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Pensioners get 4.2% pay rise

By Thokozani Mazibuko

PENSIONERS under the Public Service Pensions Fund (PSPF) will see a welcome boost to their monthly payouts this month, following the approval of a 4.2 per cent increase in pension annuities.

The adjustment, backdated to April 15, 2025, will be reflected in the August payroll, bringing much-needed relief to thousands of retirees navigating the country's rising cost of living.

In a statement released by PSPF Management, the Fund confirmed that the increase had been authorised by the Minister of Public Service, Honourable Mabulala Maseko, in consultation with the PSPF Board of Trustees. The increment falls under the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) framework, aimed at cushioning pensioners from the impact of inflation and price hikes.

"The Public Service Pensions Fund is pleased to inform all its pensioners that the Minister of Public Service, Honourable Mabulala Maseko, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, has approved a pension increase of 4.2 per cent for all PSPF pensioners with effect from 15 April 2025. The COLA will be effective in the August 2025 pension payroll," the statement reads.

While the 4.2 per cent adjustment is seen as a step in the right direction, some pensioners say it is "long overdue" given the current economic climate. In recent years, the cost of basic goods, healthcare, transport, and utilities has steadily climbed, leav-

... Public Service Pensions Fund (PSPF) announces long-awaited increase effective from April, payout lands this month



▲ Minister of Public Service Mabulala Maseko.



▲ PSPF CEO Masotja Vilakati.

ing many retirees struggling to make ends meet on fixed incomes.

Economic analysts note that although inflation in Eswatini has eased slightly compared to last year's highs, the purchasing power of pension payouts has been eroded. COLA adjustments, they say, are essential to maintaining retirees' dignity and ensuring they can meet their daily needs.

It is worth mentioning that the PSPF Board of Trustees has long emphasised the need to balance pension fund sustainability

with the welfare of its members. Sources within the Fund explained that COLA decisions are based on inflation trends, fund performance, and actuarial assessments to ensure the Fund can continue meeting obligations to current and future pensioners.

For many retirees, the news comes as a financial lifeline. "It might not cover all the rising expenses, but at least it's something to help us cope," one pensioner commented.

The PSPF has encouraged pensioners to seek financial advice on how best to manage

their increased payouts, especially considering ongoing economic uncertainty. The Fund reiterated its commitment to regular reviews of annuity payments, dependent on fund performance and government policy directives.

It should be noted that as August's payroll approaches, thousands of pensioners across the country will be awaiting the arrival of their slightly heavier pay packets — a modest but meaningful nod to their years of service to the nation.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

IN a rare and constructive engagement, Senators and Members of Parliament (MPs) set aside formalities to engage directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation this week at the Royal Villas Hotel.

The meeting aimed to deepen understanding and cooperation between the ministry's international mandate and the legislature's crucial oversight function.

Addressing persistent external misconceptions about Eswatini's political system, the Minister lamented how misunderstandings often stem from outsiders unfamiliar with the country's unique governance structure. She urged lawmakers to be well-informed ambassadors of Eswatini's policies, capable of articulating the nation's positions both domestically and internationally.

Amid discussions spanning a broad spectrum of foreign policy and diplomatic matters, one topic captivated lawmakers' attention: the prospect of passport-free travel.

This idea drew inspiration from the recent agreement between Zambia and Zimbabwe, which allows citizens of those countries to cross their shared border without passports.

However, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu was clear: Eswatini is not considering a similar open-border policy.

"For now, the gates stay guarded to keep a close eye on comings and goings," Shakantu said, emphasising that border controls remain essential for safeguarding national se-

Foreign Affairs Ministry bridges gap with Parliament in Strategic Policy Dialogue

curity, managing the economy, and regulating movement into and out of the kingdom.

She underscored Eswatini's distinct geopolitical situation. Being landlocked within South Africa and sharing a limited border with Mozambique necessitates a customised approach to border management. "Our context is not the same as Zambia and Zimbabwe," the Minister explained, adding that any future consideration of relaxed border controls would require thorough studies, regional consensus, and guarantees that national sovereignty and stability would remain uncompromised.

The gathering also served to inform legislators about the ministry's operative framework, structured around three pillars: diplomacy, economic advancement, and international cooperation.

Shakantu elaborated how these priorities interlink: diplomacy facilitates bilateral and multilateral relations, economic advancement drives trade and investment partnerships, and international cooperation fosters collaboration with global and regional institutions, delivering shared development benefits while contributing to peace and security.

Highlighting parliament's pivotal role, Shakantu encouraged MPs and Senators to engage actively in foreign affairs, stressing that the ministry's success depends heavily on legislative backing through the passage of laws and ratification of international treaties.



▲ Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu explained that border control remains a critical tool for national security, economic management and the regulation of goods and people entering the Kingdom.

By the meeting's close, MPs and Senators expressed gratitude for the ministry's transparency and pledged ongoing collaboration. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs operates under three pillars, diplomacy, economic advancement, and international cooperation, which guide our global engagement in line with national interests.

Eswatini is a sovereign nation, and our political system, borders, and governance reflect that reality. We do not simply follow trends; we make decisions based on what best serves our people and our future," Min-

ister Shakantu affirmed.

She reiterated the ministry's commitment to educating both citizens and international partners.

"Understanding our political system is essential—not only for meaningful dialogue but also for safeguarding the values that define us as a nation," she concluded.

This dialogue marks a significant step in enhancing synergy between Eswatini's external affairs and domestic governance, reinforcing a united front as the country navigates a complex global landscape.

‘BakaNgwane’ shines at Mpumalanga International Film Festival

By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

THE recent screening of the Eswatini film ‘BakaNgwane’ at the Mpumalanga International Film Festival (MIFF) marked a significant milestone not only for the film’s creators but also for the burgeoning film industry in Eswatini.

Held over the weekend at Ster-Kinekor in i’langa Mall, this event showcased the film to an enthusiastic audience, highlighting the growing interest in African cinema on an international platform. Director Sibusiso ‘Sparks’ Dlamini expressed his gratitude for the overwhelming response the film received during its screening.

“We are out of words. The atmosphere was warm and the audience was so welcoming. People were so eager to see the film,” he remarked. The excitement was palpable, with attendees queuing up long before the film’s 7 pm showing. According to Dlamini, by 5 pm, the cinema was already bustling with eager viewers, a testament to the film’s anticipation.

The screening was a full house, with Dlamini noting, “It was an overwhelming and humbling experience to see people from Eswatini and beyond love the project.” The director also highlighted the joy of seeing the film’s actors interact with the audience post-screening, further enhancing the communal atmosphere of the event.

Dlamini was particularly moved by the support from emaSwati who travelled from Es-



▲ BakaNgwane casts and production team at the Mpumalanga International Film Festival.

watini to South Africa to attend the screening. “I would like to appreciate the support from emaSwati, who came from Eswatini to watch in Mpumalanga. It was amazing and I did not expect it,” he said. However, the demand for the film exceeded expectations, as some attendees could not secure seats due to the cinema’s capacity.

“Mpumalanga people want the film again as the cinema was full and some couldn’t watch the film. We are evaluating ways to bring the film back to Mpumalanga,” he added, indicating plans for future screenings.

Being part of an international film festival is a significant achievement for Dlamini and his team. The exposure at MIFF has attracted attention from filmmakers and audiences in other countries, presenting opportunities for ‘BakaNgwane’ to be screened internationally.

“This is so amazing for emaSwati. It means growth for the Eswatini film industry,” Dlamini stated, emphasising the potential for broader recognition of Eswatini’s cinematic contributions.

‘BakaNgwane’ is a poignant period drama that delves into Eswatini’s rich historical narrative, exploring themes of love,

honour, and belonging. The film follows the extraordinary journey of King Matalatala, who faces the dual challenges of leadership and familial aspirations during a tumultuous era in his kingdom’s history. As he leads his people across the perilous Zambezi River, he must also navigate the ambitions of his daughter, iNkhosatana, adding layers of complexity to the narrative.

The film’s historical context and emotional depth resonate with audiences, making it a significant piece of storytelling that reflects the cultural heritage of Eswatini. At the helm of this remarkable production is Senator Pholile Shakantu, serving as the film’s Executive Producer.

Under her visionary leadership, ‘BakaNgwane’ has not only emerged as a critical success but also as a cultural beacon, shining a light on Eswatini’s rich heritage. The film is produced by the talented Sibusiso Dlamini, whose passion for storytelling and dedication to excellence are evident throughout the film’s production. Complementing Dlamini’s efforts is renowned director Shaft Moropane, who breathes life into the script with his unique vision and profound understanding of the intricate themes explored in the film.

Shakantu said the recent screening of BakaNgwane marks a significant achievement

for Eswatini’s film industry. Senator Shakantu envisioned BakaNgwane as a way to bring Eswatini’s stories to life, showcasing the culture, values, and vibrant spirit of the Kingdom.

Her passion for telling Eswatini stories serves not only as the foundation of this film but also as an inspiration for local filmmakers and artists. Through her work, she has highlighted the importance of authentic narratives that resonate with both the local and international audience.

As the executive producer, Shakantu’s role transcends traditional filmmaking. She has been instrumental in empowering local film producers, calling upon them to contribute their talents and creativity to produce a film that truly represents Eswatini. Her commitment to fostering a collaborative environment is evident in the diverse talents showcased in BakaNgwane and Sidlo Sekugcina, where local talent shines through.

The Mpumalanga International Film Festival, headquartered in Mbombela, serves as a vital platform for filmmakers from around the globe. Since its inception in 2013, MIFF has showcased a diverse array of films, providing an enabling environment for both established and emerging filmmakers. To date, the festival has screened over 139 films, including 89 international entries, underscoring its commitment to promoting cinematic talent from various backgrounds.

The festival’s strategic location in Mpumalanga, a region known for its breathtaking landscapes, offers filmmakers unique opportunities to capture stunning visuals that enhance their storytelling. MIFF is dedicated to showcasing new independent films and recently produced works, featuring high-profile and undiscovered talent alike. This inclusive approach fosters a rich tapestry of cinematic expression, allowing filmmakers to connect with audiences and industry professionals.



▲ Movie lovers had a blast at the screening.



▲ The casts and crew represented Eswatini well with their traditional attires.



▲ Some of the people who attended the screening of the film at Mpumalanga.



▲ BakaNgwane casts inside the cinema before the movie screening.



▲ A young girl celebrated her 13th birthday during the event.

Senator endorses PM’s efforts to secure cabinet information

By Thokozeni Mazibuko

IN a sitting on Monday with Members of the Portfolio Committee, Senator Prince Ngangabani expressed full support for Prime Minister Russell Mmiso Dlamini’s firm stance on reducing leaks of sensitive information within Cabinet.

The committee stands united behind the Prime Minister’s decision, recognizing the critical need for confidentiality to strengthen government operations and protect national interests.

Senator Ngangabani made these remarks while presenting the case for the adoption of the First Quarter Report of the Portfolio Committee of the Prime Minister’s Office for the 2025/26 financial year. He emphasized that the committee is committed to working alongside the Prime Minister’s Office to ensure effective governance.

In addition to endorsing the Prime Minister’s internal policies, Senator Ngangabani warmly congratulated PM Dlamini on his recent appointment as President of the Global Council for Political

Renewal. This prestigious role places Eswatini on the international stage and offers new opportunities for the country to showcase its leadership and vision.

“We are hopeful that the Prime Minister will use this platform to bring back valuable experience and insights that will help drive Eswatini’s development forward,” said Senator Ngangabani. He reaffirmed his confidence in PM Dlamini, referring to the ‘Nkwe mandate’ entrusted to him—a clear symbol of responsibility and the drive to deliver transformative results for the nation.

It should be noted that the Senator’s remarks reflect a strong parliamentary backing for the Prime Minister’s leadership both at home and abroad. With the adoption of the First Quarter Report anticipated soon, government efforts to promote transparency, security, and international engagement are gaining momentum.

It should be noted that as Eswatini looks ahead, the collaborative spirit between the Prime Minister’s Office and the Portfolio Committee promises to foster progress and stability across the country.

Senator calls for urgent investigation into police suicides



▲ Senator Chief Zabeni.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

DURING the adoption of the First Quarter Report of the Senate Portfolio Committee of the Prime Minister’s Office on Monday, Senator Chief Zabeni Shiba raised serious concerns over the alarming rise in police suicides.

The senator urged that immediate steps be taken to uncover the root causes behind this troubling trend.

“What is the reason behind the police suicides? This matter needs to be investigated,” Senator Shiba stated, emphasizing the urgency of addressing the issue. He proposed that local councillors be deployed to engage

directly with police officers to better understand the underlying challenges they face.

Senator Shiba further suggested the possibility of disarming officers if it became clear that their well-being and mental health were being compromised. “Is it problems of money or what?” he questioned, pointing to potential financial or personal stress factors that may be contributing to the crisis.

The senator’s remarks come amid growing concerns over mental health support within the police force, highlighting the need for a coordinated response that addresses both the welfare and safety of officers.

It is worth mentioning that as the Senate Portfolio Committee proceeds with the First Quarter Report adoption, calls for a thorough investigation and increased support for law enforcement personnel are expected to gain momentum.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

Two arrested for robbing teen of his granny’s elderly grant

TWO young people were sentenced to three years in prison each without an option of a fine after they robbed a teenager of his grandmother’s elderly grant which he had withdrawn from an ATM.

Nkosiyazi Sithole (23) and Bandisa Simelane (18) were sentenced by Principal Magistrate Florence Msibi at the Manzini Magistrates Court on Monday.

When leading evidence before court, the senior citizen’s 15-year-old grandson, who hails from Ntandozi area, informed the court that on the day the offence was committed, he had been sent by his grandmother to withdraw her elderly grant, a sum of E600 from an automated teller machine (ATM) belonging to Eswatini Bank situated at Malkerns area.

He highlighted that soon after withdrawing the money; he bought some few items as per his grandmother’s instruction. He mentioned that while headed home with the items, he decided to answer the call of nature behind some vendors’ markets at Malkerns and while doing so, Sithole came out

from nowhere and manhandled him.

“He asked me how I would feel if my girlfriend would manhandle me in the manner in which he did, before putting his hand in my pocket and taking out a sum of E50,” he said.

He mentioned that while Sithole was manhandling her, Simelane came and grabbed the groceries which were in a plastic bag belonging to her grandmother.

The teenager stated that he was left with no option but to surrender the money and the items, since the duo induced fear in him using violence.

He added that the partners in crime also demanded that he should buy food for them from the nearby markets.

