

King calls for more jobs in mining



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# Minister gives Sakhalive JN 7 days to put its house in order

# By Ncaba Ntshakala

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■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2



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# MPAKENI DAM LABOUR FRACAS

# Minister gives Sakhalive JV a 7-day ultimatum to put its house in order

## Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

THE Minister of Labour and Social Security, Phila Buthelezi, has called on the Sakhalive Joint Venture, the Chinese company contracted to construct the Mpakeni Dam project to address all labour-related abnormalities within the next seven days.

The minister made this demand during a courtesy visit to the project site in Mpakeni, Shiselweni region, following recent media reports exposing serious labour concerns.

Buthelezi, accompanied by a high-level delegation from the ministry's various departments, including Labour, Localization Unit, and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), met with project stakeholders, including Sakhalive Joint Venture management (represented by Chen and Fang), Project Manager, Ministry of Agriculture officials, EWADE representatives, members of the Workers' Councils, and other relevant parties.

The minister emphasized the importance of respecting Eswatini labour laws and urged both employers and workers to engage in constructive dialogue to find lasting solutions to the issues plaguing the project. He stressed that successful project completion hinges on cooperation and collaboration between both parties.

Addressing specific concerns, Minister Phila Buthelezi urged the employer to urgently address the issue of transport provision for workers, reminding them that they cannot arbitrarily alter terms and conditions of employment to the detriment of workers. He emphasized the need for proper consultation before any changes are



▲ Minister of Labour and Social Security Phila Buthelezi speaking to some of Sakhalive Joint Venture management during his courtesy visit to Mpakeni.

implemented.

Regarding employment contracts, the minister advised the company to seek assistance from the Commissioner of Labour, as certain clauses in the fixed-term contracts appeared to be inconsistent with Eswatini labour laws. He appealed to the workers to prioritize work and avoid work stoppages, emphasizing the importance of completing the project as envisioned by the government of Eswatini.

The visit concluded with a tour of the project compound, allowing the minister to gather firsthand information regarding the allegations against the company's management.

Buthelezi promised to return to the Mpakeni Dam project on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, to monitor progress made by the Sakhalive Joint Venture in addressing the identified labour issues.

The Mpakeni Dam project, a E3.5 billion undertaking commissioned by the Eswatini government under the Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE) which aims at bolstering water security and power generation, has been thrust into the spotlight due to recent reports of labour-related issues.

Media reports laid bare concerns surrounding workers' rights, including transport provision, employment contract terms, and communication with management, and recently, 33 Chinese nationals were arrested in Mpakeni for overstaying their Visas and engaging in employment activities in the dam without the required permits. This followed a random inspection conducted by officials from the Immigration Department in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Out of the 33 individuals taken into

custody, 28 were found to have passports but further lacked the necessary work permits, while the 5 had initiated the application process for the required permits. They were charged with violating provisions of the Immigration Act No. 17 of 1982, specifically Section 14 (2), and were granted E2000 bail each by the Nhlangano Magistrate Court. The court also instructed them to arrange legal representation for their upcoming trial, which is scheduled to take place on April 8, 2024

Upon completion, the Mpakeni Dam is expected to significantly improve water security in the Shiselweni region, providing irrigation for agriculture and ensuring a reliable water supply for communities. The project also incorporates a hydropower component, aiming to contribute to the country's energy mix and reduce reliance on imported electricity.

# EU, UNFPA pour E10m into Eswatini's fight against GBV, disability exclusion

"SUSTAINABLE development cannot be achieved without gender equality and a meaningful enhancement in women's economic and political participation. Empowered women are synonyms of a more equal and wealthier society."

These were the words of the European Union Ambassador to Eswatini, Dessislava Choumelova, which she stated during the launch of "Hlonipheka – Thriving For Dignity Programme."

The launched programme is an initiative aimed at promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms of survivors of the soaring gender-based violence (GBV) and those of persons living with disability in Eswatini. Among the major outputs of the programme are the creation of antitolerance to violence in communities, community advocacy on GBV, and school dialogues.

This three-year programme worth SZL 10 million, which the European Union is funding in partnership with UNFPA Eswatini, will cover all four regions of Eswatini. The EU asserts that the programme aims at restoring the dignity of



▲EU Ambassador to Eswatini Dessislava Choumelova (second from right) posing with the high profile figures during the launch of Hlonipheka programme.

thousands of survivors of GBV and persons with disability (PWD).

In her speech during the programme launch, Choumelova said whilst sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality and a meaningful enhancement of women's economic and political participation, the same was true for people living with disabilities.

She said the inclusion of PWD in the social and economic life of the country was key to

concretising the principle of leaving no one behind. The Ambassador said this project, which starts immediately and ends in 2027, was firmly on the right path given that His Majesty King Mswati III, in his Speech from the Throne when opening the first session of the 12th Parliament, also commended the allocation of resources to end GBV in Eswatini. She added that the King also pointed out that people with disabilities must be included.

"Investing in human capital and social inclusion, including the most vulnerable groups is a crosscutting theme in our programming in the country and it is along these lines that we worked together with UNFPA and in collaboration with the DPM Office to elaborate this programme." Stated Choumelova. "I would like to thank both institutions for the positive and constructive exchanges that have led to the finalization of the programme."

The EU Ambassador further added that this EU support to eliminate GBV was not a once-off event in Eswatini. The Ambassador asserted that the EU has, over the years, collaborated with the Government of Eswatini, civil society organisations and other partners to raise awareness and advocate for the promotion, and protection of women's rights and prevention of sexual offences and domestic violence in the country.

Present during the launch was the Principal Secretary in the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Melusi Masuku, who represented the DPM, Senator Thuli Dladla, members of the diplomatic corp and various representatives of civil society organisations.

# King calls for more jobs in mining

By EDN Reporter

HIS Majesty King Mswati III of Wednesday toured the Green Cher Mine and called for the sector to become an employment beacon.

Addressing the workers, His Majest reminded them that thousands of peopl are job hunting and those already employe should cherish the opportunities given.

"Many people in the country are lookin for jobs. Those of us who have been give opportunities must use them well so that w can also be able to open doors for those sti seeking employment," the King said.

His Majesty said he toured the site an saw what happening and the opportunitie that lie ahead. The King further urged th workers to protect the mine and defend from Zama Zamas.

The country through His Majesty's visio has identified the mining sector as a ke driver in job creation and the bettermer of emaSwati. The mining sector hold significant employment opportunities an economic boosts.

Green Chert mine, located at the Malolotj Nature Reserve is owned by Michael Le Enterprises whose owners are originall from Taiwan but incorporated in th Kingdom. The Enterprises was given a yea to undertake the prospecting process. Th prospecting process is set to create over 20 jobs and more are expected when the actual mining starts.

Globally, mines have become the backbon of economies. Botswana is a perfect exampl of the diamond mines providing jobs an stimulating the economy for the bettermer of Batswana.



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🔺 Minister of Commerce Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo, Jonsson Workwear Chairman and CEO Nick Jonsson and other stakeholders posing for a group picture during the construction site visit.



🔺 Jonsson Workwear Chairman and CEO Nick Jonsson delivering his remarks.

# Jonsson Workwear promises above minimum wage

### Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

## **GLAD tidings!**

Emaswati can expect more than just job opportunities from the upcoming Jonsson Workwear factory in Nhlangano.

During a visit on Wednesday to the construction site alongside Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Trade Manqoba Khumalo, Jonsson Workwear Chairman and CEO Nick Jonsson pledged to offer

"living wages" and prioritize employee wellbeing. Jonsson expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome he received in Eswatini, emphasizing the company's commitment to investing in human capital.

## Wage

"Unlike other companies, we prioritize our people. We pay a living wage, not a minimum wage. You can go to any of our factories, and you'll see the difference in how we treat our employees," Jonsson said. The commitment extends beyond wages for the company according to Jonsson. The 21 000 square-meter factory will boast two large canteens, each with a seating capacity of 500 people, ensuring two meals a day for employees. Additionally, a dedicated clinic will provide basic healthcare services, with plans to include doctors in future, as seen at Jonsson's factories in Lesotho.

"Employee well-being is fundamental to our operations. We believe in taking care of our people, and these facilities reflect that commitment," Jonsson



▲ Minister of Commerce Mangoba Khumalo with Jonsson Workwear Chairman and CEO Nick Jonsson and Inyatsi Construction CEO Derrick

🛕 Minister of Commerce Manqoba Khumalo with Jonsson Workwear Chairman and CEO Nick Jonsson during the site visit of the under construction factory in Nhlangano.

# Maseyisini MP calls for hiring of local residents, infrastructure support

MASEYISINI Member of Parliament Nokuthula Dlamini has urged the company to prioritise local residents when hiring for the anticipated job opportunities.

MP Dlamini, whose constituency is where the factory is located highlighted the importance of local employment opportunities. "This project presents a significant opportunity to address the high unemployment rate in our region," she stated. "I urge Jonsson Workwear to prioritise hiring individuals from the local communities surrounding the factory before expanding to hire people from other areas."

Beyond employment, MP Dlamini also raised concerns about the poor road conditions in the area, urging the company to consider supporting improvement of infrastructure. "While we celebrate the job creation and economic boost this project brings, it's crucial to address existing challenges," she emphasized. "Improved road infrastructure is essential for both the smooth operation of the factory and the well-being of the community."

Maseyisini MP expressed her overall support for the project, acknowledging its potential to curb unemployment and contribute to the region's development.

The site visit, led by Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo, brought together various stakeholders, parliamentarians, including other Shiselweni Regional Administrator Peter Mamba, Eswatini Investments Promotion Authority Board Chairperson Theo Hlophe, and representatives from Construction Associates (CA), the appointed contractor of the project. Minister Khumalo commended CA for their exceptional work on the factory

# **Jonsson Workwear overcomes** decade-long journey to Eswatini

THE upcoming Jonsson Workwear both parties has resulted in a project factory in Nhlangano marks the with significant potential benefits for culmination of a 10-year journey of Eswatini. The factory, expected to be the company, as revealed by CEO Nick Jonsson during the site visit.

Jonsson acknowledged the challenges he faced before finally establishing a footprint in Eswatini. "It hasn't been an easy road," he admitted, "but we are thrilled to finally be here and contribute to the Kingdom's growth."

Minister Khumalo echoed Jonsson's sentiment, sharing that former Minister and Ndzingeni MP Lutfo Dlamini initially connected him with Jonsson, setting the wheels in motion for this long-awaited collaboration. The perseverance of

operational by August 2024, is projected to create over 3,000 jobs and contribute to the nation's economic development.

Interestingly, Jonsson Workwear CEO Nick Jonsson revealed that the company currently employs over 22 000 individuals in its Lesotho factories. He expressed that they are looking at an expansion potential in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The company has many other factories across Southern Africa with thousands of employment opportunities. It also has a good international trade route, having several customers in other continents.

# ... Factory nears completion, to be operational by August

RESIDENTS of Shiselweni have reason to celebrate as the construction of the highly anticipated Jonsson Workwear factory is nearing completion.

Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Mangoba Khumalo, announced during the site visit alongside Jonsson Chairman and CEO Nick Jonsson that the factory is expected to be operational by August 2024.

The minister expressed his gratitude to the Jonsson company for choosing to invest in Eswatini, highlighting the positive impact the project will have on the region. "This investment not only brings job creation and economic growth to Shiselweni, but also showcases Eswatini's potential as a destination for international investment," stated Khumalo.

## **Opportunities**

He further extended an invitation to Jonsson to act as an ambassador for Eswatini, encouraging the company to promote the Kingdom's investment opportunities to its international network. This collaboration has the potential to attract further foreign investment and contribute significantly to Eswatini's economic development.

The Jonsson Workwear factory is anticipated to create over 3 000 jobs upon completion, offering significant employment opportunities for the local community. The project is also expected to generate indirect economic benefits through the creation of new businesses and increased economic activity in the country.

# I am neither a murderer nor terrorist — Bacede

## **By Bahle Gama**

bahleg@rubiconmedia.group

INCARCERATED former Hosea Member of Parliament Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza is maintaining his plea of no guilt for terrorism and murder amongst other charges.

Mabuza appeared before Judge Mumcy Dlamini on Wednesday where he was mitigating pending sentencing.

Mabuza and his co-accused former Ngwemphisi MP Mthandeni Dube were on July 25, 2021, arrested and charged with the Suppressing of Terrorism Act and murder after they incited members of the public to riot against the Government of Eswatini 2021 during the political unrest, which resulted in the loss of lives and destruction of public and private property.

In a five-hour-long mitigation, Mabuza told the court that of everything that has led to his incarceration with Dube, he is not guilty of anything.

He said this was because he was fighting for the constitutional right of emaSwati as instructed by the people of Hosea who elected him to Parliament and others from the parts of the country where his businesses were located.

He further told the court that he is a family man, with two wives, 16 children, and a disabled mother, all of whom questioned where he disappeared to as they are also unable to visit him in prison.

"With all due respect, I don't find myself guilty in all of these," he submitted.

He said during his first tenure in Parliament, he tried to withstand and work in endurance because of how things were done in the august House. He later realised that by so doing, he realized that he was not being honest to emaSwati because the MPs chosen to go to Parliament had to agree in one voice.

He went on to tell the court that he lost everything due to the unrest.

In his mitigation, Mabuza told the court that while in prison, one of his shops was burnt at Sidvwashini, Mbabane with E10 million worth of stock, and nothing was

This he said was part of the pain he has been put through for standing up for the truth. Mabuza stated that what hurt him businesses for such incidents.

