monday, after what Lebanon's state media said was a series of Israeli strikes around Ghaziyeh on Lebanon's coast around 60 km north of the border with Israel, during a media tour.



▲ Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Alexei Navalny, takes part in a meeting of European Union foreign ministers in Brussels, Belgium.

Injuries bite for Liverpool, but Klopp backs youngsters

LIVERPOOL, England - Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp says he trusts his youngsters to step up as the club faces a mounting injury toll ahead of Wednesday's home clash against Luton Town in the Premier League.

Leaders Liverpool will be without Diogo Jota and Curtis Jones for the Anfield game and Darwin Nunez is a doubt after all three were injured in last weekend's win at Brentford.

On top of that they are also missing goal-keeper Alisson, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Dominik Szoboszlai and Thiago Alcantara. "I would like to say we have no issues, but we have some. Not available Alisson, that's a muscle injury where we do not know how long it will take but definitely not in the foreseeable time coming back," Klopp told reporters on Tuesday.

"Then we have Diogo with a knee issue and is ruled out. Curtis with a bone ligament issue and is ruled out."

With a League Cup final looming against Chelsea this weekend the injuries could not have come at a worse time with Liverpool facing nine games in 30 days.

But Klopp believes the situation will offer more opportunities to the likes of Conor Bradley who impressed in recent call-ups for the first team.

"We are where we are because of them. That's how it is because the boys really delivered. We will have to use and give the opportunity because in a good moment they can all be in," Klopp said. "We have still options there definitely

"Players who showed what they can do like James McConnell or Bobby Clark, Lewis Koumas and Jayden Danns. They are all massive talents, but we will see what we can do."

Jota is the biggest worry with his knee injury likely to keep him out for a considerable amount of time.

"With Diogo it will obviously take months.



▲ Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp says he trusts his youngsters to step up as the club faces a mounting injury toll ahead of Wednesday's home clash against Luton Town in the Premier League.

With Curtis... It's with the injuries as well you have important days. Day five, day 10 are important days when you judge the situation again because nobody reacts in the same way," Klopp added.

Liverpool are two points clear at the top of the Premier League although third-placed Manchester City could cut the gap to one point if they beat Brentford later on Tuesday.

Luton dropped into the relegation zone on Monday courtesy of Everton's draw with Crystal Palace but Klopp is well aware of the threat they can pose.

"Set-pieces are one strength (of Luton) but I have to say the way they play their system with their confidence level, they play incredible. Even in games they lost they were in the game," he said.

"We experienced a tough game there, but it was a different game to how they play now."

(Reuters)

▲ Carlos Alcaraz will stick to the same formula that landed him last year's Wimbledon title with the Spaniard announcing on Tuesday that he will play at the Queen's Club Championships.

Alcaraz to play at Queen's Club Championships

LONDON - Carlos Alcaraz will stick to the same formula that landed him last year's Wimbledon title with the Spaniard announcing on Tuesday that he will play at the Queen's Club Championships.

World number two Alcaraz won the Queen's title last year and then swept through the Wimbledon fortnight, beating holder Novak Djokovic in the final

The 20-year-old is the first player to confirm his entry for the prestigious pre-Wimbledon tournament.

"I'm excited to be heading back to the LTA's cinch Championships this year," said Alcaraz, who beat Australia's Alex de Minaur in last year's final.

"Winning the title in 2023 was very special for me and the perfect preparation for Wimbledon. I really enjoyed playing on the British grass courts and look forward to competing again this summer."

(Reuters)

Barca, Atletico set to battle for Greenwood

BARCELONA and Atletico Madrid are both interested in signing Manchester United outcast Mason Greenwood this summer, according to reports.

Greenwood, 22, is currently on loan at Getafe after United offloaded the striker last summer, just seven months after attempted rape and assault charges against him were dropped.

He has started well at Getafe, scoring five goals and providing five assists in 21 LaLiga appearances, and he could be set to stay in Spain beyond this season.

According to German outlet Sporti via Mundo Deportivo, Barcelona and Atletico are preparing to battle for his signature in the coming months, and Mail Sport understands the latter club are following him particularly keenly.

United are ready to sell Greenwood, and have set an asking price of €40m (£34m) for interested suitors.

Greenwood's Old Trafford

contract runs until June 2025, with this summer representing United's final opportunity to receive a sizeable fee for him.

Getafe would like to keep

Greenwood on loan for another year, but cannot afford his £75,000-a-week salary.

