

Over 5 000 businesses engaged
through the Bafundzise Campaign

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Sigwe walks into the future with new shoe factory

By Delisa Magagula

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Budget to the people consultation exercise to commence

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Sigwe walks into the future with new shoe factory

By Delisa Magagula

... Over 120 jobs to be created

THE community of Sigwe Inkhundla is on the verge of a historic economic boost as the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade has confirmed the establishment of a new footwear manufacturing factory in the area.

The project, spearheaded by Amandla Omnotho, is expected to transform not only the local economy but also the broader leather value chain in Eswatini.

The announcement was made recently by Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Manqoba Khumalo, who was joined by Gugulethu Xaba, the President and Founder of Amandla Omnotho.

Minister Khumalo described the factory as a game-changing investment, set to empower the youth, create sustainable jobs, and position Eswatini as a serious player in the footwear industry.

“This project is more than just about making shoes. It is about reviving our leather value chain, building sustainable industries from the ground up, and ensuring that young Emaswati are not just employees but also investors and co-owners of the businesses that shape their future,” said the Minister.

The Minister explained that although Eswatini produces significant amounts of leather, much of it currently goes to waste due to the absence of a structured value chain.

The establishment of the Sigwe footwear factory is expected to change this trajectory, creating a market for raw materials while stimulating related industries.

According to Amandla Omnotho, the factory will begin by producing 5,000 pairs of shoes per month, focusing initially on school shoes, a critical market given the country’s



▲ Minister of Commerce Manqoba Khumalo seated with Principal Secretary Melusi Masuku and Sigwe MP David ‘Cruiser’ Ngcamphalala. This was during the commissioning of the shoe factory at Sigwe.

large population of learners.

The investment is expected to generate 50 permanent jobs in Phase One, with the number increasing to 120 permanent positions once the factory reaches full capacity.

Beyond job creation, the company has committed to providing on-the-job training for local workers to develop skills that will empower them within and beyond the project.

Ownership opportunities will also be extended to Emaswati, particularly the youth,

ensuring that they are active participants in the long-term sustainability of the project.

The Minister further stressed that remuneration structures will be guided by the Kingdom’s Gazette, ensuring that workers receive fair and improved wages.

The factory’s operations will be overseen by Thulani Goba, a seasoned footwear expert with decades of industry knowledge. Goba will not only manage production but will also lead training programmes to ensure that local employees are equipped with mod-

ern skills in footwear manufacturing.

“Our vision is to build an industry that lasts. We are committed to equipping young people with practical skills that will allow them to run and own production lines, and eventually become the industry leaders of tomorrow,” said Goba.

The announcement of the investment was warmly received by Sigwe Member of Parliament, David ‘Cruiser’ Ngcamphalala, who expressed his gratitude to Their Majesties for appointing Minister Khumalo.

Ngcamphalala described the project as a long-awaited development for the Sigwe community, which has struggled with unemployment and limited industrial opportunities.

“This factory is not just about jobs, but about dignity and self-reliance for our people. We thank the government for bringing such a life-changing initiative to our community. It gives us hope and motivation for the future,” he said.

The Minister revealed that the next step will involve introducing the appointed contractor to local traditional authorities, marking the official start of the project.

“The people of Sigwe must be part of every step of this journey. From the construction phase to production, this project belongs to the community, and they will be its biggest beneficiaries,” the Minister

The Ministry is expected to return to Sigwe soon for this formal introduction, which will pave the way for construction to begin.

While the financial estimate of the project has not yet been made public, Minister Khumalo hinted that it would be a significant investment.

“This is not a small undertaking. The figures are still being finalised, but what we can say is that it is big enough to change the face of Sigwe and to inspire other investors to look at Eswatini as a serious manufacturing destination,” he said.

Eswatini to create leather value chain

By Delisa Magagula

ONE of the most striking aspects of the shoe factory announcement was the Minister’s emphasis on the leather value chain.

Khumalo said Eswatini produces large amounts of leather, primarily from livestock, but much of it ends up being discarded or underutilised due to lack of processing capacity.

By setting up a footwear factory, the government hopes to create a market that will reduce waste, create jobs, and increase exports.

“Every piece of leather that has been going to waste is a missed opportunity. This factory will ensure that our resources are utilised fully, creating wealth where there was once loss,” Khumalo said.

The Minister further noted that strengthening the leather value chain will open opportunities for tanners, suppliers, designers, and distributors, effectively building an entire ecosystem around the Sigwe project.

He further said, the most unique feature of the investment is the partnership with the youth of Sigwe, who are being brought in not

just as employees but also as potential investors and co-owners.

Gugulethu Xaba, President of Amandla Omnotho, stressed that the model is designed to empower young people with more than just jobs.

“Our goal is to make sure that the youth have a real stake in this factory. This is about economic transformation, giving them the tools, training, and ownership they need to shape their own future,”

The establishment of the Amandla Omnotho footwear factory in Sigwe marks a significant step forward in Eswatini’s industrial development agenda.

With promises of job creation, skill development, fair wages, community ownership, and a revived leather value chain, the project is set to bring long-term benefits not only to Sigwe but also to the entire Kingdom.

As the nation waits the official unveiling of the contractor and the commencement of construction, optimism is running high.

For Sigwe, this factory represents not just shoes, but a future stitched together with hope, opportunity, and economic dignity.



▲ Gugulethu Xaba, the President and Founder of Amandla Omnotho.

Eswatini to host historic Catholic Conference with 71 Bishops, 4 Cardinals

By Kwanele Dhladhla and Taonga Nkhata

ESWATINI will host one of the largest Catholic gatherings in the Southern African region, as 71 bishops and four cardinals from across Africa and the Vatican will converge for the Golden Jubilee of the Interregional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA). The high-level plenary session will bring together 120 delegates – 95 per cent of them from outside Eswatini – making it one of the most internationally significant Church events ever held in the kingdom.

Delegates will begin arriving on September 24, with official proceedings running from the 25th until September 29. The gathering will be held at Esibayeni Lodge, while the highlight of the week, a special Mass, will take place on Sunday at Mavuso Trade Centre.

IMBISA Director Rafael Sapato said the Jubilee celebration was not only a moment of reflection but also of renewal for the Catholic Church in Southern Africa.

“When IMBISA was founded, the purpose was to share personal experiences, challenges, and good practices. We want to take this Golden Jubilee to evaluate what needs to be improved. Our main target is to consolidate our synodality as a region, so that we move forward more united,” Sapato explained.

He added that Eswatini’s role as host was particularly significant.

“This is not a meeting of locals. Basically, we are the hosting country for this big event, and it is the image of Eswatini that we will be



▲ Manzini Bishop Jose Luis Ponce de Leon, IMBISA President Archbishop Liborius Nashenda (Namibia) and Director Rafael Sapato (Mozambique) sharing with the Church.”

Among the attendees will be four cardinals who hold prominent roles within the global Catholic Church. These include Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who is President of the Catholic Continental Body in Africa; Cardinal Michael Czerny from the Vatican; and two cardinals from South Africa.

“These are men who are especially close to Pope Leo. Their presence here is a great honour for Eswatini and for the entire region,” Sapato noted.

A celebration for the Nation

IMBISA President, Archbishop Liborius Nashenda of Windhoek, Namibia, said the conference will culminate in a unifying celebration of prayer, the Catholic Mass.

“On Sunday, there will be no celebrations in the parishes so that all Catholics – locals and visitors – can gather at Mavuso Trade Centre. It is going to be a lovely time for the visitors and a very big blessing to the people of the country,” Archbishop Nashenda said.

The conference will be conducted in English and Portuguese, with simultaneous translation provided for delegates.



▲ The IMBISA Golden Jubilee will be themed; ‘The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church and her Prophetic Mission in Southern Africa.’

Beyond the spiritual and governance discussions, the event will also highlight Eswatini’s unique culture and traditions. Delegates will be treated to traditional performances, showcasing the kingdom’s rich heritage of music and dance.

“Our delegates will be very excited to experience the hospitality of Eswatini. I am sure after seeing the traditional dances, many will be asking for the conference to be extended for another week,” Sapato said with a smile. As Eswatini prepares to welcome church leaders from across the continent and beyond, the Golden Jubilee of IMBISA promises not only to consolidate unity within the church but also to place the kingdom firmly on the map as a centre of faith and hospitality in Southern Africa.

Catholic Bishop Ponce de Leon applauds Eswatini for Pope transition support

By Kwanele Dhladhla

MANZINI Catholic Bishop Jose Luis Ponce de Leon has expressed heartfelt gratitude to the people of Eswatini for the solidarity and closeness they showed during the difficult period from Pope Francis’ illness to the election of Pope Leo.

Speaking during a press briefing ahead of the Interregional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) to be held between September 24-29 at Esibayeni Lodge, Bishop Ponce de Leon said the Kingdom of Eswatini walked closely with the Catholic Church at a time when the world’s attention was on Rome.

“From the time Pope Francis got sick until the election of Pope Leo, Eswatini was amazingly close to us. We saw the same thing in South Africa. I haven’t had a chance to check in other countries, but clearly, we feel the need to say thank you to each one of you,” he said.

The bishop recalled how the media and the public eagerly sought updates on the Pope’s health and later the process of electing a new pontiff.

“Those days were different. It was the media really looking for information from us. There was eagerness to understand how sick Pope Francis was,” he explained.

He vividly remembered the day of Pope Francis’ passing.

“I saw it by chance on social media. I con-

tinued doing what I was doing when, after an hour, one of the local media was already at the Manzini Catholic Church. You immediately wanted to have information. You tried to understand the way the Catholic Church journeys towards the election of the new Bishop of Rome and Pope.”

Bishop Ponce de Leon shared that many in Eswatini wondered if the Church might elect its first African Pope.

“It was a natural feeling. But probably Asia had the same feeling. Latin America, where I come from, said no, we already had one. Italy, on the other hand, was saying it was time for Italians to be back. It was a lovely time in which we journeyed together,” he reflected.

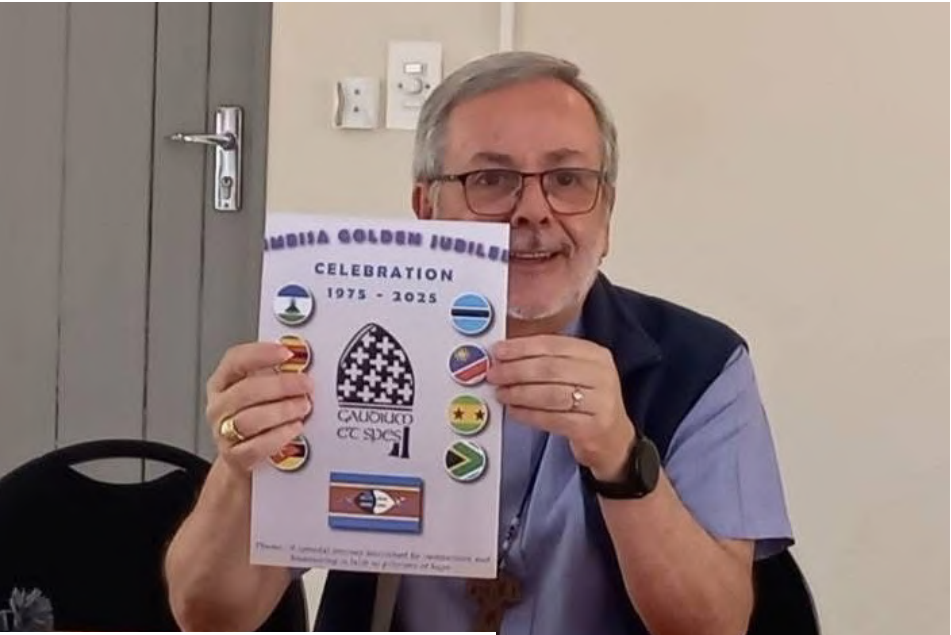
The bishop said the bond between the Church and the local media was evident when Pope Leo was elected.

“We had not yet seen who he was when one of the Eswatini media had already sent me a message saying: ‘We need a statement from the Church.’ I said, please give me a moment. I don’t even know who the Pope is,” he said with a smile.

Bishop Ponce de Leon stated that the Catholic Church values this partnership with Eswatini and hopes it will continue to grow.

“I think the more we can inform our people, the better. The quality of our information makes a difference in the life of a nation. We want to be available to the media when they need us,” he stated.

He added that trustworthy information was essential for peace and understanding in society.



▲ Manzini Catholic Bishop Jose Luis Ponce de Leon showcases the booklet unpacking the historic conference.

“I always feel that when information is not clear, we all remain with questions. But if we can trust absolutely what we hear, what we see, what you produce, I think this can only be a blessing for the country.”

Concluding his remarks, Bishop Ponce de Leon assured the nation of the Church’s continued prayers.