But when he had to claim he was told an order had been given that he does not get

"I am saying all of this because I wish that it ends with me and doesn't happen to any other liSwati. As I'm talking to you, from conception in 2006 until 2021 I have never been sued in court for having failed to pay debts," he said.

He stated that when he was arrested, he had 14 stores which hired about 500 emaSwati and there was not a single one left to date and there are people who remain

He said a lot of things he had worked hard for have been taken or repossessed but his mindset remains intact that emaSwati needs freedom.

"These businesses were looking after OVC and feeding families. All that stopped and some of the children are out of school because of the fight I'm in. It had identified disabled people in Eswatini who would receive a stipend monthly. It hurts that those people had to stop receiving those stipends out of the blue. All of these I didn't do it for fame but simply because I didn't want to see liSwati suffering the way I did when growing up. All of this is the pain I've been subjected to, and God has been standing with me," he

He further told the court that his visitation rights were taken from him such that his mother, wives, and 16 children have never visited him in prison.

Mabuza told the court that his life had been made very hard and he lost everything, but with God as his witness, he prays that everyone involved is forgiven, "and we face together the truth."

He pleaded that in handing sentence, the court carefully looks into whether he deserves to be kept in prison for speaking on behalf of emaSwati even beyond the three years that have elapsed.

He referenced the submission made during the People's Parliament where some requested that they be released from prison.

"I also plead that the court hears the request from emaSwati by ensuring that the sentence is lenient and not harsh because by so doing the current Parliament

will not stand up for emaSwati

they are already afraid.

I am thankful for this



▲Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza having a conversation with his wives in court.



▲Advocate Myron Dewrance in a deep conversation with Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza.



## Stories By Nokunceda Magagula

nokuncedam@rubiconmedia.group

A 31-year-old man, Mfulatseli Splash Sifundza, has been arrested and charged with the murder of Armido Tito Pauke, which took place at Nkoyoyo, Mbabane. Sifundza appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court on Wednesday.

He stands accused of the murder of the Mozambican national, as stated in the charge sheet, which indicates that the incident occurred on February 17, 2024, at Nkoyoyo. The charge sheet states that the accused unlawfully and intentionally stabbed the deceased multiple times all over the body with a sharp object, causing fatal wounds that led to his death.

### Custody

In court, the accused represented himself, and the crown requested that he be remanded into custody pending committal to the High Court and the Principal Magistrate granted the plea. He will be remanded into custody until March 1 and will file his bail application at the High Court. The crown also requested that Sifundza's blood specimen be taken for further investigation.

The arrest and court appearance of

# Man (31) held in connection with Nkoyoyo murder

Sifundza follows a report by the police on Sunday, stating that a 47-year-old Mozambican man from Nkoyoyo was found dead with multiple stab wounds on a pathway in Nkoyoyo. Residents who discovered the body on Saturday morning stated that the man had been consuming alcoholic drinks at a nearby watering hole on Friday.

### Drinking

It is reported that the man left the drinking spot for his flat around a certain time and was in a good state when he left.

"When he was found, his pockets were turned out, so it is assumed that he was being robbed. We do not know who committed this act, but there have been incidents where people were almost robbed in the area," the source said.

Assistant Superintendent Nosipho Mnguni, the Deputy Chief Police Information and Communication Officer (PICO) confirmed that a 47-year-old man was found in Nkoyoyo with multiple stab wounds.



▲ Mfulatseli Splash Sifundza, has been arrested and charged with the murder of Armido Tito Pauke.

# Stepfather assaults stepdaughter, damages girlfriend's phone on Valentine's

While others were celebrating the day of love, 24-year-old Mpendulo Ngcamphalala was assaulting his stepdaughter and damaged his girlfriend's phone worth E2 500.

Ngcamphalala from Nkoyoyo appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate Court on Tuesday. According to the accused's charge sheet, the incident occurred on February 14, 2024.

It also adds that the accused argued with his girlfriend, Xolile Gama, as he suspected she was cheating, which led to him damaging her cell phone and assaulting her daughter, Nomphumelelo Masilela. This act resulted in Gama being charged with two counts of contravening Section 77(1) (a) of the Sexual Offences and Violence Act of 2018.

Count one details that "On February 14, 2024, at Ngwenya New Skom area in the Hhohho region, the accused, being a stepfather of Masilela, unlawfully assaulted her and caused her bodily harm."

Count two states that on the same day, the accused unlawfully damaged Gama's cellphone, a Navy blue Vivo model valued at E2,500

In court, Ngcamphalala pleaded guilty to both counts. When asked to explain his actions, he stated that he and Gama were fighting over her phone because he suspected she was cheating. During the altercation, his stepdaughter got in the way and was accidentally assaulted.

The accused was found guilty as per his plea. In his mitigation statement, he expressed remorse for his actions, acknowledging that he acted out of anger without thinking things through. He requested leniency from the court, emphasizing that he is a first-time offender who pleaded guilty to the offence, thus not wasting the court's time.

For count one, the accused was sentenced to two years of imprisonment or an E5,000 fine. For count two, he was sentenced to one year of imprisonment or an E2,500 fine.



▲ Mpendulo Ngcamphalala from Nkoyoyo appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate Court on Tuesday.



# Mbabane Introducing Urgcwetrbe Shizanyatra

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# Man fined E5 000 for assaulting cousin over shoe

A fight between two cousins has led to one being sentenced to pay an E5,000 fine or serve two years in prison.

The suspect in this case is Phumlani Gama, a 22-year-old from Mantsholo. Gama appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court on Wednesday. Gama is accused of assaulting his cousin, Phumelele Thandiswa Gamedze, several times on the face with open fists, thereby contravening Section 77(1)(a) of the Sexual Offense and Violence Act of 2018.

It is alleged that the assault occurred because Gamedze wore the accused's shoes without his permission. Gama's charge sheet states, "On January 22, 2024, in the Mantsholo area of the Hhohho region, wrongfully and unlawfully assaulted the complainant with open hands and fists several times."

In court, Gama represented himself and pleaded guilty to the charge of assault, which the crown accepted. Principal Magistrate Nhlabatsi questioned the accused about why he assaulted his cousin. Gama first confirmed that the complainant was indeed his cousin and explained that on the day of the incident, Gamedze wore his shoes without asking, which made him furious and led to the attack.

Based on his plea, the court found the accused guilty. In his mitigation statement, Gama expressed remorse for his behaviour and assured the court that he would never repeat it. He also mentioned that he is the one supporting his older sister's child, and if he were to be imprisoned, he would be unable to fulfil those duties.

"Your Worship, I am extremely remorseful for my behaviour. I would also like to apologize to my cousin, and I swear to the court that I will never do anything like this ever again," Gama said.

Considering all the circumstances, the court sentenced the accused to two years of imprisonment or an E5 000 fine.



▲Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi.



# BUSINESS NEWS



# **BUSINESS** BRIBES

## Eswatini integrates into COMESA e-Co system

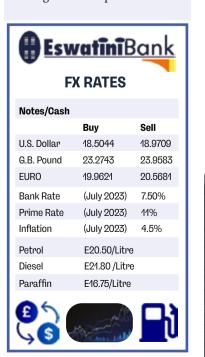
ESWATINI is among the Member States that have completed the process of integration of its national systems into the COMESA e-CO system, and they are ready to start the first phase of piloting the implementation of COMESA e-CO. This was stated by the COMESA Secretariat Director of Trade and Customs Division Onyango Christopher during the COMESA Secretariat Sub-Regional Meeting of the National Electronic Certificate of Origin (E-Co) Focal Persons from February 19-21, 2024 in Lusaka, Zambia at the COMESA headquarters.

## SA taps reserves to limit rising debt

CAPE TOWN — South Africa's government will draw down \$8 billion over the next three years from contingency reserves held at the central bank to limit rising debt, the National Treasury said on Wednesday. Africa's most industrialised economy has barely grown in more than a decade, with rising debt-servicing costs eating up a growing share of the national budget.

## Rand, dollar bonds jump after budget

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand and international dollar bonds jumped on Wednesday, after the finance minister said the government would tap 150 billion rand (\$7.99 billion) from a central bank-administered contingency account in order to limit borrowing. At 1249 GMT, the rand traded at 18.825 against the dollar, around 0.49 per cent stronger than its previous close.



# Tough times ahead for 'sinners' as SA Finance Minister raises excise duties

## **By Silindzelwe Nxumalo**

silindzelwen@rubiconmedia.group

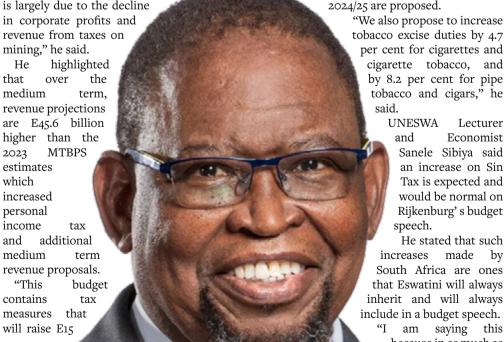
ALCOHOL imbibers and smokers will dig deeper into their pockets to pay for their 'sins' following that the South African Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana has announced a remarkable increase of excise duties on alcoholic drinks by between 6.7 per cent - 7.2 per cent and 4.2 per cent - 8.2 per cent for tobacco and cigarettes.

Notwithstanding that Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg will be announcing the Eswatini national budget speech tomorrow (Friday) emaSwati should just be prepared to bear Godongwana's brunt mainly because Eswatini imports several alcoholic and tobacco products from South Africa which means they will absorb the price increase as it is. They might suffer a double blow should Rijkenberg also announce an increase in the same products on Friday.

In his speech, Godongwana said the weak performance of our economy has resulted in for 2023/24.

a sharp deterioration in tax revenue collection "At E1.73 trillion, tax revenue for 2023/24 is E56.1 billion lower than estimated in

the 2023 Budget. The shortfall





▲A man drinks beer while smoking a cigarette.

billion in 2024/25 to alleviate immediate fiscal pressure and support faster debt stabilisation. Revenue is mostly raised through personal income tax by not adjusting the tax brackets, rebates, and medical tax credit for inflation," he said.

He stated that for alcohol products excise duties, above-inflation increases of between 6.7 and 7.2 percent for

> Lecturer Economist Sanele Sibiya said an increase on Sin Tax is expected and would be normal on Rijkenburg's budget

He stated that such increases made by South Africa are ones that Eswatini will always inherit and will always include in a budget speech. "I am saying this because in as much as the government may

hide it as a way of a discouraging measure it is also a standing stream of revenue for the country," he said.

Sibiya defined Sin taxes as taxes that are for habit forming products or goods which the country uses as a way of discouraging people not to use certain goods.

"In all honesty there is no way an addicted person can stop using certain products just because you have announced an increase today, to get out of an addiction takes time. This is why i say this is guaranteed revenue for the government," he said.

He added that in as much it affects the consumer, these are taxes that they can not run away from unless they stop the addiction or just learn to live with it.

# What Godongwana said in a nutshell Plans to lift excise duties on alcoholic drinks by between 6.7 per cent to 7.2 per cent for

- A can of beer increases by 14 cents;
- A can of a cider and alcoholic fruit beverage goes up by 14 cents;
- A bottle of wine will cost an extra 28 cents;
- A bottle of fortified wine will cost an additional 47 cents;
- A bottle of sparkling wine will cost an extra 89 cents; and
- A bottle of spirits, including whisky, gin or vodka, increases by R5.53.

## He'll also raise duties on cigarettes by 4.7 per cent and by 8.2 per cent for pipe tobacco and cigars.

- A R9.51 increase for cigars;
- A 97 cent increase to a pack of cigarettes and •An extra 57 cents for a pipe of tobacco.

Additionally, Godongwana noted an increase in the excise duty on electronic nicotine and non-nicotine delivery systems, known as vapes, to E3.04 per millilitre.

> South Africa Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana.

# Eswatini successfully integrates national systems into the COMESA e-Co system

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo

silindzelwen@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI is among the Member States that have completed the process of integration of its national systems into the COMESA e-CO system, and they are ready to start the first phase of piloting the implementation of COMESA e-CO.

This was stated by the COMESA Secretariat Director of Trade and Customs Division Dr Christopher Onyango during the COMESA Secretariat Sub-Regional Meeting of the National Electronic Certificate of Origin (E-Co) Focal Persons from February 19-21, 2024 in Lusaka, Zambia at the COMESA headquarters.

The meeting was for focal point persons of the national electronic certificate of origin (E-CO), this team is made of Eswatini, Malawi and Zambia.

During the opening of the meeting Dr Christopher Onyango, said the objective of the joint technical meeting included agreeing on a Joint Piloting Action Plan and outlining constructive recommendations and specific actions that will guide all to start piloting the COMESA e-CO before May 2024 based on the lessons learned from their implementation of SADC e-CO Pilot.

He stated that another objective of the meeting was to receive national status reports from the three Member States in terms of preparations for piloting e-CO and share their experience with other counterparts and ensuring that there is a common understanding of the usage of technical and functional parts of the e-CO system and implementation of data exchange thru the COMESA e-CO system.

"The meeting will also conduct Technical Testing of exchanging e-CO among the three piloting Member States thru COMESA e-CO system and make any required modifications or fixing bugs that may be arise during testing to ensure successful exchange of e-CO," he said.

Onyango highlighted that the meeting was part of the implementation of COMESA e-CO system project



▲ The Eswatini delegation during the meeting: Senior Customs Officer-Border Operations Sikelela Mkhonta (right) seated with Nelisiwe Nxumalo in Lusaka Zambia.

Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP) funded by the European Union (EU) under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11).