Since moving to Getafe, Greenwood has largely im-

Greenwood has largely impressed on the pitch, and recently scored a penalty with his weaker right foot against Real Betis.

He was also hailed by fans as a 'generational' talent after starring in his side's draw with Villarreal last Friday.

However, he was involved in a moment of controversy in a game against Real Madrid earlier this month when England star Jude Bellingham was alleged to have muttered a shocking insult in Greenwood's direction.

Some fans believed they had spotted Bellingham calling Greenwood a 'rapist', a reference to the charges that were first brought against him in January 2022 before being dropped 13 months later.



▲ Barcelona and Atletico Madrid are both interested in signing Manchester United outcast Mason Greenwood this summer.

Getafe reported the incident to LaLiga, who are now investigating the matter.

They have called upon a lip-reader to help determine

whether the case needs to be taken any further, with Bellingham at risk of facing a ban if it is concluded that he insulted Greenwood. (Daily Mail)

Messi sets record straight over Hong Kong absence

LIONEL Messi took to one of China's largest social media platforms on Monday to address speculation over his non-appearance in a recent Inter Miami friendly in Hong Kong.

Chinese state media, Hong Kong politicians and fans reacted angrily when the 36-year-old Argentine forward came off the bench three days later in a friendly match in Tokyo.

Since then Hangzhou and Beijing have said they will not host Argentina games scheduled for March as the fallout rumbles on and now Messi has spoken in an attempt to diffuse the situation. "I've read and heard many things that have been said after the game in Hong Kong. I wanted to record this video and give you the true version so nobody has to continue reading false stories," Messi said in a video posted on Weibo.

(Reuters)

Free-scoring Arsenal want to win it all, says Odegaard

MARTIN Odegaard has urged Arsenal to use the momentum from their recent goal spree to fuel the club's historic bid for Champions League and Premier League glory.

The Gunners head to Porto on Wednesday for the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie in buoyant mood after demolishing Burnley 5-0 last weekend.

Mikel Arteta's side have started a calendar year with five successive league wins for the first time in their history, scoring 21 goals in

Arsenal are just two points behind Premier League leaders Liverpool and can turn their attention to Porto safe in the knowledge they are firmly in the hunt for a first title since 2004.

As well as reigning supreme in England for the first time in 20 years, the north Londoners are convinced they can also conquer Europe. Arsenal have never won the Champions League — losing their only final appearance against Barcelona in 2006.

Buoyed by the recent string of high-scoring wins, Gunners captain Odegaard is confident his team can mount a thrilling bid for both trophies.

"That's what we want to do, we want to compete in every competition we play in,"

the Norway midfielder said.

"Of course Champions League is a massive one, so we are excited for it.

"We just want to focus on ourselves each game, keep improving every game and we will see how it goes.

"We are in a good moment now. We have to use that momentum, keep building on it and we will see."

Blistering run

Arsenal lost their opening game of the year to Liverpool in the FA Cup.

Revitalised by a warm-weather training camp in Dubai, they crushed Crystal Palace 5-0 and beat Nottingham Forest. They put Liverpool to the sword in a 3-1 league victory that served notice of Arsenal's hunger to make amends for last season's late collapse in the title race.

They then thrashed West Ham 6-0 before crushing Burnley.

Porto, a disappointing third in the Portuguese league, could be next to suffer against Arsenal's suddenly ruthless attack.

For much of the season, critics suggested Arsenal's lack of a genuine penalty-box predator could ruin their title chances.

Gabriel Jesus's recurring injury problems have hardly helped but, even with the Brazilian playing just twice in 2024, Arsenal have been scoring with ease.

"I think that's what we were missing a little bit in the last few weeks before the break. We created so much but we didn't score the goals," Odegaard said.

"But within the last few games, we've been brilliant in front of goal. We get so many people in the box and so many situations around the box."

Sensational Saka

England winger Bukayo Saka has been one of the key figures in Arsenal's blistering run. Stopping him will be an essential part of Porto's game-plan at the Estadio do Dragao.

The 22-year-old scored twice against Burnley, giving him seven goals in his last seven games.

"The boss told us we're the first Arsenal team to win five in a row at the start of the year, so it's a nice achievement and we'll definitely build momentum going forward,"

"Not only that I'm playing well, the team's playing well and we're scoring a lot of goals because we've got some really important fixtures coming up, starting on Wednesday.