“We want to say thank you. Really, thank you. We assure you our prayers for your work, which is never easy, and for your families, and for everything that you carry in your hearts. Thank you so much.”



▲ Father Ncamiso Vilakati directs proceedings..



Over 5 000 businesses engaged through the Bafundzise Campaign

... ERS expands outreach to businesses on Swazi Nation Land

By Lwazi Dlamini
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THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) is making significant progress through its Bafundzise Campaign, an outreach and education initiative launched in March of this year to improve tax compliance and strengthen engagement with businesses across the country.

The campaign, which focuses on both registered and unregistered businesses, including Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs), employers, and more, has already reached thousands of clients in major towns. The Bafundzise team will be kicking off, engaging businesses in Siteki from the 28th of August 2025, after successful engagements in Manzini, Matsapha, Mbabane, Ezulwini and Nhlangano.

Strengthening Partnerships with the Ministry of Tinkundla On August 13, 2025, the ERS Commissioner General, Brightwell Nkambule, met with the Minister of Tinkhundla, Honourable Sikhumbuzo Dlamini, Principal Secretary Nonhlanhla Dlamini, Under Secretary Ngcayizivele Dlamini, Regional Administrators for the Manzini and Hhohho regions, and representatives from the Tinkhundla Administration Offices. The discussions focused on developing a collaborative approach to reach businesses

in rural areas. It was agreed that Regional Administrators would facilitate engagements with Chiefdoms to explain the purpose of the campaign and secure support to work with local businesses. A detailed rollout plan will then be shared, while the Ministry of Tinkhundla and ERS coordinate communication and mobilisation ahead of the activities. Bafundzise in Numbers Since launch, the campaign has engaged more than 5,000 clients across five major urban centres.

Key results include:

- **Manzini:** 1,777 businesses engaged (69.4% holding Tax Identification Numbers (TINs))
- **Matsapha:** 931 businesses engaged, recording the highest compliance rate so far (88.9% holding TINs)
- **Mbabane:** 1,667 businesses engaged (72.1% holding TINs)
- **Ezulwini:** 229 businesses engaged (89% holding TINs, one of the strongest rates)
- **Nhlangano:** 522 businesses engaged (73.8% holding TINs)

In addition, ERS has facilitated onsite TIN registration for over 300 clients, a service that remains in high demand. Educating, enabling and empowering local businesses. The Bafundzise Campaign is designed to educate. The sessions and one-on-one consultations cover a wide range of tax-related topics, including Presumptive Tax for small businesses, Corporate Income Tax, PAYE,



▲ The Bafundzise team will be kicking off, engaging businesses in Siteki from the 28th of August 2025, after successful engagements in Manzini, Matsapha, Mbabane, Ezulwini and Nhlangano.

sion on the TaxEase digital platform.

Also covered are TIN registration and the importance of compliance, navigation and use of TaxEase and customs-related enquiries. Businesses that are behind on their obligations are also being encouraged to use the Sondzela Sikhulume solution, which supports clients requiring debt management assistance.

By addressing both general tax knowledge and practical steps for compliance, ERS is empowering businesses to adopt best practices and use digital tools to simplify their tax obligations. Feedback from clients has been overwhelmingly positive. Many businesses, particularly SMMEs, welcomed the campaign's door-to-door approach, saying it provided them with direct access to

have sought out on their own. Building a culture of compliance "Clients are beginning to see ERS not only as a collector of taxes, but as an institution committed to helping them understand their obligations, grow their businesses, and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

By making tax education accessible, relevant, and supportive, ERS is laying the foundation for a stronger culture of compliance across Eswatini," says Ntobeko Dlamini, ERS Director of Communications and Marketing.

As the campaign continues, its success will not only be measured in numbers but in the strengthened relationship between the tax authority and the business community.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

POPULAR Bishop Vusumuzi Makuluve Gumedze is getting engaged to his new fiancé this coming Saturday, hardly three months after ending things with his second wife.

This comes after Gumedze (47) issued a public statement on May 17, stating that the marriage to his second wife Lindelwa Nomvumelwano Shongwe had come to an end.

According to Gumedze, he has found new love in Tekhaya Nolwazi Shongwe and he will be getting engaged to her this coming Saturday.

However, according to Gumedze, he was not at liberty to disclose the venue, where the engagement ceremony will be taking place, since it will be a private function with

very few people invited to attend.

Gumedze further rubbished claims that he fell in love with Tekhaya whilst she was a member of his choir.

This comes after Gumedze was heavily criticised by social media users on social media platforms, particularly Facebook for falling in love and preparing to get married to one of his choir members.

When setting the record straight, Gumedze mentioned that he had not released an album for a period of about five years now, since he did not have a choir. He mentioned that he recently formed a new choir about two months ago, with which he has recently released an album.

He mentioned that had been in a relationship with Tekhaya for seven months now.

"I fell in love with Tekhaya months before she joined the new choir," he said.

Gumedze further mentioned that even if it was true that he was getting ready to get married to one of his choir members, he would not have done anything wrong by so doing, since there was no verse in the Bible, which prohibits Christians from doing such.

Meanwhile, according to Gumedze through the statement he released in May this year, his marriage conducted in Swati law and custom with Lindelwa (30) reached an irreparable end.

He alleged that this came after an unceremonious and unthought-of disappearance of his wedded wife from the matrimonial set up for a period of eight months, only leaving behind a note (which he still keeps), appre-

ciating the love and care, which she allegedly said she did not deserve and probably sensed danger ahead.

He alleged that this was not the first time Shongwe disappeared as this instance followed another absence without official leave (AWOL) which lasted for three months to Johannesburg and Mpumalanga at that time, with people unknown to him as her husband in the year 2022. Meanwhile, this was not the first time Makuluve ended things with his wife as in 2020; he divorced his first wife of 15 years, Nomvumelwano Lukhele.

The divorce decree was issued by the then Magistrate Innocent Mahlalela at the Manzini Magistrate's Court, where Makuluve was accompanied by his supporters, including Lindelwa.

Bishop Makuluve to tie the knot again

By Thokozani Mazibuko

Mysterious fire engulfs toyota corolla in Mhlume

RESIDENTS of Mhlume Section 14 were left in shock on Monday evening after a vehicle was consumed by a mysterious fire while in motion.

According to a statement issued by the Chief Police Information and Communication Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati, the incident occurred on 25 August 2025 at around 5:55 p.m. A grey Toyota Corolla sedan, valued at E44,000, caught fire while being driven by a 34-year-old woman from Shewula.

Vilakati confirmed that the cause of the fire remains unknown. "The vehicle was mysteriously burnt while being driven at Mhlume Section 14 area. No injuries were reported, and the driver managed to escape unharmed," she said.

Eyewitnesses described scenes of panic as flames quickly engulfed the vehicle. "It all happened so fast. One moment the car was moving normally, and the next, smoke and fire were coming out of the bonnet. Luckily, the lady managed to get out in time," said a resident who witnessed the ordeal.

Firefighters from the Mhlume Fire Station were called to the scene, but by the time they arrived, the sedan had already been ex-

tensively damaged. Only the charred shell of the car remained.

Police have since launched an investigation into the matter to establish the exact cause of the blaze. While mechanical faults such as electrical short circuits or overheating are among the possible explanations, the mysterious nature of the incident has raised concerns among the community.

It should be noted that this is not the first such case reported in the country. In recent months, sporadic incidents of vehicles catching fire while in motion have been documented, sparking debates on road safety, car maintenance, and possible foul play.

Authorities have since urged motorists to ensure regular vehicle servicing and to immediately stop driving and seek help if they notice unusual smoke, smells, or warning lights while on the road.

The incident has left the Shewula woman counting her losses, as her vehicle was completely written off. Police investigations are ongoing.



Son bites, locks his mother in bathroom, arrested

A 24-year-old man has been arrested for assaulting, biting and locking his mother in her bathroom.

This has seen Mnotfo Langelihle Tsabedze (24) of Luhleko area, appearing before Principal Magistrate Florence Msibi at the Manzini Magistrates Court.

This comes after he contravened the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act 15/2018, in that being a biological son to Celiwe Dlamini; he assaulted her with kicks all over the body. He also grabbed his mother's hair and hit her against the wall several times and further bit her right hand.

Tsabedze further locked his mother inside her bedroom. The aforementioned conduct according to the charge sheet, caused imminent harm to the safety, health and wellbeing of Dlamini.

He pleaded guilty to the charge and he was found guilty as per his own plea.

He pleaded with the court to be lenient with him when passing sentence without stating and particular reason as to why he

was seeking such a leniency.

Tsabedze was sentenced to five years in in prison with an option of a fine of E10 000.

Meanwhile, another 45-year-old man, who stole his mother's furniture valued at E6 800 and further threatened to kill her, appeared in the same court.

Mario Henwood from Ngculwini area was also charged with the contravention of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act 15/2018.

This comes after he stole his mother's two wardrobes valued at E4 800 and two tables worth E2 000.

On top of that, Henwood threatened to kill his mother, a conduct that might have harmed or caused imminent harm to the safety, health or wellbeing of the aggrieved person.

Henwood pleaded guilty to the offence and he was found guilty as charged.

He mitigated for a lenient sentence on grounds that he was unemployed, yet he had a son that was dependent on him.

Henwood was sentenced to four years in prison with an option of a fine of E6 000.



▲ PICO Phindile Vilakati.

Man electrocuted while fixing water pump at KaPhunga

TRAGEDY struck the KaPhunga area on Tuesday when a man lost his life after being electrocuted while working on a water pump along the Mkhondvo River.

According to a police report issued by the Chief Police Information and Communication Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati, the incident occurred on 26 August 2025 at around 11:30 a.m. The victim, a 47-year-old man from Emasini, was reportedly attempting to connect a water pump when he was fatally electrocuted.

"Preliminary investigations indicate that the man was handling electrical connections at the riverside pump when the tragedy occurred. He was certified dead on the scene," said Vilakati.

The shocking incident has left the

Emasini community reeling, as residents described the deceased as a hardworking family man who was known for his commitment to community development projects. "He was always willing to help whenever there were issues with the water pumps. This is a very painful loss for us," said a neighbour who gathered with others at the scene after hearing the news.

Emergency services, including the police and emergency medical technicians, attended the site but unfortunately could not save the man's life. His body was later transported to a local mortuary for post-mortem examination.

Vilakati reminded the public of the dangers of working with electrical systems, particularly in environments with water. "We urge members of the public to exercise

extreme caution when handling electrical appliances, especially near rivers or other wet areas. Always seek professional assistance to avoid such tragedies," she said.

It should be noted that cases of electrocution, though not frequent, have been reported in various parts of the country, often linked to unsafe handling of electrical installations, illegal connections, or poor maintenance of equipment. Safety experts continue to stress the importance of protective gear, proper insulation, and professional supervision in all electrical-related tasks.

It is worth mentioning that as investigations continue, the tragic incident at KaPhunga serves as a painful reminder of the risks associated with electricity and the importance of always observing safety measures.

Stories by Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Medical Christian University (EMCU) has secured an urgent court order reinforcing an earlier directive that halted a strike by the National Workers Union in Swaziland Higher Institutions (NAWUSHI).

This comes after the university approached the Industrial Court on Monday, seeking to have NAWUSHI's leadership held in contempt of court for allegedly ignoring the August 13 interdict and persisting with a work stoppage that has disrupted academic activities.

In his founding affidavit, Registrar Seben-ta Menon argued that the union's continued defiance had caused irreparable harm to students and posed a direct challenge to the courts' authority.

Menon accused NAWUSHI members of forcibly removing students from lecture rooms, disrupting tests, and creating an unsafe environment on campus.

He said the strike action continued unlawfully on August 15, 19, 20, 21 and 22, 2025, despite the court's ruling.

"This conduct shows that the first respondent is a law unto itself and disregards any other authority, including this honourable court's authority," he told the court.

The university has applied for the union's Secretary General, Stanley Simelane, to be jailed for 30 days for contempt of court if the strike is not called off immediately.

The disruption, Menon added, had severely affected preparations for end-of-year examinations scheduled to begin on September 1.

He explained that management suspended face-to-face classes on August 19 due to safety concerns but later reopened lectures on August 25, even though the strike continued.

Supporting the application, Student Representative Council (SRC) President Andile Lawson confirmed that students were pre-

Court orders NAWUSHI to stop the EMCU strike



▲ Students from the Eswatini Medical Christian University gathered at the Ministry of Education and Training to voice their grievances.

vented from attending classes and writing tests. "As students, we are worried about the disregard of the court orders by the first respondent.

The first respondent removes the students from lecture rooms advising that there is a strike and that the students must go home," Lawson said in his affidavit.

The university further requested police presence on campus to maintain peace and ensure classes continue without interference.

Represented in court by attorney Modesai Donga, the university obtained an order interdicting NAWUSHI from continuing with the strike and directing members to return to work immediately, failing which they will be held in contempt of court.