"In November 2018, the COMESA Secretariat and the EU signed a Euro 48 million COMESA TFP for the benefit of its Member States. The overall objective of the TFP was to play a fundamental role in deepening regional integration, improving inclusive regional economic growth and enhancing competitiveness of the COMESA region," he said.

He explained that the specific objectives of the TFP were to increase intra-regional trade flows of goods, persons and services by reducing the costs or delays of imports or exports at specific border posts through reduction of non-tariff barriers (NTBs), implementation of COMESA Digital FTA instruments such as electronic certificate of origin (e-CO), Trade Information

Portal (TIP), the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and improvements of coordinated border management (CBM) and border upgrade projects and liberalization of trade in services and free movement of persons.

The Director also said the development and implementation of the COMESA e-CO falls under the e-logistics trust of the digital FTA and it was aimed to facilitate intraregional trade by eventually replacing the procedures of manual certificate of origin currently in use by the Member States with a web-based e-CO system accessible using web browsers in line with the COMESA Protocol on Rules of Origin and its implementation Guidelines

Furthermore, he stated that the progress of implementation of COMESA e-CO Project Activities and the achievements made so far, including the COMESA e-CO

development has been completed and ready for piloting in those Member States who are ready for piloting, and the COMESA Regulations for the implementation of e-CO was developed which was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2019 where the Council also recommended that the Member States should review their national laws to domesticate the COMESA regulations to enable them to exchange the e-COs.

He also added that amendments to the Protocol on Rules of Origin and its Appendixes were adopted by the Council of Ministers, and accordingly, the implementation Procedures Manual and e-CO User Guides were also prepared.

"Other achievements also include the National Situational assessments were conducted to review readiness and needs of the Member States. Further engagements are underway with those Member States who have responded to the questionnaire and indicated their readiness, and the Secretariat assisted to selected Member States (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Seychelles) to prepare their country-specific action plan to interface and pilot the COMESA e-CO system and conduct necessary training and support," he said.

He also noted that the 44th Meeting of the Council of Ministers, which was held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 23rd November 2023, URGED Member States to expedite the integration of their national systems with the COMESA e-CO System.

"It is against the above background that the COMESA Secretariat is continuing to work with the Member States to finalise integration, start piloting and implement the remaining e-CO Project Activities in 2024 Work Plan," he said.

He further highlighted that Malawi, Eswatini, and Zambia are among the Member States that have completed the process of integration or interfacing of national systems with the COMESA e-CO system, and they are ready to start the first phase of piloting the implementation of the COMESA e-CO.

The Eswatini delegation included Senior Customs Officer-Border Operations Sikelela Mkhonta, Systems Developer Specialist Thandokuhle Nkambule, and



▼The attendees of the meeting that was held in Lusaka, Zambia posing for a group picture.

# South Africa taps contingency reserves to limit rising debt

By Kopano Gumbi, Olivia Kumwenda-mtambo and **Nellie Peyton** 

CAPE TOWN South Africa's government will draw down \$8 billion over the next three years from contingency reserves held at the central bank to limit rising debt, the National Treasury said on Wednesday.

Africa's most industrialised economy has barely grown in more than a decade, with rising debt-servicing costs eating up a growing share of the national budget.

The bleak economic backdrop is looming large over a general election due on May 29 that could see the governing African National Congress party lose its parliamentary majority for the first time since the end of apartheid 30 years ago.

Presenting the 2024 budget, Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana said the unusual move to draw down 150 billion rand (\$7.93 billion) from the Gold and Foreign Exchange Contingency Reserve Account (GFECRA) would not compromise the central bank's solvency and still leave sufficient buffers to absorb exchange rate shocks. GFECRA captures gains and losses on the country's foreign currency reserve transactions and has a balance of more than 500 billion rand, larger than plausible reserve losses from rand appreciation, the Treasury said.

The government will receive 100 billion rand in the next fiscal year to the end of



▲South Africa's Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana speaks during his 2024 budget speech in Cape Town, South Africa.

March 2025, and 25 billion rand in each of the following two years.

Director-General Pieterse told reporters that in effect the government was using the reserve account to replace more expensive borrowing.

The rand gained modestly and the country's sovereign dollar bonds strengthened as investors were reassured about government funding needs.

### Lower debt peak

Among revenue measures, the Treasury proposed 15 billion rand of tax increases next fiscal year to alleviate fiscal pressures.

Consolidated spending is seen rising to 2.6 trillion rand in fiscal year 2026/2027 from 2.4 trillion in 2024/2025, with increased allocations including health, education and the extension of a social grant introduced during the Covid era.

Gross debt is now projected to stabilise at 75.3 per cent of gross domestic product in 2025/2026, below the 77.7 per cent ratio seen in November. The consolidated budget deficit in the current fiscal year that ends in March is seen at 4.9 per cent of GDP, unchanged from November's forecast, and the economy is seen growing 1.3 per cent in 2024, up from estimated growth of 0.6 per cent in 2023. A major constraint on growth have been rolling power cuts that have hurt businesses of all sizes, with utility Eskom implementing the heaviest outages ever last year. South Africa also faces a logistics crisis as another state company, Transnet, struggles to provide adequate freight rail and port services because of equipment shortages, maintenance backlogs rampant vandalism.

"Government is making the most out of very limited resources," Godongwana said.

"The budgets we have tabled since 1994, have been about securing the goal of growing the economy, so that we can do more to address the inequalities and deprivation that still scar our society and undermine the promise of democracy." (Reuters)



▲A flare burns excess natural gas in the Permian Basin in Loving County, Texas, U.S.

# Oil steady as investors weigh US rate cut outlook with Middle East tensions

LONDON - Oil prices steadied on Wednesday, stabilising from losses in the previous session, as growing expectations that cuts to U.S. interest rates will take longer than thought balanced ongoing concerns over attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

Brent crude futures fell by 14 cents, or 0.17 per cent, to \$82.20 a barrel by 1511 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures (WTI) were lower by 9 cents, or 0.12

The Brent and WTI contracts fell from near three-week highs on Tuesday, dropping by 1.5 per cent and 1.4 per cent, respectively.

The premium of front-month April Brent futures over September contracts - known as backwardation, and a sign of a tightly supplied market - hit its highest since Oct. 31 on Monday at \$3.64 a barrel, though has since cooled off to around \$3.50.

Tuesday's drop was "inspired by a lack of any further conflict news from the world's clash points as markets had to settle on what was bothering the macro world," PVM analyst John Evans said in a note published on Wednesday morning.

Concerns that rate cuts by the Federal Reserve could take longer than thought have weighed on the outlook for oil demand. U.S. inflation data last week pushed back expectations for an imminent start to the Fed's easing cycle, with economists polled by Reuters now forecasting a cut in June.

"Brent has regained a measure of its historic behavioural tendency to track equities, in recent times and this has tied some of its moves into the debate on the path of interest rates that are influencing equities," Investec head of commodities Callum Macpherson told Reuters.

Minutes from the Fed's January monetary policy meeting, due at 1900 GMT, will offer further clues on the timing of potential interest rate cuts.

But Houthi attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab strait have continued to stoke concerns over freight flows through the critical waterway. Drone and missile strikes have hit at least four vessels since last Friday.

Washington on Tuesday again vetoed a draft United Nations Security Council resolution on the Israel-Hamas war, blocking a demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The U.S. is instead pushing for a ceasefire conditional on the release of Israeli hostages by Hamas. (Reuters)

# Rand, dollar bonds jump after budget

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand and international dollar bonds jumped on Wednesday, after the finance minister said the government would tap 150 billion rand (\$7.99 billion) from a central bankadministered contingency account in order to limit borrowing.

At 1249 GMT, the rand traded at 18.825 against the dollar, around 0.49 per cent stronger than its previous close. Just before Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana's 2024 budget speech, it had been trading close to its previous close.

South Africa's longer-dated international bonds rose the most in response to the 2024 budget speech, with the 2052 maturity jumping 1.58 cents on the dollar at 1249 GMT to trade at 87.8 cents, according to Tradeweb data. Africa's most industrialised economy has barely grown in a decade while revenue collection has also been weak, leading to rising debt levels. The Treasury said in the 2024 budget that it was able to tap the Gold and Foreign Exchange Contingency Reserve Account (GFECRA) - which had a balance of 507.3 billion rand in January 2024 - because it was "now larger than any plausible losses on foreign exchange reserves from rand appreciation".

It said the settlement would be used to cut borrowing and the rise in debt servicing costs, meaning gross debt is projected to stabilise at 75.3 per cent of GDP in 2025/26, lower than 77.7 per cent of GDP seen in



▲ South African Rand coins seen in this illustration picture.

"The government opted for the easy way and tapped R150bn of the valuation gains in the GFECRA," Jee-A van der Linde, senior economist at Oxford Economics, said in a note to clients.

"The GFECRA profits, which will be distributed over the next three years, helps to offset the government's net borrowing requirement, and reduces debt-service costs. That said, government has not actually reduced spending nor is it borrowing less."

South Africa's bleak economic backdrop, with GDP growth averaging 0.8 per cent since 2012, is looming over national elections due on May 29 that could see the governing African National Congress (ANC) party lose its parliamentary majority for the first time since the end of apartheid 30

Meanwhile, data from Stats SA showed earlier on Wednesday that annual inflation quickened to 5.3 per cent in January from 5.1 per cent in December. Economists polled by Reuters had predicted an increase in to 5.4

The South African Reserve Bank likes to see inflation around the mid-point of its 3 per cent to 6 per cent target range and has said it wants to see a clearer disinflation trend before cutting interest rates.

"Interest rates will be kept steady in the first half of the year, with the first cut of 25 basis points (bps) expected in July, followed by cuts of similar magnitude in September and November," Nedbank economists said in a research note. (Reuters)

MADRID - The number of Spaniards installing solar panels on their homes fell last year, the first decline since 2018 as the impact of subsidies faded, while the outlook for this year is steady.

Analysts said lower energy prices and the squeeze on household budgets caused by inflation had begun to sap enthusiasm for solar across Europe, but the impact is particularly marked in Spain, a relatively immature market for rooftop solar.

Almost 112,000 Spanish households set up solar energy installations in 2023, roughly half the record level of 2022, according to renewable lobby APPA.

Although one of Europe's sunniest countries and a leader in renewable energy, Spain lags other countries in this segment, notably Europe's solar leader Germany.

It began to catch up after Spain in 2018 scrapped an unpopular levy, known as the sun tax, as part of measures to reduce electricity bills. The charge on solar power affected households and small businesses.

Christophe Lits, a market analyst at European industry association SolarPower Europe, said demand had fallen especially sharply in Spain because the market was less mature and would "fluctuate more due to external shocks". Madrid earmarked more than 2 billion euros (\$2.16 billion) of European Union post-pandemic recovery funds for solar installations, energy storage and domestic renewable heating systems. In addition, many local authorities offer solar panel tax breaks.

"We had in 2022 a market doped with subsidies, the war in Ukraine and market instability," Javier Dominguez, technical director at Spanish renewable energy systems firm Cambio Energetico said. "In 2023 there was a hangover from that."

Lucia Varela, director of self-consumption and energy communities at solar industry group UNEF, said a decline in demand from households had been expected when people stopped perceiving energy prices as high as they did during the price shock of 2022 caused by the market disruption linked to Russia's war on Ukraine.

For the industry, however, she said the extent of the decline in installations on peo-

# Rooftop solar fever cools in sunny Spain



▲Almost 112,000 Spanish households set up solar energy installations in 2023, roughly half the record level of 2022, according to renewable lobby APPA.

ple's homes was concerning and it may have to look more to new forms of installations, serving groups of households or communities. The industrial sector also installed less solar in 2023, though the decline was smaller. Overall, some 1.9 gigawatts (GW) of capacity was added, 27% less than in 2022 but well above the 2021 performance, APPA figures show.

## PLAYING CATCH UP

Spain's total installed solar rooftop capacity at the end of last year was a fifth of Germany's and roughly half of Italy's, Solar-Power Europe data shows.

"The sector is 15 years behind due to the

sun tax," Christopher Cederskog, chief executive of solar supplier Sunhero, said.

He also said delays in subsidy payments had damaged public perception of the sector. The danger is, he said, that the poorest who would benefit most from cheaper energy, feel unable to risk the initial outlay.

An average domestic system costs around 7,000 euros, according to APPA. Based on last year's energy prices, such investment would be recovered in seven years' time even without government support.

Average waiting times for subsidies are around a year, Varela of UNEF estimated, and in some cases closer to two.

The energy ministry transfers funds to the regional governments to implement the scheme, which must comply with rigorous European Commission rules, a spokesperson said, adding about 44% of the allocated funds have been disbursed.

Maria Diaz Fernandez, a 43-year-old primary school teacher, spent around 6,400 euros installing 10 solar panels on her home in Toledo, central Spain, in November. She said she is waiting for the subsidies that she hoped would cover 40% of the cost.

Her siblings, who installed their systems almost a year earlier, were also still waiting.

### **BRIGHT FUTURE?**

The energy ministry spokesperson, however, said the government's track record on solar was strong as it not only cancelled the sun tax, but had improved the regulatory framework, adding the market had grown 14-fold since 2018. Jon Macias, president of APPA's prosumer branch, was also upbeat, citing Spain's continued potential for growth as only 7% of single-family homes and 2% of businesses in Spain get their energy from their own solar panels. He predicts installations this year will be steady with last year's and said Spain was on track to reach a 2030 target of 19 gigawatts (GW) of installations on homes and company-owned buildings.

The goal would correspond to fitting solar panels to more than 4 million average homes.