"I can't wait to go there. I'm really excited, looking forward to it and hopefully we can take this form into that game as well."

(The Citizen)



▲ Martin Odegaard has urged Arsenal to use the momentum from their recent goal spree to fuel the club's historic bid for Champions League and Premier League glory.

Woods withdraws from Genesis due to flu diagnosis

TIGER Woods confirmed Saturday over social media that he is dealing with the flu.

Woods' announcement came one day after he withdrew from the Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades,

"I would like to confirm that I had to withdraw from (the Genesis Invitational) due to illness, which we now know is influenza," the 15-time major champion wrote on Twitter. "I am resting and feeling better. Good luck to the players this weekend. I'm disappointed to not be there and want to thank (the tournament) and all the fans for the support."

Woods' post on Twitter is in line with the message revealed by Rob McNamara, his friend and business partner.

"So he started feeling some flu-like symptoms (on Thursday) night," McNamara said on Friday. "Woke up this morning, they were worse than the night previous. He had a little bit of a fever and that, and was better during the warm-up, but then when he got out there and was walking and playing, he started feeling dizzy.

"Ultimately the doctors are saying he's got some -- potentially some type of flu and that he was dehydrated. He's been treated with an IV bag and he's doing much, much better and he'll be released on his own here soon."

Woods, 48, hadn't played an official PGA Tour event since the Masters 10 months ago, when he withdrew before undergoing ankle surgery. After shooting a 1-over 72 on Thursday, he admitted to reporters he was dealing with back spasms along with soreness in his surgically repaired leg.

Woods opened Friday's round with a birdie and made consecutive bogeys at Nos. 4-5. After saving par at the par-3 sixth and hitting his drive at the par-4 seventh, the Golf Channel broadcast showed a rules official driving Woods off the course on a cart.

Even after the PGA Tour confirmed



▲ Tiger Woods confirmed Saturday over social media that he is dealing with the flu.

Woods' withdrawal, speculation grew when fire and paramedic trucks were seen outside the Riviera clubhouse. But Woods did not leave in one of those trucks, and he was later seen leaving the property in a normal tournament vehicle. (Reuters)

Ivory Coast confirm Fae as permanent coach

ABIDJAN - Ivory Coast have appointed Emerse Fae as their full time coach after he led them to success in the Africa Cup of Nations earlier this month, the country's football federation president said.

Fae, 40, was assistant when the tournament in the Ivory Coast kicked off last month but was handed the reigns after Frenchman Jean Louis Gasset was fired when the Ivorians lost two of their three group games. They still managed to scrape into the knockout stages as the last of the four best third-placed finishers and went on to win the trophy as Fae engineered a remarkable comeback. "Emerse Fae was until now interim coach. He is now confirmed as a permanent coach," said Ivorian Football Federation president Idriss Diallo at a function in Abidjan on Monday, the Ivorian media reported on Tuesday. Fae's only previous coaching experience was with the juniors at French club Nice and as coach of the reserves at Clermont Foot. (Reuters)



▲ Ivory Coast have appointed Emerse Fae as their full time coach after he led them to success in the Africa Cup of Nations earlier this month

AFCON preliminary round draw conducted

CAIRO - The draw for the preliminary round of Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers for next year's tournament in Morocco was conducted in Cairo on Tuesday barely a week after the conclusion of the finals in the Ivory Coast won by the hosts.

The bottom eight ranked entrants have been drawn into four two-legged knockout ties to be played between March 20-26.

Somalia were the lowest ranked team and drawn against Eswatini, while Sao Tome e Principe take on South Sudan.

The other two fixtures are between Chad and Mauritius while Djibouti play

Both Liberia and Mauritius have previously qualified for the Cup of Nations

The winners of the four preliminary round ties advance to the group stage of the qualifiers, joining 44 other countries.

The 48 teams will be drawn into 12 groups of four with the top two in each group qualifying for the finals in Morocco. (Reuters)

MPRA special elections on March 9

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela

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Manzini Regional Association (MRPA) will finally replace their former Chairman Menzi Bhembe on March 9.

This will be during the association's annual general meeting set to take place at a venue still to be confirmed.

Bhembe was recently co-opted into the Eswatini Cue Sports Association executive committee where he assumed the Treasurer position where he will replace Fana Gama.

MRPA Secretary Musa Dlamini confirmed the news when contacted by the Eswatini Daily News.