Accused seeks bail again in the Gallery Hotel murder case

A 22-year-old South African man accused of participating in the murder of Gallery Hotel Director Sifiso Simelane has returned to the High Court to apply for bail, citing new circumstances and personal hardship.

The accused, Nkosinathi Winston Ngozwane, was arrested in May 2024 and has been in custody since then. He faces charges of murder, two counts of robbery, and two counts of kidnapping, alongside six co-accused.

The charges stem from the January 23, 2024 incident, in which Simelane was allegedly kidnapped and murdered. According to the charge sheet, the accused allegedly slit Simelane's throat around Malkerns before fleeing.

On the same day, they allegedly committed a violent robbery at Bethany, where property worth more than E240 000 including televisions, sound systems, an iPhone, cash, and a BMW 325 sedan was stolen.

Two kidnapping counts were also added after victims were allegedly forced into vehicles and driven around Ezulwini and Matsapha



throughout the night.

Ngozwane's first bail application was rejected earlier this year. In his fresh application, he argued that exceptional circumstances exist in his case, including prolonged detention without trial.

He pointed out that some of his co-accused have already been granted bail. He further told the court that he has strong ties to Eswatini, having lived in the country since 2015.

He said he ran a small business in Moneni, where he lived with his partner and their one-year-old child. Ngozwane added that his cousin was willing to stand surety for him should he be released.

The applicant also cited health concerns, claiming he suffers from asthma and other medical conditions that make life in detention difficult.

He denied direct involvement in the murder, insisting that his role was limited to transporting some of the co-accused under the impression that they were collecting tyres.

Ngozwane stressed that he is presumed innocent until proven guilty and argued that continued detention amounts to punishment before trial. The matter is expected to return to court for the determination of his bail application.

Couple in court over shopping list dispute

A DOMESTIC dispute over a shopping list landed a 62-year-old man in court after he allegedly assaulted his wife during an argument.

Douglas Gamedze of Sibebe appeared before Principal Magistrate Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court, where he was charged with contravening Section 77 of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act.

It was alleged that Gamedze struck his wife, Nonhlanhla Shiba, several times on the face, strangled her, and used an extension cord to whip her on the buttocks.

When questioned in court about the attack, Gamedze claimed he had acted in self-defence, saying his wife attempted to throw hot water at him. He told the magistrate that the altercation began after his wife accused him of fathering a child outside marriage. The accusation was reportedly sparked by a grocery

receipt that showed sugar had been purchased, although he had failed to bring it home as requested.

According to his account, he returned home late that night to find himself locked out. When his wife refused to open the door, even after their neighbour intervened, she allegedly continued to confront him with accusations of infidelity. The argument, he claimed, escalated into a physical altercation.

During mitigation, Gamedze apologised to his wife in open court and promised not to repeat his actions. He pleaded for leniency, citing his advanced age and role as the family's breadwinner.

After considering the facts, Magistrate Nhlabatsi sentenced him to five years' imprisonment with an option of an E5 000 fine. However, the sentence was wholly suspended for three years on the condition that he does not commit a similar offence under the SODV Act during that period.

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

E100 000 up for grabs at FNB

FNB Eswatini has rolled out a new campaign to encourage customers to swipe more and carry less cash as the festive season draws near. The Swipe for the WIN Campaign, officially launched on Tuesday at Mica Hardware and Spar Matsapha Lifestyle, is part of the bank's 30th anniversary celebrations. The initiative aims to promote safe, convenient and trackable transactions while rewarding loyal customers with cash-back opportunities.

Dollar firms, focus on Fed policy as French politics clouds euro

MUMBAI — The dollar firmed against major currencies on Wednesday as investors turned their focus to upcoming U.S. economic data for policy cues, even as worries persist over the Federal Reserve's independence. The euro touched its weakest level since August 6 and was last down 0.4 per cent at \$1.1595. Sterling declined 0.3 per cent to \$1.3442, and the Swiss franc and the Japanese yen both slipped by about 0.4 per cent against the dollar.

Rand weakens as dollar firms

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand slipped on Wednesday, as the dollar made a tentative rebound, while concerns lingered over the independence of the U.S. Federal Reserve. By 0925 GMT the rand was trading at 17.7225 against the dollar, or 0.5 per cent weaker than Tuesday's close. The dollar traded about 0.3 per cent stronger against a basket of currencies.

FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	17.3312	17.7938
G.B. Pound	23.2755	23.9425
EURO	20.1018	20.7098
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	

Budget to the people consultations commence

By Delisa Magagula

THE Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, has announced the commencement of the Budget to the People consultation exercise, which is aimed at engaging and sensitizing Emaswati on the national budget process.

He also provided an update on the country's ongoing anti-money laundering assessments and highlighted possible implications for Eswatini of recent international developments concerning South Africa.

Speaking during his weekly Finance in Focus update, Rijkenberg said the Ministry was beginning its annual budget process by taking consultations directly to the people, in line with promises made during Sibaya.

"As a Ministry of Finance, it's the time of the year now where we take the budget to the people. It's the beginning of the budget process in our country, which is a heck of a process to get finalized," he said.

The Minister explained that last year the Ministry had conducted high-level meetings with stakeholders such as CENSTARS. This year, however, the consultations will go deeper by engaging directly with regional leaders and communities.

He said teams from the Ministry will travel to all four regions of the country, where they will meet with BoTopho, community development teams, and Tindvuna.

According to Rijkenberg, the first round of regional consultations is scheduled as follows:

- Manzini Region – September 10
- Shiselweni Region – September 11
- Hhohho Region – September 12
- Lubombo Region – September 17

"These meetings are heavily focused on sensitization. We want to make sure everybody has a deep understanding of how the budget is formulated before we start receiving inputs," said the Minister.

He added that Emaswati are encouraged to share recommendations even outside of the meetings, either through the Ministry's official email address (finance@gov.sz) or the website. "If anybody wants to give input into next year's budget, they are very welcome to send an email to us. We do take information, and this process is ongoing," he said.

The Minister expressed confidence that as the consultations continue annually, the national budget will become increasingly reflective of the needs of the people.

Turning to international financial compliance, Rijkenberg said Eswatini was in the process of addressing deficiencies identified by the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), a regional body linked to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

He revealed that Eswatini had not performed well in a previous assessment, scoring only 14 out of the 40 required standards, where at least 20 are necessary to avoid being grey listed.

"Eswatini unfortunately only got 14, so we were actually in a bit of trouble and needed to



▲ Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg.

make changes," he said.

The Minister noted that significant progress has since been made, including the passing of new legislation with strong support from Parliament, Cabinet, and His Majesty the King. Following this, Eswatini requested a re-rating.

He explained that the Ministry had initially presented 15 recommendations for review, with the teams in Addis Ababa currently undergoing official evaluation sessions.

"It looks like at least 14 if not 15 of them will be qualified," he said, adding that he would personally join the ministerial-level meeting in Addis Ababa later in the week for formal approval.

Rijkenberg urged the nation to remain optimistic, saying the reforms were steering Eswatini in the right direction.

The Minister also touched on developments in the United States, where a motion had been tabled in Congress to impose sanctions on South Africa.

He said the motion, if passed, could have potential spillover effects on Eswatini due to the close economic ties between the two countries.

"There's been a motion in America to sanction South Africa for things that they've done which America feels aggrieved about, and obviously if South Africa gets sanctioned it can have quite big consequences on Eswatini," he said.

However, Rijkenberg stressed that the proposal was still in its early stages and subject to multiple levels of approval within the U.S. legislature.

He said the current recommendations suggested targeted sanctions, likely aimed at spe-

cific individuals, rather than sweeping measures such as cutting South Africa off the global SWIFT financial system.

"That would be a very harsh sanction on South Africa and would have consequences on us as a country," he said. "But I would say there's still nothing to fear in Eswatini around this. We will handle it as it comes,"

Rijkenberg further explained that Eswatini's economy has a counter-cyclical relationship with South Africa, meaning the two countries do not always follow the same growth patterns.

"Normally when South Africa's growth is down, our growth is higher. When South Africa's growth is higher, our growth is down," he said.

He gave the example of the pre-1994 period, during which South Africa faced sanctions while Eswatini recorded its highest levels of economic growth.

Rijkenberg cautioned that while Eswatini hopes for South Africa's prosperity due to trade and market ties, history shows that sanctions do not automatically spell "doom and gloom" for the Kingdom.

"As a country, if anything goes on there, we'll see what we do as a country to take counter measures if needed. But ultimately, we just hope and pray that nothing happens to South Africa because they are our neighbours and we have a close relationship with them," he said.

The Minister concluded by thanking the public and confirming that the Ministry would continue to provide weekly updates on finance matters through the Finance in Focus platform.

E100 000 up for grabs at FNB

By Delisa Magagula

FNB Eswatini has rolled out a new campaign to encourage customers to swipe more and carry less cash as the festive season draws near.

The Swipe for the WIN Campaign, officially launched on Tuesday at Mica Hardware and Spar Matsapha Lifestyle, is part of the bank's 30th anniversary celebrations.

The initiative aims to promote safe, convenient and trackable transactions while rewarding loyal customers with cash-back opportunities.

FNB Eswatini Head of Transact and Deposits, Nosizwe Sigwane, said the bank has always focused on innovation that meets customer needs.

"Throughout our 30 years of serving Eswatini, we have always prioritised customer convenience and safety. We are proud to have introduced swiping back in 1996, making it easier for our customers to shop without carrying large sums of cash. Swiping also helps them monitor and manage their spending better," she explained.

The bank has set aside E100 000 in prizes for customers who swipe at selected FNB-banked retailers nationwide over the next six weeks. Sigwane noted that the 30 participating retailers are strategically spread across all regions, ensuring inclusivity.

▲ Nosizwe Sigwane, FNB Chief Marketing Officer.



▲ Some of the FNB staff during the launch.

"We serve Eswatini in its entirety, and as we continue our 30th birthday celebrations, we want all Emaswati to feel part of it. No matter where you are in the country, you stand a chance to win simply by swiping your FNB card," she added.

The campaign has already

started producing winners. Golfer Raymond Mathonsi, who won at Spar Matsapha Lifestyle, expressed his delight:

"It feels good to have free lunch. I hadn't planned on making a big purchase, but this initiative is fantastic. I swipe all the time because of the convenience it brings," he said.

Another winner, Nomalungelo Sukati, highlighted how swiping helps her manage her finances more effectively.

"I am so excited to have won! I wasn't expecting it at all. Swiping helps me track my spending, unlike cash which I tend to use impulsively. This campaign has truly encour-

aged me to continue swiping," she said.

Sigwane revealed that this is only the beginning, as FNB will continue rolling out promotions and rewards leading up to the end of the year.

"Our customers can look forward to many more opportunities to win as we celebrate 30 years of impacting the lives of emaSwati," she said.

The Swipe for the WIN Campaign reinforces FNB Eswatini's commitment to driving financial inclusion, safety, and convenience while thanking customers for their loyalty over the past three decades.

Negligent fires cause over E5mln in losses

By Delisa Magagula

NEGLIGENT veld fires have left a trail of destruction across Eswatini, causing losses estimated at over E5 million and affecting at least 237 people, according to a rapid assessment conducted by the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA).

The fires, which raged between 21 and 23 August 2025, were exacerbated by strong winds and dry conditions typical of the peak fire season.

The western regions of the country, including Mahlangatsha, Magubhubheleni, Lushikishini, and Sitsatsaweni, were the hardest hit.

The NDMA confirmed that 46 households, comprising 237 members, were directly affected. Families lost shelter, personal belongings, and essential household food reserves.

In addition to homes, grazing lands, wetlands, and critical infrastructure were scorched, destroying grain stores, irrigation systems, and water supplies.

This has disrupted household food production and put pressure on water access for both domestic and agricultural use.

At least 11 livestock, mainly sheep, perished in the fires, while more remain at risk due to destroyed grazing land and limited access to water.

According to the NDMA, the fires not only displaced families but also threatened agricultural sustainability and damaged vital environmental resources.

The estimated E5 million loss covers household property, crops, and livestock.

"The fires have significantly reduced pasture availability and disrupted small-scale farming activities. Food security and the sustainability of livestock production are at risk," the NDMA noted in its report.

One person sustained injuries during the blaze. The NDMA said its rapid needs assessment is ongoing to establish the full extent

of damage and determine the required humanitarian response.

Considering the heightened fire risk, the NDMA issued a strong fire safety advisory urging communities to prevent avoidable disasters.

The agency stressed the importance of properly extinguishing fires used for cooking or land clearing, ensuring cigarette butts are safely disposed of, and clearing vegetation around homesteads and critical infrastructure.

Motorists were advised to reduce speed when driving through areas with dense smoke to avoid accidents.