Some, however, say change is needed to ensure Spain carries on installing solar panels. With roughly two-thirds of Spaniards living in apartment blocks, many in the sector say the future lies in shared projects, in which solar panels would provide energy to group of consumers rather than a single household. (**Reuters**)

# House punts on AI with directionless new task force

THE House of Representatives has founded a Task Force on artificial intelligence that will "ensure America continues leading in this strategic area," as Speaker Mike Johnson put it.

But the announcement feels more like a punt after years of indecision that show no sign of ending.

In a way this task force chaired by California Reps Ted Lieu and Jay Obernolte — is a welcome sign of Congress doing something, anything, on an important topic that has become the darling of tech investment. But in another, more important way, it comes off as lip service at a time many feel AI and tech are running circles around regulators and lawmakers. Furthermore, the dispiriting partisanship and obstruction on display every day in Congress renders quaint any notion that this task force would produce anything of value at any time, let alone during a historically divisive election year.

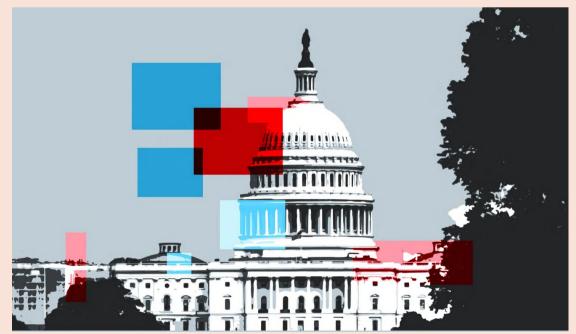
"As new innovations in AI continue to emerge, Congress and our

partners in federal government must keep up. House Republicans and Democrats will work together to create a comprehensive report detailing the regulatory standards and congressional actions needed to both protect consumers and foster continued investment and innovation in AI," said Rep. Obernolte in the announcement.

And Rep. Lieu: "AI has the capability of changing our lives as we know it. The question is how to ensure AI benefits society instead of harming us. As a recovering Computer Science major, I know this will not be an easy or quick or one-time task, but I believe Congress has an essential role to play in the future of AI. I have been heartened to see so many Members of Congress of all political persuasions agree."

Of course, the White House, numerous agencies, the EU and countless other authorities and organizations are already issuing "comprehensive reports" and recommending legislative actions, but what's one more?

It seems as though Congress



▲Many feel AI and tech are running circles around regulators and lawmakers.

realized that it was the last substantive entity to act on this industry-reshaping force, and so representatives reached across the aisle to pat each other on the back for taking the smallest possible step toward future legislation. But at the same time, with Congress dysfunctional (having passed a historically low number of bills) and all eyes on the 2024 presidential election, this task force is just a way of kicking the can down the road until they

know what they can get away with under the coming administration.

Certainly studying AI and its risks and benefits is not a bad thing — but it's a little late in the day to be announcing it.

# Zim starts an emergency polio vaccination drive

# ... after detecting cases caused by a rare mutation

ZIMBABWE begananemergency campaign to inoculate more than 4 million children against polio on Tuesday after health authorities detected three cases caused by the rare mutation of the weakened virus used in oral vaccines, including a 10-year-old girl who was paralyzed in January.

The health ministry said laboratory tests from samples collected from sewage sites in several areas of the capital, Harare, late last year showed the presence of a mutated polio virus that originated in an oral vaccine used in the global eradication effort. In rare instances, the live polio virus in vaccines can mutate into a form capable of sparking new outbreaks, especially in places with poor sanitation and low vaccination levels.

The number of polio cases globally has dropped by more than 99% since the global effort to wipe out the disease led by the World Health Organization and others began in 1988. But the majority of children being paralyzed by polio these days are being crippled by a virus that was originally linked to a vaccine.

Vaccination teams in Zimbabwe are moving from house to house to deliver more doses to protect children, while others will be stationed at health facilities, authorities said.

Officials said it was the first time Zimbabwe would be using a new oral polio vaccine specifically designed



▲ Zimbabwe began an emergency campaign to inoculate more than 4 million children against polio.

to reduce the risk of the virus within it mutating into a dangerous form.

Zimbabwe aims to roll out more than 10 million new vaccine doses targeting just over 4 million children below the age of 10 in two rounds in February and March. More than 95% of that population needs to be immunized against polio to stop new outbreaks.

Last year, the wild poliovirus caused a dozen cases in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the only countries that still have that virus. In comparison, polioviruses linked to the vaccine caused more than 500 cases in nearly two dozen countries globally, mostly in Africa. Zimbabwe last reported a wild poliovirus case in 1986, according to the United Nations

children's Agency.

Zimbabwe Health Minister Douglas Mombeshora called the new detection of polio "a serious concern" but said they were prepared to respond swiftly. The health ministry said it was collaborating with health authorities in at least five other African countries that had recently detected polioviruses through environmental sampling and routine surveillance.

Polio can cause total paralysis, and children under 5 are especially vulnerable. It is transmitted from person to person, mainly through contact with contaminated feces, water or food, as well as through droplets from a sneeze or cough of an infected person. (Africa news)

# Italy arrests 12 people over speed boat migrant trips from Tunisia

ROME - Italian police said on Wednesday they had arrested 12 suspected human traffickers for allegedly organising highspeed transfers for at least 73 illegal migrants from Tunisia to Europe.

Expert pilots operated the speed boats crossing from Tunisia to Marsala in Sicily between June and September last year, police said in a statement, describing them as "VIP trips".

The traffickers transferred relatively small groups of up to 20 people on each of four trips, charging fees of up to 6,000 euros (\$6,500) per person, the statement said.

The trip, on a crowded and less seaworthy vessel, would normally cost under 1,000 euros per migrant, an official with knowledge of the matter said.

Italy and other European governments have taken an increasingly hard line on immigration in recent years amid a surge of arrivals of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. EU data shows fewer than 100,000

irregular migrants made to it Europe in 2020, but that rose to 250,000 last year.

Six Tunisians and six Italians were detained as part of an investigation coordinated by European police body Europol and the Italian anti-mafia police unit.

The investigators identified a Tunisian former police officer as the head of the trafficking organisation.

They also held 19 illegal migrants and arrested eight Tunisian boat operators last year during the initial part of the investigation. Four of the boat crew were also charged over firing naval flares at a military vessel during an attempt to evade being apprehended by authorities.

Since the beginning of the year, 4,247 illegal migrants have landed on Italy's shores, data from the home affairs ministry shows. That is down from more than 12,500 at the same stage in 2023, when Italy recorded unprecedented pressure from the number of people trying to reach Europe.

(Reuters)



▲ Italian police said on Wednesday they had arrested 12 suspected human traffickers for allegedly organising high-speed transfers for at least 73 illegal migrants from Tunisia to Europe.

# Senegal election:

# President Sall "slow" to set date, opposition says

DAKAR - Opposition candidates in Senegal's presidential election have accused the authorities of dragging their feet on setting a new date for the vote after a court ruled that a 10-month postponement was unlawful.

President Macky Sall last week promised he would abide by the Constitutional Council's request for the vote to be scheduled as soon as possible

The court blocked Sall's parliament-backed decree to postpone the election, originally scheduled for Feb. 25.

Sall faced significant domestic and international pressure to accept the council's ruling after the crisis triggered violent street protests and warnings of authoritarian overreach in one of coup-hit West Africa's more stable democracies.

But a new date has yet to be set, stoking concern among opposition candidates, some of whom are pushing for the election to take place before Sall's mandate ends on April 2.

In a joint statement late on Tuesday, 16 of the 19 presidential con-

tenders complained about an "inexplicable slowness" enacting the council's ruling.

They said the slow resumption of electoral operations showed Sall's unwillingness to launch a process that would lead to a change of power.

The presidency did not respond to a request for comment.

Asked in a press conference on Tuesday about the end of Sall's mandate on April 2, Justice Minister Aïssata Tall Sall said it was up for debate.

"I do not know if the presidential election will happen (before April 2)," she said.

"But as for those who say there will be a power vacuum from April 2... it's a debate between lawyers and constitutional experts," she added.

Senegal had never previously delayed a presidential vote and many of the opposition saw the attempted postponement as an effort by the president to extend his mandate via an "institutional coup." Sall, 62, is not standing for re-election, having reached the constitutional limit of two terms in power. He has said the vote's postponement was needed



▲ President Macky Sall last week promised he would abide by the Constitutional Council's request for the vote to be scheduled as soon as possible.

due to a dispute over the candidate list and alleged corruption within the Constitutional Council, which it denies. The Constitutional Council published an amended list of 19 presidential candidates on Tuesday that was almost unchanged from the original. Just one candidate was removed because she had withdrawn her application. (**Reuters**)

# Kenyan police officers arrested over human smuggling claims

KENYAN authorities have taken swift action following a significant raid on a house near Nairobi, resulting in the arrest of four police officers. The operation uncovered 37 Ethiopian nationals, believed to be victims of human smuggling and trafficking.

Reports suggest that the detained Ethiopians were en route to South Africa in pursuit of improved living conditions.

This revelation sheds light on the pervasive issue of human trafficking and the desperate measures individuals undertake in search of a bettor life

Efforts are underway to identify and apprehend all in-

volved parties, including the owner of the house and other members of the smuggling ring.

The collaboration between law enforcement agencies signals a commitment to combatting such criminal activities and ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable migrants.

Kenya is a common transit route for Ethiopian migrants attempting to illegally enter South Africa, according to the UN migration agency IOM.

The agency says that the migrants, who are mostly men from Ethiopia's Oromia and SNNP regions, enter Kenya through the Moyale border point, before proceeding to Tanzania and eventually South Africa.

# Biden administration to cancel \$1.2 billion of student loans

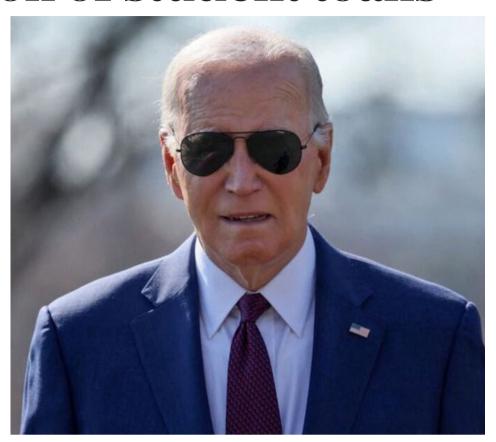
WASHINGTON - President Joe Biden's administration said on Wednesday it is cancelling \$1.2 billion worth of student loans for some 153,000 people who are eligible under a program used to make good on promises to increase loan forgiveness.

Biden last year pledged to find other avenues for tackling debt relief after the Supreme Court in June blocked a broader plan to forgive \$430 billion in student loan debt.

The administration has now canceled some \$138 billion in student debt for nearly 3.9 million people through executive actions, the White House said. The latest announcement applies to people enrolled in a repayment program known as Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) and covers those who borrowed \$12,000 or less who have been repaying the money for at least 10

The move will "particularly help community college and other borrowers with smaller loans and put many on track to being free of student debt faster than ever before," the White House said. Left-leaning progressive and young voters, whose support Biden needs to win re-election in November, have been vocal in advocating for student loan forgiveness on a wide scale. Republicans largely oppose such actions.

(Reuters)



▲US President Joe Biden.

# Ukraine outnumbered, outgunned, ground down by relentless Russia

KRAMATORSK - As the Ukraine war enters its third year, the infantry of 59th Brigade are confronting a bleak reality: they're running out of soldiers and ammunition to resist their Russian invaders.

One platoon commander who goes by his call sign "Tygr" estimated that just 60-70 per cent of the several thousand men in the brigade at the start of the conflict were still serving. The rest had been killed, wounded or signed off for reasons such as old age or illness.

Heavy casualties at the hands of Russian forces have been compounded by dreadful conditions on the eastern front, with frozen soil turning into thick mud in unseasonably warm temperatures, playing havoc with soldier's health.

"The weather is rain, snow, rain, snow. People get ill with simple flu or angina as a result. They're out of action for some time, and there is nobody to replace them," said a company commander in the brigade with the call sign "Limuzyn". "The most immediate problem in every unit is lack of people."

## Anniversary

On the cusp of the second anniversary of its Feb. 24 invasion, Vladimir Putin's Russia is in the ascendancy in a conflict that combines attritional trench combat reminiscent of World War One with hightech drone warfare that's sending tens of thousands of machines into the skies above.

Moscow has made small gains in recent months and claimed a major victory at the weekend when it took control of Avdiivka in the hotly contested eastern Donetsk region. A spokesperson for 3rd Separate Assault Brigade, one of the units that tried to hold the town, said the defenders were outnumbered seven to one.

Reuters spoke to more than 20 soldiers



▲A Ukrainian serviceman practises operating drones at an undisclosed location in Donetsk region,

and commanders in infantry, drone and troops. artillery units on different sections of the 1,000-km frontlines in eastern and southern Ukraine.

While still motivated to fight Russian occupation, they spoke of the challenges of holding off a larger and better supplied enemy as military support from the West slows despite pleas for more from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Another commander in the 59th Brigade, who only gave his first name Hryhoriy, described relentless attacks from groups of five to seven Russian soldiers who would push forward up to 10 times a day in what he called "meat assaults" - highly costly to the Russians but also a major threat to his

"When one or two defensive positions are fighting off these assaults all day, the guys get tired," Hryhoriy said as he and his exhausted men were afforded a brief rotation away from the frontlines near the Russian-occupied eastern city of Donetsk.

"Weapons break, and if there is no possibility of bringing them ammunition or changing their weapons, then you understand what this leads to."