Nominations

"We will be having our special elections on March 9, and we will soon open nominations for the Chairman position. We urge teams to attend the AGM in numbers since we will be discussing important matters on the day," he

Dlamini further thanked their sponsor Dixie's for their continued investment in the league.

This is after the Matsapha-based company pumped in E40 000 for the RE2024/25 season for the regional pool league during a presentation held over the weekend at Manzini Club.

"We are grateful for the support of the



▲2023/24 Dixie's International E40 000 league champions Manzini pool club lifting their trophy. sponsor which contributes immensely towards the development of the sport in the

The Secretary further urged new teams to contact him on 7626 3690 for registration.

country," he said,

The recent presentation saw Manzini Pool Club take home E9 500 first prize money after winning the 2023/24 title.

The hub outfit were the biggest earners for the past season after they raked in E11 000 for winning the league and E15 00 for finishing third in the knockout tournament.

Police side REPS took home E9 400 after finishing second in the league (5 500) and won the knockout tournament's E 4 000 first prize money.

BREAKDOWN

- 1. Manzini pool olub E9 500
- 2. REPS E5 500
- 3. Stairs E3 500
- 4. Ludzeludze E2 500

Knockout tournament

- 1. REPS E4 000
- 3. Manzini pool olub E1 500



▲Carlota Munave is part of the African Games 13 member squad.

Two-day camp for African Games squad

THE Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) have lined up a two-day camp for the 2024 Africa Games team.

The camp will be staged between March 1 and 2 at Mhlume Country Club in preparation for the continent's showpiece in Ghana. The 13-member team is currently preparing for the quadrennial international assignment between March 8 and 13 in Accra.

EOCGA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maxwell Jele confirmed the news when giving updates on the squad.

"The team will have a two-day camp where they will get to know each other ahead of the international assignment. We will announce other details in due course," he said.

The team will be funded to the tune of E1.7 million by the Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council (E1.1 million) and EOCGA (E600 000).

The team will be led by EOCGA board member Zakhele Zulu who is the chef de mission and Zama Tsabedze (squad Manager) during the assignment.

Two athletes Sibusiso 'Swazibolt' Matsenjwa and Bongiwe Mahlalela recently secured podium finishes during the 2024 Akane Sim-

THE FULL TEAM ESWATINI

Athletics

Sibusiso 'Swazibolt' Matsenjwa Bongiwe Mahlalela

Coach/ Manager - Thoba Mazibuko

Swimming Simanga Dlamini

Coach: Welcome Nhlabatsi

Boxing

Thabiso Dlamini Sibongiseni Shongwe

Coach: Muzi Shongwe

Lwazi Dlamini Melusi Dlamini

Coach: Victor Gwebu

Taekwondo

Carlotta Munave

Wandile Maziya

Saneliso Masuku

Sivunolesihle Dlamini Coach: Mancoba Motsa

Nkosinathi Mthembu (poomsae)

Sizwe Mabuza(poomsae) Chef de mission: Zakhele Zulu

General Manager: Zama Tsabedze

Physiotherapist: Nomvula Dlamini

bine Classic Shootout competition held over the weekend at the Pilditch Stadium.

William Siame appointed Gift Of **Chess Ambassador to Eswatini**

By Siphesihle Dlamini

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ESWATINI's William Siame has been bestowed and appointed as Gift Of Chess ambassador to Eswatini.

Siame's appointment comes with a noble mission - to distribute 1 000 chess sets to schools, orphanages, prisons, and community centres across Eswatini, using the game of chess as a powerful tool to expand opportunities for learning and personal growth.

In an exclusive interview, Siame expressed delight at being chosen as an ambassador for such a revered organization, emphasizing his commitment to utilizing chess as a means to positively impact lives in the



institutions," Siame shared.

As part of his distribution plan, Siame intends to allocate 100 chess sets to the Eswatini Chess Federation, with the remaining sets earmarked for distribution to the designated locations. The initiative aligns closely with Gift Of Chess's overarching goal of donating 1 million chess sets worldwide by 2030, leveraging the game as a universal language to create opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds.

According to their website, Gift Of Chess is a 501(C) (3) charitable organization dedicated to transforming lives through the universal language of chess, recognizing its potential to foster critical thinking, strategic planning, and problem-solving skills. By providing chess sets to schools, orphanages, prisons, and community centres, the organization aims to empower individuals and communities through the game's enriching benefits. With a network of ambassadors in partner

Gift Of Chess is making a tangible impact on a global scale. By leveraging chess as a cost-effective and impactful tool for personal development, the organization is unlocking human potential and fostering mea ingful connections across diverse segments of society.