Citizens are also urged to monitor weather forecasts, follow official announcements on fire alerts, and immediately report fire outbreaks by contacting ENFRES toll-free numbers 933, 112, or 999.

"We urge the nation to practice fire safety and prevent avoidable disasters," the NDMA stated.

Images released by the NDMA showed scorched homesteads, destroyed grain stores, and collapsed structures in Mahlangatsha and surrounding areas, underscoring the scale of devastation.

The agency reaffirmed its commitment to working with affected communities to restore livelihoods while intensifying awareness campaigns to reduce future risks.



▲ NDMA CEO Victor Mahlalela.

Dollar firms, focus on Fed policy as French politics clouds euro

By Jaspreet Kalra

MUMBAI — The dollar firmed against major currencies on Wednesday as investors turned their focus to upcoming U.S. economic data for policy cues, even as worries persist over the Federal Reserve's independence.

The euro touched its weakest level since August 6 and was last down 0.4 per cent at \$1.1595. Sterling declined 0.3 per cent to \$1.3442, and the Swiss franc and the Japanese yen both slipped by about 0.4 per cent against the dollar. Although the dollar appears to have shaken off the immediate worries over Fed independence that followed U.S. President Donald Trump's attempt on Monday to fire Governor Lisa Cook, the U.S. Treasury yield curve has steepened.

Cook's lawyer later said she would file a lawsuit to prevent her ouster, kicking off what could be a protracted legal fight.

Lee Hardman, senior currency analyst at MUFG, said the U.S. dollar's resilience could reflect that market participants are waiting for confirmation from the release of the August non-farm payrolls data and inflation



▲U.S. dollar banknotes are seen in this illustration taken.

reports that the Fed will "follow through with plans to resume rate cuts next month".

Since his return to the White House this year, Trump has relentlessly pressured the central bank to lower interest rates.

The two-year U.S. Treasury yield, which typically reflects near-term rate

expectations, bottomed at 3.6450 per cent on Wednesday, its lowest since May 1, while the yield of its 30-year counterpart was last up 5 basis points at 4.9562 per cent.

Money markets are pricing in a 88 per cent chance of a 25 basis point rate cut in September, according to the CME's

FedWatch tool.

Elsewhere, political developments in France are the focus for the euro as Prime Minister Francois Bayrou battles to save his minority government ahead of a September 8 confidence vote over budget cuts.

A majority of French people want new parliamentary and presidential elections, opinion polls showed on Wednesday.

"There's a clear danger that this mini crisis lasts longer, but even so, we expect the focus to switch back firmly to the U.S. economy next week," Kit Juckes, chief FX strategist at Societe Generale said in a note.

Investors will next week examine U.S. labour market and business survey data for clues on the future path of Fed policy.

"With Euro under a bit of a cloud, we would still rather go into next week-long JPY and AUD, though CHF appeals too," the note said.

French government bonds steadied on Wednesday, a day after the yield on the 10-year benchmark bond climbed to its highest level in five months.

Meanwhile, preliminary data released on Wednesday showed that British producer output price inflation rose to a two-year high of 1.9 per cent in June, up from 1.3 per cent in May, adding to signs of inflationary pressures in the economy. (Reuters)



▲Gold bangles are displayed at a jewellery store in Mumbai, India.

Gold eases on profit-taking

By Ishaan Arora

GOLD slipped on Wednesday as the dollar firmed and investors booked profits after prices hit a more than two-week high in the previous session.

Spot gold was down 0.5 per cent at \$3,375.79 per ounce at 1119 GMT. U.S. gold futures for December delivery eased 0.2 per cent to \$3,425.10.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of major currencies, rose about 0.4 per cent, making dollar-priced bullion more expensive for other currency holders.

"(Gold) prices are acting less like an arrow and more like a feather, with the prevailing direction of travel determined by the dollar. Current gold price weakness is likely attributable to some profit-taking... as momentum faded to the upside," independent analyst Ross Norman said.

Bullion hit its highest since August 11 on Tuesday after U.S. President Donald Trump's attempt to fire Fed Governor Lisa Cook undermined confidence in the

independence of the central bank and more broadly in U.S. assets, boosting safe-haven demand.

Cook will file a lawsuit to prevent Trump from firing her, her lawyer said, kicking off what could be a protracted legal fight over the White House's effort to shape U.S. monetary policy.

"Market participants will await the decision of U.S. courts (regarding whether) Trump can fire Cook or not, before gold reacts more strongly," UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo added.

The data focus is on the Fed's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index, due on Friday, after dovish remarks from Fed Chair Jerome Powell at the Jackson Hole symposium last week. Markets have priced in an 87 per cent chance of a quarter-point rate cut at the Fed's September 17 policy meeting, according to the CME FedWatch Tool.

Non-yielding gold typically performs well in a low-interest-rate environment.

Spot silver fell 0.8 per cent to \$38.27 per ounce, platinum was also down 0.8 per cent at \$1,337.38 and palladium was 0.2 per cent lower at \$1,091.99. (Reuters)

Rand weakens as dollar firms

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand slipped on Wednesday, as the dollar made a tentative rebound, while concerns lingered over the independence of the U.S. Federal Reserve.

By 0925 GMT the rand was trading at 17.7225 against the dollar, or 0.5 per cent weaker than Tuesday's close. The dollar traded about 0.3 per cent stronger against a basket of currencies, dulling the appeal of the risk-sensitive rand, which was also on the backfoot for most of Tuesday's session as markets await clues from local economic data.

Releases due later in the week include producer inflation numbers on Thursday, money supply and private sector credit and trade balance and budget balance figures on



▲South African Rand coins are seen in this illustration.

Friday.

On the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the Top-40 index was down 0.7 per cent in early trade. South Africa's benchmark 2035 government bond was also weaker, as the yield rose 2.5 basis points to 9.61 per cent. (Reuters)

Qatar's Al Mansour commits to invest \$20 billion in Mozambique

MAPUTO — Qatari investment firm Al Mansour Holding has signed a \$20 billion partnership agreement with Mozambique to support sectors the government is prioritising including energy and agriculture, President Daniel Chapo's office said.

It is the latest in a series of investments by Al Mansour Holding across Africa, with similar deals in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Botswana announced in the past two weeks.

The continent's vast land resources, a paucity of key infrastructure and some of the world's top mineral deposits crucial to the global renewable energy push have drawn increasing interest from Middle Eastern nations and companies, which are vying for

influence with rivals such as China and the United States.

Earlier on Wednesday Al Mansour Holding, which is led by Sheikh Mansour bin Jabor bin Jassim Al Thani, announced the acquisition of a 19.9 per cent stake in Australia's Invictus Energy to help finance a promising gas project in Zimbabwe.

"We are not here to compete, we are here to complement. We are not here to take, we are here to build," he said in a statement after meeting Chapo on Tuesday, adding that Al Mansour Holding was in Africa for the long-term.

In Zambia, President Hakainde Hichilema announced on August 18 that the investment firm had pledged \$19 billion in investments for the southern African nation. (Reuters)

Investors worry Trump's Intel deal kicks off era of US industrial policy

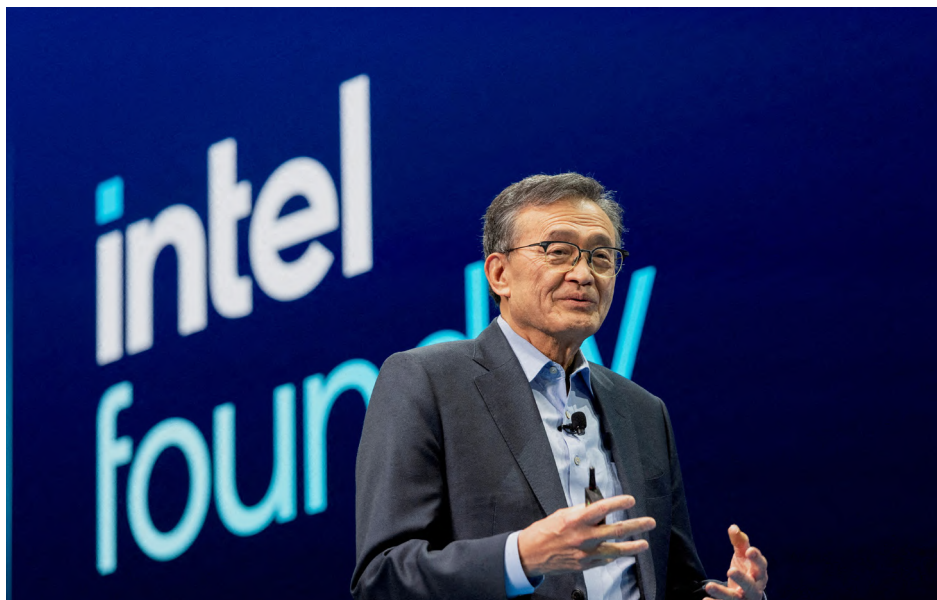
THE U.S. government's new stake in Intel, opens new tab is making some investors nervous that President Donald Trump's deal heralds an era of government meddling in private industry, particularly as the arrangement followed Trump's call for the resignation of the computer chip maker's CEO.

The deal, announced on Friday, converts \$11.1 billion in Chips Act grants and other government funding into a 9.9% equity stake in Intel. The company's press release announcing the deal included statements from the CEOs of Microsoft opens new tab, Dell, opens new tab and other companies praising the move.

Investors said this level of tractability was not usually associated with relations between businesses and Washington. Trump had said on social media that Intel CEO Lip-Bu Tan wanted to keep his job and "ended up giving us \$10 billion for the United States."

"It sets a bad precedent if the president can just take 10% of a company by threatening the CEO," said James McRitchie, a private investor and shareholder activist in California who owns Intel shares. The statement, he said, effectively sends the message that "we love Trump, we don't want 10% of our company taken away."

Intel shares closed at \$20.41 on August 6, the day before Trump called for Tan's resignation, and trended upward to finish at \$24.56 on August 15, the last trading day before Trump's terms surfaced. On Tuesday, Intel closed down 1% at \$24.35. The deal does not give the U.S. Commerce Depart-



▲ Intel's CEO Lip-Bu Tan speaks at the company's Annual Manufacturing Technology Conference in San Jose, California, U.S.

ment board seats, according to a securities filing, and it requires Commerce to support the board on director nominees and proposals. But Commerce can vote "as it wishes" on several other matters.

Fitch Ratings said the deal does not improve Intel's BBB credit rating, which sits just above junk status. While it provides more liquidity, it does not fundamentally improve customer demand for Intel chips, Fitch said in a research note Tuesday.

REDUCED VOTING RIGHTS

Intel's filing also states the deal dilutes existing shareholders, reduces their voting rights, and could subject the company to additional regulations or restrictions in other countries. What's more, CEO Tan said Intel

did not need the money. SoftBank poured \$2 billion into the chipmaker three days before the Trump announcement.

This was the latest extraordinary intervention in a private corporation by Trump's White House, following a military deal for a mining company stake announced in July and influence over U.S. Steel, opens new tab as part of its purchase by Japan's Nippon Steel (5401.T), opens new tab. On Tuesday U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said the Trump administration may take stakes in defense contractors.

Yet the U.S. moves could be seen as business as usual in a number of European and Asian countries whose governments already own chunks of major companies. The Ger-

man state of Lower Saxony has a 20% stake in Volkswagen (VOWG.DE), opens new tab, for instance.

"This has been going on for years with the Japanese government, the Korean government, the Taiwanese government, the Singaporean government, the Malaysian government," said Richard Hardegree, vice chairman of technology investment banking at UBS. "In Italy, in France, they've done massive amounts of industrial policy around the semiconductor industry ... for 40 or 50 years, ever since everybody figured out the semiconductor is important."

During the 2008-2009 financial crisis, Washington also took equity positions in several endangered vital companies, but those arrangements were temporary. Pressuring otherwise healthy companies for long-term ownership stakes was unprecedented, and the move has alarmed some investors.

BLURRED LINES

Rich Weiss, senior vice president and chief investment officer of multi-asset strategies for American Century Investments, said future federal investments "will need regulations and guidelines to limit the opportunities for abuses such as insider trading."

"In an unchecked scenario of government direct investing, trading in those companies could be much riskier for investors," he said.

Several investors and representatives cited similar risks such as when boards weigh competing interests on decisions such as where to locate a new plant, whether to lay off workers, or how hard to press into overseas markets.

(Reuters)

Dominant AI trade confronts test as Nvidia reports earnings



▲ Artificial Intelligence words are seen in this illustration.

THE artificial intelligence theme that has propelled markets over the past couple years faces a crucial moment on Wednesday, when bellwether Nvidia Corp (NVDA.O), opens new tab reports its second-quarter results.

Technology shares, including a number of signature stocks in the AI trade, have wobbled this month with investors pointing to some signs of caution emerging in the AI industry.