The Ukrainian and Russian defence ministries didn't immediately respond to requests for comment on the state of the play on the frontlines and how both sides intend to prosecute the war through to the end of the year. (Reuters)

# London's iconic BT Tower to become hotel

LONDON's iconic BT Tower is set to become a hotel after the owner BT Group said it had agreed to sell the 177-metre building in the capital's West End to MCR Hotels for 275 million pounds (US\$347 million).

The tower, opened by Prime Minister Harold Wilson in 1965, was London's tallest building for 16 years until the NatWest Tower in the City of London

It was open to the public and the top floor was used as a revolving restaurant until 1971, and BT has used the floor as a venue for corporate and charity events since 1984.

Its role in communications has diminished as fixed and mobile technology changes, and its microwave aerials were removed more than a decade ago as they were no longer needed to connect London to the rest of the country.

The sale comes as part of a plan to cut costs and real estate holdings, the company said in a statement on Wednesday.

BT's Property Director Brent Mathews said the tower, which sits at the heart of London, had played a vital role in carrying the nation's calls, messages and TV signals.

"This deal with MCR will enable BT Tower to take on a new purpose, preserving this iconic building for decades to come," he said.

Tyler Morse, CEO and owner of MCR Hotels, said: "We are proud to preserve this beloved building and will work to develop proposals to tell its story as an iconic hotel, opening its doors for generations to enjoy."



▲The BT Tower communications tower will get a new lease on life and be converted into a hotel, after the owners sold the structure.

# Lifestyle & enemant // Thursday 22 February, 2024 13

# Malemon added to Matamza's show

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini

siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

AMAPIANO sensation Malemon has been announced as the latest addition to the star-studded lineup of the upcoming 'Matamza & Friends'

Taking place at Ekhayeni Chillaz on February 23, 2024, this event is set to be a Friday escape for fun-loving individuals, as they would have a chance to dance away the week's frustrations. Malemon will be sharing the stage with the likes of Gogo Skhotheni, DJ Yeka, and the event's headliner, Matamza. Joining them are a host of talented supporting acts including Zulu D, Sgitha, The Bishops, Sbu Drum DJ, Bavarah, Tilungu, Mixmash, Black Pearl, Fantacy, Expo, Drum Rhythm, and Resident DJ, ensuring a night filled with diverse sounds and infectious rhythms.

Tickets for this highly anticipated event are selling fast, priced at E50 before 10 PM and E80 thereafter. For those seeking an elevated experience, VVIP tickets are available at E150, offering exclusive access to mingle and snap pictures with Malemon, Gogo Skhotheni and DJ Yeka.

Malemon's musical journey began at a young age, and his ability to seamlessly blend various genres sets him apart in the industry. Known for his interesting



▲ Malemon has been added to the Matamza Friends line-up.

fusion of African sounds, his music not only resonates with a wide audience but also reflects his deep-rooted connection to his heritage. With hit songs like 'LePlane iLandile', 'S'gcebhezana', and 'Ses'jimile', Malemon's lyrics delve into everyday

experiences, making his music both relatable and authentic. His breakthrough moment came with the release of 'Lemonade', a continental anthem that catapulted him into the international

# Lyrikal Busta, Young Zesh to shine in Sandton

music stars trailblazers, Lyrikal Busta and Young Zesh are prepared to take the stage at Maracana in Sandton, South Africa.

The talented Upscale artists, known for their electrifying performances and unique sound, will be gracing the Macarana stage on March 24, 2024, in a show that promises to be a night to remember. The event is open to all music enthusiasts, with free entry for attendees, although strictly no under-21s will be allowed.

In an exclusive interview, Lyrikal Busta expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming performance, highlighting the significance of this opportunity to showcase Eswatini's music on an international platform. He emphasized the importance of building relationships with promoters to further the reach of Eswatini music globally.

"This performance comes after a relationship we fostered with the event's promoter. The promoter has previously booked us at Karaoke Kong, and he was happy with our performance and requested us to come over to Maracana," he said. He added that they are thrilled to be performing at Maracana as it aligns perfectly with their vision of elevating Eswatini music onto the world



▲ Young Zesh and Lyrikal Busta are set to perform in Sandton.

stage. "We are happy and honoured to be appealing on the global market," he added.

Promising an impressive performance, Lyrikal Busta extended a warm invitation to all Eswatini nationals in Johannesburg and surrounding areas to come and witness their stellar performance, vowing to set the stage ablaze and leave a lasting impression on the audience. Young Zesh,

equally excited about the opportunity to perform in Sandton, emphasized the growth of their brand and the significance of representing Eswatini music on an international platform. Confident in their abilities, Young Zesh assured fans that they would deliver a top-notch performance that would showcase the golden essence of Eswatini music.



▲ Vocalist Sethu for Sibebe Soul Sunday

# Sethu to mesmerise at Sibebe Soul **Sundays**

IT will be an outstanding musical experience at Ehawini Lifestyle and Sibebe Premium Lager as the venue has announced the third edition of the 'Sibebe Soul Sundays', featuring local vocalist, Sethu.

This Sunday, music enthusiasts can look forward to an immersive experience at Ehawini Lifestyle, where the ambience will be set by the smooth tunes of a live band, complemented by the refreshing taste of Sibebe Premium Lager.

Headlining the event is Eswatini's talented songbird, Sethu, whose soulsoothing voice is set to enchant the audience and create an evening filled with soulful melodies and positive energy. Sethu will be supported by a live band and the event will feature a supporting performance from Lusta. Entry to the show is free but attendees who would come after 4 pm will pay damages of E30. Attendees can expect not only a musical treat but also the chance to participate in contests and activities with exciting prizes up for grabs. **Edition** 

Last week's edition of 'Sibebe Soul Sundays' featured the sensational Zinia, who left the audience wanting more with her electrifying performance, setting the stage for Sethu to continue the tradition of delivering unforgettable musical experiences.

Sethu, a talented vocalist who emerged from the University of Zululand in South Africa where she studied dramatic arts, has quickly made a name for herself in the music industry. Her journey to stardom was accelerated by her victory in MTN Spotlight Season 2, followed by the release of her hit single 'Bambelela' featuring Msimisi and Denzel.

In 2022, she dropped an album titled 'Dvute Nami,' on which she featured artists including A2Z on a song called 'Ngibambe', which won the MTN SWAMA 2021 Best Afro Pop Song award. On the album, she also featured Llucid MusiQ, Fakazi Samuel, and KrTC among others. Sethu possesses vocal prowess and a voice that can be mistaken for that of an angel.

# Tendaness to drop 'Kuyabandza'

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini

siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI-born music sensation, Tendaness, is gearing up to release a new single titled 'Kuyabandza' on March 1, featuring the talented

The song is a unique blend of Afro and electronic sounds, showcasing Tendaness' diverse musical influences. In a recent interview, Tendaness shared the story behind the creation of 'Kuyabandza', revealing that the collaboration with Liyana was born out of a spontaneous creative spark. Describing the process as organic and filled with positive energy, Tendaness explained how Liyana's vocals brought the song to life, turning an initial idea into a classic.

'Kuyabandza' is a love song that speaks to the universal theme of yearning for someone special to return. It's a plea for connection, a call for understanding in a moment of need. Reflecting on the collaborative effort, Tendaness praised Liyana's vocal prowess and artistic vision, emphasizing the seamless partnership that led to the creation of this beautiful piece of music. Liyana, known for her work as part of the duo EzamaSwazi, brought her unique style and perspective to 'Kuyabandza', elevating the song to new heights.

"She commanded how the song should be vocally and I appreciate that. It is a beautiful song, and she is a good vocalist," she said. Tendaness hinted at a future collaboration with EzamaSwazi on his Tendamix Volume One EP, which



Tendaness to drop 'Kuyabandza' featuring Liyana.

will drop on March 15, 2024. Tendaness said he has the curiosity to understand EzamaSwazi's journey.

# Support

Encouraging fans to support local talent, Tendaness urged listeners to stream his music and help elevate Eswatini's music scene on a global scale.

"It's not just about me, it's about celebrating our country's rich musical heritage and talent. Let's come together as a community to support our artists and show the world what we're capable of," Tendaness pleaded, calling on fellow emaSwati to rally behind their own in the same way other countries champion their artists.

# Miss Eswatini to host 'Haven Sip & Paint' fundraising event

THE reigning Miss Eswatini, Tania Nunn, is set to host the highly anticipated second edition of the 'Haven Sip & Paint' fundraising

The fundraiser is scheduled to take place at the Rehoboth Mountain Suites on March 2, 2024. This year's event, themed 'Radiant Minds', aims to raise awareness about mental health issues and support initiatives under the Haven

With a focus on promoting mental well-being and fostering a sense of community support, the event will feature a guest speaker and counselling psychologist, Lisa Badenhorst, who will share insights and guidance on mental health awareness. Renowned artist Malwande Simelane will lead a painting session, adding a creative touch to the evening's activities.

Building on the success of the inaugural event held on September 30, 2023, the Haven Sip & Paint Fundraising Event has garnered support from various sponsors, including Explorers, Rehoboth Mountain Suites, Calf's Tours, The White Orchid Day Spa, Rejuvenate Drip Bar, Regnbow Decorations, Deelangza Photography, and

Attendees can look forward to an exciting raffle draw with enticing prizes up for grabs, including two vouchers for fullbody massages at The White Orchid Day Spa valued at E580 each, an IV vitamin drip therapy session at Rejuvenate Drip Bar worth E1 300, a getaway package to Mozambique's Ponta Do Ouro courtesy of Calf's Tours valued at E2 600, and three luxurious Swazi Scents perfumes valued at E250 each.

Miss Eswatini and the organizers of the Haven Sip & Paint event invited the community to come together in support of mental health awareness and fundraising efforts, emphasising the importance of creating a safe and inclusive space to discuss and address mental health challenges. Through art, conversation, and camaraderie, the event aims to spark meaningful dialogue and inspire positive change in the community.



Miss Eswatini Tania Nunn.



Eswatini DJ Mistosoul.

# Ehawini Lifestyle prepares for Mistosoul & Friends' Finale

AN amazing series coming to an end. They say every beautiful story has an epilogue and every suspenseful movie has a credit crawl.

With that being considered, Ehawini Lifestyle is preparing to host the highly anticipated season finale of Mistosoul & Friends, promising an evening of music, entertainment, and celebration.

The grand finale is set to take place this upcoming Saturday at Ehawini Lifestyle, with the immensely talented Mistosoul headlining the event. Joining Mistosoul on stage will be a lineup of exceptional artists including Crooks, Wicked, Its All Blaq, MBO, and Cybos, all poised to deliver electrifying performances that will entice the audience.

# **Enjoy**

In a bid to ensure that music enthusiasts can revel in the festivities, attendees arriving before 3 pm will enjoy complimentary entry, while those joining later will be required to pay a nominal fee of E30. It is important to note that the event is exclusively open to individuals aged 18 and above, creating a vibrant and mature atmosphere for attendees to immerse themselves in the music.

The 'Mistosoul & Friends' season finale will be a culmination of talent, passion, and community spirit, bringing together music lovers from near and far to celebrate the artistry and creativity of local musicians. With a diverse lineup of performers and an atmosphere of camaraderie and joy, the event is poised to be a fitting conclusion to a remarkable series that has captured the hearts of many.

The 'Mistosoul & Friends' season finale will be a culmination of talent, passion, and community spirit, bringing together music lovers from near and far to celebrate the artistry and creativity of local musicians

# Gangster's greed

... Tupac Shakur murder suspect Keefe D says he lied about shooting dead the rapper to make money & rages about bail issues

KEEFE D lied about killing Tupac Shakur "for money" his lawyer has claimed after the gangster appeared in court in Las Vegas.

The 60-year-old - real name Duane Davis fabricated his role in the 1996 assassination of Shakur to bank tens of thousands of dollars through media interviews and a memoir - after seeing an ex-LAPD officer make money with his own book.

Former LA drug dealer Keefe looked dejected, shuffling around in his shackled hands and feet as he appeared in court to hear how his trial would be postponed until November.

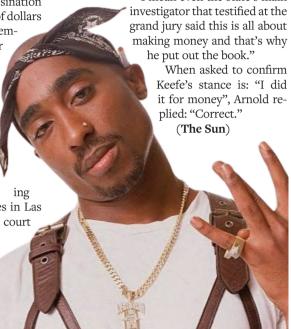
Afterwards, Keefe's new defense lawyer Carl Arnold told The U.S Sun he was confident on clearhis client in "one of the biggest cases in Las Vegas history" - following Tuesday's court

Arnold says Keefe's previous confessions to the murder were influenced by ex LAPD task force investigator Greg Kading, who after probing Biggie Smalls and Tupac's

deaths, released a book and forged a media career around the killings.

Arnold said: "There's no evidence that he was involved. "He did what Detective Kading did. He put out a book and he made money.

> "I mean even the state's main grand jury said this is all about making money and that's why he put out the book."





lacktriangle Keefe D who was arrested in connection with the murder of rapper Tupac Shakur (Left).

# DJ Zinhle, Kairo set for mum, daughter cooking lessons after (eggs)posure

AFTER being innocently ousted for not knowing how to cook by her 8-year-old daughter Kairo, the award-winning DJ Zinhle, who has been rocking Mzansi dance floors for years, is set for some mom and daughter cooking lessons.

This comes after Kairo Forbes, the DJ mom's daughter with the later Kiernan "AKA" Forbes, answered a round of rapid fire questions; including what was her favourite food, that her mother prepared for her.

Kairo innocently answered that her mom, whose real name is Zinhle Jiyane, did not know how to cook.