▲Eswatini's William Siame has been appointed as Gift Of Chess ambassador in the country.

'Magwegwe', 'Mshishi' blow for Green Mamba



▲Njabulo Magwegwe.

By Sibusiso Masilela sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

PREMIER League defending champions Green Mamba have been dealt a major blow in the current league campaign.

The green and white ensemble will be without their two attacking midfielders Njabulo 'Magwegwe' Magagula and Mbongeni 'Mshishi' Magagula, during their next league outing against Moneni Pirates on Saturday at Mhlume Stadium.

The two players are currently nursing knee injuries which saw them miss the team's recent 4-0 win over Denver Sundowns.

The Correctional Services side head coach Ernest Mavuso confirmed the absence of the

duo.

"We will be without the services of Magwegwe and Mshishi during our next match as they are still nursing knee injuries. They have both started light training and they are still not available for selection for the next match," he said.

The current Sihlangu assistant coach also said their preparations for their match against the 'Sea Robbers'.

"We are pushing hard at training and every player is fighting to be in the starting xi during the next match," Mavuso said.

'Inyoka eluhlazana' are currently perched third in the log table with 31 points after 17 matches.

Green Mamba striker Sabelo 'Sikhali' Ndzinisa is also the league's current top goal scorer with 15 goals.

Pennington out of NMB Championships



▲James Pennington.

PROFESSIONAL golfer James Pennington is out of the E6.6 million NMB Championships.

This comes after he finished 41st in the qualifiers out of over 70 golfers on Tuesday during the one-round qualifier played at the PE Golf Club. Only 10 professional golfers qualified for the main tournament set to start tomorrow and be played for over four days.

The Eswatini Royal Insurance Corporation (ESRIC) Brand Ambassador was the only LiSwati to play in the qualifiers with the duo of Brandon-Jude Rennei and Mandla Dlamini Jnr missing out.

The trio is playing under the Sunshine Tour.

Rangers' 'Trueboy' joins Fire and Emergency Services

Stories by Ntokozo Magongo

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SHISELWENI-BASED side Rangers will have to do without the right back Mfanasibili 'Trueboy' Kunene who is among the recruits under the Eswatini National Fire and Emergency Services (ENFES).

Kunene is currently in the institution's training programme. Due to the engagement, the team won't have him in some of the games. Determined and capable players have raised their hands to assume the defending responsibility and fight for the team.

According to a statement released by the club's General Manager Thokozani Ndzinisa, the player will now miss the majority of their game and training due to his commitment.

Ndzinisa then assured the red and blue out that the mandate given by the directors at the beginning of the season was achievable and they would deliver it as commanded.

"The mandate is to sustain the elite league status. Not mincing words, when the 2023/24 league elapses, Rangers Football Club will be one of the teams that will be looking forward to next season in the elite league,' he said.

He then thanked their supporters for their continued support.

"Your support means the world to us, and we cannot express our gratitude enough. Thank you for being a loyal supporter who believes in the team. Especially in these hard times the team is going through. The technical bench, players, management and



▲Mfanasibili 'Trueboy' Kunene.

directors are working tirelessly to ensure that the team turn the corner. We sincerely urge every stakeholder to execute his/ her duties with determination and enthusiasm. Together, we will accomplish fulfil the 2023/24 season's mandate," he said.

EFA upgrade their website



▲EFA Communication and Marketing Officer Muzi Radebe.

THE Eswatini Football Association (EFA) is moving with the times.

This comes after the re-launching of their website which will be easily accessible and more informative. EFA Communication and Marketing Officer Muzi Radebe told the members of the media during a press conference that making the website accessible was one way

of being accountable.

He said the website will now also assist as people will be able to view national team matches and past games on YouTube that will feature on the website. He said this would help in marketing the players and the local football abroad.

Present during the re-launch of the website was EFA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Frederick Mngomezulu.

SPORTS



▲ The national team, Sihlangu Semnikati's journey to the group stages of the 2025 AFCON qualifiers will once go via the same opponents Somali.

Sihlangu, Somalia set for AFCON qualifiers rematch

By Sibusiso Masilela

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THE national team, Sihlangu Semnikati's journey to the group stages of the 2025 AFCON qualifiers will once go via the same opponents Somalia.