The declines have taken some of the steam out of an array of tech and other stocks that have sizzled since chatbot ChatGPT unleashed a frenzy over the potential for AI about three years ago.

An equal-weighted basket of 50 AI-related stocks tracked by Bespoke Investment

Group -- which includes many of the world's biggest tech companies -- has soared nearly 170% since the end of 2022, as of Monday.

"AI is a critical piece of what is driving stocks right now," said Peter Berezin, chief global strategist at BCA Research.

This year, strong gains for number of heavyweight tech stocks exposed to AI have helped power major equity indexes to record highs.

Semiconductor giant Nvidia has ridden its position as the dominant AI player to become the first company to top \$4 trillion in market value last month.

Its more-than 30% gain this year alone has accounted for nearly one quarter of the S&P 500's 10.4% year-to-date total return as of Monday, according to Howard Silver-

blatt, senior index analyst at S&P Dow Jones Indices. More broadly, 10 top AI plays have contributed nearly half of the index's year-to-date return, according to BCA Research.

Shares of data and analytics firm Palantir Technologies (PLTR.O), opens new tab, have doubled, while other chipmakers including Broadcom, opens new tab and Advanced Micro Devices, opens new tab have also handily outpaced the broader market.

Earlier in the reporting period, companies such as Microsoft, opens new tab and Google parent Alphabet, opens new tab unveiled significant capital spending, as AI helped results.

AI stock enthusiasm has spread beyond tech and tech-related areas including to utilities and power equipment companies amid spiking energy demand expected to be needed to fuel the technology. Industrial firm GE Vernova, opens new tab and utilities sector members Constellation Energy, opens new tab and Vistra, opens new tab are among the non-tech stocks that have put up strong gains in the past year, helped by AI excitement.

The AI enthusiasm has helped drive stock valuations well above historical levels. The overall S&P 500's price-to-earnings ratio, based on expected earnings over the next 12 months, last stood at 22.4 times, according to LSEG Datastream. That is near its highest level in over four years, and some 40% above its long-term average of 15.9.

Tech -- which has by far the heaviest weighting in the S&P 500 of the 11 sectors -- has seen its forward P/E rise to 29.2, about 36% above its long-term average of 21.4, according to LSEG Datastream.

"There is a risk that we have gotten a little bit ahead of our skis here and that some

of the near-term expectations just won't be realized," BCA's Berezin said.

The P/E valuations for both the tech sector and the S&P 500 are still below highs reached during the late 1990s and early 2000s, when many stock prices ran up to exorbitant levels during the dawn of the internet, leading to a steep fall for tech stocks in the ensuing years.

However, investors have pointed to the increasing presence of the tech sector in market indexes as a sign the market may be overly dependent on the performance of the group.

The tech sector comprises slightly over one-third of the overall S&P 500's market value, not far from the 35% level it reached in March 2000, according to LSEG Datastream.

Meanwhile, the combined market cap of the 10 biggest AI plays, including Nvidia, Broadcom and Microsoft -- stood at \$18 trillion, BCA said in a note last week. That amounts to about 33% of S&P 500 stock market capitalization, up from around 15% in late 2022, according to BCA.

Market concentration risk is "real and rising," Anthony Saglimbene, chief market strategist for Ameriprise Financial, said in a note

Nvidia's "commentary on Wednesday could help set the table for how AI trends develop into year-end and, by extension, for a market now anchored to a small group of very large and influential technology stocks," Saglimbene said.

(Reuters)

Report spotlights tensions in Mali military over Wagner mercenaries

RUSSIAN private mercenary operations in Mali have sowed resentment within the West African nation's army and military government, caused security lapses, and failed to yield any mining concessions, a new report has found.

The Wagner group began operating in Mali after the military, which seized power in two coups in 2020 and 2021, ejected French and United Nations forces that had been involved in fighting Islamist insurgents for a decade.

Wagner announced its departure in June, but Africa Corps, a Kremlin-controlled paramilitary force, said it would stay on. About 70-80% of the Africa Corps is made up of former Wagner mercenaries, according to several Telegram chats used by Russian mercenaries seen by Reuters.

Rights groups including New York-based Human Rights Watch have repeatedly, opens new tab accused, opens new tab Wagner, fighting alongside Mali's army, of committing atrocities, opens new tab against civilians.

But the report - based on interviews with officials from Mali's military, intelligence agency, finance and mines ministries, and published on Wednesday, opens new tab by investigative research group The Sentry - found that Wagner had also caused trouble for the military and government it was hired to support.

Citing interviews with Malian soldiers, it said Wagner fighters would "often operate outside the chain of command", using army equipment and even carrying out security operations without permission or prior notice.

These missions sometimes led to the loss of equipment, vehicles or personnel, the report said. At other times, they had left Malian soldiers



▲ People gather in front of a makeshift memorial during a commemoration ceremony held to pay tribute to Wagner fighters who were recently killed in Mali by northern Tuareg rebels, in central Moscow, Russia.

unexpectedly without equipment to fight when insurgent attacks took place, it said.

According to the report, Malian soldiers resent Russian mercenaries who receive "preferential treatment", such as medical evacuations that are otherwise limited due to a scarcity of fuel.

The Russian Defence Ministry and Wagner did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

DESTABILISATION ATTEMPT

Earlier this month, Mali arrested more than 30 soldiers and military officers accused of trying to destabilise the military government.

Sentry investigators told Reuters that the arrests followed a meeting between two generals and several colonels to discuss grievances, including the fact that "Russians" still

appeared to be in command in the military bases where they operated.

Any destabilisation attempt would likely be related at least in part to how Wagner and Africa Corps have treated Malian troops, The Sentry investigators said.

Defence Minister Sadio Camara is believed by U.S. officials to have secured the agreement for Wagner to operate in Mali; the U.S. Treasury Department in 2023 sanctioned him, opens new tab for doing so. But The Sentry report said President Assimi Goita himself blocked Wagner from obtaining mining licenses or concessions as payment.

Instead, it found that for Wagner and Africa Corps, "no viable business has been set up; relations with the military.

(Reuters)

Kenyan rights activist plans to run for president in 2027

Kenyan human rights activist Boniface Mwangi, who has played a prominent role in anti-government protests, said on Wednesday he plans to run for the presidency in the country's 2027 election.

His candidacy will test whether the popular support for protests, led by young Kenyans over the last two years, can be translated into an electoral movement.

Mwangi previously ran unsuccessfully for parliament in 2017 on an anti-corruption platform. He has over the course of years earned a reputation for speaking out against human rights violations in Kenya and abroad.

"Our leadership has failed us in numerous ways. You pay taxes expecting service, or you're supposed to pay bribes to get that same service," he said during an event to announce his presidential bid.

"So as we stand here, our

country must be taken back into our hands."

He was expelled from neighbouring Tanzania in May after travelling there to observe a hearing in a treason case against opposition leader Tundu Lissu.

In July, a Kenyan court charged Mwangi with possession of teargas canisters and a single rifle round found in his home.

He pleaded not guilty, saying the authorities had no evidence and called the prosecution "a big shame".

Elections in Kenya are due in August 2027. Mwangi's candidacy will have to be cleared by the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission that qualifies all candidates.

Others who have announced presidential bids include Senator Okiya Omtatah and former Chief Justice David Maraga. Incumbent President William Ruto also intends to seek re-election.

(Reuters)



▲ Kenyan human rights activist Boniface Mwangi, who played a prominent role in anti-government protests, gestures as he announces his plans to run for the presidency in the country's 2027 election, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Coastal surges sweep away Nigeria coastal community as Commonwealth promise stalls



▲ Displaced residents are seen through the frame of a broken television box on the eroded shoreline of Lepiya, one of the coastal communities affected by ocean surges, Nigeria.

ONE morning in June, an ocean surge swept through the village of Apakin, one of Lagos' last indigenous coastal communities, washing away fishing boats, nets and graves. It was only the latest event in the settlement of roughly 3,000 people that is losing homes and livelihoods to rising seas.

Despite pledges of support from Commonwealth leaders, worsening ocean surges have left the centuries-old community feeling powerless, with residents fearing their ancestral land could soon be lost to the sea, according to local chief Abimbola Iyowun.

"We only have two graves left from my father's lineage. "We've been trying to move them, but we haven't found the place to move them to," Iyowun said, pointing into the ocean where his house and that of his father once stood.

About 80 per cent of the Lagos shoreline has been washed away in the past five decades, according to a 2022 report in the Journal of African Earth Sciences. The study blamed deepwater ports along the Bight of Benin as the main reason for erosion.

Lagos has more than a dozen coastal communities battling ocean surges, but Apakin's residents say they're among the worst hit.

On land once known for coconut farming, a final 50-metre stretch of trees vanished four years ago.

Iyowun said the building he used as a palace when he was appointed the village head three years ago had also gone.

Lagos State says rising seas pose the biggest long-term climate threat, but environmentalist Philip Jakpor argues that government-backed projects like the massive Dangote oil refinery and deep sea ports are equally damaging to coastal communities.

"A lot of dredging is happening, which is pushing water in the direction of communities, swallowing communities," said Jakpor.

Meanwhile Nigerian activist Akinbode Oluwafemi pointed out that the 'Living Lands Charter' adopted by leaders at the 2022 Commonwealth summit in Kigali, Rwanda, was non-binding, unenforced and failing to deliver a concrete plan to protect coastal communities.

"The Kigali Declaration acknowledges human factors that will worsen climate change. However, it did not expressly adopt any clear resolution in terms of bringing corporations that are causing climate change into accountability," he said.

(Reuters)

ISRAELI tanks pushed into a new area on the edge of Gaza City overnight, destroying houses and prompting residents to flee, witnesses said, ahead of an expected meeting on the war to be chaired by U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday.

Tanks late on Tuesday entered into the Ebad-Alrahman neighbourhood on the northern edge of Gaza City and shelled houses, wounding several people and forcing many others, who had been taken by surprise, to move deeper into Gaza’s largest city, residents said.

“All of a sudden, we heard that the tanks pushed into Ebad-Alrahman, the sounds of explosions became louder, and louder, and we saw people escaping towards our area,” said Saad Abed, 60, a former construction worker.

“If no truce is reached, we will see the tanks outside our homes,” he told Reuters via a chat app from his house in Jala Street in Gaza City, around one kilometre (0.6 mile) from the Ebad-Alrahman neighbourhood.

Israel has said it is preparing to launch a new offensive in Gaza City, which it describes as Hamas’ last bastion. Around half of the enclave’s two million people are currently living there and Israel has said they will be told to evacuate.

Thousands have already left, but church leaders in the city said on Wednesday they were staying put, as leaving Gaza City and “trying to flee to the south would be nothing less than a death sentence”.

“For this reason, the clergy and nuns have decided to remain and continue to care for all those who will be in the compounds,” a joint statement by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Israeli military’s Arabic spokesperson Avichay Adraee said “evacuating Gaza City is inevitable” and Israel had begun facilitating the entry of tents into the enclave.

“Before transitioning to the next phase in the war, I wish to confirm that there are vast empty areas in the southern Strip, just

Damaged Chinese coast guard ship now under repair at Hainan, satellite images show

THE Chinese coast guard ship damaged in a collision with a Chinese naval vessel in the South China Sea earlier this month is now under repair at Hainan Island, according to satellite images seen by Reuters - the first confirmation that it made it back to port.

The images provided to Reuters by Maxar Technologies show the vessel with a crushed bow flanked by tugs alongside a dry dock at the Yulin naval base near Sanya, a city on Hainan.

Chinese officials have never commented on the collision, which the Philippines said occurred on August 11 as its coast guard vessels were carrying out a mission to deliver supplies to Filipino fishermen operating near the Scarborough shoal.

It was the first known collision between Chinese vessels in the area amid protracted tensions over disputed features straddling the vital trade route.

Beijing accused the Philippines of “dangerous manoeuvres” without referring directly to the collision but Manila’s foreign ministry said it bore no responsibility for the accident, which it described as an “unfortunate outcome”.

“We demand that the Philippine side immediately stop its infringing and provocative rhetoric and actions,” Chinese defence ministry spokesperson Jiang Bin said at the time.

China coast guard ships routinely patrol Scarborough, which Beijing calls Huangyan Dao, as part of historic claim to much of the South China Sea. Sovereignty over the Scarborough Shoal has never been established.

Israeli tanks close in on Gaza City, Trump to chair meeting



▲ An Israeli tank manouvres at the Israel-Gaza border, as seen from Israel.

as is the case in the central camps and in Al-Mawasi. These areas are free of tents,” he said, addressing residents’ concerns over lack of space in central and southern areas.

Palestinian and United Nations officials said the Gaza Strip was in need of around 1.5 million new tents.

U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff said on Tuesday that Trump would chair a meeting on Gaza at the White House on Wednesday and added that Washington expected Israel’s war in the Palestinian territory to be settled by the end of the year.