"My mom doesn't cook for me. She doesn't know how to cook."

When probed further, Kairo said Zinhle did however like to make eggs for

But DJ Zinhle's lack of talent in the

kitchen is no secret, as she has revealed in her reality show 'The Unexpected', that she does not know how to cook.

In the show, Zinhle revealed that her house manager, Zama, is the one who takes care of the pots in her home.

However, after being outed by her daughter, the popular DJ is now ready to change all of that and take cooking lessons with her daughter.

She said she was ready to take cooking lessons to learn how to cook more than just an egg.

"If you offer cooking lessons, let me know. I'd need to learn from the comfort of my own home though. Kairo and I will learn together," she tweeted.

Zinhle's post was filled with many recommendations with chef Fikile Zungu being a top candidate and the DJ has even reached out to her already.



▲ DJ Zinhle and her daughter Kairo on stage at Samsung Galaxy 947 Joburg Day 2023.

# Food no issue for my eviction, I ate when everyone ate - Pale

BIG Brother Mzansi's latest evictee, Palesa Motanyane, does not believe fellow housemates nominated her because of the food issue.

Speaking to Sunday World this week, Motanyane, better known as Pale, said she believes the food issue was a narrative and is adamant that there is the truth to it.

"Unfortunately, the narrative is very easy to follow when you are looking at someone who is bigger-bodied than the rest of the girls in the house. It is easier for people to point out that a bigger person eats the most than the others or fights for food. I ate when everyone ate but because the big girl was eating, people would take snapshots of that," said Pale.

People do not know my weight story

She said that people went on with the narrative, not knowing that there were other factors contributing to her weight gain and her difficulty losing weight.

"People do not know what I struggle with, and I just think it is merely a perception, or rather a narrative versus the truth. They nominated me because they were used to the sweet person and switched up on them, and they were never ready for that."

Pale shares that her strategy going into the Big Brother house was to always be herself, and her being evicted does not bother her in any way.

"It was really an experience to remember. I believe I could've given myself the opportunity to engage more with other people. I tried establishing a conversation with most of the housemates, and maybe I was overly sensitive and didn't try hard enough to form relationships in the house."

She is content having made it past four weeks but going into the house the aim was to take home the grand prize of R2-million.

"It was not as easy as I thought it was going to be, but I am content, and I believe I achieved what I wanted to achieve by going



▲Big Brother Mzansi's latest evictee, Palesa Motanyane.

into the house."

Culinary career loading

Pale said she is planning on venturing into the culinary space and has always known that she likes cooking.

With the current housemates left in the house, she says she is rooting for either Mpumi or Mc Junior to take the grand prize.

(Sunday World)

YOUR target running heart rate may vary depending on your age and fitness level.

Other factors like heat, humidity, and stress levels can also affect your heart rate.

Your heart rate, or pulse, is measured in beats per minute (bpm). During aerobic exercise like running, your heart rate increases. As your pace and work rate increase, so does your heart rate. Blood circulates to your muscles so they can get the oxygen and nutrients they need to keep going. Your heart rate during exercise is a good measurement of how hard you're working. Keep reading to learn more about how to calculate your target heart rate for running.

# Factors that affect your heart rate while running

The average heart rate while running is different for each person due to several factors, such as:

**Age:** As you get older, your target heart rate during physical activity gets lower.

**Fitness level:** A physically active person may have a lower resting heart rate than someone more sedentary because their heart muscle is stronger and doesn't need to work as hard to beat.

**Air temperature:** In hot and humid temperatures, your heart may beat 5 to 10 more times per minute to pump more blood.

**Medication use:** Some medications like beta blockers may slow your heart rate, while high dosages of thyroid medication may raise it.

**Emotions:** Some emotions like stress, excitement, and anger may slow or quicken your heart rate.

# How to determine your ideal running heart rate

To determine your ideal running heart rate, you'll first need to calculate your maximum heart rate. To do this, subtract your age from 220, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For example, if you're 30 years old, your maximum heart rate is 190 bpm. It's important to note that this is just a guide. Your maximum heart rate may vary depending on several factors, such as underlying health conditions.

Next, to determine your ideal running heart rate, you'll have to figure out the intensity you're aiming for, according to the American Heart Association (AHA).

For moderate-intensity exercise like brisk walking, aim for a heart rate of 50–75 per cent of your maximum heart rate. For vigorous activity like running, aim for 70–85 per cent of your maximum heart rate.

# Average target heart rates while running

The table below highlights the approximate target heart rates in bpm for moderate and vigorous activities, based on age and maximum heart rate, according to the AHA. It's important to speak with a healthcare professional if you're living with a heart condition. They could help establish the best target heart rates for you.

# What's my ideal running heart rate?





Age in years	Maximum heart rate (bpm)	Target heart rate (bpm) 50–75%	Target heart rate (bpm) 70–85%
20	200	100–150	140–170
30	190	95–142	133–161
35	185	93–139	129–157
40	180	90–135	126–153
45	175	88–131	122–149
50	170	85–127	119–144
60	160	80–120	112–136
70	150	75–112	105–127

Monitoring your heart rate while you run can help you achieve your goals. For example, if your heart rate is too low for your desired intensity, you need to push harder. If it's too high, you may need to slow down.

Using a heart rate monitor can help you keep track of your heart rate during exercise.

It's important to note that your heart rate may be 15 to 20 bpm higher or lower than the numbers above.

# When the heart rate is too high

Exceeding your maximum heart rate for long periods may pose several health risks, especially if you have an underlying cardiovascular condition.

A 2002 study of recreational hockey players found that those who continuously exceeded their target and maximum heart rates while playing had poor recovery rates after exercise. They also increased their risk for cardiac events like arrhythmias, chest pain, and discomfort.

Some symptoms that your heart rate is too high may include:

- ▶ dizziness
- ► chest tightness
- difficulty speaking
- ▶ difficulty breathing
- ▶ nausea
- ▶ illness

If your heart rate is too high or you experience these symptoms while running,

it's important to slow down to a more comfortable pace.

A 2020 study suggests spending up to 9 per cent of your total weekly training time above 90 per cent of your maximum heart rate. This is to help avoid overtraining and to maximize the benefits of exercise.

### What is heart rate training?

Heart rate zone training relies on bpm as a guide for how fast you should run, instead of pace per mile.

Heart rate training uses 5 zones based on your maximum heart rate. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, these zones include:

- ▶ Very light: Less than 57 per cent of maximum heart rate.
- ▶ Light: 57–63 per cent of maximum heart rate.
- ▶ Moderate: 64–76 per cent of maximum heart
- ▶ Vigorous: 77–95 per cent of maximum heart
- ▶ Maximal: 96–100 per cent of maximum

Depending on your goals, you may spend time training in different zones.

For example, marathon runners who focus on keeping a steady pace for many miles may want to spend more time in zones 1 to 3.

If you're training for a shorter race like 5 kilometers, you may want to spend more time training in zones 3 to 4.

Elite athletes and sprinters may focus more of their training in zones 4 and 5.

Use a heart rate monitor to keep track of your training. If you're continuously working in zone 4 or higher, it may be best to slow down and gradually build your pace.

A professional trainer or running coach may help you determine a workout schedule based on your goals.

## **Takeaway**

Heart rate training can be an effective way to measure how hard your body is working while running. Remember not to push yourself to the point of complete exhaustion when training.

Trying to keep your heart rate up in a comfortable zone can be challenging. Work with a running coach or fitness professional to design workouts at an appropriate level for you.

Always see a doctor before starting a new running or fitness routine.

Healthline

Monitoring your heart rate while you run can help you achieve your goals. For example, if your heart rate is too low for your desired intensity, you need to push harder.

# Why am I still coughing weeks after getting over a cold?

HAVE you ever had a cold but then been plagued by a continuing cough for weeks after you've recovered from all of your other symptoms?

This phenomenon is quite common, according to the authors of an article published on February 12, 2024, in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

They cite statistics showing that around 11%-25% of all adults will experience a post-infectious cough after having a respiratory infection.

Symptoms can last between three to eight weeks, they say.

### Why a cough can hang around after an infection

According to Omid Mehdizadeh, MD — an otolaryngologist (ENT) and laryngologist at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, California - a post-infectious cough, also known as a post-viral cough, can occur after you have a respiratory tract infection caused by a virus, such as the common cold.

"A post-viral cough is typically due to increased inflammation of the respiratory system, including the nose, throat, voice box, and lungs," Mehdizadeh explained.

Per the article's authors, this inflammation can lead to increased sensitivity of the bronchial tubes and increased mucus production, while decreasing mucus clearance at the same

UCLA Health notes that inflammation can cause the airways to swell, while draining mucus (postnatal drip) can irritate the throat and vocal cords. Both of these factors can contribute to a postinfectious cough.

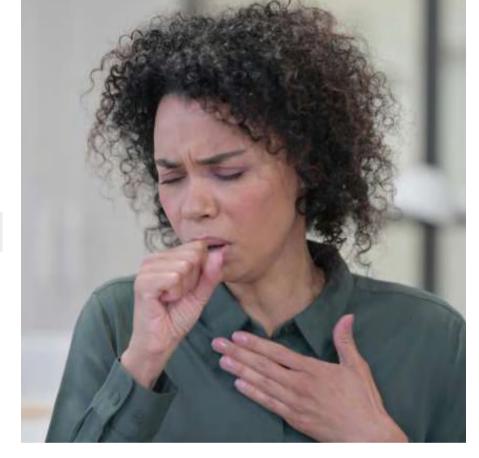
## What to do if you have a postinfectious cough

Chantel Strachan, MD, Primary Care Physician and Internist at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, said one residual effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is a stigma surrounding having a prolonged cough.

However, she stated that a postinfectious cough is benign, so it's usually nothing to worry about, although it can be physically disturbing and a social nuisance.

"Offering conservative treatment for this cough can help to minimize this," she said. "Conservative treatments include over-the-counter cough suppressants, over-the-counter intranasal steroids for post nasal drip, humidifiers, and

Strachan added that no evidence



supports the use of antibiotics or steroids to help with a post-infectious cough.

Per the report, most trials found that people's coughs improved over time without medication.

The authors also noted other reasons why it might be a good idea to avoid medicating post-infectious coughs.

The metered-dose inhalers to deliver these medications give off greenhouse gases and can place a burden on the medical supply chain if they are prescribed off-label for post-infectious cough, they explained.

## How to know if your cough is something more serious

Mehdizadeh said that one way to distinguish a post-infectious cough from something more serious is the fact that a post-infectious cough is typically a dry, hacking cough.

"A wet cough, which is associated with shortness of breath or chest pain, should be evaluated," he noted.

"Other symptoms which should prompt evaluation include blood in the mucous, difficulty swallowing, pain, fever, difficulty breathing, and noisy breathing," said Mehdizadeh.

According to the authors of the article, symptoms like these would indicate the

need for a chest x-ray.

Other red flags that might indicate a problem include a history of recurrent pneumonia or long-term smoking.

Having a cough for longer than eight weeks is also a potential indicator of trouble. At this point, it is deemed to be a chronic cough, and a pulmonary function test to rule out asthma or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) would be

## **Takeaway**

Having a cough following a respiratory infection such as the common cold is quite common, affecting 11% to 25% of adults.

A post-infectious cough occurs because of inflammation and swelling in a person's airways. Postnasal drip due to increased mucus production also contributes.

Symptoms should clear up after about three to eight weeks. No prescription treatments are necessary, although overthe-counter medications can help ease your symptoms.

However, if your symptoms last longer than eight weeks or you have other redflag symptoms such as a wet cough, bloody mucus, shortness of breath, chest pain, fever, or problems swallowing, you should see a doctor for evaluation.

Healthline

# Around the world in pictures



▲ Republic of Singapore Air Force's F-15SG and AH-64D helicopter perform during an aerial display at the Singapore Airshow at Changi Exhibition Centre in Singapore.



▲ Farmers, who are marching towards New Delhi to press for better crop prices promised to them in 2021, run for cover amidst tear gas fired by police to disperse them at Shambhu barrier, a border crossing between Punjab and Haryana states, India.



▲Paramilitary police officers remove snow from a road following snowfall in Beijing, China.



▲ A boy looks on as he swims in an area affected by floods due to the overflowing of the Batanghari River at Sungai Bungur village in Muaro Jambi, Jambi province, Indonesia.



▲U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) and former U.S. President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump participate in a Fox News town hall with Laura Ingraham in Greenville, South Carolina, U.S.



A Palestinian man reacts while carrying the body of his daughter who was killed in an Israeli strike, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, at Abu Yousef Al-Najjar hospital, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.



▲ Director Martin Scorsese holds the Honorary Golden Bear for Lifetime Achievement award at the 74th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany.

# Komphela opens up about struggles he faced at Swallows

FORMER Moroka Swallows FC coach Steve Komphela has highlighted some of the struggles he faced at the club.

Speaking to Andile Ncube during Metro FM's Sports Night Amplified with Andile, Komphela revealed how he found himself complaining almost every day due to some basic stuff that were not met by staff members at the club.

Komphela, who was careful in his answers not to care off potential employer, says at some point, he questioned himself on whether the team manager at the club was not doing his job on purpose, adding that he even felt bad for the players because he was always trying to correct the wrongs at the team.