He mentioned that one of the vendors who were watching from a distance while he was being robbed, advised him to rush to a nearby police van to report the crime and he did, resulting in the duo being arrested.

They both pleaded guilty to the offence.

The Crown, Mlindzi Mthethwa, applied

that the co-accused persons should be found guilty of committing the offence as per their own pleas, since they both placed themselves on the crime scene through their line of questioning during cross examination.

He further pointed out that robbery was one of the crimes that were very serious in the country because it places the life of the victim in danger.

He mentioned that sentences for such a crime ranged between zero to 15 years without an option of a fine as per the prescription of the law.

The partners in crime were both found guilty as per the Crown’s application.

Sithole mitigated for a lenient sentence on grounds that he committed the offence by mistake.

“Your worship, I do not know what came over me. I am not used to committing such an offence,” he said.

He further mentioned that he had a young child who was depended on him.

Simelane also highlighted that he was a



first-time offender, who committed the offence by mistake.

They were both granted the aforementioned sentence which was backdated to July 23, 2025, the day they were arrested.

Ebet to give away another car on Wednesday

By Thokozani Mazibuko

EXCITEMENT is once again mounting in the Kingdom as another lucky punter is set to drive away in a brand-new Suzuki this week, courtesy of the ongoing eBet Registration Drive.

The promotion, which has been gaining momentum over the past months, has already changed lives — with a woman punter having recently won herself a brand-new Toyota Vitz. This time, all eyes will be on the Manzini Bus Rank on Wednesday, where the much-anticipated car handover will take place at 9 a.m.

Speaking to Eswatini Daily News, eBet Chief Executive Officer Sibonginkhosi Lukhele said the initiative was designed to reward loyal players while encouraging more people to join the eBet community.

“People who register with eBet and play our fantastic games put themselves in a position to be picked for the car draw. This Wednesday, we will be at the Manzini Bus Rank to see another winner drive away happy,” Lukhele said.

It should be noted that the eBet Registration Drive has attracted thousands of new sign-ups since its launch, combining gaming excitement with life-changing prizes. With the Suzuki up for grabs this week, anticipation is at fever pitch among punters eager to see who will take the wheel.



▲ A Suzuki Celerio.



Ezulwini woman dies after Mbabane road crash

Stories by Thokozani Mazibuko

A 59-year-old woman from Ezulwini tragically lost her life on Sunday morning after her vehicle collided with a concrete median along the MR3 public road in Mbabane. According to Chief Police Information and Communication Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati, the incident happened at about 9:40 a.m. on 10 August 2025, near Temple's Corner along the Eden/Mangwaneni Traffic Circle. "A Mazda Demio

sedan driven by a 59-year-old woman of Ezulwini knocked the outer concrete median. The driver was rushed to Mbabane Government Hospital where she was certified dead upon arrival," Vilakati said. The vehicle suffered damage to the front bumper and the right side of the wheel. Police are investigating the cause of the accident, but preliminary observations suggest the vehicle veered off its lane before striking the barrier. It should be noted that this fatal accident adds to the recent spate of road-related tragedies in the country, with authorities continuing to urge motorists to exercise caution and adhere to traffic regulations.

Drunk driver crashes into a house

A DRINK- driver was arrested after he crashed the motor vehicle he was driving into a house while spinning the car. This resulted in Ntokozo Shongwe (23) of Mhlaleni area appearing before Principal Magistrate Florence Msibi at the Manzini Magistrates Court on Monday. He was charged with three counts of contravening the Road Traffic Act 6 of 2007 namely; driving a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of alcohol, refusing to provide a breath specimen when ordered to do so by the police and driving recklessly.

He committed the offences on August 10, 2025 near Mshayazafe Cardinal Investment while driving a Toyota sedan registered ISD 139 CM. The particulars of his drink-driving were that he had a strong smell of liquor emanating from his breath, he was staggering when walking, he was also wearing a T-shirt in the early hours of the morning while it was cold and that he was spinning the car, thus causing the accident. On the second count, Shongwe intentionally refused to provide his breath specimen



Two arrested for 21kg dagga possession

TWO men from Vusweni are facing charges under the Pharmacy Act after they were allegedly found in possession of 21.2 kilograms of dagga without a licence or permit. The arrest took place on 10 August 2025 at about 11:10 a.m., when police stopped a blue Honda Fit in the Mayiwane area.

Senior Superintendent Vilakati confirmed that the suspects were taken into custody and will appear in court to face the charges. It is worth mentioning that possession of dagga without proper authorisation remains a serious offence in Eswatini, with authorities continuing to crack down on illegal drug trafficking and distribution.

Sudden death shocks Mahwalala Community

THE Mahwalala community is reeling in shock following the sudden death of a 47-year-old man who was found lifeless inside his motor vehicle at his home on Sunday evening. According to Chief Police Information and Communications Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati, the incident occurred on 10 August 2025 at about 7:00 p.m.

The man, whose identity has been withheld pending family notification, was discovered by relatives and neighbours after he had not been seen for several hours. "A 47-year-old man of Mahwalala was discovered dead while seated inside his motor vehicle at his home. Investigations are still ongoing," Vilakati said in a statement.

Police have not yet confirmed the cause of death, and it remains unclear whether foul play, natural causes, or other factors were involved. The body has since been taken for a post-mortem examination to determine the exact circumstances.

This latest case comes amid a concerning pattern of sudden death reports in various parts of Eswatini in recent months. Authorities say that in the past few weeks alone, several similar incidents have been recorded - where individuals collapsed or were found unresponsive without prior signs of severe illness.

A health expert who spoke to EDN anonymously, urged members of the pub-



▲ PICO Phindile Vilakati.

lic to undergo regular medical check-ups and to seek immediate medical attention when experiencing unusual symptoms such as chest pains, dizziness, or shortness of breath.

Vilakati further appealed to the public to remain calm but vigilant, stressing that thorough investigations would be conducted into each reported case. "We understand the anxiety these incidents may cause within communities, and we assure the public that the police are treating all sudden death reports with the utmost seriousness," she said.

when ordered to do so by Constable Vermaak and pretended to be asleep.

On the third count, Shongwe negligently drove the said motor vehicle by spinning it on the aforementioned public road and in the process, lost control of the car which crashed into a veranda pillar of a certain house.

He pleaded guilty to all the counts and was found guilty as per his own plea.

He was sentenced to four years in prison with an option of a fine of E5 000 on the first count of drink-driving, while on the second count of refusing to provide a breath specimen, he was sentenced to six months in prison with an option of a fine of E800.

On the third count of driving recklessly, he was also sentenced to six months in prison with an option of a fine of E800.

Meanwhile, a bus driver was arrested for driving a bus while under the influence of alcohol.

Sandile Gama (43) of Manzini area was arrested on August 8, 2025 at Hhelehhele area along MR3 Public Road.

He was driving a Tata Bus Registered SSD 632 DM, while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drug with a breath specimen of 0.71 milligrammes per litre (mg/l), which was above the legal limit of 0.38mg/l.

He pleaded guilty to the offence and was found guilty as per his own plea. He mitigated for a lenient sentence on grounds that he

had five children to support. He also mentioned that he committed the offence by mistake. He was sentenced to four years in prison with an option of a fine of E5 000.

"I was tempted by a certain lady who hired me to transport her and gave me an offer I could not refuse."

These sentiments were shared by Lusekwane Fakudze (35) of Mhlanya area when mitigating for a lenient sentence before Principal Magistrates Florence Msibi shortly after he was nabbed for drink-driving.

According to Lusekwane, who was arrested on August 9, 2025 near Malandelas area along MR27 public road while driving a Toyota station wagon, on the day he was apprehended for committing the offence, he was approached by a certain lady, who hired her to transport her.

He mentioned that even though he was fully aware that he was intoxicated at the time and was not fit to drive, however, the woman promised to give him a lot of money and he could not refuse her offer since he desperately needed the cash, given that he was unemployed, yet he had three children who were dependent on him.

Fakudze, whose breath specimen reading was 1.04mg/l, was sentenced to four years in prison with an option of a fine of E5 000.

Man resists arrest, strangles cops

Stories by Delisa Magagula

MACHAWE Dlamini appeared in court on Monday facing six counts of contravening the Road Traffic Act, including allegations of assaulting police officers during a roadside arrest.

The court heard that Dlamini was apprehended on suspicion of drunk driving. During the arrest, he is alleged to have pushed and strangled two police officers.

Prosecutors stated that the incident occurred after officers stopped him for a routine traffic check, which later escalated.

In court, Dlamini denied assaulting the officers. He told the presiding magistrate that he acted in self-defence after allegedly being assaulted during the arrest.

He said he did not know that pushing police officers could constitute a criminal offence.

"I was defending myself," he said in response to the charges.

The prosecution outlined that the charges included multiple traffic offences and two counts of assaulting police officers while they were carrying out their lawful duties.

The Road Traffic Act contraventions were not detailed in full during the brief hearing, but the court was told that they related to driving under the influence, reckless driving, and resisting arrest.

The State alleged that Dlamini ignored police instructions, became confrontational, and physically engaged with officers at the scene.

Witnesses, including the arresting officers, are expected to testify during the trial.

Dlamini was granted bail of E2,000 and ordered to return to court for trial next month. Conditions of bail include that he does not interfere with witnesses and that he attends all scheduled court proceedings.

The magistrate reminded Dlamini that the charges against him were serious and that any breach of his bail conditions could result in it being revoked.



▲ Machawe Dlamini appeared in court on Monday facing six counts of contravening the Road Traffic Act, including allegations of assaulting police officers during a roadside arrest.

A COUPLE appeared in court on charges of housebreaking and theft, breaking down in tears as the charges were read to them.

The accused, identified as Adidas Dlamini and Futhi Nkambule, both pleaded guilty to the offence.

Prosecutors told the court that the pair broke into a residential property and stole four blankets valued at E2,850. The incident occurred earlier this month in a rural community where the complainant resides.

The court heard that the stolen items were recovered during a police search at the couple's residence following a report from the victim.

The complainant had reported the break-in shortly after discovering the missing items. Police investigations led to the arrest of the couple, who were found in possession of the blankets.

During the court appearance, both accused admitted to committing the offence. They said the theft was not premeditated

Couple breaks down as housebreaking charges read

but occurred after they noticed that the house was unoccupied.

The magistrate noted their plea of guilty but said sentencing would only take place after the trial date.

The couple applied for bail, which was granted at E2,000 each. They were instructed to appear in court on September 19 for trial and possible sentencing.

The prosecution submitted that while the value of the stolen property was modest, the offence was serious because it involved unlawful entry into a home.

The State said it intended to call the complainant and investigating officer as witnesses to give a full account of the events leading to the arrest.

The magistrate cautioned the couple that their admission of guilt would be considered during sentencing, but so too would the nature of the offence and its impact on the victim. The court also noted that both accused were first-time offenders.



▲ The accused, identified as Adidas Dlamini and Futhi Nkambule, both pleaded guilty to the offence.

Man remanded in custody for rape of minor



A MAN who admitted to having a sexual relationship with a 15-year-old girl has been remanded in custody pending further court proceedings.

Mkhululi Vilakati appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi on Monday morning, charged with engaging in a sexual act with a minor. Initially, Vilakati pleaded guilty to the charge, telling the court that he was unaware of the girl's age at the time of the incident.

According to the court record, Vilakati claimed the offence occurred during the school holidays, and he assumed the complainant was above the legal age of consent.

He further told the court that upon later learning that the girl was 15 years old, he went to apologise to her family.

However, during the proceedings, Vilakati altered his plea. While his initial admission formed part of the court's record, his change of plea meant the matter could not proceed to sentencing immediately.

The prosecution stated that the complainant was a pupil at the time of the incident and that her age had been verified through official records.

The State emphasised the seriousness of the offence and argued for Vilakati's continued detention while investigations continue.

Principal Magistrate Nhlabatsi ordered that Vilakati remain in custody until his next court appearance on August 22, 2025. The magistrate noted the change in plea and said the court would allow both the prosecution and the defence to prepare for the next stage of proceedings.

Under Eswatini law, engaging in a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 16 constitutes a criminal offence, regardless of consent. If convicted, the accused could face a custodial sentence.

The matter remains under investigation, and the court has advised that no further details identifying the complainant be published to protect her identity.

● **Under Eswatini law, engaging in a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 16 constitutes a criminal offence, regardless of consent.**

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

EWADE delivers E53mln Water Scheme to Sinyamantulwa

A NEW era has dawned for more than 3,200 residents of Sinyamantulwa in the Lubombo Region following the official opening of a potable water supply scheme valued at E53.3 million. The project, delivered by the Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE), marks the end of years of severe water scarcity that had forced residents to walk long distances to fetch unsafe water, often shared with livestock.

'U.S.—SA trade deal unlikely without race policy changes'

JOHANNESBURG — The second biggest party in South Africa's ruling coalition thinks the 30 per cent tariff Donald Trump imposed on its exports to the U.S. will stay unless the government changes some domestic race policies such as affirmative action, its leader said on Monday. The government of Africa's biggest economy has tried for months to negotiate a trade deal with Washington but failed to reach agreement before Trump's deadline. Its exports to the U.S. now face the highest tariff rate in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Rand starts week firmer before local manufacturing figures

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand gained in early trade on Monday ahead of the release of domestic manufacturing data, while investors also kept a close eye on trade updates as the country scrambles to secure a lower tariff rate on its exports to the United States.



FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	17.3025	17.7727
G.B. Pound	23.2766	25.9581
EURO	20.2093	20.8205
Bank Rate	(July 2023)	7.50%
Prime Rate	(July 2023)	11%
Inflation	(July 2023)	4.5%
Petrol	E21.60/Litre	
Diesel	E22.90 /Litre	
Paraffin	E17.25/Litre	



Only 1% of Eswatini MSMEs export-ready

By Delisa Magagula

OUT of the 68,000 registered Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Eswatini, only one percent is currently considered export ready.

This stark figure, drawn from the FinScope MSME Survey 2023, was presented last week during a workshop on 'Advocacy for National Competitiveness' held at The Royal Villas in Ezulwini.

The workshop was convened under the State-Business Relations (SBR) Secretariat and supported by the European Union (EU) and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

It marked a significant milestone in Eswatini's efforts to institutionalise Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) a process designed to foster structured engagement between government and business in shaping policies that drive economic growth.

The central focus of the workshop was to equip stakeholders with the tools to carry out evidence-based advocacy for improving the country's competitiveness.

Government officials, business leaders, development partners, and SME representatives gathered to explore concrete solutions for building a private sector capable of competing on regional and global markets.