The U.S. State Department separately

said Secretary of State Marco Rubio would meet Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar in Washington. It was unclear who would be present at the Trump meeting.

TANKS PULL BACK, BOMBARDMENTS CONTINUE

Israeli tanks retreated from the edge of Gaza City later on Wednesday to the Jabalia area, where they have been operating for months, although bombardments on three of the city’s eastern suburbs - Shejaia, Zeitoun and Sabra - continued.

Gaza health authorities said Israeli fire had killed at least 20 people, including a

four-year-old girl, across the enclave.

The Israeli military said in a statement that its forces were operating in Jabalia and the outskirts of Gaza City to “dismantle terror infrastructure sites and eliminate terrorists”.

It said it had killed a senior Hamas militant, Mahmoud Al-Aswad, who served as the group’s head of general security intelligence for the West Gaza area, on August 22. Hamas has not confirmed his death.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing mounting opposition to the war. Thousands of Israelis rallied across the country on Tuesday demanding an end to the conflict and the release of hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza.

Israel has yet to publicly respond to the latest 60-day U.S.-backed ceasefire proposal, which it had previously accepted and which Hamas last week agreed to.

The war was triggered on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led fighters stormed into Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages, Israeli tallies show.

Israel’s subsequent military campaign against Hamas has killed more than 62,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities. It has plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis, displaced nearly its entire population and left much of the territory in ruins.

On Wednesday, the Gaza health ministry said 10 more people have died of malnutrition and starvation, raising deaths from such causes to 313 people, including 119 children, since the war started. Israel disputes fatality figures by the health ministry in the Hamas-run strip.

(Reuters)



▲ Botswana’s President Duma Gideon Boko attends the inauguration of Namibia’s first female President, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah at the State House in Windhoek, Namibia.

A landmark 2016 ruling on the South China Sea by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which voided Beijing’s sweeping claims to the region, was not tasked with establishing sovereignty.

But it ruled China’s blockade of the shoal violated international law and said the area was a traditional fishing ground for several countries. China rejected the ruling.

Maxar and other analysts said they were confident the vessel in the images was the same one, CG3104, involved in the collision.

The Chinese defence ministry did not immediately respond to Reuters questions about the fate of the ship, or whether there were any casualties or whether it got to Hainan under its own power.

Philippines Coast Guard spokesperson

Jay Tarriela said on Wednesday that they had monitored the departure of two Chinese ships from the shoal the day after the incident but did not see them during a flight later that week.

Tarriela earlier released extensive footage of the crash taken from a Philippines coast guard vessel.

(Reuters)

Lady Spshesh shines on eTV's The Morning Show

Stories By Siphesihle Dlamini
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LADY Spshesh has recently made a remarkable impression on the international stage with her feature on the popular television programme, 'The Morning Show' on eTV. This appearance marks a significant milestone in her career, highlighting her growing influence as a gospel artist beyond her home country. Following the footsteps of Eswatini's celebrated gospel star Nothando Hlophe, who was featured on the same show just last week, Lady Spshesh used this platform to share her inspiring musical journey and aspirations. The exposure on such a widely viewed international show is a testament to her rising profile in the gospel music scene. During the interview, Lady Spshesh expressed her excitement and gratitude for the opportunity to be showcased on The Morning Show. She emphasised how such recognition plays a crucial role in expanding her reach and presence beyond national borders. "Going international is instrumental in the growth of the brand," she said. "I am more focused on reaching other markets abroad. I do not want to box myself for Eswatini." Her words reflect a clear vision of growth and ambition, signalling her intent to break

into new territories and connect with a broader audience. This mindset is becoming increasingly important for artists from smaller countries who seek to elevate their careers on global stages. Lady Spshesh's feature comes at a time when African music is gaining more international attention, with artists blending traditional sounds with contemporary influences to appeal to diverse listeners worldwide. By leveraging platforms like The Morning Show, Lady Spshesh is positioning herself as a key figure in this movement, showcasing the richness of Eswatini's gospel heritage while embracing a global outlook. Her journey mirrors that of Nothando Hlophe, who also shared her story on the same program, highlighting the importance of international exposure for artists from Eswatini. Both artists underscore the value of stepping beyond local markets to build sustainable and impactful careers. The feature on The Morning Show not only boosts Lady Spshesh's visibility but also serves as inspiration for other gospel musicians in Eswatini and the broader Southern African region. It demonstrates that with talent, determination, and strategic exposure, artists can transcend geographical limitations and make their mark on the world stage.



▲ Musician Lady Spshesh.

Big Brother SA winner Sweet Guluva to dazzle at Mdzimba View

FANS of South African reality television, Sweet Guluva, the charismatic winner of Big Brother SA Season 5, is poised to make a grand appearance at Mdzimba View Shisanyama. The highly anticipated event, aptly named 'Ladies Night,' is scheduled for August 29, 2025. Sweet Guluva, whose real name is Akhonamathemba Mbele, has taken the nation by storm since his victory on the popular reality show, where he not only showcased his vibrant personality but also walked away with the impressive E2 million grand prizes. At just 23 years old, Guluva's journey from an ordinary contestant to a household name has been nothing short of remarkable. His charm, resilience, and creativity captivated audiences throughout the season, earning him a dedicated fanbase that continues to grow. The 'Ladies Night' event will feature an impressive lineup of South African faces Slick Widit, Afrikan Papi. Attendees can also look forward to electrifying sets

from talented artists including Slim Deep, Castle, Baba, and Bandora, ensuring that the night will be filled with diverse musical offerings. For those looking to join in on the festivities, general tickets are available for E100, while VIP tickets can be purchased for E200, providing fans with an opportunity to experience the event in style. The combination of Sweet Guluva's star power and the impressive lineup of performers makes this event a must-attend for anyone looking to enjoy a night out filled with fun and entertainment. Sweet Guluva's journey on Big Brother SA was marked by his ability to connect with viewers and fellow contestants alike. His blend of humour, strategy, and authenticity allowed him to navigate the challenges of the house with finesse. Competing against formidable housemates such as Jojo, Nate, Nsuku, and Uyanda, Guluva consistently demonstrated his determination to win.



▲ DJ Tibza.

DJ Tibza's birthday lineup revealed

TUBUKO "Tibza" Nxumalo, widely known as DJ Tibza, is set to mark a significant milestone in his life and career by celebrating his 45th birthday with a unique event themed "Urban & Pantsula." The celebration will take place on Friday, August 29, 2025, at the newly revamped 23:28 Lounge in Mbabane Business Park, promising an unforgettable night of music and style. The announcement was made by Them-binkosi Mthethwa, owner and CEO of 23:28 Lounge, who expressed excitement about hosting such a landmark event. The party will kick off at 6 pm with a soulful Old Skool R&B set, setting the tone for an evening that blends nostalgia with contemporary urban vibes. The main event will showcase a stellar lineup of Eswatini's finest musical talents, including Cybos, Jazzinsoul, Crooks, and Wicked. These artists are known for their high-energy performances and are expected to keep the crowd energised throughout the night, delivering a dynamic fusion of beats that celebrate the kingdom's rich musical heritage. For DJ Tibza, the "Urban & Pantsula" theme is deeply personal and reflective of his artistic journey. "As a creative, style and fashion have always been central to my craft. I've always been driven by cutting-edge urban culture with a Pantsula twist, so the theme will embody what I stand for, being authentic and comfortable in your own skin," he explained. Although his birthday was on August 12, the timing of this event allows for a grand celebration with friends, fans, and fellow artists. DJ Tibza's influence in Eswatini's music scene is well established. Earlier this year, he performed at the prestigious Bushfire Festival in May 2025, a highlight that reinforced his reputation as one of the kingdom's most versatile and sought-after DJs. His ability to blend different genres and create immersive musical experiences has earned him a loyal following. Beyond his solo career, DJ Tibza is also known for his collaborative work with his brother, DJ Lungstar. Together, they co-founded 'Urban Elements' in 2006, a brand synonymous with iconic events that have shaped Eswatini's nightlife culture. Their journey began at the legendary Mhlambanyatsi Club and continues with a monthly residency at Happy Valley Hotel's Soul Oasis in Ezulwini, where they consistently deliver soulful and vibrant experiences.



▲ DJ Tibza.

Andile Mpisane, MaMkhize to headline Ocean Cuisine's All Black Party

Stories By Siphesihle Dlamini
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SOUTH African entertainment and business icons Andile Mpisane and Shauwn 'MaMkhize' Mkhize are set to headline a highly anticipated event at Ocean Cuisine, promising an unforgettable night for fans and partygoers alike.

Scheduled for August 29, 2025, the 'All Black Party' will showcase a vibrant mix of music, fashion, and celebrity glamour, with both stars bringing their unique flair to the occasion.

The event's name, 'All Black Party,' reflects its stylish dress code, where attendees are encouraged to don all-black attire, creating an atmosphere of elegance and unity. The night will feature an impressive lineup of South African musical talent including Sbu De Drum DJ, Bandora, Paris, Cnatra, and Bisto, ensuring a diverse and energetic soundtrack that spans genres and appeals to a wide audience.

Shauwn Mkhize, popularly known as Mam' Mkhize, is a household name in South

Africa, recognised not only for her business acumen but also for her philanthropic efforts and television presence. As a prominent socialite and entrepreneur, MaMkhize has built a powerful brand that extends beyond her role on the Mzansi Magic reality TV series Kwa MaMkhize. Her influence in the entertainment and business sectors has

made her a role model for many aspiring entrepreneurs, especially women in South Africa.

On the other hand, Andile Mpisane represents the new generation of multi-talented South African stars. Combining his passion for music and football, Andile has carved out a niche for himself in both industries. His musical career took off with singles like Uyangqhaska, featuring notable artists DJ Tira, Dladla Mshunqisi, and Stix Manyanyisa. In April 2020, he released his second single Umcimbi, collaborating with Distruction Boyz and Madanon. Both tracks were launched under his label, Royal AM Entertainment, which also serves as the platform for distributing his music. Beyond music, Andile's involvement in football adds another layer to his dynamic public persona.



▲ South African entertainment and business icons Shauwn 'MaMkhize' Mkhize and Andile Mpisane.

Eswatini Farmers Market trader applications close on Thursday

THE Eswatini Farmers Market is set to officially close its doors for trader applications.

Aspiring traders can submit their applications via email at tradersmeltingc@gmail.com, marking the beginning of a vibrant opportunity for those looking to showcase their products and contribute to the rich tapestry of Eswatini's heritage. Scheduled to take place on October 11, 2025, the Eswatini Farmers Market promises to be a hallmark of cultural celebration and community spirit.

Tickets for this vibrant event are selling rapidly. Early bird VIP tickets have already sold out, and the early bird kids' tickets have followed suit, leaving only general admission tickets available at E250. The festival will be hosted at Malkerns Country Club, a venue that perfectly complements the event's ethos of

celebrating local culture and community.

In an exclusive interview, Mbekezeli 'Culolam' Dlamini, the festival's director, expressed his excitement for this year's market. "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," he stated.

The Eswatini Farmers Market is more than just an event; it is a cultural phenomenon that celebrates the rich heritage of Eswatini. Dlamini emphasised the festival's role in fostering community bonds 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.

Dlamini urged the public to secure their tickets early, emphasising the importance of community participation in making the event a success.

"People should buy tickets as soon as possible, as this is for us Eswatini," he stressed.



▲ Eswatini Farmers Market stalls.

Lizwe Umlangeni for Poetry In Comfort

POETRY In Comfort, one of the premier poetry shows in the Kingdom, is poised to make a grand return on December 6, 2025, and has revealed Lizwe Umlangeni as a performer.

This event promises to be a celebration of both established and emerging poets, offering a unique blend of art and luxury in an outdoor setting.

In an exclusive interview, Project Manager Mqobi Tsabedze shared insights into the vision behind this year's show.

"We are presenting the art space with a poetry in comfort outdoor concept," he explained. "We take it this is a self-explanatory concept; we want to provide an exclusive, luxurious experience to poetry lovers and art enthusiasts. Our goal is to create lasting memories for attendees, rather than just having them attend an event and leave."

The event will feature distinct segments designed to enhance the overall experience for participants and attendees alike. The first segment focuses on Talent Search/Talent Appreciation, where young and undiscovered poets will be given a platform to showcase their skills on a significant stage.

"This segment allows us to crown the best poets of the day," Tsabedze noted. "We believe that this will change the poetry industry; it is what it

needs now. We aim to award all the amazing undiscovered talent a stage to showcase what they have to the world."

Tsabedze emphasised the importance of maintaining a classy and manageable event, which is why they are limiting the number of entries. "We want to ensure that the event remains intimate and allows for meaningful interactions," he added.

Attendees can anticipate an experience unlike any other. "Poetry lovers should expect a memory they will keep forever," Tsabedze stated.