"Imagine coming in platforms like this and saying such (talking about problems at your former club), it reflects badly on me as a coach. It is not only people who are interested in the Swallows story, my next boss is listening to me and saying oh goodness me. If I hire this guy the level of confidentiality is...But the struggles we went through at Swallows are so...I have never seen some of the struggles I saw," said Komph-

"I am talking about front-desk stuff, basic stuff that needs to be delivered. If you put a guy in a position and say manage a team, but he is not capable or efficient enough, then you have to find a way to remove



▲ Former Moroka Swallows FC coach Steve Komphela has highlighted some of the struggles he faced at the club.

them. But if you don't remove them, they are there and they continue in their way of doing things that are anti-progress. Then you ask yourself, is this guy deliberately doing this or not? Because at some point, there is obedience and there is malicious obedience.

"There was a stage when we were at a pre-training meeting and I said 'guys, I feel so bad that every day I come here, I am always fighting, moaning, and groaning to get things right. I am sure you guys (players) are saying you have never come across a coach who complains like this'." Komphela also revealed how he had to do a pre-match meeting at a gym in Stellenbosch because the team manager didn't do his job properly. Elasto Kapowezha, Swallows' general manager, is doubling up as the team manager at the club.

(The Citizen)

# Simeone sweating on Griezmann fitness after ankle injury

ATLETICO Madrid are hoping Antoine Griezmann's injury is nothing more than a sprained ankle after the forward was substituted in their 1-0 defeat by Inter Milan in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie, manager Diego Simeone said.

Atletico's all-time leading goalscorer, who has scored five goals in six Champions League games this season, was replaced by Angel Correa in the 78th minute.

"He (Griezmann) sprained his ankle and we hope it will be just a sprained ankle," Simeone told reporters.

Atletico's injuries are piling up ahead of next week's Copa del Rey semi-final second leg against Athletic Bilbao.

Defender Jose Maria Gimenez was also injured a minute after halftime on Tuesday, while midfielder Thomas Lemar and winger Marcos Paulo are also sidelined.

Simeone also said he was optimistic about his team's chances of advancing to the Champions League quarter-finals when they host the Serie A leaders in the second leg on



▲ Atletico Madrid are hoping Antoine Griezmann's injury is nothing more than a sprained ankle.

March 13. "Going beyond the defeat, we've proven that we're able to compete. We know what we'll face," Simeone added.

"After playing against them now

we know how they play. Now we hope that when the time comes we'll be in top shape and we'll compete the way this tournament demands."

(Reuters)



▲ World No. 3 seed Coco Gauff came back from a set down to defeat Czech Karolina Pliskova on Wednesday and reach the quarterfinals of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships.

# Coco Gauff rallies to reach quarterfinal round in Dubai

WORLD No. 3 seed Coco Gauff came back from a set down to defeat Czech Karolina Pliskova 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 on Wednesday and reach the quarterfinals of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in the United Arab Emirates. Gauff's victory snapped the 11-match winning streak of Pliskova, a former World No. 1. Two weeks ago, Pliskova won at Cluj-Napoca for her first title since 2020 and has risen from No. 78 to No. 36 in the rankings.

The American teen's victory came in one hour, 53 minutes, and she now has won two of three head-to-head matches against Pliskova.

"I feel like [Pliskova's] been playing well since the start of the year, coming back from injury," Gauff said after the match. "Even though her ranking is probably not where it should be considering the caliber of player she is, I think it definitely felt like a top win for me. Hopefully I can continue to use that to build my confidence going into the rest of this week."

Gauff now has reached at least the quarterfinals in three of her four entries in Dubai and will be playing in her third quarterfinal of 2024 when she meets Russian qualifier Anna Kalinskaya. It will be Gauff's first clash with Kalinskaya, ranked No. 40.

Kalinskaya upset No. 9 seed Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia 6-4, 7-5 on Wednesday in 93 minutes. It was just the fourth loss of the season for Ostapenko, who has 16 match wins, trailing only Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan.

Rybakina, the No. 4 seed, notched another victory when she came from 5-3 down in the first set to defeat Polish qualifier Magdalena Frech 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-4 in two hours, 39 minutes. She is now 17-3 on the season.

Rybakina has won 10 out of 11 matches on the WTA Tour's swing through the Middle East. She won the tournament two weeks ago in Abu Dhabi and lost to World No. 1 Iga Swiatek in the final in Doha last week.

Next up for Rybakina is Italy's Jasmine Paolini, who upset No. 8 seed Maria Sakkari of Greece 6-4, 6-2.

Rybakina admitted her strong play in the Middle East has left her tired as she readies to play Paolini on a short turnaround.

"It's a good problem to have," Rybakina said. "No one expected me to play so many matches in the past two weeks. I think it's already good what I'm doing. Whatever happens this week, I know that there is other tournaments in front. I'm not a machine that can work every day the same in the end of the day."

Also on Wednesday, Swiatek recorded a 6-1, 6-4 victory over 15th-seeded Elina Svitolina of the Ukraine.

In other action, Czech Marketa Vondrousova, the No. 7 seed, defeated No.12 seed Liudmila Samsonova of Russia 6-2, 6-2 in 75 minutes. Awaiting her in the quarterfinal is Romania's Sorana Cirstea, who defeated Croatian Donna Vekic 3-6, 6-3, 7-5.

# Bayern to part ways with coach Thomas Tuchel at season end'

BERLIN - Bayern Munich bruecken. have decided to end their collaboration with coach Thomas Tuchel at the end of the current season despite a contract to 2025, the club said on Wednesday.

Bayern lost their last three games in all competitions, including a 3-0 defeat to league leaders Bayer Leverkusen and have now dropped eight points behind them in the Bundesliga.

They were also beaten 1-0 by Lazio in last week's Champions League first leg and now risk going without any silverware for the first season in more than a decade.

Tuchel had taken over in March 2023 from Julian Nagelsmann with high expectations but he suffered a bumpy start, crashing out of the German Cup and the Champions League before snatching the Bundesliga title from Borussia Dortmund on the final matchday.

This season they have been equally mercurial, showing only glimpses of the form that saw them dominate German football for the past decade. They were eliminated from the German Cup by third-tier club Saar-

Bayern CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen said there would a 'a new direction' next season with a new coach.

"In a good, open discussion, we decided to end our working relationship by mutual agreement in the summer," Dreesen said. "Our goal is to pursue a new footballing direction with a new head coach for the 2024/25 season."

"Until then, every individual at the club is expressly called upon to achieve the maximum possible in the Champions League and Bundesliga. I also explicitly hold the team accountable in this regard."

The coach, who in the past had been in charge at Borussia Dortmund, Paris St Germain and also won a Champions League title with Chelsea in 2021, said his remaining time in Munich would be focused on the remaining goals in the Bundesliga and the Champions League.

His first full season at Bayern had been hit by a string of injuries to key players and by what he had said was a relatively thin squad at the start of the campaign despite the arrival of Bundesliga record signing Harry



▲ Bayern Munich have decided to end their collaboration with coach Thomas Tuchel at the end of the current season despite a contract to 2025.

He also triggered the ire of Bayern fans, opting to play Joshua Kimmich in defence instead of a holding six and leaving veteran and crowd favourite Thomas Mueller on the bench for several games. "We have agreed that we will end our working

relationship at the end of this season," Tuchel said. "Until then, I will of course continue to do everything I can with my coaching staff to achieve maximum success." Bayern, in second place in the Bundesliga on 50 points, host RB Leipzig on Saturday. (Reuters)

▲ Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen.

# Formula E boss bets \$250 000 on Verstappen taking F1 title again

LONDON - Formula E boss Jeff Dodds has promised to pay \$250,000 to charity if Red Bull's Max Verstappen fails to win a fourth successive Formula One title this season.

Red Bull won 21 of 22 races last year in the most dominant of campaigns while 26-year-old Dutch driver Verstappen took a record 19 victories.

Red Bull have also won 38 of the last 44

"Unless he's injured or something crazy happens, 99% he (Verstappen) gets that trophy," Dodds said in an interview with TNT Sports.

"If any one of the other 19 drivers wins it (the F1 championship), we'll give a quarter of a million dollars to the charity of choice of the other driver that wins it.

"It wouldn't be the worst day in the office to give a load of money to charity. But absolutely he is nailed on to win that season."

All-electric Formula E has proven less predictable than F1, with three different winners in three races in the 10th season that started in January, but attracts a far smaller audience.

France's double champion Jean-Eric Vergne is the only driver to win more than one Formula E title since the citybased series started in 2014-15.

"If (McLaren's) Lando (Norris) wins, we'll go and visit him and give him a quarter of a million dollars for his charity. No questions asked," said Dodds, who took the helm of the electric series last June.

Verstappen set the pace on the first day of Formula One testing on Wednesday, with the season starting on March

Dodds said Formula E was on a rapid development curve and getting faster and faster.

"You're going to see an acceleration in these (future) Formula E cars that leaves every other motorsport pretty much for dust," he said.

(Reuters)

# Wales to play Bokke in June ahead of Australia tour

LONDON - Wales will meet world champions South Africa in a one-off test at neutral Twickenham on June 22, the first fixture for the Springboks since the return of Rassie Erasmus as head coach following their Rugby World Cup triumph in France last year. Warren Gatland's side will also travel to Australia for two tests, the first in Sydney on July 6 followed by a second match in Melbourne a week later.

Both Wales and South Africa could be severely depleted for their meeting as the game will fall outside of World Rugby's international window and on the same day scheduled for the United Rugby Champion-

South Africa's Stormers and Bulls, who both have a large number of Springboks, contested the URC final in 2022 and the

former made a repeat appearance last year. They are in contention again.

The Springboks inflicted a record 35-7 defeat on old foes New Zealand in front of a sizeable expatriate crowd at Twickenham last August, where they first experimented with their 7-1 split between forwards and backs on the bench.

Depleted or not, they will use this test to fine-tune for two home fixtures against Ireland in July, where the number one ranking in the world could be on the line.

"We have very fond memories of the World Cup warm-up test we played against the All Blacks at Twickenham last year," Erasmus said in a statement.

"The fact that we're playing Wales, who we have faced there before in an exhilarating 2015 World Cup quarter-final, will bring back plenty of memories as well."

Wales coach Warren Gatland is rebuilding

his squad with young players and sees the clash at Twickenham as an important step-

South Africa thumped the Welsh 52-16 in a World Cup warm-up game in Cardiff in Au-

"To have the opportunity for our young squad to test itself against the world champions at a neutral venue is an extremely important experience and something that we will relish," Gatland said.

"We know the Wallabies will be hurting after the Rugby World Cup but Australia is a tough place to go and play rugby and we're expecting a fired up side led by new head coach Joe Schmidt."

The match at Twickenham forms part of a double-header in South West London as a Robbie Deans-coached Barbarians side play Fiji later in the day.



🔺 South Africa's Stormers and Bulls, who both have a large number of Springboks, contested the URC final in 2022.



▲Two of their players are the top goal-scorers at the end of the first round. Young Buffaloes Ladies forward Simangele Sikhondze is the leading top goal scorer in the Women's Football League. She is leading with 15 goals end of the first round that ended last

# **Young Buffaloes Ladies** scoring for fun in WFL

# Stories By Ntokozo Magongo

ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

YOUNG Buffaloes Ladies team players are banging goals for fun in the Women's Football League.

Two of their players are the top goalscorers at the end of the first round. Young Buffaloes Ladies forward Simangele Sikhondze is the leading top goal scorer in the Women's Football League.

She is leading with 15 goals end of the first round that ended last weekend.

Following her closely is her teammate Tenanile Ngcamphalala with 14 goals while Green Mamba's Nokuthula Ndlovu is third with 12

Others who complete the top five goal scorers are Manzini Wanderers Lindiwe Dlamini with 11 goals and Nsingizini Hotspurs Simile Marks fifth with 10 goals.

Buffaloes have scored 69 goals

in total and they have only conceded one to end the first round on a high.

Young Buffaloes Ladies is at the top of the table with 27 points after nine matches while Manzini Wanderers is second with 25 points while Green Mamba completes the top three with 19

Mbekelweni are yet to get a point after seven games as they are perched at the bottom of the 12 team's log with zero points. Second from the bottom is Callies Happy Girls with three points from six matches.

Meanwhile, the Women's Football League is awarding players of the points after nine month through a sponsorship from Wanderville. The players of the month pocket E2 000 each and already the duo of Young second with 25 points Buffaloes Celiwe 'Cece' Nkambule and Manzini Wanderers Lindiwe Dlamini have been awarded the E2 completes the top 000 each for being the best players in the month of November and December respectively.

## THE TOP FIVE GOAL SCORERS:

- 1. Simangele Sikhondze Y. Buffaloes 15 goals
- 2. Tenanile Ngcamphalala Y. Buffaloes 14 goals
- 3. Nokuthula Ndlovu Green Mamba 12 goals
- 4. Lindiwe Dlamini M. Wanderers 11 goals

Young Buffaloes Ladies is at the top of the table with 27 matches while Manzini Wanderers is while Green Mamba three with 19 points.

# 10th place finish for Kago **Mamba in South Africa**

The country is already yielding the fruits of the Youth Athlete Scholarship Programme that awarded to seven athletes.

Cyclist Kago Mamba who is among the beneficiaries gave an outstanding performance in the 2024 Dischem Ride for Sight race in Johannesburg, South Africa on February 18, 2024, when he finished 10th in the 62km.

He finished position 10 in the under-15 category after clocking 2:07:37 hours in the 62km.

"Kusekhaya Cycling would like to congratulate Kago Mamba on his top 10 finish at the 2024 Dischem Ride for Sight race in Johannesburg. Kago is one of the beneficiaries of the current cohort of the EOCGA Youth Scholarship Programme," reads part of the statement.

Kago rides for Kusekhaya Cycling Club. He was competing in the event alongside four other cyclists from his club.