"This should be a wake-up call," said Musa Maseko, Interim Director of the SBR Secretariat and Head of Trade and Commerce at Business Eswatini.

"We cannot talk about being an export-based economy when only a few of our businesses are ready to compete beyond our borders.

This platform is designed to change that." He said in addition.

Eswatini's National Development Plan 2023–2028 outlines an ambitious vision of promoting economic growth through private sector expansion and increased exports.

However, the 1% readiness statistic exposes a wide gap between policy intentions and the realities faced by businesses on the ground.

"This is not just a number it's a barrier to national growth," said Professor Owen Skae, senior advisor with the ITC.

"We're talking about real businesses, with real products that cannot access regional or international markets due to structural and regulatory barriers."

Stakeholders identified multiple constraints holding back MSMEs from tapping into cross-border opportunities.

These include limited digital payment infrastructure restricting the ability to process international transactions efficiently.

"If we can't solve basic issues like cross-border transactions, how are we going to expand trade?" Skae asked. "

The SBR Secretariat was launched earlier this year as part of the State-Business Relations Initiative announced by Prime Minister Russell Dlamini.

The framework introduces the National Competitiveness Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, and a



▲ Professor Owen Skae.

network of technical working groups tasked with tackling specific policy and operational challenges facing the private sector.

These structures are intended to formalise on-going dialogue between government and business, enabling joint problem-solving and continuous policy improvement.

Significantly, the initiative also envisions a legal framework to govern these engagements, ensuring accountability and follow-through on agreed actions.

According to the ITC's Alliances for Action model which is guiding much of the programme design stakeholder engagement follows a four-step cycle: consultation, validation, transformation, and investment.



This process is intended to result in tangible outcomes such as higher export volumes, job creation, and greater foreign exchange earnings.

"We're not here to talk just for the sake of talking," Skae stressed.

While government and development partners are investing significant resources into building this framework, both Maseko and Skae emphasised that the private sector must take equal ownership of the process.

"You now have a seat at the table. But having a seat is not enough you must use your voice. Each sector must assign representatives to the working groups. We need actionable feedback, clear advocacy, and above all, collaboration." Maseko told participants.

This call to action means businesses need to share direct, experience-based insights on:

1. Compliance costs and how they impact pricing and competitiveness.
2. Digital trade tools such as e-commerce platforms and online payment systems.
3. Cross-border e-commerce barriers including customs clearance delays and inconsistent trade regulations.

The emphasis is on practical problem-solving rather than generalised commentary, ensuring that proposed reforms are rooted in operational realities.

Worth mentioning is that, If the number of export-ready MSMEs could be raised from 1% to even 10%, stakeholders believe the ripple effects across the economy would be significant.

Increased exports would help diversify the country's revenue base, reduce reliance on a narrow set of industries, and stimulate innovation within the domestic market.

"Such an improvement would transform not just our economy, but the lives of thousands," Maseko said in closing remarks.

The workshop concluded with a commitment from participants to maintain momentum through the SBR Secretariat's upcoming technical meetings.

The first round of working group sessions is scheduled for later this year, focusing on trade facilitation, SME financing, and digital trade readiness.

While the road to expanding export capacity is long, the PPD process if effectively implemented offers a structured way to close the gap between Eswatini's economic aspirations and the readiness of its enterprises

For now, the message from both government and business leadership is clear that public-private engagement must shift from dialogue to delivery.

The one-percent figure is said to be not just a statistic but a challenge to be overcome through targeted reform, strategic investment, and shared responsibility.

If sustained, this collaboration could see Eswatini's MSMEs not only serving domestic markets but also competing successfully in regional trade blocs such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

▲Musa Maseko, the Interim Director of the SBR Secretariat.

EWADE delivers E53mln Water Scheme to Sinyamantulwa

By Delisa Magagula

A NEW era has dawned for more than 3,200 residents of Sinyamantulwa in the Lubombo Region following the official opening of a potable water supply scheme valued at E53.3 million.

The project, delivered by the Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE), marks the end of years of severe water scarcity that had forced residents to walk long distances to fetch unsafe water, often shared with livestock.

For communities under the KaMamba Chiefdom, the arrival of clean, safe drinking water represents a transformative shift in daily life and long-term prospects.

Commissioned in May this year, the Sinyamantulwa Potable Water Scheme is one of six rural water supply initiatives implemented under Phase II of the Lower Usuthu Smallholder Irrigation Project (LUSIP II). Together, these schemes amount to a capital investment of over E191.2 million, specifically targeted at improving water access in underserved rural communities across the Lubombo Region.

Situated between Matata, Ncandweni, and Mcathuvane, Sinyamantulwa has historically been associated with acute water shortages. In the dry winter months, residents often resorted to digging into parched riverbeds in search of water.

This practice, while a necessity, carried significant health risks, as the water was often contaminated.

The lack of reliable water also meant that household chores, food preparation, hygiene, and even small-scale farming were compromised.

For decades, this reality hindered not only public health but also local development. Without access to safe water, communities faced higher disease burdens, lower productivity, and diminished opportunities

for economic advancement.

EWADE engaged Icon Construction through a competitive procurement process to implement the scheme.

The contractor completed the work within six months, demonstrating both efficiency and adherence to timelines.

During the construction phase, the project created direct employment for 63 local residents. In an area where each breadwinner typically supports at least seven dependents, the short-term job creation benefited an estimated 440 people through wages spent on food, school fees, and other essentials.

This economic ripple effect added immediate value to the community even before the water began to flow.

EWADE Corporate Communications Manager, Nokwazi Hlophe, emphasised that the water supply scheme was not simply an engineering project but an investment in human dignity and future opportunity.

“To thousands of emaSwati in places like Sinyamantulwa, access to clean and safe water is no longer a distant dream. It is now a lived reality under LUSIP II,” Hlophe said.

“Clean water is essential not only for health and dignity but also for local economic growth. It allows communities to focus on education, business activities, and agricultural production without the constant burden of fetching unsafe water,” said Hlophe in addition.

She noted that the programme supports Sustainable Development Goal 6, which aims to ensure universal access to safe and affordable drinking water.

By aligning national development projects with global benchmarks, EWADE is helping to position Eswatini as a country committed to equitable and sustainable growth.



▲EWADE water project.

Residents are already feeling the impact of the new water supply. Raymond Ngcamphalala, a 64-year-old resident, described the change as life-altering.

“We never thought this day would come. For years, we lived like forgotten people, sharing dirty water with animals. Now we have clean water at our doorstep. We are truly grateful to EWADE and everyone who made this happen,” he said.

Such testimonials underscore the human value of infrastructure development benefits that extend beyond statistics to touch health, education, and social wellbeing.

EWADE Potable Water Technician, Menzi Masango, explained that the scheme was designed with long-term sustainability in mind.

“The design accounts for a 4.4 percent annual population growth and is expected to serve the community for at least 20 years.

It’s a forward-looking system intended to promote resilience and improve quality of life for future generations,” Masango said.

This approach ensures that the investment will continue to yield benefits well into the future, reducing the likelihood of water shortages as the population grows and economic activities expand.

Sinyamantulwa’s landscape, marked by thorny aloes and dry terrain, is beginning to shed its reputation for hardship and isolation. The introduction of reliable water supply is already bringing tangible changes.

Women and children, who traditionally bore the brunt of water collection duties, now have more time for education, income-generating activities, and community involvement.

The reduction in reliance on unsafe water sources is expected to lead to measurable improvements in public health, lowering the incidence of waterborne diseases and reducing healthcare costs for households.

Furthermore, easier access to water supports small-scale agriculture and livestock care, opening new avenues for food security and economic participation.

The Government of Eswatini, through EWADE, has made rural infrastructure a priority, recognising that equitable development requires investment beyond urban centres.

Under LUSIP II, potable water access is considered a foundational driver for reducing poverty, increasing productivity, and building inclusive rural economies.

In addition to the Sinyamantulwa scheme, other projects under LUSIP II are being rolled out across the Lubombo Region to bring similar benefits to thousands more residents.

The combined investment reflects a commitment to bridging development gaps and ensuring that no community is left behind.

As water begins to flow into homes and community taps, Sinyamantulwa is stepping into a new chapter one where safe water is not a privilege but a basic service that supports life, health, and prosperity.

The scheme demonstrates how targeted infrastructure projects can transform rural communities, not only through improved services but also through job creation, capacity building, and long-term resilience.

Through initiatives like the Sinyamantulwa Potable Water Scheme, communities once on the margins of development are beginning to share in the benefits of national progress.

With continued investment and careful planning, such projects can serve as a blueprint for addressing similar challenges in other parts of the country, contributing to a more equitable and prosperous Eswatini.



‘U.S.—SA trade deal unlikely without race policy changes’

By Nellie Peyton

JOHANNESBURG — The second biggest party in South Africa’s ruling coalition thinks the 30 per cent tariff Donald Trump imposed on its exports to the U.S. will stay unless the government changes some domestic race policies such as affirmative action, its leader said on Monday.

The government of Africa’s biggest economy has tried for months to negotiate a trade deal with Washington but failed to reach agreement before Trump’s deadline.

Its exports to the U.S. now face the highest tariff rate in Sub-Saharan Africa.

“It is very clear that while we’ve been negotiating on a trade track, the issues with the Trump administration are deeper than that,” Democratic Alliance (DA) leader John Steenhuisen told Reuters in an interview.

“These cover things (like) ... expropriation without compensation. It deals with some of



▲The South Africa flag and the word “Tariffs” are seen in this illustration.

the labour laws in the country and also the racial legislation,” Steenhuisen said.

He added that South Africa’s membership of the BRICS bloc centred around Brazil, Russia, India and China - and which aims to challenge U.S. hegemony - was also an issue for the Trump administration.

Steenhuisen serves as agriculture minister in South African President Cyril Ramaphosa’s cabinet. Agriculture is one of the sectors worst hit by the tariffs. (Reuters)



▲South African Rand coins are seen in this illustration.

Rand starts week firmer before local manufacturing figures

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand gained in early trade on Monday ahead of the release of domestic manufacturing data, while investors also kept a close eye on trade updates as the country scrambles to secure a lower tariff rate on its exports to the United States.

U.S. imports from South Africa face a 30 per cent duty, the highest rate among sub-Saharan African countries, but President Cyril Ramaphosa’s office said last week he had spoken with U.S. President Donald Trump and that the two countries’ trade negotiating teams would hold more detailed talks.

At 0701 GMT the rand traded at 17.7250 against the dollar, about 0.2 per cent stronger than Friday’s close.

Statistics South Africa will publish June manufacturing output at 1100 GMT on Monday.

Production inched up 0.5 per cent year-on-year in May, but analysts polled by Reuters and Nedbank economists expect it to have risen 1 per cent and 0.8 per cent respectively.

This week’s releases also include mining output and unemployment figures on Tuesday and retail sales data on Wednesday.

South Africa’s benchmark 2035 government bond was flat in early deals, with the yield at 9.63 per cent, unchanged from its previous close. (Reuters)

Stock and bond markets cautious ahead of big week for geopolitics and economic data

By Wayne Cole and Alun John

SYDNEY/LONDON — Stocks marked time on Monday, holding just shy of peaks scaled in late July, as investors awaited a crucial report on U.S. inflation that will likely also set the course of the dollar and bonds.

Trade and geopolitics also loom large for investors this week. A U.S. tariff deadline on China, due to expire on Tuesday, is expected to be extended again, while U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian leader Vladimir Putin are due to meet in Alaska on Friday to discuss ending the Ukraine war.

S&P 500 futures were last up 0.16 per cent, with Europe’s STOXX 600 share index flat on the day after Asia-Pacific stocks had gained 0.3 per cent.

That leaves MSCI’s world share index around 0.2 per cent below its all-time high hit in late July as a strong earnings season in the United States, and a mildly positive one in Europe, support overall sentiment, helping investors to shrug off the impact of soft U.S. July jobs data.

The main economic release this week will be U.S. consumer prices on Tuesday, with analysts expecting the impact of tariffs to help nudge the core up 0.3 per cent to an annual pace of 3 per cent and away from the Federal Reserve target of 2 per cent.

An upside surprise would challenge market wagers for a September rate cut, though analysts assume it would have to be a very high number given that a downward turn in payrolls is now dominating the outlook.

It also comes at a complicated time for the



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

Fed, with Trump having repeatedly criticised policymakers for not cutting rates at recent meetings, and with the focus on who will succeed current chair Jerome Powell, whose term ends in May.

This, said Paul Mackel, Global Head of FX Research at HSBC, meant that the dollar’s reaction to the CPI data would not be straightforward.

If the figure indicated higher U.S. tariff price pressures, “that could support the stagflation narrative, and to the dollar’s detriment”, he said, adding this would also go against the view of some policymakers that tariffs were not causing prices to increase.

“If, however, softer U.S. CPI readings materialise, including the core goods figures, this would likely challenge the dollar too by

supporting the case for further Fed easing, and perhaps see greater criticism from the U.S. administration towards Fed Chair Powell.”

Markets imply around a 90 per cent probability of a September easing, and at least one more cut by year-end.

That has helped support Treasuries, and the U.S. benchmark 10-year yield was last at 4.27 per cent, down around 1 basis point and hovering near last week’s low of 4.187 per cent.

The prospect of lower borrowing costs has supported equities, along with a run of strong earnings, particularly from tech names.

Analysts were unsure what to make of reports, including by Reuters, that Nvidia and AMD have agreed to give the U.S. government

15 per cent of their revenues from chip sales in China, under an arrangement to obtain export licences for the semiconductors. Shares of both companies were marginally lower in pre-market trading.

China exports deflation

Chinese blue chips added 0.4 per cent after data showed consumer price inflation ticked up in July, but producer prices kept falling as the country’s massive manufacturing sector exported deflation to the rest of the world.

Figures on Chinese industrial output and retail sales for July are due on Friday, and forecasts are for a slight slowdown after a jump in the previous month.

Currencies were quiet, with early trading thinned by a holiday in Japan. The euro was marginally softer at \$1.1627 while the dollar inched up to 147.87 yen.

The Australian dollar eased to \$0.6510 ahead of a meeting of the Reserve Bank of Australia, which is widely expected to back a rate cut. It stunned markets in July by skipping an easing of policy to await more inflation data.

In commodity markets, gold fell 1.3 per cent to \$3,354 an ounce after wild swings last week on reports that the U.S. would slap 39 per cent tariffs on some gold bars, which are major exports of Switzerland.

The White House has said it planned to issue an executive order clarifying the country’s stance.