"We urge poetry lovers, art lovers, and young people to buy tickets to support this great initiative, which looks at empowering youth and uplifting the art space in the country."

The Poetry In Comfort initiative is more than just a show; it is a movement aimed at uplifting the art scene in the

Kingdom. By providing a platform for young poets, the event seeks to inspire the next generation of artists and encourage them to pursue their passion. "We believe that art is a powerful tool for change," Tsabedze remarked.

"By empowering young poets, we are not only enriching the cultural landscape of our country but also fostering a sense of community and belonging among the youth."



▲ Poet Lizwe Umlangeni.

Worrying internal leadership instability results in postponement of SAFTAS

THE South African Film and Television Awards' (Saftas) 19th edition has been rescheduled for March 2026 because of internal leadership concerns.

The event aims to honour star actors by presenting the Golden Horn awards in October. However, the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) rescheduled the prestigious ceremony for March.

According to the organisation, NFVF leadership changes and associated unanticipated delays were the reason for the decision to move the awards. "This transition has provided us with an opportunity to strengthen governance, sharpen our strategic focus, and reinforce the NFVF's role as custodian of the South African Film and Television Awards," the organisation said in a statement.

Leadership woes

The NFVF has encountered numerous challenges, particularly with regard to the CEO position. Thobela Mayinje, who was named the acting CEO in April 2023, was put on administrative leave in June 2023. On July 30, the council was dissolved as a result of multiple accusations.

Lebogang Mogoera was subsequently named interim acting CEO by the Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture.

Gayton MacKenzie, the Minister of Sport, Arts, and Culture, stated that the NFVF leadership had a serious issue.

"It can't be that all the people in the arts are complaining. There must be a problem in there. We must address that issue," said McKenzie.

In 2024, Mogoera, the then-CEO of the NFVF, took more than 40 employees to the French Riviera for "exposure and network-



▲ Zolisa Xaliva is one of the previous winners at Saftas. The 2025 awards ceremony has been moved to March 2026 due to leadership instability.

ing". Dr Rirhandzu Machaba, the recently appointed acting CEO, is also serving as the Saftas committee's acting chair.

Machaba said: "The Saftas have always been about recognising greatness, and in 2026 we look forward to celebrating an industry that continues to rise, inspire, and unite."

Overshooting budget

The awards ceremony at the Gallagher Estate in Midrand last year cost R1.5-million more than planned.

A source disclosed that the miscalculation was not entirely the fault of the awards, which were produced by Black Swan Media, which is co-owned by TV and radio person-

ality Relebogile Mabotja.

"The amounts were approved, and two days before the main event, the production company said they needed funds, as they had miscalculated the quote," the source said.

"They said there are occurrences that they did not anticipate. The criteria for selecting production companies are primarily based on their ability to deliver high-quality work within a reasonable budget. This is all taxpayers' money."

Lerato Mokopane, the marketing officer at NFVF, confirmed the rescheduling of the Saftas, but she declined to discuss management-related topics.

(Sunday World)

Bester, Nandipha seek urgent court intervention to stop documentary

WITH less than two weeks until the highly anticipated debut of the true-crime docuseries "Beauty and the Bester", incarcerated duo Thabo Bester and Nandipha Magudumana have filed an urgent court application to stop the release.

Streaming giant Netflix is scheduled to premiere the docu-series on September 12; however, the couple argues through their legal team that the series contains inaccurate, defamatory and unsubstantiated claims and violates their constitutional rights.

The matter is now set for a court hearing on September 9, just three days before the documentary's airing. The gripping three-part documentary delves into the shocking 2022 prison escape of Thabo Bester, a convicted rapist and murderer, from the Mangaung Maximum Security Prison, and his lavish double life.

It also covers the nationwide manhunt that ended with their arrest in Tanzania in 2023, alongside his partner and celebrity doctor, Nandipha Magudumana.

According to Netflix, the series presents "courtroom footage and never-before-seen investigative material that peel back the layers of a story where love, manipulation, and corruption collide, culminating in a jaw-dropping incident that stunned the world."

The trailer, which has already been released, features friends and family, including Magudumana's father, Zolile Cornelius



▲ With less than two weeks until the highly anticipated debut of the true-crime docuseries "Beauty and the Bester", incarcerated duo Thabo Bester and Nandipha Magudumana have filed an urgent court application to stop the release.

Sekeleni, DJ Pearl Thusi and TV personality Penny Lebyane, opening up in exclusive interviews, each trying to make sense of the strange and unsettling bond between the respected doctor and her convicted criminal partner, Bester. The couple's legal team have argued that the docuseries unfairly targets their clients and is designed for sensationalism rather than objective reality, while also stating that Bester was not given a fair opportunity to respond to the allegations within the documentary.

This is not their first attempt to block a documentary about their case. Previously, they tried and failed to stop the four-part docu-series "Tracking Thabo Bester", which premiered on Showmax in March 2024.

However, the Johannesburg High Court dismissed their urgent application.

Judge Stuart Wilson ruled that the applicants showed only "generalised anxiety" about the documentary and that the publication did not pose a real risk of substantial harm to the administration of justice.

"Reading the applicants' papers, I find almost nothing that even rises to conjecture or speculation," Wilson said, dismissing the applications.

"There is no other right in the law to pre-publication approval, where a public figure, as Mr Bester arguably is, is the object of a media piece. Prosecutors have an overriding duty to ensure that the trial is fair in all respects," Wilson said at the time.

As proceedings continue, the couple's formal trial is set to commence on November 10 until March 29, 2026.

(IOL)



▲ South Africa is preparing to bid farewell to one of its most cherished actresses, the legendary Nandi Nyembe.

Nandi Nyembe Memorial service to be held today at Market Theatre

SOUTH Africa is preparing to bid farewell to one of its most cherished actresses, the legendary Nandi Nyembe.

Affectionately known as Mam'Nandi, the veteran performer passed away on August 23 at the age of 75, leaving behind a remarkable legacy that spans more than five decades in the entertainment industry.

A memorial service will be held on Thursday at The Market Theatre in Newtown, Johannesburg, a fitting venue for a woman who embodied the spirit of the arts. The theatre, long a home for cultural storytelling, mirrors the authenticity, depth, and grace Nyembe consistently brought to her craft.

The memorial service will not only celebrate her extraordinary body of work but also her role in breaking barriers and nurturing future generations of storytellers. Unforgettable performances in iconic television series such as Yizo Yizo, Zone 14, Isibaya, and House of Zwide marked Nyembe's career.

On the big screen, she captivated audiences in films including the Oscar-nominated Yesterday.

Health, financial challenges

Her ability to portray strong, complex, and deeply human characters made her a household name and a role model for countless aspiring actors.

Details of her funeral service, scheduled for Saturday from 7am to 10am, are still being finalised, and the venue has yet to be confirmed.

Nyembe family members have requested privacy as they make these final arrangements. Since news of her passing, tributes have poured in from across the country.

The Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture hailed Nyembe as "the very soul of South African storytelling", while colleagues and fans have remembered her warmth, professionalism, and the wisdom she generously shared with younger performers.

Despite facing health challenges and financial struggles in her later years, Nyembe's resilience and dedication to her craft never faltered.

Her journey has sparked renewed calls for greater support structures for artists in South Africa.

(Sunday World)



LATE nights and a few drinks might be disrupting your sleep more than you think.

A large international study led by researchers at Flinders University has found that symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) — a common sleep disorder that may slow or stop breathing — may tend to worsen on weekends.

Researchers coined the term “social apnea” to describe the weekend increase in symptoms, which appear driven by lifestyle habits such as staying up late, sleeping in, and drinking alcohol. Adherence to OSA therapies like CPAP machines may also be less consistent on weekends.

The team analyzed data from over 70,000 people worldwide and found participants were 18% more likely to have moderate to severe OSA on weekends (Saturdays) than mid-week (Wednesdays).

Sleeping an extra 45 minutes or more on weekends increased the risk of worse sleep apnea by 47%.

“Biologically, these habits can relax the muscles in the throat, push sleep into early-morning REM stages (when OSA is often more severe), and throw the body clock out of sync,” Heather Darwall-Smith, a psychotherapist specializing in sleep, who wasn’t involved in the study, told Healthline.

Why ‘social apnea’ may worsen on weekends

Sleep specialist Lindsey Hanna said symptoms of “social apnea” could develop even in those who don’t have obstructive sleep apnea.

“We often call it ‘social jetlag,’” she told Healthline. “Your body clock thrives on predictability, and when you shift your schedule by several hours on the weekend, your sleep becomes lighter and more fragmented.”

“Even without OSA, people often notice Monday morning grogginess, cravings for sugary foods, and reduced focus. You don’t need a diagnosis of OSA to feel the impact because your circadian system always notices when routines are off,” Hanna continued.

Certain individuals may be more susceptible to sleep-related disruptions than others.

“The research found the effect was stronger in men and in adults under 60, but anyone who lives with big swings between weekdays and weekends is likely to notice it,” Hanna said.

“Shift workers, parents of young children, or anyone juggling late nights with early starts are especially vulnerable to weekend-related sleep disruption,” she added.

Long-term effects of poor sleep

Long-term poor sleep — even if it’s only on weekends — can take a toll on physical and mental health.

“Even without diagnosed OSA (bear in mind it is massively under-diagnosed), irregular weekend routines can fragment sleep, reduce deep and REM stages, and leave you feeling less rested,” Darwall-Smith said.

“It can also disrupt hormone balance, including leptin and ghrelin. This can lead to increased appetite, food cravings, and gradual weight gain, which in turn can raise OSA risk.”

Late nights and increased alcohol consumption can also impact body weight and appetite hormones.

“Eating large, late meals can disrupt digestion overnight and, over time, contribute to weight gain,” Darwall-Smith explained.

“This is important because extra weight



Weekend habits may worsen symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea

around the neck and upper airway increases OSA risk, while disrupted sleep alters hormones like leptin (which signals fullness) and ghrelin (which triggers hunger), making it harder to maintain a healthy weight.”

Darwall-Smith said these factors can affect mood, focus, and emotional regulation, which may influence a person’s behaviors in relationships, at work, and in daily life.

“Beyond the medical side, disrupted sleep also affects patience, communication, and emotional availability,” she explained.

Lifestyle changes to improve sleep quality

If you’re concerned you’re not getting enough quality sleep on the weekends, experts say it’s important to maintain a consistent wake-up time, even on weekends.

“Even if you go to bed later, try not to sleep in too much the next day as that can trigger social jetlag,” Darwall-Smith advised.

For those nights when you don’t get enough quality shut-eye, Hanna recommended short daytime naps, of 30 minutes or less, “rather than prolonged morning sleep to repay sleep debt.”

If you’re consuming alcohol, Darwall-Smith noted it’s a good idea to alternate drinks with a nonalcoholic beverage.

“For every alcoholic drink, have a glass of water; this reduces dehydration and may lessen airway relaxation,” she explained.

What and when you eat can impact your sleep quality as well.

“Aim to finish large or heavy meals at least



two to three hours before bed to aid digestion and reduce night-time reflux, which can worsen breathing disruptions,” Darwall-Smith advised.

You should also carve out time for restful activities on the weekend. For example, Darwall-Smith recommended adding recovery time to your weekend schedule.

“Plan lighter activities the morning after a big night, so you’re not overloading yourself when you’re already short on restorative

sleep,” she said.

“What I like about the ‘social apnea’ concept is that it reminds us that sleep health isn’t just a medical issue, it’s relational,” Darwall-Smith said.

“It affects how we feel, think, and interact, and, fortunately, small changes in weekend habits can protect not only your health but also the quality of your time with loved ones.”

(Healthline)

ALTHOUGH my experience with dream journaling didn't produce the results I was hoping for (improving my memory of both my dreams and in general), it was a fun experience that you can start at any time.

Dream journaling is what it sounds like — you write down the dreams you have each night in a notebook or phone app.

Those who try this (or want to) might do so for a number of reasons, but I did so to see if it would help enhance my ability to remember my dreams and my day-to-day memory.

Results weren't what I had hoped for, but those who try this in the long term might see some improvements. It's hard to say because no scientific evidence suggests that it will.

My dream journaling set up

Between June 22 and July 22, I recorded my dreams in the Notes app on my phone. I usually reach for my phone first thing in the morning (terrible habit, I know), so that's why I chose to use it as my "journal."

You might elect to keep a physical journal, and I'm here to tell you that as long as you have a place where you can consistently write down your dreams, you have all the equipment you need. A recorder is another option if you'd rather speak your dreams aloud.

In each entry, I wrote down the date in addition to the details of my dreams. You can choose to be as thorough or brief with your entries as you want.

Because I wanted to capture as much detail as possible, I wrote mostly in full sentences. But it didn't always work when parts of my dreams were fragmented or I had a hard time recalling them.