The nation's pride will once again face the East African minnows in the preliminary of the continent's showpiece qualifiers.

The two nations will face off the first hurdle of the qualifiers between March 20 and 25 following a draw conducted on Tuesday in Cairo.

The national side overcame during the preliminary round of the 2023 edition qualifiers where the Dominic Kunene-led side recorded a 4-1 aggregate win over the same opponents in March 2022.

The four winners in the preliminary round will join the other 44 nations in the group stages for the biennial continental spectacle set to be hosted by Morocco in two years.

Sihlangu will be away in Mogadishu before the return leg three days later possibly at Mbombela Stadium.

Sihlangu assistant coach Sifiso 'Nuro' Nti-

bane said they will be cautious of the opponents when commenting on behalf of head coach Dominic Kunene.

"We won't underestimate the opponents despite the fact they currently ranked below us. We will treat this tie as a cup final so that we can advance to the group stages," he said.

Sihlangu is expected to start training on Monday in preparation for the upcoming qualifiers and the squad will be announced before the end of the week.

Sihlangu is ranked 43 in the continent and 146 in the FIFA rankings while Somaliaa is placed 53rd in the continent and 196 in the world.

The Eswatini Football Association (EFA) recently announced changes in the Sihlangu technical bench that saw the roping in of Ntibane and Ernest Mavuso as co-assistants to Kunene.

The changes further saw the deployment of Anthony Mdluli to the goalkeeper coach position replacing Sipho 'Shilton 'Dube.

The changes saw the engagement of Royal Leopard trainer Dennis Fakudze in the same position previously occupied by Mbu-



▲ The nation's pride will once again face the East African minnows in the preliminary of the continent's showpiece qualifiers.

'Birds', Leopard clash at Mkhuzweni

By Ntokozo Magongo

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THE newly constructed Mkhuzweni Technical Centre will play host to the MTN Premier League game between Mbabane Swallows and Royal Leopard.

The match is billed for Saturday, kick-off 3 pm. Both teams are challenging for the title with Swallows fourth on 30 points while Royal Leopard is second with 32 points. The last time the two sides met, the game ended with a 1-all draw.

'Week 18' of the MTN Premier League will kick off on Friday with a doubleheader at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium. Rangers will first take centre stage against Denver Sundowns at 1 pm and the last match will be between Mbabane Highlanders and Illovo, starting at 3:30 pm.

Log leaders Young Buffaloes will host Nsingizini Hotspurs on Saturday at KaLanga Technical Cen-



▲ Mbabane Swallows will play Royal Leopard at Mkhuzweni Technical Centre.

tre, kick-off at 3 pm with defending champions Green Mamba playing bottom-placed Moneni Pirates at Mhlume Stadium, game starting at 3 pm. There is only one game to be played on Sunday. Ezulwini United will host relegation-threatened Manzini Wanderers at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium, kick-off at 3:30

Wanderers' Mlamuli Nkambule, Celimphilo are January's best

By Sibusiso Masilela sibusisom@rubicon-

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MANZINI Wanderers Captain Mlamuli 'Mlaba' Nkambule's recent league heroics have earned him the MTN Premier League Player of the Month for January.

The seasoned former Mbabane Highlanders and Denver Sundowns midfielder won himself E6 000 during a prize presentation held at Mahlalekhukhwini house on Tuesday.

Nkambule dedicated the award to his teammates.

"I would like to thank my teammates for the unity which they showed since the start of the season. This award will certainly go a long way in motivating us to cheat relegation and further secure a good position at the end of the season," he said.

The one-time Sihlangu player also thanked his family for supporting his career.

Meanwhile, national first division winner Celimphilo Zwane of Sisonkhe FC said the award will motivate him soon after receiving E2 000.

"I am grateful for the award which will also encourage the entire team in our quest to gain promotion at the end of the season," he said.

Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) Football Manager Pat Vilakati congratulated the duo for their achievement.

"We are happy for the two players, and we believe these awards will motivate both players to deliver for their respective teams. We further advocate for fair play in all premier league matches," he said.



'Mlaba',
Celimphilo
January's best

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MIN PLE - Player of the Month
Emalangeni

Two Thousand
Endongeni

Two Thousand
Emalangeni



... like it happened during the AFCON 2023 preliminary round qualifiers, Sihlangu will face the 'Ocean Stars' of Somalia in the Morocco 2025 qualifiers. Sihlangu will travel away on March 18 with the second leg set for March 25. *Page 23*