Oil prices stabilised as investors looked ahead to the talks between Trump and Putin in Alaska on Friday, with U.S. policy towards Russian oil exports in focus.

Brent rose 0.6 per cent to \$66.99 a barrel, while U.S. crude gained 0.5 per cent to \$64.20. (Reuters)

A security researcher said flaws in a carmaker’s online dealership portal exposed the private information and vehicle data of its customers, and could have allowed hackers to remotely break into any of its customers’ vehicles.

Eaton Zveare, who works as a security researcher at software delivery company Harness, told TechCrunch the flaw he discovered allowed the creation of an admin account that granted “unfettered access” to the unnamed carmaker’s centralized web portal.

With this access, a malicious hacker could have viewed the personal and financial data of the carmaker’s customers, track vehicles, and enroll customers in features that allow owners — or the hackers — control some of their car’s functions from anywhere.

Zveare said he doesn’t plan on naming the vendor, but said it was a widely known automaker with several popular sub-brands.

In an interview with TechCrunch ahead of his talk at the Def Con security conference in Las Vegas on Sunday, Zveare said the bugs put a spotlight on the security of these dealership systems, which grant their employees and associates broad access to customer and vehicle information.

Zveare, who has found bugs in carmakers’ customer systems and vehicle management systems before, found the flaw earlier this year as part of a weekend project, he told TechCrunch.

He said while the security flaws in the portal’s login system was a challenge to find, once he found it, the bugs let him bypass the login mechanism altogether by permitting him to create a new “national admin” account. The flaws were problematic because the buggy code loaded in the user’s browser when opening the portal’s login page, allowing the user — in this case, Zveare — to modify the code to bypass the login security checks. Zveare told TechCrunch that the carmaker found no evidence of past exploitation, suggesting he was the first to find it and report it to the carmaker.

Security flaws in a carmaker’s portal let hacker remotely unlock cars from anywhere



▲ With this access, a malicious hacker could have viewed the personal and financial data of the carmaker’s customers, track vehicles, and enroll customers in features that allow owners — or the hackers — control some of their car’s functions from anywhere.

When logged in, the account granted access to more than 1,000 of the carmakers’ dealers across the United States, he told TechCrunch.

“No one even knows that you’re just silently looking at all of these dealers’ data, all their financials, all their private stuff, all their leads,” said Zveare, in describing the access. Zveare said one of the things he found inside the dealership portal was a national consumer lookup tool that allowed logged-in portal users to look-up the vehicle and driver data of that carmaker.

In one real-world example, Zveare took a vehicle’s unique identification number from the windshield of a car in a public parking lot and used the number to identify the car’s owner. Zveare said the tool could be used to look-up someone using only a customer’s first and last name.

With access to the portal, Zveare said it was also possible to pair any vehicle with a mobile account, which allows customers to remotely control some of their car’s functions from an app, such as unlocking their cars.

(TechCrunch)

Nigerian profitable food delivery Chowdeck lands \$9 mln

CHOWDECK, a Lagos-based food delivery startup that has stayed profitable in a notoriously tough and low-margin market, has raised \$9 million in Series A funding to launch a quick commerce strategy and expand into more cities in Nigeria and Ghana.

The equity round was led by Novastar Ventures, with participation from Y Combinator, AAIC Investment, Rebel Fund, GFR Fund, Kaleo, HoaQ, and others. The investors are betting on the team’s ability to pair local market expertise with execution and turn a notoriously difficult sector into a profitable super app for food, groceries and essentials.

“We’re thrilled about this round as it brings us closer to our vision of becoming Africa’s number one super app,” CEO and co-founder Femi Aluko said. “This funding will supercharge our growth plans, enabling us to expand into more cities, reduce delivery times, scale our grocery footprint, and attract the best talent to drive innovation and customer satisfaction.” Founded in October 2021 by Aluko, Olumide Ojo, and Lanre Yusuf, Chowdeck

now operates in 11 cities across Nigeria and Ghana, serving 1.5 million customers with a network of more than 20,000 riders. Its logistics system averages 30 minutes per order, and in dense areas, more than half of deliveries arrive by bicycle.

While prominent players have exited or scaled back their African operations, Chowdeck has leaned into the complexity of local markets—delivering local meals, an operationally harder challenge—to build trust with customers.

In 2024, the value of meals delivered through Chowdeck grew more than sixfold from the previous year. This year, the company says it passed its 2024 total before July.

The new funding will help Chowdeck roll out quick commerce, ultra-fast delivery backed by a network of dark stores and hyperlocal logistics hubs. The company plans to open 40 dark stores by the end of this year and 500 by the end of 2026, with two to three new stores launching each week. Chowdeck raised a \$2.5 million seed round last year. Food delivery is a crowded business globally, but when done well, it has led to some other big companies like DoorDash.

Quick commerce, on the other



▲ The equity round was led by Novastar Ventures, with participation from Y Combinator, AAIC Investment, Rebel Fund, GFR Fund, Kaleo, HoaQ, and others.

hand, has been a capital-intensive gamble in most markets. In Europe, Gorillas and Getir burned through hundreds of millions of dollars before retreating or consolidating. In India, platforms like Blinkit, Zepto and Swiggy have had varying levels of success with the model when it comes to profitability. Chowdeck has been profitable since before this raise and Aluko says the company doesn’t enter cities or verticals without planning to break even within a couple of weeks.

(TechCrunch)

Nigeria arraigns five accused in 2022 Catholic church massacre in Abuja court

NIGERIAN prosecutors on Monday arraigned five men accused of carrying out a deadly Islamist militant attack on a Catholic church in Owo, in the southwestern Ondo state, that killed at least 50 worshippers in 2022 and wounded over 100 others.

The suspects - Idris Omeiza, Al Qasim Idris, Jamiu Abdulmalik, Abdulhaleem Idris and Momoh Otuho Abubakar - appeared before a federal high court in Abuja, where they were charged under Nigeria's terrorism law.

The suspects pleaded not guilty to the charges and were remanded in the custody of the Department of State Services (DSS).

Judge Emeka Nwite adjourned the start of the trial to August 19. The trial is expected to test the government's ability to prosecute cases tied to terrorism, a challenge as Nigeria

grapples with insurgencies and widespread insecurity.

According to court filings, the men allegedly joined the East African terrorist group Al Shabaab in 2021 and plotted the assault at a public school in central Nigeria and near a mosque 30 kilometres (18.6 miles) from Owo's St Francis Catholic Church.

Al Shabaab did not claim responsibility for the June 2022 attack, and its operational presence in Nigeria remains unverified.

Authorities initially blamed Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which, alongside Boko Haram has waged a prolonged insurgency in Nigeria's northeast, though the group also did not claim responsibility for the attack.

(Reuters)



▲ People attend a mass memorial service for victims killed in an attack by gunmen during a Sunday mass service, at St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo, Nigeria.



▲ Minister Gayton McKenzie's social media past is catching up with him.

McKenzie apologises for being a troll ... but blames EFF for racism saga

SPORTS, Arts and Culture Minister Gayton McKenzie has issued a public apology for "insensitive, stupid and hurtful" tweets from more than a decade ago, while vehemently denying allegations of racism and blaming the EFF for orchestrating a political campaign against him.

The Patriotic Alliance (PA) leader found himself under intense scrutiny last week after old tweets resurfaced on social media. This came after he called for accountability against the Open Chats Podcast hosts for making racist remarks about coloured people.

McKenzie mounted a defence during a Facebook Live broadcast on Sunday night, asking: "How can I be racist against black people if I'm black?"

He emphasised his mixed heritage and personal relationships to counter the allegations.

"I'm the son of a black woman, I have children with a black woman, I fought my whole life for the same treatment between black and coloured people because we fought the

same struggle," McKenzie stated on Monday.

The minister denied ever using racial slurs to attack individuals directly.

"In my entire life, I have never called anybody the K-word. Never," he said during the live broadcast. "Where are the victims? This is a political campaign driven by EFF together with some, they call them influencers on Twitter." Despite his denials, McKenzie acknowledged problematic past behaviour.

A 2011 tweet has caused particular controversy, where he responded "Bulls**t" to a user who wrote: "When we coloureds say k****r, it's the same as when we call other coloureds bu****s, or Indians c****e. Purely descriptive."

McKenzie explained his position on the tweet: "This person makes this comment. I say, bull**t, because it's bull**t to even call people that. Now, how did I go from calling out somebody to being the person using those words?"

However, multiple tweets from McKenzie containing the racial slur have been found, with some having been deleted by him.

(The Citizen)

Supreme Court upholds 20-year sentence for former ANC MP

THE Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) recently rejected former ANC MP Manyaba Rubben Mohlaloga's bid to overturn his 20-year imprisonment for stealing R6 million from a government agricultural empowerment fund.

The court dismissed his appeal of his sentence and struck his application for reconsideration of his conviction from the roll.

Mohlaloga, who chaired parliament's portfolio committee on agriculture, was found guilty of fraud and money laundering under the Prevention of Organised Crime Act for plundering the Agricultural Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (AgriB-BBEE) Fund between 2007 and 2008.

Parliament created the AgriB-BBEE programme to provide financial assistance to previously disadvantaged farmers.

"Its objective was to facilitate broad-based black economic empowerment in the agricultural sector," the court noted.

According to the court, the initiative aimed "to include black South Africans at all levels of agricultural activity and enterprises along the entire agricultural value chain."

The National Department of Agriculture and Land Bank established the fund with R100 million from National Treasury.

Applications require assessment according to the AgriB-BBEE Operational Manual, with the National Advisory Panel responsible for approvals or rejections.

Crucially, the manual's paragraph 5.5.1 "ex-

plicitly provided that politicians, while holding public office and government employees do not qualify and will not be eligible for grants from the Fund."

The court found that the fraudulent scheme began when Mohlaloga approached Tjia, head of the Limpopo Youth Commission, proposing that they seek project funding.

Mohlaloga later met Tjia and attorney Nkhwashi at his Polokwane residence to discuss "embarking on a broad-based youth empowerment project to empower, educate and employ the youth".

When acting Land Bank CEO Mohlahlane informed them they qualified for a R3 million grant, the court found their plans immediately shifted.

"Mr Mohlaloga and Mr Tjia immediately changed plans and the idea of a broad-based empowerment programme was abandoned," Justice Kathree-Setiloane wrote. "They decided to buy a farm on receipt of the grant."

The transformation was telling. "It was apparent, from that point on, that they intended to make a profit from the project, and it ceased to be a broad-based empowerment programme," the judgment states.

When Mohlahlane informed the group about the manual's politician prohibition, Mohlaloga devised a workaround.

"On being informed of this, Mr Mohlaloga instructed Mr Tjia to make the application," the court found. (The Citizen)



▲ The court dismissed the former MP's appeal of his sentence and struck his application for reconsideration of his conviction from the roll.

Europe races to try to influence US position ahead of Trump-Putin talks

By Sam Tobin and Amy-Jo Crowley

BRUSSELS — Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that the U.S. had pledged to consult with Europe ahead of a summit with Russia’s Vladimir Putin, as European ministers prepare for discussions amid fears Washington may dictate unfavourable peace terms to Ukraine.

European Union foreign ministers were due to hold a video conference on Monday afternoon to discuss their support for Kyiv and the upcoming meeting.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced last week he would meet Putin on Friday in Alaska to negotiate an end to the 3-1/2-year war, which began with Russia’s full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

“The American side has promised that it will consult with European partners on its position before the meeting in Alaska,” Poland’s Tusk told a press conference.

“I will wait... for the effects of the meeting between Presidents Trump and Putin - I have many fears and a lot of hope,” he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Monday that concessions to Moscow would not persuade it to stop fighting in Ukraine and that there was a need to ramp up pressure on the Kremlin.

European officials have sought to influence



▲ Rescuers work at the site where a hospital was damaged during a Russian air strike, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

the White House’s positioning ahead of the Alaska talks, emphasizing the need to safeguard Ukraine’s sovereignty, provide security guarantees and allow Kyiv to choose its own path.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance met European and Ukrainian officials over the weekend, and European leaders are expected to conduct more outreach to Washington in the coming days.

“Any deal between the U.S. and Russia

must have Ukraine and the EU included, for it is a matter of Ukraine’s and the whole of Europe’s security,” EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on Sunday.

European leaders have also underscored their commitment to the idea that international borders cannot be changed by force, as EU capitals fear a deal forced on Kyiv could create a dangerous precedent.

“Regarding territorial issues, the Russian position is framed as a territorial swap,

but it appears as a rather one-sided swap,” a European Commission official said on Sunday.

“In the context of these talks, the U.S. administration has been very involved and has shown interest in aligning positioning with Europe,” the official said.

“The most robust security guarantee would be that there are no limitations on Ukraine armed forces and third countries’ support to Ukraine.” (Reuters)



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev, and Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan pose with their documents during a trilateral signing event at the White House, in Washington, D.C.

Azerbaijan, Armenia publish text of initialed peace agreement

ARMENIA and Azerbaijan published the text of a U.S.-brokered peace agreement on Monday, pledging to respect each other’s territorial integrity and formally put an end to nearly four decades of conflict.

The deal was struck in Washington last Friday, when Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with U.S. President Donald Trump in the White House.

The text of the agreement, published by both countries’ foreign ministries, says Yerevan and Baku will relinquish all claims to each other’s territory, refrain from using force against one another and pledge to respect international law.

“This agreement is a solid foundation for establishing a reliable and lasting peace, the result of an agreement between Armenia

and Azerbaijan that reflects the balanced interests of the two countries,” Pashinyan wrote on Facebook.

Armenia and Azerbaijan, neighbours in the South Caucasus region, have been locked in conflict since the late 1980s over Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous region at the southern end of the Karabakh mountain range, within Azerbaijan. Baku took back full control of the region in 2023, prompting almost all of the territory’s 100,000 ethnic Armenians to flee to Armenia.

Since then both sides have said they want peace, but talks have largely stalled until this month. At the White House meeting on Friday, the United States gained exclusive development rights to a strategic transit corridor through the South Caucasus that the Trump administration said would boost bilateral economic ties and allow for greater exports of energy. (Reuters)

India decries ‘sabre rattling’ after Pakistan army chief’s reported nuclear remarks

NEW DELHI — India on Monday accused its neighbour Pakistan of “sabre rattling” and “irresponsibility” after media reports on remarks about nuclear threats in South Asia made by Pakistan’s army chief while on a visit to the U.S.

Indian media reports, citing sources, quoted Pakistan’s Field Marshal Asim Munir as saying: “We are a nuclear nation. If we think we are going down, we’ll take half the world down with us”.