"Your determination and hard work will pay off. Keep chasing your dreams and turn those aspiratories. First international race and a top 10 finish, well done," continues the statement.

Mamba was the only athlete from cyclists to benefit from the scholarship. Other athletes who are benefiting from the E1 million ate athletes Nokwethu Nhlabatsi, Mayibongwe Vilakati, boxer Siboniso Vilakati, swimmer Tiano Fraser and taekwondo artists Sivunulesihle Dlamini and Sihlelelwe Matsebula.

## **ABOUT KAGO MAMBA IN** THE DISCHEM RACE **Number: 3117** Event: 62km

Gender: Male

Category: Under 15 Status: Finished **Pace:** 29.4 km/h Start Time: 07:41:59



# Cycling to open calendar with Road Safety Awareness ride

IT'S safety first for cyclists. They will open their 2024 calendar by riding in the Road Safety Awareness Ride that will be held on Saturday at Corner Plaza, Ezulwini, starting at 6:30

The ride will start at the Plaza to Mahhala, Matsapha and it will cover 25km.

"All cyclists are invited and this is a procession, not a race. Road bikes and E-bikes are all welcome to the take part in the event," reads a statement from the Eswatini Cycling Association

ECA is encouraging vehicles to share the rod with cyclists and also keep the over 1.5m from a cyclist along the road.

The country had seen incidences whereby cyclists were knocked down by cars and some of the incidents were fatal.

"A very important procession ride as we prepare for our cycling season to get underway. The entire cycling community is invited as we remind each other of the safety requirements and etiquette for sharing the road," reads part of the statement.

# Safety

Next after the road ride safety awareness, the cyclist will compete in the Sisekelo MTB Challenge which is billed for March 23, starting and finishing at Sisekelo School in Big Bend. The third event will be the National Road Championships billed for April 14 along the Siteki-Mhlumeni road Lubombo.



▲Cyclists are expected to ride in the Road Safety Awareness on Saturday at Ezulwini.

## Stories by Sibusiso Masilela

sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

MBABANE Highlanders have fully forgiven their prodigal son Enzo Motsa. The former Denver Sundowns and Mbabane Swallows player is now training with the entire team after spending a week training on the sidelines.

This was after the club revoked its decision to suspend him together with utility player Ndumiso 'Ndu' Mabuza.

He was initially part of the four players who were suspended by the team together with Mandla Palma and Mxolisi Dlamini, who are both no longer with the black ensemble.

A source close to the matter revealed that the player was part of the team activities.

"The technical bench has forgiven the player, and he has been training with the entire team for the past week. He is now fighting for his place to be in the starting xi and he has clearly shown remorse for his actions," the source said.

Highlanders Public Relations Officer (PRO) Kenneth Dlamini said he was yet to verify the latest updates.

"I haven't attended training for the past two days due to work commitments and I cannot pre-empt whether the player is now training with the entire team or not," he said.

The 'Black Bull' will take on sugar-belt Illovo in their next MTN Premier League clash scheduled for Friday at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium.

The match will precede the relegation battle between Rangers and Denver Sundowns.

The crowd pullers are also part of the SM-VAF Ingwenyama Cup together with Green Mamba, Young Buffaloes and Mbabane Swallows.

# 'Bull' unfreezes Enzo!



 $\blacktriangle$  Mbabane Highlanders have fully for given their prodigal son Enzo Motsa.

# Ex-Nsingizini Coach, resurfaces at Malawian side

FORMER Nsingizini Hotspurs coach Meck Mwase has resurfaced at Malawian premier side Mighty Wanderers.

Mwase was recently announced as the club's new assistant to head Coach Nsamzurwino Ramadhan.

Other members of the Wanderers technical bench include Yassin Osman (technical bench) and Simplex Nthala (Goalkeeper coach), among others.

Mwase left the ambitious Shiselweni based earlier this season on special leave and he was recently replaced by Zimbabwean coach Alexis Sergion.

Mwase confirmed his latest move.
"I am now with Mighty Wanderers and my target is to help the team reach greater heights," he said.

The soft-spoken previously had a stint with capital city giants Mbabane Highlanders together with his fellow countryman Charles Manda, who is also part of the current Nsingizini technical bench.

He won the MTN Premier League the then E300 000 first-round incentive with the capital city giants in 2015/16 during the leadership of former Boss Bheki 'Rubber' Simelane.

Mwase was once in charge of the Malawi national team where he led the 'Flames' to the round 16 of the AFCON 2021.

He is among the list of Malawian coaches who have coached in the country such as Kina Phiri and Franco Ndawa, among others.



▲ Former Nsingizini Hotspurs coach Meck Mwase has resurfaced at Malawian premier side Mighty Wanderers.



▲ Viva Beverages is among the companies that are behind Luca Fraser's success

# VIVA LUCA! Viva Water proud of Luca Fraser

By Ntokozo Magongo

ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

VIVA Beverages is among the companies that are behind Luca Fraser's success.

They are the main sponsor of Swim Lab Swimming Club which has produced top swimmers in the country who are hoisting the country's flag high internationally including the 14-year-old Luca Fraser.

Fraser returned home with his head high after winning a gold medal in the 100m breaststroke

at the Dubai Swimming Championships where he was accompanied by Coach and Eswatini Swimming Association (ESA) Interim President Welcome Nhlabatsi.

"VIVA LUCA!!! At Viva Beverages, we are deeply proud to contribute to the community that fuels our business. It's truly inspiring to witness these partnerships flourish and our associates excel on the global stage. Congratulations to Luca Fraser, at Swim Lab and Eswatini Swimming Association for their outstanding achievements," reads the statement.

# Referees ExCO's VAR moment

## Stories by Sibusiso Masilela

sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE Eswatini Referees Association (ERA) executive fate will be known on Saturday.

This will be during the association's special meeting scheduled for Prince Mfanyana

The referee's mother body has been rocked by the E42 000 financial scandal which has been followed by the resignation of Chairman Jabulani Motsa and Treasurer Phinda 'Ndishi' Dlamini.

A source close to the matter revealed that members will decide on the fate of the remaining members.

"The remaining members will have to give answers to the members following the recent financial scandal which tainted the image of refereeing. The members will then decide whether the current committee will remain in office or elect an interim committee until the next Annual General Meeting in 2024," the source said.

ERA Secretary Mbongeni Shongwe confirmed that they will be having the meeting on Saturday.

"We will be having a special meeting where urgent and pending matters of the association will be discussed," he said.

Some of the current members include Vice Chairman Mbongiseni Fakudze, Phinda Ndzimandze, Banele Nhlengetfwa and

The resigned Motsa has spent three years in the hot seat since he replaced Sipho Kunene, who is now an executive member of the Eswatini Football Association and Chairman of the Referees Committee.

... Hit by a E42 000 financial scandal, the remaining members of the Eswatini Referees Association Executive Committee to know their fate on Saturday following the resignation of Chairman Jabulani Motsa and treasurer, Phinda Dlamini.



▲ The Eswatini Referees Association (ERA) executive fate will be known on Saturday.

# No Champions League football for Mxolisi

THEcountry's player international Mxolisi Mkhonto will not taste the CAF Champions League with his current team Jwaneng Galaxy this season.

ex-Green Mamba captain joined Galaxy on a two-year contract in January after the CAF second transfer window.

Galaxy is currently part of the continent's premier club competition in Group B together with Wydad Casablanca (Morocco), Simba (Tanzania), and Asec Mimosas (Ivory Coast).

The Morena Morebuli-led outfit will take on the North African giants Wydad Casablanca on Saturday in their next group match.

The player also confirmed the news.

"I am not part of the CAF champions League since I joined the team after the second CAF registration deadline. I have settled well in the team since I joined them and I confident that we will CAF next season," he said.

Mkhonto was part of the Green Mamba squad that was knocked out in the preliminary of the current



▲Mxolisi Mkhonto will not taste the CAF Champions League with his current team Jwaneng Galaxy this season.

Champions League campaign by Mozambique champions UD Songo.

This was after he led 'Inyoka eluhlazana' to the 2022/23 MTN Premier League under the guidance of Ernest Mavuso.

He is part of the current international players including;

Banele 'Stiga' Ndzaba-

bandzaba (Botswana Police XI, Lindo Mkhonta (Zesco United, Zambia) and Justice Figareido (Richards Bay, South Africa).

The ex-Malanti Chiefs player boasts of various Sihlangu obtained under former coach Kostadin Papic and the incumbent Dominic Kunene.

# Leopard face 'Birds' in PLE Under-19 League

# By Ntokozo Magongo

ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

THE Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) Under-19 League defending champions and leaders Royal Leopard will face Mbabane Swallows.

The game will be played at the Prince of Wales Sports Ground on Saturday, kickoff at 11 am. The match will be played the same day the senior teams are playing against each other at Mkhuzweni Technical Centre later in the day.

Leopard is top of the table after four games with 12 points while Mbabane Swallows is in third with eight points.

The PLE released the Un-



The Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) Under-19 League defending champions and leaders Royal Leopard will face Mbabane

dre-19 League fixtures on Wednesday.

A doubleheader for the Under -19 is billed for the University of Eswatini (UN-ESWA) Sports Ground on Sunday where Manzini Sea Birds will first face Madlenya at noon and the last game Denver Sundowns at 11 am.

will be between Green Mamba and Moneni Pirates at 2

On Sunday at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium, Nsingizini Hotspurs will host Young Buffaloes at 9 am and Rangers will be up against

## The PLE Under-19 week 5 fixtures:

# Saturday:

**Prince of Wales Sports Ground:** M. Swallows R. Leopard

**Manzini Club:** 

M. Wanderers ٧S Ezulwini

Mayaluka Stadium:

Highlanders Illovo

### Sunday: **UNESWA Sports Ground:**

Sea Birds Madlenya G. Mamba M. Pirates VS

# King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium:

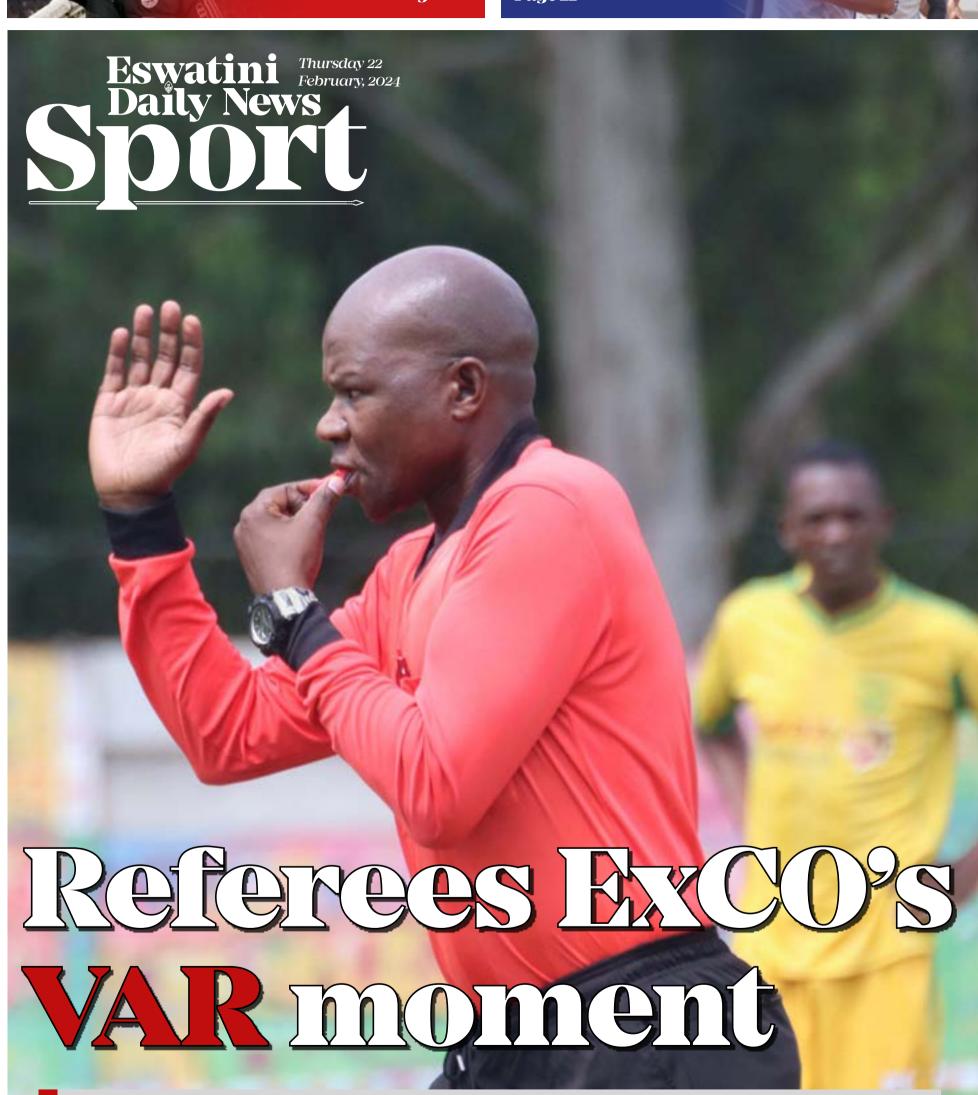
N. Hotspurs Y. Buffaloes VS Rangers' VS D Sundowns



Highlanders unfreezes Enzo!

**Mbabane** 

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... Hit by a E42 000 financial scandal, the remaining members of the **Eswatini Referees Association Executive Committee to know their** fate on Saturday following the resignation of Chairman Jabulani Motsa and treasurer, Phinda Dlamini. Page 23