Pakistan’s military and foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Munir’s comments. An excerpt of his speech shared by Pakistani security officials did not include the “nuclear nation” remarks.

Munir reportedly made the remarks at a black-tie dinner hosted by a Pakistani-origin businessman in Florida on Saturday, where he spoke to a crowd of more than 100 people. Reuters could not independently verify the remarks.

India and Pakistan both possess nuclear weapons and fought their deadliest battle in decades in May, sparked by an attack on tourists the previous month in Indian Kashmir, which killed 26 civilians.

Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson of India’s foreign ministry, said: “Nuclear sabre-rattling is Pakistan’s stock-in-trade,” adding: “The international community can draw its own conclusions on the irresponsibility inherent in such remarks.”

He said it was also regrettable that the



▲ Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan Asim Munir holds a microphone during his visit at the Tilla Field Firing Ranges (TFFR) in Mangla, Pakistan.

reported remarks should have been made while in a friendly third country.

In a version of the speech shared by Pakistani security officials, Munir said: “The (Indian) aggression has brought the region to the brink of a dangerously escalating war, where a bilateral conflict due to any miscalculation will be a grave mistake.”

Munir was on a visit to the U.S. to attend a farewell event for General Michael Kurilla, the 15th commander of the United States Central Command.

India previously lodged a private diplomatic protest with Washington when President Donald Trump hosted Munir for a lunch at the White House in June.

Analysts have said that India’s disagreement with Washington over the May 10 ceasefire with Pakistan, and Trump’s renewed engagement with Islamabad, have contributed to a recent setback in ties between India and the U.S. under the Trump administration. (Reuters)

Opera star Thandolwethu Mamba reflects on Don Giovanni debut

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI opera star Thandolwethu Mamba has recently made headlines with his remarkable debut in Mozart’s ‘Don Giovanni’ at Opera Wilmington, held at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW). This prestigious event, which ran from July 18 to 27, marked a significant milestone in Mamba’s burgeoning career, showcasing his talent on an international stage.

Reflecting on his debut, Mamba expressed profound gratitude for the support he received throughout the process. “My Don Giovanni debut was a great joy not only because of the dreamt process and colleagues in the theatre but also because of the immense love and support I felt when I stepped off the stage,” he stated.

His heartfelt acknowledgement extended to everyone who contributed to his journey, including those who sent messages of encouragement from afar.

“Please allow me to say a huge thank you

to these fine people and those I couldn’t get photos with, including all of you who sent their love and support from afar! I am very grateful,” he added. Mamba’s journey to this moment has been anything but conventional. Growing up in Mbabane, Eswatini, he discovered his passion for opera in a rather humble setting, through a friend’s mother’s computer. “We’re a long way from the boy who fell in love with this work through the tiny screen, but the feeling of wonder and excitement is still as potent, if not more,” he reflected. This early exposure ignited a life-long passion that has now blossomed into a promising career.

The production of ‘Don Giovanni,’ directed by Nancy King, is renowned for its intricate characters and rich musical landscape. Mamba’s portrayal of the infamous seducer was met with widespread acclaim, as he infused the character with a unique blend of charisma and a nuanced understanding of his darker elements. Critics noted that Mamba brought a fresh perspective to the role, captivating audiences with his vocal prowess and emotional depth.

“This has been, and continues to be, an adventure of discovery, challenges, triumphs,



▲ Eswatini’s Thandolwethu Mamba (l) debuting as Don Giovanni.

and trust in and within myself,” Mamba shared, highlighting the transformative nature of his experience.

His journey reflects not only personal growth but also the broader narrative of aspiring artists from underrepresented backgrounds making their mark in the world of opera.

Siya Seya added to the Eswatini International Comedy Festival

SOUTH African international comedy star Siya Seya has been added to the second edition of the Eswatini International Comedy Festival (ECOFEST), set on September 26, 2025. This highly anticipated event will be an unforgettable evening filled with laughter and entertainment, showcasing a blend of local and international comedic talent.



▲ Comedian Siya Seya.

The event has already confirmed the comedians Baldwin Bals, Bongiswa&Darren and Ndosh among others. Tickets for ECOFEST 2025 are already on sale, allowing comedy enthusiasts to secure their spots early. Early bird tickets are priced at E120 and can be purchased exclusively through Delta Pay. Pre-sale tickets will be available for E150, while tickets bought at the gate will cost E200. This annual event will take place at the Sibane Sami Hotel in Ezulwini.

ECOFEST was founded by the charismatic comedian Bonginkosi Dlamini, affectionately known as Dr. Shakes. Dlamini’s vision for the festival is to showcase comedic talent from across Southern Africa while highlighting local and emerging artists. “This year, 2025 marks the 2nd edition of ECOFEST, and we aim to make it bigger and better than the inaugural event,” Dlamini stated, emphasising the festival’s growth and its significance in the entertainment calendar of Eswatini.

One of the most exciting developments for this year’s festival is the introduction

of a comedy search aimed at uncovering local talent from one of the universities in the country. This initiative will provide a selected student comedian with the unique opportunity to share the stage with renowned international acts. Dlamini expressed his commitment to nurturing local talent, saying, “We want to give our local comedians a platform to showcase their skills alongside established performers. It’s about creating opportunities and fostering growth in our comedy scene.”

ECOFEST 2025 is set to feature an impressive lineup of comedic acts from various countries, including China, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, and, of course, Eswatini. Dlamini promises that this year’s edition will be “bigger, better, and bolder than ever before.” He hinted at an exciting array of comedians, with further details to be revealed in the lead-up to the event. “If you thought last year was good, wait until you see what we have planned for the 2nd edition. This year’s festival will be an evening rich in humour, stand-up brilliance, and a lively atmosphere,” he said.

TLC Events Centre to host ‘Kingdom Live’

THE Luke Commission Events Centre is gearing up to host an exhilarating gospel show titled ‘Kingdom Live’, promising to be a transformative experience for worshippers and music lovers alike.

Scheduled for December 6, 2025, this highly anticipated event is set to redefine the gospel concert experience, drawing fans from across the region and beyond. The announcement was made via the venue’s social media platforms, generating excitement among gospel enthusiasts. “It’s Happening! When worship rises, the Kingdom shakes. On the 6th of December 2025, the TLC Events Centre will transform into a sanctuary of sound as Kingdom Live hosts an unforgettable night of worship, unity, and a powerful live recording,” the post proclaimed. This event is not merely a concert; it is described as a “Kingdom encounter,” where attendees can expect to experience a profound connection through music and worship. The organisers emphasised that every moment will be meticulously captured, ensuring that the collective voices of the audience will resonate as a powerful

declaration of faith and glory, echoing well beyond the confines of the venue. Early Bird tickets for Kingdom Live are priced at E100, offering an affordable opportunity for fans to secure their seats ahead of time. The organisers have urged potential attendees to act quickly, stating, “Secure your seat now and be part of the sound that will be heard for years to come. Limited availability, once they are gone, they are gone.” This sense of urgency reflects the high demand anticipated for such a monumental event.

Kingdom Live is poised to be a vibrant celebration of music, culture, and unity, featuring an impressive lineup of both local and international gospel artists. The event aims to create an electrifying atmosphere, characterised by captivating performances and innovative stage design that will enhance the overall experience. With a focus on fostering a sense of community among attendees, Kingdom Live will not only entertain but also inspire and connect individuals through the universal language of music. The event promises to be a melting pot of diverse musical expressions, showcasing the richness of gospel music and its ability to bring people together in worship.



▲ A recent event at TLC Events Centre.

Stories By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

Eswatini Farmers Market slated for October 11

THE Eswatini Farmers Market, one of the country's most anticipated annual events, is set to take place on October 11, 2025. The event will be held at Malkerns Country Club. This was confirmed by the festival's director, Mbekezeli 'Culolam' Dlamini. In an exclusive interview, Dlamini expressed his excitement about the upcoming market, stating, "I am thrilled to announce the return of the Eswatini Farmers Market, and I can assure you that this year's event will surpass all expectations. Get ready for a day filled with endless excitement and unforgettable moments."

The Eswatini Farmers Market is a cultural phenomenon that celebrates the rich heritage of Eswatini. Dlamini emphasised the importance of the festival in bringing communities together through music, food, and cultural exchange. "Every year, we aim to make the festival bigger and better, bringing in new ideas that will leave a lasting legacy and uniqueness for each year," he remarked.

This year's market promises a diverse array of activities, including live music performances and fun games. With the event

drawing near, Dlamini urged the public to secure their tickets early. "People should buy tickets as soon as possible, as this is for us Eswatini," he said, emphasising the importance of community participation in making the event a success.

As the date approaches, excitement is building among potential attendees, with many eager to experience the vibrant atmosphere and the sense of unity that the Eswatini Farmers Market embodies. The event is expected to attract not only locals but also visitors from neighbouring countries, further promoting Eswatini as a destination for cultural tourism.

One of the most important cultural events in Eswatini, the Eswatini Farmers Market is a must-visit for anyone looking to explore the country's rich traditions and local produce. Last year's event was a celebration of African unity, with the theme "Africa Unite" focusing on collaboration and showcasing the very best of African culture.



▲ Attendees at the previous edition of the Eswatini Farmers Market.

Simiso Simelane celebrates God's greatness with the track 'Uphakeme Praise'

ESWATINI gospel star Simiso Simelane is preparing to captivate audiences with his upcoming single, 'Uphakeme Praise.'

The song is set for release on all digital streaming platforms on August 15, 2025. This highly anticipated track is part of his album, 'Springs Of Life 2,' and promises to be a powerful declaration of faith and celebration of God's greatness. In an exclusive interview, Simelane described the song as a bold and uplifting anthem that encapsulates the essence of worship through a vibrant Siswati melody.

"It's a celebration of who God is— sovereign, holy, and worthy of all praise," he stated. He emphasised that the song is designed to evoke joy and encourage listeners to dance, making it a perfect addition to any worship playlist. The inspiration behind the song is rooted in the belief that God remains exalted above all circumstances.

"The message behind the song is simple: God is exalted



▲ Shekinah Motsa for Prayer Revival Conference.

above all. In every season, good or bad, He remains worthy of praise," Simelane explained. He likened the song to Psalms 150, which calls for exuberant praise, stating, "It's just Psalms 150 in action; we are praising God in full blast, and dance, of course."

Simelane noted that 'Uphakeme Praise' falls under the Live Gospel/Christian genre, enriched by influences from traditional African praise sounds. The song was recorded live at the Zakhele FEA Old Auditorium last year, which adds an element of authenticity and energy to the track. "I believe listeners will feel that authenticity," he remarked. Simelane is eager to share his music with the world and hopes that it resonates deeply with listeners. "I encourage everyone to stream 'Uphakeme Praise' when it drops on August 15th. Let it be your daily soundtrack, your feel-good vibe in your rush hour mornings, your mood lifter in the right direction of praise," he urged.

He also emphasised the collective effort in spreading the message of God's greatness, stating, "Every stream, every share helps spread the message of God's greatness. Let's lift His name together, Uphakeme!"

Lozitha Africa Evangelical Church to host Prayer Revival Conference

THE winds of spiritual renewal are set to sweep through Lozitha this August as the Lozitha Africa Evangelical Church prepares to host its much-anticipated Prayer Revival Conference 2025, a five-day gathering that promises to ignite faith, inspire worship, and usher in a season of divine transformation.

Slated for August 13-17, 2025, at the Lozitha High School Hall, the conference will run under the powerful theme "Pray to the Lord of the Harvest", drawn from **Matthew 9:38**.

The theme is a clarion call to believers to seek the face of God with fervency and expectation, aligning with the church's mission to place God first in all things.

The event, hosted by Pastor M. Mathabela, will feature a dynamic line-up of both local and international spiritual leaders whose voices and ministries have touched countless lives across the globe. Among the keynote speakers are Rev. Richard Dlamini, Bishop Silas Nashicila, Apostle Felix Okoh, and Rev. S. Ngema. In a statement, the organising team described the gathering as "more than just a conference—this is a spiritual appointment with destiny." With daily evening services starting at 6 pm, and extended sessions on Friday (9 am to 1 pm and 6 pm) and Saturday (9 am to 12 pm and 6 pm), the schedule is designed to immerse attendees in worship, the Word, and intercessory prayer. The final Sunday service will begin at 10 am, culminating in a grand closing session of thanksgiving and commissioning.

Complementing the powerful preaching will be a stellar roster of gospel artists whose music has stirred hearts far and wide. Sphiwo Ndoni, Ayanda Ntanz, Shekinah



▲ Shekinah Motsa for Prayer Revival Conference.

Motsa, Oncemore Six, and Nontokoza Mkhize will minister in song throughout the conference, creating an atmosphere of praise and adoration. Their performances are expected to blend heartfelt worship with moments of high-energy celebration, making the event as musically uplifting as it is spiritually edifying.

Sizwe Dhlomo demands the removal of Minister Gayton McKenzie

TELEVISION and radio personality Sizwe Dhlomo has publicly called for the dismissal of Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie, following the resurfacing of racist remarks.

On Saturday, 9 August, ActionSA complained to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), accusing Minister McKenzie of making racist remarks dating back to the apartheid era."

The party has also indicated it may escalate the case to the Equality Court under Section 20 of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act if necessary.

Alan Beesley, ActionSA's Member of Parliament, emphasised the importance of following the appropriate legal channels, stating:

"The SAHRC remains the constitutionally empowered institution mandated to address such matters. We will follow the prescribed process, but are prepared to independently institute proceedings at the Equality Court if required."

Herman Mashaba shared ActionSA's statement on X with the comment: "This is deeply disturbing and concerning coming from someone who is a Minister in our democratic society. I hope and strongly advise @GaytonMcK to urgently apologise."

In response, Dhlomo quoted Mashaba's post, bluntly stating: "No, he must just get fired. End of story." The debate has sparked a range of reactions from Dhlomo's followers:

@nfdmckenna wrote: "Even if he gets fired, PA still has seats in Parliament more than two faces Herman, and whatever you



▲ Television and radio personality Sizwe Dhlomo has publicly called for the dismissal of Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie

say, he does not care."

@xactly_getwitit added: "I hope this sets a new standard and introduces new laws that put all races on a level playing field. Black people do racist things every day. People should be charged for their racist tweets."

@DinahRadeb noted: "This is shocking from a cabinet vetting perspective. Aren't these issues supposed to be uncovered before appointing him? So who does the vetting?" Just last week, the Minister urged his party, the Patriotic Alliance, to take legal action against the hosts of the "Open Chats Podcast", who made disparaging and racist remarks about the coloured community - ac-

cusing families of intimate relationships and claiming that they suffer from mental health issues.

McKenzie said, "If coloured people had made similar remarks about other races, it would have made front-page news." In response to the backlash over his own alleged remarks, he expressed feeling humiliated and angry: "I never thought I would be accused of racism. In my life, I have never called anyone the K-word."

"This campaign is driven by the EFF and influencers. Show me the people I called the K-word. People are digging up posts from 11 years ago - who are the victims?" (IOL)

Colombian star champions children's hearing safety

COLOMBIAN singer Maluma's weekend show in Mexico City took an unexpected turn when he stopped mid-performance to address a mother in the crowd who had brought her one-year-old child without any ear protection.

In a moment captured on video and now widely circulating online, the "Borro Cas-sette" hitmaker paused the music and spoke directly to the unidentified woman. He said, "Ma'am, I'm going to tell you something. Don't bring him here; leave him there. With all due respect, I'm already a father. What's he? A year old?"

The Grammy-nominated artist went on to question the decision. "Do you think it's a good idea to bring a one-year-old baby to a concert where the decibels are really loud, where the sound is really loud?" he asked, pointing out that the child "doesn't even know what he's doing here". Maluma urged the mom to think about the child's well-being at future events. "Next time, protect his ears or something. That's really irresponsible, and you were waving the baby around like he was a toy."

"That kid really doesn't want to be there," he said, adding that as a father himself, he "would never" bring his own child to such an environment.

"So next time, be a little more aware." Hearing safety at concerts has become an increasing point of discussion in recent years, with some adult concertgoers choosing to wear noise-cancelling devices such as AirPods Pro 2, often set to transparency mode, to reduce the impact of high-volume sound systems.

If adults take such precautions for their ear health, it is even more important for children's hearing to be protected, as their hearing is still developing, making them more vulnerable to damage.

(Bang Showbiz)

Sean Trimz's role in shaping SA's soapie soundtracks

SEAN Trimz, born Dumisani Mlaudza, hails from Katlehong and was raised in Vosloorus.

As a multifaceted artist, songwriter, record producer and record executive, he has quietly shaped the soundscape of some of South Africa's most popular television shows.

His music has been featured in hit shows such as "Isidingo", "Gomora", "Uzalo", "Isibaya", "Isithembiso" and "The Queen".

Despite his pervasive presence in millions of households, Trimz has deliberately stayed out of the limelight, focusing instead on building a sustainable career and growing his record label, Certified Clique Music.

Trimz's passion for music started early, singing in school choirs during primary school, where he discovered his love for songwriting.

He began recording in 2011 and, by 2013, launched his own record label. His professional breakthrough came with the 2015 single "MyTurn", which brought him initial recognition.

Over the years, he released several significant projects, including "Thang For Ya", "Eastside", "Eastside 2.0", "Freedom", and the "No Validation" EP, which impressively hit number one on iTunes within an hour of its release.

Reflecting on his music being a staple in popular TV dramas, Trimz shared, "It feels really good because that's where music sells

itself. Having my music play on TV changed a lot for me. These shows are licensed and marketed internationally, so they gave me global reach." "I even get direct messages on Instagram from people around the world who discovered my music through those shows." His music, embedded in the fabric of South African storytelling, resonates far beyond local borders.

Though his sound is widely recognised, Trimz has intentionally kept a low profile.

He explained, "I don't want to be famous - but broke. That's never been the goal. I've always been focused on building a solid, sustainable music career that generates real income - not just hype."

This practical mindset has guided his career choices, valuing longevity and financial stability over fleeting fame. On Certified Clique Music, Trimz is clear about his ambitions: "The vision is to create global hits - something that moves people the way 'Jerusalem' by Master KG or 'Water' by Tyla did."

His approach to running a label has been transformative.

"Running my label taught me a lot about the music market. Once you understand the market, you know what sounds to release and when. I've learned that music is more than sound - it's life, it's a need. Timing, strategy, and relevance are everything," he said. Trimz has now stepped more fully into the spotlight as an artist with his debut al-

bum,

"There's Only One Way To Find Out". The lead single, "Sorry Makubhlungu", is already receiving airplay on 28 radio stations, with a music video set to drop soon.

He noted, "The album is loaded with hits - no fillers."

Balancing the roles of producer, artist and label head can be complex, but Trimz takes it in stride.

"It's normal. I haven't broken through just yet, so I still have a lot of time on my hands. During the day, I'm the label head - handling meetings, emails and pitches. In the evening, I become an artist - that's when I create without interruptions."

He admitted that breaking through on certain platforms is challenging due to gate-keeping, but the payoff is worth it: "Every time I get paid for my music - that's the win." Storytelling is at the heart of Trimz's music.

"Mostly the journey. It's important to tell my story because it inspires others. Inspiration doesn't have limits - it crosses age, gender and culture." "My journey includes being an independent artist, navigating love and heartbreak, being a father, making money here and there, growing as a man and sharing what I see daily. That's what I put in the music." When it comes to the music he's created for television, Trimz clarified that he didn't work directly on the shows but rather pitched his existing songs to them.

(IOL)



▲ Sean Trimz, born Dumisani Mlaudza, hails from Katlehong and was raised in Vosloorus.



WHEN you laugh, your body responds in ways that promote healing, relaxation, and resilience.

Laughter is more than a spontaneous reaction to something funny. It's a natural and powerful tool that can support your physical and mental well-being.

Whether you're watching a comedy special, sharing a joke with a friend, or laughing at your own mistakes, the simple act of laughing can provide meaningful health benefits that go far beyond the moment.

Boosts immunity

Laughter has been shownTrusted Source to reduce stress hormones like cortisol and increase immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies. This strengthens your immune response and helps protect you from illness.

Even a few minutes of genuine laughter can stimulate changes in immune activity that make your body more resistant to disease.

Enhances cardiovascular function

Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help reduce your risk of heart conditions.

When you laugh, your heart rate rises briefly, followed by a period of muscle relaxation and decreased blood pressure. This mirrors the effects of light physical activity and supports better circulation throughout your body.

Relieves physical tension and pain

Laughter stimulates the release of endorphins, which are your body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins not only enhance your mood but also act as natural pain relievers.

Regular laughter can reduce the perception of pain and increase your tolerance to discomfort. Physically, it also relaxes your muscles, relieving tension long after you've stopped laughing.

Supports respiratory health

When you laugh deeply, you engage your diaphragm and lungs, stimulatingTrusted Source oxygen intake and clearing stale air from your lungs.

This can be especially beneficial if you spend long periods sitting or taking shallow breaths due to stress or inactivity. A hearty laugh helps you take in oxygen and promotes a more open airway, making it easier to breathe.

Provides a light physical workout

Laughing can stimulate many of the same systems activated during physical activity. It engages your abdominal muscles, shoulders, and diaphragm and can even increase your heart rate.

While it won't replace a gym session, a bout of laughter can give your body a small workout and support physical activity in a gentle and enjoyable way.

Reduces stress and anxiety

Laughter reduces the levels of stress



What are the health benefits of laughter?

hormones in your body and increases the production of calming neurochemicals like dopamine and serotonin.

These changes can shift your mindset and reduce the mental and emotional weight of stress and anxiety.

Laughing during challenging situations helps you gain perspective and feel more grounded, even if the circumstances haven't changed.

Improves mood

When you laugh, you feel lighter, happier, and more present. That mood lift isn't just temporary — it can help reduce symptoms of depression and increase your sense of life satisfaction.

Shared laughter can also deepen connection to others, reinforcing your support network and boosting emotional resilience.

Strengthens relationships

Laughter fosters closeness and trust in relationships. Sharing a genuine laugh with someone builds emotional bonds and encourages openness and vulnerability.

Whether you're laughing with a partner, friend, co-worker, or family member, humor can defuse tension, resolve conflict, and promote empathy. These social connections are vital for your long-term mental health and well-being.

Enhances cognitive function

Positive emotions, such as those triggered by laughter, can sharpen focus and improve memory. Laughter also encourages mental flexibility and creativity.



Laughter reduces stress and increases psychological safety, which can help you approach challenges with a clearer, more adaptive mindset.

Promotes emotional resilience

When you develop the habit of finding humor in daily life, you build resilience.

Laughter helps you stay hopeful and optimistic, even during setbacks. It reminds you that joy and difficulty can exist side by side and gives you a way to cope without feeling overwhelmed.

Even when you don't feel like laughing,

the act of smiling or watching something amusing can lead to real laughter. Over time, this practice becomes easier and more natural, and the benefits become more pronounced.

The bottom line

Laughter is a simple yet powerful form of self-care that supports your body, mind, and relationships.

By making space for humor, you create a healthier foundation for coping with stress, deepening social bonds, and improving your quality of life. (Healthline)



IF you touch a rusty object, rust can rub off onto your skin.

This causes discoloration. Rust can stain your skin, but there are several natural ingredients that can help you gently remove these stains from your skin.

Rust is the product of a chemical reaction between iron and moisture from air or water. This reaction forms a coating that's reddish-brown or orange-brown in color.

The coating can flake off rusty objects, staining surfaces, including skin. Here's a look at how to remove rust from your skin, and whether rust poses any health risks, including tetanus.

Is it harmful to get rust on your skin?

Rust is made up of a combination of iron and oxygen atoms. This compound, a type of iron oxide, isn't known to be harmful to humans if it comes into contact with your skin.

Having rust stains on your skin doesn't pose any health risks. In particular, you can't get tetanus from getting rust on the surface of your skin.

What's the best way to get rust off your skin?

Rust is known to stain materials such as:

- concrete
- wood
- clothing
- human skin

While there are products to remove rust stains from fabric or other materials, you should never use these on your skin. They may contain chemicals that could be potentially harmful to your skin.

To get rust off your skin, you will need salt and an acidic liquid, such as vinegar or lemon juice. Then follow the steps outlined below.

Can you get tetanus from a rusty nail?

Tetanus is an infection caused by Clostridium tetani, bacteria found in organic matter, such as soil and manure. **These bacteria can enter your body through broken skin from:**

- cuts
- burns
- punctures

Stepping on a rusty nail is a commonly cited way of getting tetanus. But a rusty nail doesn't always cause tetanus.

The example probably comes from the fact that Clostridium bacteria thrive in deep wounds, and stepping on a nail — whether it's rusty or not — causes a deep puncture.

In addition, rusty objects and tetanus-causing bacteria tend to be found in similar environments, like:

- abandoned houses or sheds
- forests
- fields

Metal objects that are left to rust in natural environments are also likely to collect tetanus-causing bacteria. These objects can include things like nails, knives, and gardening tools. o, although rust itself doesn't cause tetanus, it may be a sign of an environment where Clostridia bacteria are present.

What to know about tetanus

In someone who isn't vaccinated against tetanus, this infection can cause a stiff or cramped jaw, more commonly known as "lockjaw."

Other symptoms of tetanus can include:

- muscle stiffness and spasms
- difficulty swallowing
- an increased heart rate
- headaches
- fever
- sweating
- elevated blood pressure

If left untreated, tetanus can lead to complications such as:

- brain injury
- broken bones
- pneumonia

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tetanus causes death in approximately 11 percent of people who contract the infection. Today, most children and adults in the United States are protected by the tetanus vaccine. To maintain immunity against tetanus, you need a booster shot every 10 years or so.

If you're not sure when you last had a tetanus shot, check with your doctor.

What's the best way to care for a wound from a rusty object?

If you're sure your tetanus shot is up to date, you can care for a minor wound from a rusty object at home.

Follow these steps:

What else can cause tetanus?

Wounds caused by objects contaminated with Clostridium bacteria are the most common cause of tetanus. However, it's possible to contract tetanus from other sources, too.

Tetanus-causing bacteria can enter your body through any tear in your skin.

You may be at risk of contracting tetanus if you have:

- puncture wounds from tattoos, piercings, or substance use



- burns
- surgical wounds
- an infection from a foot ulcer
- broken bones
- open sores, wounds, or cuts that become contaminated with dirt, saliva, or feces

Although less common, tetanus has also been associated with:

- insect bites
- animal bites
- dental infections

You should seek medical attention right away if you suspect you may have contracted tetanus.

The bottom line

Rust isn't inherently harmful to human beings. In particular, touching rust or getting it on your skin isn't associated with any health risks. While you can get tetanus from a wound caused by a rusty object, it's not the rust that causes tetanus. Instead, it's caused by a type of bacteria that may be on the object.

To prevent tetanus, make sure you're up to date on your tetanus shot. If you're unsure whether you're current on your tetanus vaccine, be sure to contact your family doctor.

(Healthline)

News in pictures



▲ A passenger plane passes a full moon known as the “Sturgeon Moon” as it rises over Frankfurt, Germany.



▲ The aerial flypast is performed by the Singapore Armed Forces at the 60th National Day Parade in Singapore.



▲ Visitors watch humanoid robots fight at the Unitree Robotics booth during the World Robot Conference in Beijing, China.



▲ A drone view shows competitors taking part in the annual international waterfall jumping competition held in the old town of Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina.



▲ A man uses a spotlight to salvage belongings during a fire outbreak at iron-sheet homes in the Grogon village of Huruma district in Nairobi, Kenya.



▲ A firefighter runs near caged abandoned animals as fire rises above the beach villages of Buljarica and Canj, during a heatwave near Bar, Montenegro.



▲ A flak jacket and a Palestinian flag are placed on the body of Al Jazeera journalist Anas Al Sharif, during the funeral for him, Mohammed Qreigeh, Ibrahim Zaher, Mohammed Noufal and another colleague, who were killed in an Israeli strike, in Gaza City.



▲ A hot air balloon flies over an open air car parking lot, during a mass launch at the annual Bristol International Balloon Fiesta, in Bristol, Britain.

Zamalek not interested in free agent Percy Tau

RUMOURS linking Percy Tau with a move to Egyptian giants Zamalek are wide of the mark, according to sources who spoke to Phakaaathi. Tau is currently a free agent after parting ways with Qatar SC at the end of last season.

The Bafana Bafana forward previously spent four years with Zamalek's fierce rivals Al-Ahly, where he enjoyed a trophy-laden spell after joining from Brighton & Hove Albion.

Any move to Zamalek would undoubtedly split opinion between the two sets of supporters, given Tau's connection to the Red Devils. Instead, his name has been linked with MC Alger, where head coach Rulani Mokwena is said to be an admirer. Mokwena had also hoped to lure Tau back to Mamelodi Sundowns during his final season in charge of the Brazilians.

With the Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco kicking off in December, the 31-year-old is racing against time to secure a new club, regain top form and force his way into Hugo Broos's Bafana Bafana squad. Multiple



▲ Rumours linking Percy Tau with a move to Egyptian giants Zamalek are wide of the mark.

sources in Egypt have dismissed the Zamalek speculation, with one insisting the White Knights "were never interested".

"It's very unlikely that the move will happen and Zamalek have already signed two wingers in Tau's position. I don't think they will sign him from what people at the club told me," a source close to the club said.

After leaving Sundowns, Tau signed for Brighton but, due to work permit issues, spent loan spells with Union SG, Club Brugge and Anderlecht in Belgium. He eventually secured a UK permit but made only a handful of appearances before joining Ahly, where he lifted three league titles and two CAF Champions League crowns.

(The Citizen)



Rassie Erasmus not playing mind games by starting Siya Kolisi at 8

THERE were a couple of interesting developments at the Springboks press conference with Rassie Erasmus on Monday, and it's not quite certain if the Bok coach has started the mind games with Australia just yet.

The sides lock horns at Ellis Park on Saturday in their opening match of the Rugby Championship, and Erasmus named his team a day earlier than usual and with skipper Siya Kolisi at eighthman instead of flank.

Even though Erasmus recently said that Kolisi is not a number eight, that now appears to not be the case.

Ultimately though, Erasmus insisted there was little difference where the skipper played among the loose forwards. "We actually changed our mind there. The more we practise and prepare we realise that the only position the guy already plays at eight is at scrums. Scrums is probably a thing that happens 13 or 14 times in a game," said Erasmus at the team announcement in Sandton on Monday.

"But general play is probably the thing that happens the most when we're having a guy like Pieter-Steph [Du Toit] and Marco [Van Staden] and Siya on the field at the same time. We really feel Australia is a big threat at the breakdown. They really bind hard at the breakdown and all three of those guys are really good." Erasmus went on to explain at length how Kolisi will be assisted by the other two in the loose trio.

"Guys are cleaning out at the breakdown and we feel we're going to need that. Siya

is probably going to pack six scrums. Sometimes on defence he might be at flank and Marco might be at 8. So the one is happy with the way he's scrumming. So it's actually just scrumming where he's at [8].

"Apart from that the guys will in general play defence and attack. So I know I said a couple of weeks ago Siya is 6 not an 8, but we came to the conclusion that it won't happen so much in the game where we actually need him at 8.

"And then we have Kwagga [Smith] ha on the bench who can cover us there as well." As for the announcement of the team early, Erasmus said there was nothing to read into that.

"Because we've been preparing for three weeks for Australia, where it doesn't normally happen.

"It's normally after the incoming series; the next Test match is a little bit closer or shorter period. Why we are announcing it early is to get the speculation out of the way. You guys can now speculate about the team that is playing. The team knows already who's playing. Getting this out of the way, we can now just focus on the training

"If they go 6-2, we might change on Thursday or Friday and bring back RG [Snyman] back into the mix. But if they stay 5-3, this would be our team.

So that's just to get it out of the way and focus on training. Tomorrow is a pretty heavy day for us. We've changed our schedule a little bit in terms of training, and tomorrow is going to be a busy day for us."

(IOL Sports)

Proteas defeated by Australia in T20 series opener

THOUGH they put up a fight, South Africa were ultimately outplayed by Australia on Sunday, falling in a 17-run defeat in the first game of a three-match T20 International series in Darwin.

Set a target of 179 runs to win, the Proteas struggled to build partnerships, and while opening batter Ryan Rickelton tried to hold the innings together, he did not receive sufficient support. Rickelton contributed 71 runs off 55 balls, hitting his second T20 International half-century before he was removed in the final over of the innings, and the SA team were restricted to 161/9 in their 20 overs.

Seamer Ben Dwarshuis (3/26) and Josh Hazlewood (3/27) were the best of Australia's bowlers, leading their

attack.

"There are one or two things to probably tweak in the batting," Rickelton said after the match. "With just a bit more smarts and hopefully a better platform to start off, I think the guys are pretty confident in what we have in the changeroom and hopefully we can bring out something better (in the second game of the T20I series) on Tuesday."

Australia innings

Earlier, after being sent in to bat, Australia got off to a fast start, but they paid for their aggression with the loss of some early wickets, and they were teetering on the edge of a collapse at 71/4 at the end of the six-over powerplay.

However, Tim David did well to carry the lower order, contributing 83 runs off 52 balls as the hosts

reached 178 in their 20 overs.

Taking their 10th wicket from the last ball of the innings, the Proteas bowled out Australia in a T20 International for the first time.

Fast bowler Kwen Maphaka kept the pressure on the hosts in the second half of the innings, with the 19-year-old left-arm quick taking 4/20, returning career best figures in his ninth T20 International.

The rest of the Proteas attack combined well, with five of their six bowlers taking wickets, albeit in a losing cause.

"They (Australia) came out guns blazing and we managed to create a lot of chances, so that's quite exciting for us as a group, the fact that we could pin such a formidable batting lineup down a little bit," Rickelton said.



▲ Members of the Proteas team during the first T20 International against Australia in Darwin on Sunday.

Everton agree season-long loan for City's Grealish

LONDON - Everton have agreed a season-long loan deal for Manchester City's England midfielder Jack Grealish, Sky Sports television reported on Monday.

The 29-year-old joined City from Aston Villa for 100 million pounds (\$134.57 million) in 2021 but has fallen out of favour there and is in urgent need of game time ahead of next year's World Cup.

Grealish made only seven league starts last season and was not included in City's recent Club World Cup squad. He was also omitted from England's 2024 European Championship squad.

There was no immediate word from either club and the BBC cited sources saying a deal was not yet imminent although talks were progressing.

(Reuters)



▲ Everton have agreed a season-long loan deal for Manchester City's England midfielder Jack Grealish, Sky Sports television reported on Monday.

Spain part ways with women's coach Tome after Euro 2025 final loss

MADRID - Spain's women's team coach Montse Tome will step down from her role after her contract expires on August 31, the Spanish football federation (RFEF) said on Monday, following their defeat by England in the final of Euro 2025.

Sonia Bermudez, current manager of the women's Under-23 side, has been named as her successor. Tome, who took over the role less than two years ago, had previously served as assistant coach to Jorge Vilda from 2018 until his dismissal in 2023. Despite guiding Spain to the European Championship final in Switzerland last month, the RFEF decided against renewing Tome's contract. She previously led Spain to the 2023-24 Nations League title.

However, a disappointing campaign at the Paris Olympics where the team failed to secure a medal followed by the penalty shootout heartbreak at the Euros, undermined confidence in her leadership.

"The Board of Directors... would like to thank Montse



▲ Spain's women's team coach Montse Tome will step down from her role after her contract expires on August 31.

Tome for her work, professionalism and dedication in various roles during her time as a member of the national teams at the RFEF, particularly during her time as head coach of the senior women's national team," the RFEF said in a statement.

(Reuters)

Slot seeks Liverpool balance for Premier League defence

LIVERPOOL boss Arne Slot said his side are conceding too often if they are to defend the Premier League title after losing the Community Shield on penalties to Crystal Palace on Sunday.

The new-look Reds, after a £260 million (\$350 million) spending spree in the transfer market, looked slick in attack at Wembley with new signings Hugo Ekitike and Jeremie Frimpong on target. However, the Reds twice failed to hold onto the lead as Palace levelled through Jean-Philippe Mateta's penalty and Ismaila Sarr's strike 13 minutes from time as the match ended 2-2 before the shootout.

Last season Liverpool beat Palace 1-0 at Selhurst Park and drew 1-1 on the final day of the season at Anfield as they romped to the title with four games to spare.

Slot saw flashes of what his star-studded forward line are capable of as the most expensive of his new recruits, Florian Wirtz, teed up Ekitike for the opening goal after just four minutes.

However, in keeping with the pattern of Liverpool's pre-season friendlies, they were cut open with ease on the counter-attack. AC Milan beat Slot's men 4-2 in Hong Kong, while Liverpool edged out Athletic Bilbao 3-2 in one of two friendlies against the Basques on their return to Anfield on Monday.

"If you look at our attacking play against a team that is so compact, that might be a bit better than last season," said Slot.

"We only could score one goal against Palace (last season). Now we scored two and created more against them.

"But, on the other hand, we conceded two goals, which we did against Bilbao, and we conceded a couple more against Milan, so that is something we need to do better."

Only Arsenal had a better defensive record than Liverpool in the Premier League last season and Slot is keen to rectify his side's issues before they begin their title defence at home to Bournemouth on Friday.



▲ Liverpool boss Arne Slot.

"We are able to create more but we are conceding at the moment more as well. If you want to compete to win the league, you cannot concede these chances.

"We conceded too much today to win the game." Liverpool's spending in the transfer market may not be over as they continue to be linked with a move for Newcastle striker Alexander Isak.

However, Slot dismissed the claim that the transfer spending will put his players under more pressure this season.

"Because we are Liverpool the pressure is always on," he said. "That is nothing to do with brining players in." (Reuters)

Alcaraz battles as Shelton, Zverev race into Cincinnati third round

CARLOS Alcaraz fought through a second-set slump to post a "rollercoaster" 6-1, 2-6, 6-3 victory over Damir Dzumhur in his opening match Sunday at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open.

The Spaniard, playing his first tournament since losing to Jannik Sinner in the Wimbledon final, raced through the first set but completely lost his way in the second, dropping his serve twice against the 33-year-old Bosnian. Alcaraz regained his intensity and cut down his errors in the third as a seventh ace took him to a match point that was converted when Dzumhur fired wide.

"It was just a rollercoaster," said the second seed, who was winning his 12th straight match at the Masters 1000 level after taking the titles in Monte Carlo and Rome.

"Lots of good feelings, bad feelings, back to the good ones. I am happy to get the win at the end. I know that I have chances to do better."

Alcaraz committed 44 unforced errors and said conditions in Cincinnati, where he was runner-up in 2023, were always tricky.

"The ball flies a lot, goes super fast," he said. "You have to be ready to be in a good position for each shot and that is really difficult to do."

Third seed Alexander Zverev found things more straightforward, winning 6-3, 6-3 against US wild card Nishesh Basavareddy in the night session.

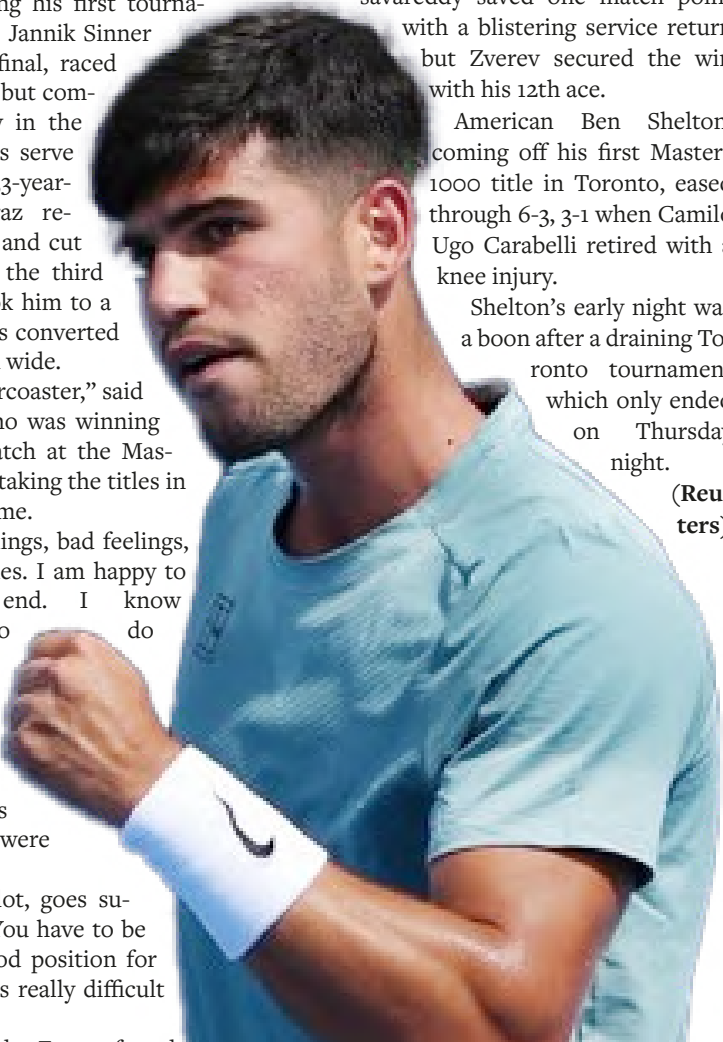
Zverev needed just 66 minutes to get past Basavareddy, a 20-year-old ranked 109th in the world.

The German put 41 of his 50 first serves in play and didn't face a break point. Basavareddy saved one match point with a blistering service return but Zverev secured the win with his 12th ace.

American Ben Shelton, coming off his first Masters 1000 title in Toronto, eased through 6-3, 3-1 when Camilo Ugo Carabelli retired with a knee injury.

Shelton's early night was a boon after a draining Toronto tournament which only ended on Thursday night.

(Reuters)



▲ Carlos Alcaraz fought through a second-set slump to post a "rollercoaster" 6-1, 2-6, 6-3 victory over Damir Dzumhur in his opening match Sunday at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open.



Norman still can't 'Dodge' Matsebula, E10 000 gone

Stories by Chris Dlamini

SO close, yet so far for Norman Khoza. It is becoming a norm for Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) Pool Team star Norman Khoza to lose to his former teammate and now Manzini Pool Club star, Sithembiso 'Dodge' Matsebula.

In their fourth one on one cash challenge battle, Matsebula once again emerged as the winner. The duo had an eye-catching E10 000 winner-takes-all pot match at Tshaneni Pool Room over the weekend, on Saturday, August 9, to be precise.

Once again, the much-decorated Matsebula, sponsored by Magudlu Construction, cued his way to another victory, taking home

the E10 000 prize. The match had kicked off at 1pm.

The final score was 15-12 showing major improvement from Khoza, who was agonisingly thrashed in the last outing played at the same venue.

The package was E20 000 in the previous challenge before the latest one. Meanwhile, Khoza was funded by Sphana Investments, who had financed the full E20 000 package last time.

Sphana had also previously funded the battle between these two to the tune of E5 000, and still, Khoza was defeated.

The first battle between these two was set at E5 000, then E20 000 for the second one. Matsebula collected the money in all meetings as the winner.

Ex-Westlians' 'Theo' edged in E2k battle

THERE was no luck for former Manzini Wanderers star midfielder Sandile 'Theo' Motsa in the E2 000 pot battle. Motsa faced off with Lubombo pool player, Dennis Nxumalo at Tshaneni Pool Room, two hours before the big clash between renowned stars, Sithembiso 'Dodge' Matsebula and Norman Khoza on Saturday. The latter fought it out for E10 000, in what was a winner-takes-all pot match.

For Motsa and Nxumalo, E2 000 was at stake. As it turned out, Nxumalo emerged victorious with a close 9-6 margin.

It was a close contest but if mother luck is not on your side, losing is inevitable. According to fans, both players gave a stellar performance and made life very difficult for each other on the pool table down the Eastern part of Eswatini.

Motsa's commendable performance in the ongoing Billiards and Games Singles Pool League in Mbabane showed, but it just was not his day to win as Nxumalo displayed his skills to win the cash.



▲ Dennis Nxumalo with his E2 000 prize money.



▲ Sandile 'Theo' Motsa.

SA's Kasi Ladies edge Eswatini's Black Queens Eswatini's ladies



▲ Some of the Black Queens players.

TRADING as the Black Queens, the country's pride of blackball or billiards displayed their talent in South Africa (SA) on Sunday against their neighbouring counterparts teams called Kasi Ladies.

The Ladies team, led by national team captain and Eswatini's number one ranking female player, Ncobile 'S'ncobesh' Dlamini, took on the Kasi Ladies at Tokoza, Mike's Place in Johannesburg at 1pm on Sunday.

"The team is back after the international outing in SA. Our Ladies lost but got valuable international exposure and competition. However, in the singles, Thandiswa was among the winners while Ncobile also won a

session against SA's Delly," affirmed Eswatini Cue Sports Association (ECSA) President Muntu Dlamini who thanked their venue host, Mike for the competition organised by Cue Queens Africa in appreciation of Women's Day.

"A huge thank you to everyone who came through and made Saturday's sessions a success. A special appreciation to our Swaziland ladies; Angel, Ncobile, Vumile, Thandiswa, and Yvonne – it was a pleasure meeting you all. Wishing you safe travels back home," wrote the SA counterparts.

ECSA also expressed their utmost gratitude for the invite and the E500 sponsored by Mike, the playing venue owner.



▲ Trading as the Black Queens, the country's pride of blackball or billiards displayed their talent in South Africa (SA) on Sunday.

By Chris Dlamini

THIS was his fourth Sunshine Tour title.

That is the FNB Eswatini Golf Challenge 2025 champion, Michael Hollick from South Africa (SA). He was crowned the champion on Saturday, August 9, in the afternoon following three days of golf at the exciting Ezulwini Golf Course at the now defunct Royal Swazi Sun Hotel. His last title was in Zimbabwe last year.

Asked what it was between him and Africa as he seemed to win in most of the countries, Hollick said it was always something to win a Sunshine Tour competition.

“With the Sunshine Tour, it’s always special to win particularly anywhere you play. As for this course, I used to come here from when I was young and I fell in love with the course while it was still under the Royal Swazi Sun Hotel. My dad owned a business here, so when I saw this tournament on the schedule, I thought I must play as this course is special to me,” he said.

This was before receiving his E317,000 cash prize as the FNB Eswatini Golf Challenge 2025 winner.

“It has been a while since I last saw the course this good, and I must say I was pleased to see it in such great shape when I got here for this tournament. Hats off to the Ezulwini Golf and Country Club team and everyone involved in keeping it this flaw-

Ezulwini Golf Course special — SA’s Michael Hollick

less,” noted Hollick.

He also expressed his utmost appreciation to the spectators who took their time to watch the spectacle.

“Without all the spectators that came out to watch us play, this tournament and lovely scenery would be boring,” said Hollick.

To the sponsor FNB Eswatini, he said they outdid themselves with a super organised event.

“Without sponsors like you, there’s no competition for us under the Sunshine Tour,” he said.

Meanwhile, Hollick also confirmed he would return next year to try and defend his title. It must be noted that no previous winner has defended it since 2022 when the first edition was played.

Last year’s champion, Daniel van Tonder, also from SA, was not around to play for his title defence as he was committed in Europe, where he now plays full-time. Two previous winners, Jaco Prinsloo (2022) and Peter Karmis (2023), played the 2025 edition but finished within the top 50.



▲Champion Micheal Hollick ready to return to defend his crown next year.

Thumbs up to Nomads Eswatini — Sunshine Tour, EGU

By Chris Dlamini

DEVELOPMENT in any sport is key to progress and excellence.

This was made clear once again during the awards ceremony of the fourth edition of the FNB Eswatini Golf Challenge 2025 on Saturday afternoon. This was at the Ezulwini Golf and Country Club.

As partners of FNB Eswatini for the Challenge, Sunshine Tour representative Dirk Cloete and Eswatini Golf Union (EGU) Vice-Captain Wandile Simelane were full of praise for Nomads Eswatini’s role in the development of the sport in the Kingdom.

“Our Nomads, long-standing partners of the Sunshine Tour SA, we thank you for delivering a first-class scoring service to the event. Well done!” he said.

He said the Nomads’ work made the



▲Sunshine Tour’s Dick Cloete making his remarks.

tournament flawless. Cloete was also full of praise for the sponsor, FNB Eswatini, for the successful fourth edition.

“We thank FNB Eswatini for this tournament sponsorship. We hope to give this tournament a long, long legacy if FNB is willing to go all the way with us. We are already looking forward to 2026 with the FNB as our proud sponsor,” said Cloete.



▲EGU vice president Wandile Simelane.

Meanwhile, Eswatini Golf Union (EGU) Vice-Captain Wandile Simelane shot straight to the hip.

“We can’t thank the Nomads enough for the work they have done over the years running our golf development programme. Yes, we’d like to thank FNB Eswatini as the main sponsors and thank the other sponsors who partnered with them to make this a

success. This is for the good of the game in the country,” said Simelane.

He said the EGU was embarking on a golf development programme.

“We have secured equipment from various sponsors in platforms such as this one, and we thank FNB Eswatini, who has been supporting the junior development programme over the years. We are happy that they are here to stay as a bank,” said Simelane.

Continuing with his remarks, Simelane said, “We also thank the Nomads who have been running the programme over the years. They have also supported immensely,” he said. Simelane further invited other sponsors to chip in ‘as we develop and nurture the next champion,’ he said.

Simelane further thanked the Eswatini Professional Golfers Association (EPGA) for the well-organised event at the Ezulwini Golf and Country Club.

Play to win 2026 title — Minister to FNB Challenge Top 3

By Chris Dlamini

PROFESSIONAL golfer James Pennington and his two top local colleagues have been encouraged to fight for the title next year.

In his remarks during the fourth edition of the FNB Eswatini Golf Challenge 2025 at Ezulwini Golf and Country Club on Saturday, Education and Training Minister Owen Nxumalo, representing his Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs Minister Bongani Nzima, appealed to the country’s top three professionals to see themselves as the ambassadors of golf in Eswatini.

“It must not end with this achievement, but you can build from this to lifting the title next year,” he said.

Nxumalo congratulated the best three emaSwati out of this tournament, with South Africa-based James Pennington taking the lead to even make the final top 50 cut, earning himself a double prize in the process.

Pennington won E30 000 as the best LiSwati performer, finishing 37th overall, which further earned him E5 333.00.

FNB Eswatini further gave him an additional E30 000 for his outstanding top 50 cut, taking his earnings to just over E65 000.

The other two after him, Mandla Junior (MJ) Dlamini and Brendon Rennie, also



▲Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo with officials and players during the closing ceremony held over the weekend at Ezulwini Country Club.

based in SA, won E20 000 and E10 000, respectively, but finished outside the top 50.

“You are all ambassadors of golf now and from this achievement, you need to lead and improve your skills so that next year, you go all out to win this title for Eswatini,” said

Nxumalo.

The minister further called for Sunshine Tour to consider a Ladies Golf tournament given the increased number seen playing in the Pre-Qualifiers in early July as well the two-day client FNB Eswatini Challenge PRO-AM on Tuesday and Wednesday.

‘I can sue ‘Rubber’ – Chief Ally

Stories By Chris Dlamini

IS local businessman Bheki ‘Rubber’ Simelane in court against the right people?

This question comes after it transpired that in his High Court papers against Mbabane Highlanders AM FC patrons and new leader, President Shauwn ‘MaMkhize’ Mkhize, among other Respondents, excludes the legitimate owner of the club with an 80 per cent stake, Chief Ally Kgomongwe.

The latter’s reaction to the High Court matter was to the effect he should be the one officially dragged to court in any case.

“I’m the official and legitimate owner of Mbabane Highlanders. With everything

that’s happening, I clearly can sue Rubber myself,” said Kgomongwe.

He said it was disappointing that this issue was not passing when the team should be focussing its energy on moving forward under Mkhize.

“I recently put things to perspective because I could see Rubber didn’t know he was also in charge of my company team without my knowledge and approval. I can sue him and I’m surprised that I’m not one of the Respondents in the matter, yet I legally own Highlanders,” he wondered.

Kgomongwe said since the matter was scheduled for Tuesday, August 11, he would be following with keen interest.

He said if push comes to shove, then he would have to take a stand himself to ensure Mkhize and the patrons did not have to focus their energy on Simelane but get the

matter closed for good with the courts.

It is only a few weeks ago that Kgomongwe corrected a South African newspaper about who owned Highlanders and further signed in Mkhize, helping the patrons remove Simelane’s name under the club leadership at the Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) which had given the impression Mkhize had to pay E1 million compensation to Simelane who had signed an 18-month contract with the patrons from last November.

However, the Patrons wanted a board of directors in place with Simelane a part of it, but that did not go well and Mkhize, as well as her son Andile Mpisane and local businessman Fortune Nxumalo are in currently in charge. Meanwhile, Mkhize is the second Respondent in the matter, while the Patrons are first, then the PLE and EFA.



▲ Chief Ally Kgomongwe and Bheki “Rubber” Simelane.

CAF gives temporary Somhlolo approval

THE issue of a top-notch stadium demand for Eswatini remains.

This is amid what may only come as short-lived joy by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) for Eswatini following the official confirmation of the tiny stadium approval to host category 2 and 3 international games. Banned in 2016 as a health hazard by CAF, the stadium has been under renovation since 2018 when the provisional permits from CAF stopped.

However, Mbabane Highlanders AM was able to use it to host Royal AM about two years ago in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup.

CAF officially released the list of approved stadiums on Monday, way ahead of next month’s TotalEnergies

CAF Champions League and TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26 preliminary round games. Eswatini is included as having been given the green light to see Champions League envoys Nsingizini Hotspurs and Confederation Cup representatives Royal Leopard host their opening games at home, as opposed to using South African stadiums at a huge cost. Nsingizini will host Zimbabwe side, Simba Bhora, while Leopard will be home to Namibia’s Young Africans in their second legs towards the end of September.

The first legs will be away for both teams on September 19. Given that both Zimbabwe and Namibia currently have no approved venues, their home games could be in South Africa.

Leopard’s Public Relations Officer (PRO), Frank Hurube, and Nsingizini’s Mnotfo Dlamini all affirmed their draw as was done by CAF on Saturday. They both confirmed their first preliminary round games would be played at Somhlolo National Stadium in Lobamba. Hurube also confirmed on Monday that they could play Young Africans in SA. However, CAF is still not done with its inspections and will update on the stadiums regularly between now and the first fixtures next month.

If any or both sides progress to the second preliminary round, those games may go outside of the country unless seats are installed at the ‘sacred’ open area well-known as the No Man’s Land.

Lindo gets early silverware in Zambia

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI international defender Lindo Mkhonta has earned early silverware in Zambia.

The ex-Young Buffaloes player was part of the Zesco United FC squad that won the Carling Cup after beating Power Dynamos 2-0 over the weekend.

Mkhonta will be part of the Zesco United squad that will compete in the 2025 CAF Confederation Cup after he was handed a two year contract extension by the Ndola-based side.

He recently reunited with for-

mer Mbabane Swallows coach Honour Janza, who recently joined the Ndola-based side as Technical Director (TD).

Mkhonta could not be reached for comment when compiling this report.

He was left out of the 2025 COSAFA Cup squad recently announced by Croatian coach Zdravko Logarusic.

The one-time Malanti Chiefs player is part of the country’s international list, which includes Justice Figareido (Chippa United, South Africa), Mxolisi Mkhonto (Jwaneng Galaxy, Botswana), and Banele ‘Ndzabandzaba (Botswana Defence Force).



▲ Sihlangu players during a recent match.

Sihlangu to face Morocco in friendly matches

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

BIG moments wait for Sihlangu players in the next two years.

The senior national team will face Morocco in international friendly matches.

This is part of the standing two-year Memorandum of Understanding between the Eswatini Football Association and the Morocco Football Federation that was recently signed by the two associations’ presidents, Peter ‘Samora’ Simelane and Fouzi Lekjaa. Sitsebe will also benefit from the program with the oth-

er junior squads, such as the National Under-17, Under-20, and Under-23.

Simelane confirmed the agreement when delivering his manifesto during the EFA elections campaigns held on Saturday at Sigwaca house. “We have a standing MOU with Morocco, which will benefit both countries in several aspects of the games,” he said.

The MOU include exchange of programme such as the development of youth football and training of officials. This will see three local officials travel to Morocco for training and observation of events.

Simelane is vying for a second term as EFA president.

He is competing with his deputy, Mashumi Shongwe, in the hot seat ahead of the elective General Assembly scheduled for August 17, 2025 at Hilton Garden Court.

It’s a five-horse race in the vice president position between the incumbent Steve Horton, Nichomedus ‘Ace’ Mashwama, Sonnyboy Mabuza, Simanga Nhleko, and Nkhosingiphile Shongwe.

The executive member position battle will be between Sicelo Nene, Musa Mamba, Aaron ‘Katalala’ Mavimbela, Sibusiso ‘Scorpion’ Nxumalo, and Phumzile Dlamini.

Dlamini will also contest with Sindi Dlodlu for the Women’s executive member position.



▲ Eswatini international and Zesco United player Lindo Mkhonta (Right) celebrating his Carling Cup success with his team mate.



Zamalek not interested in free agent Tau

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Sihlangu to face Morocco

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‘I can sue ‘Rubber’ – Ally Kgomongwe

● **Former Mbabane Highlanders Managing Director Chief Ally Kgomongwe says he should be among the Respondents in ‘Rubber’s High Court case alongside South African businesswoman Shauwn ‘MaMkhize’ Mkhize.**