In sum, choose a journaling setup that works for you. It might also take you a few entries to decide on your format (which might change daily).

Did dream journaling improve my memory?

I didn't notice any discernible change (for better or worse) in my memory after dream journaling for a month.

In all honesty, I only remembered my dreams about half of the time, and I didn't remember more at the end of the experiment than at the beginning.

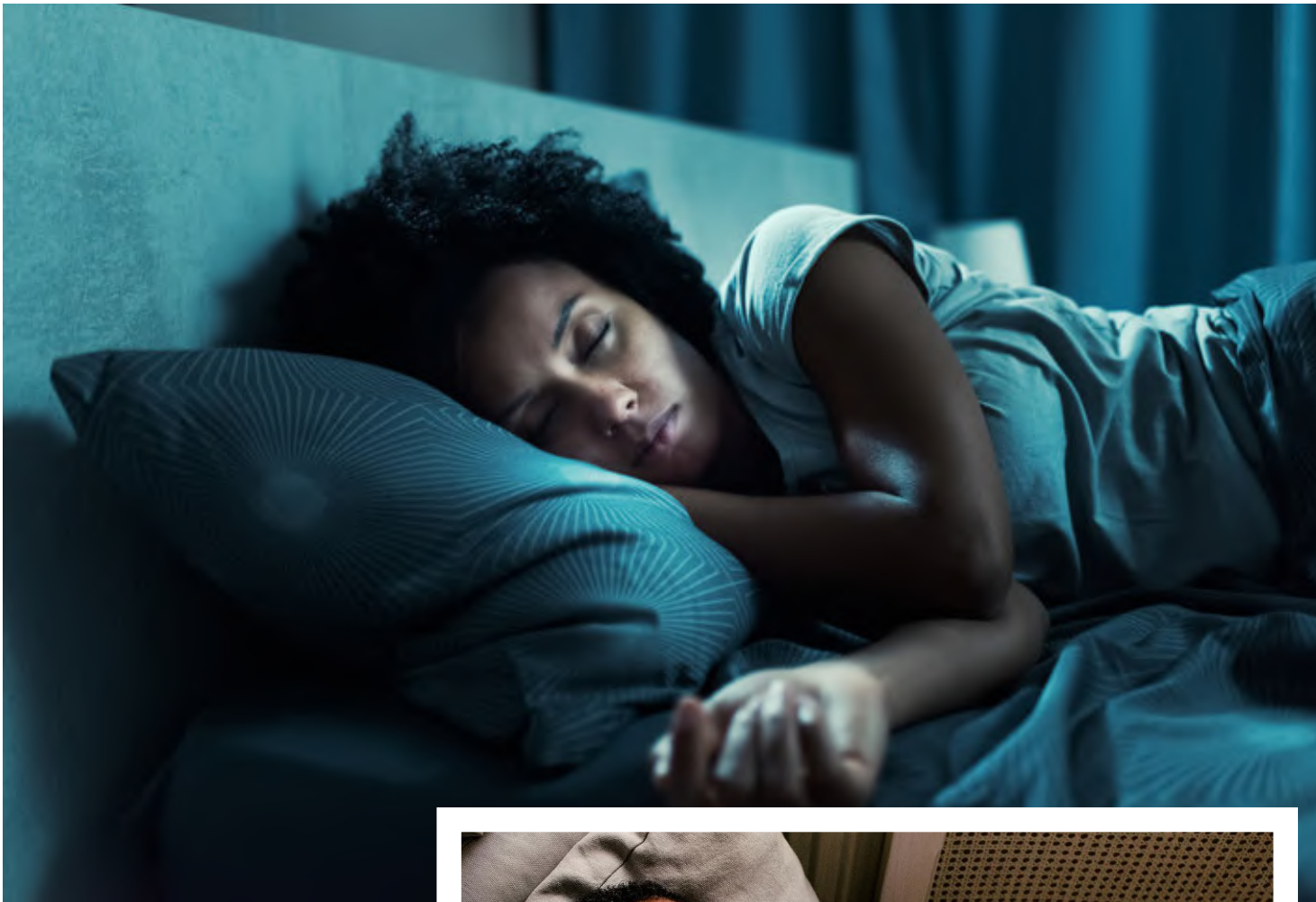
I did, however, sometimes spontaneously remember my dream or parts of it as I was working or doing another task, and I would immediately write it down.

What sparked these sudden memories is unknown, as the tasks I was doing were unrelated to the content of my dream.

Some things that helped me increase the chance of remembering my dream include:

- **Thinking about my dream:** Once I woke up, I lay there for a minute, thinking about what had happened in my dream before writing it down. Doing this helped me get a better picture, so I could write a more detailed entry.
- **Writing down my dream right away:** I sometimes went through my morning routine before journaling, and even if I had remembered it at first or thought about it upon waking up, I ended up forgetting it altogether.
- **Telling myself to remember my dream before falling asleep:** This might sound strange, but thinking "I want to remember my dream" before

Can dream journaling improve your memory?



I fell asleep helped with retention when I woke up.

Does research support dream journaling for memory?

The majority of evidence on dream journaling boosting memory is anecdotal, meaning it comes from personal experience (like mine).

A mental health nonprofit, Takes 2 Minutes, suggests that journaling about dreams can train your brain to better remember them. It also indicates that it can help boost overall memory.

But no scientific studies have examined this claim in depth, so no conclusions can be made between dream journaling and memory.

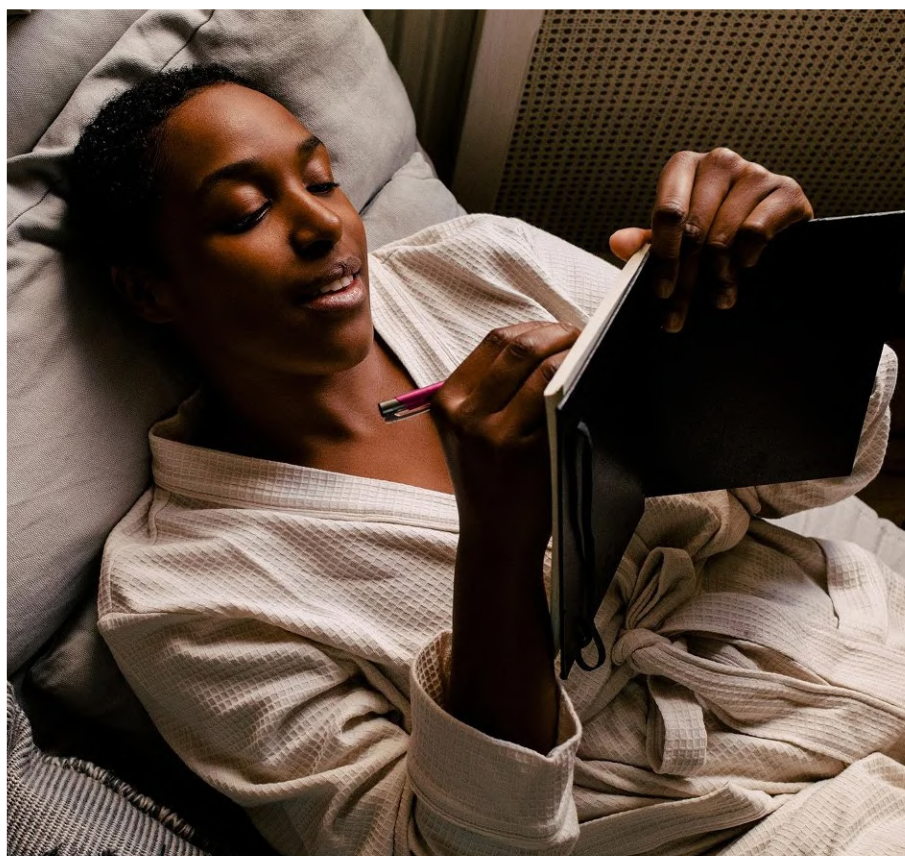
However, a 2024 study of college-age students found that writing in general (at many times of day) may improve working memory.

Working memory is a mix of attention ability and holding information in the moment while you work with it before it turns into short-term memory.

It's important to note that because this study looked at the physical act of writing, the same findings may not apply if you verbally record or type your dreams. Maybe that was where I went wrong.

Will I continue dream journaling?

While the effect on my memory is questionable (through experience and given limited scientific evidence), it was interesting to reflect on my dreams and read



about them later.

Even still, I probably won't continue this in the long term. I might write down a particularly strange or vivid dream every once in a while, but not every morning.

Perhaps if I continued this in the long term and made it a habit to physically write my dreams down, I would notice a more positive change in my memory retention.

The takeaway

I tried writing down my dreams, an activity known as dream journaling, for 1 month in

hopes of improving my memory, which I heard could occur from anecdotal evidence.

After my trial month, I didn't notice any discernible changes in my memory, but it's interesting to read past dreams. I probably won't make a habit of it, though, in the long term.

If you want to give it a try for yourself, all you need is somewhere to write down or record your dreams.

Have fun looking back on what you've dreamed!

(Healthline)

News in pictures from around the world



▲ A protester holds a photo of an Israeli hostage as demonstrators block a main road during a demonstration demanding the immediate end of the Gaza war and the release of all hostages, in Yakum near Tel Aviv, Israel.



▲ A dust storm blankets the sky in Paradise Valley, Arizona



▲ Kilmar Abrego Garcia, the migrant whose wrongful deportation to El Salvador made him a symbol of Trump's aggressive immigration policie.



▲ A girl having dinner with her family in a restaurant looks out at members of the Ohio National Guard, wearing their sidearms, in the Logan Circle neighborhood of Washington, D.C.



▲ Revelers take part in the Notting Hill Carnival in London.



▲ People walk on a bridge to cross the overflowing river Beas following heavy rain in Kullu district in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh, India.

Bati's recipe for record as oldest outfield player

A healthy lifestyle, discipline and a careful training load for Atisang Bati is the recipe for the new record holder in South African football.

Orbit College's captain set a new mark as the oldest outfield player in the history of the South African game when he started for the newly promoted team in their first Betway Premiership outing against AmaZulu earlier this month and with each passing game he extends that record further.

He started again in Tuesday's league match against Orlando Pirates one month and one day shy of his 43rd birthday.

"It's all about the lifestyle ... discipline," said his coach Poisgo Makhoye.

"He doesn't smoke. He doesn't drink. He trains hard and the way he looks after himself he could still find himself, I think, playing at the age of 45."

Makhoye said the club paid special attention to the load on the veteran midfielder, who had never before competed in the top flight of South African football before this season's promotion.

"We also help in terms of training; we have special training for him where sometimes we give him two days off and he comes back and joins us two days before a game. It's all about training well and make sure that he stays healthy and disciplined," Makhoye emphasised.

Previously the oldest outfield player in South African club football history was John Moshoeu, who was 42 years, four months and 27 days old when he played his last game for AmaZulu in May 2008.

In 2013, Andre Arendse became the oldest player in professional football history in the country when he kept goal for Bidvest Wits against Pretoria University, beating by months a more than 30-year-old record.

Arendse's record is 45 years, 10 months and four days, edging by three months the record set by equally legendary goalkeeper Trevor Gething in 1982.

Arendse also beat the Premier Soccer League record set by another goalkeeper – Bruce Grobbelaar in 2002.

The former Bafana Bafana stalwart, who was the Wits goalkeeping coach under Gavin Hunt, was pressed into action to help Wits out of a goalkeeping crisis and saw his club to a 2-1 away win against AmaTuks.

The previous record of 45 years, seven months and 22 days was held by Trevor Gething, who came out of retirement several times to help clubs in crisis.

He played for Pretoria Callies in 1979 aged 42 when they had a crisis and for Arcadia in 1981 and again in 1982, when he filled in for the injured Deshi Bhaktawar for 10 matches.

Grobbelaar was the oldest player in PSL history stretching back to 1997 but it was a



▲ Atisang Bati, contrived mark.

Grobbelaar was coach of Hellenic at the time and registered himself near the end of the season so that he could play the last

game of the 2001-02 season against Kaizer Chiefs at the age of 44 years, six months and 21 days. He let in four goals.

(Supersport)

Gauff survives Tomljanovic scare to reach US Open second round

FORMER champion Coco Gauff launched her US Open campaign with a 6-4, 6-7(2), 7-5 win over unseeded Ajla Tomljanovic in the first round on Tuesday, as the American navigated a big test following a late coaching shake-up ahead of the year's final Grand Slam.

Gauff, who arrived in New York after splitting with mentor Matt Daly and hiring biomechanics specialist Gavin MacMillan to address her lingering service issues, made a shaky start under the prime time glare of Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The 2023 champion dropped the opening game on her delivery and produced a flurry of errors but soon shook off the cobwebs and grabbed a 5-4 lead with an ace out wide, eventually taking the first set with a decisive break.

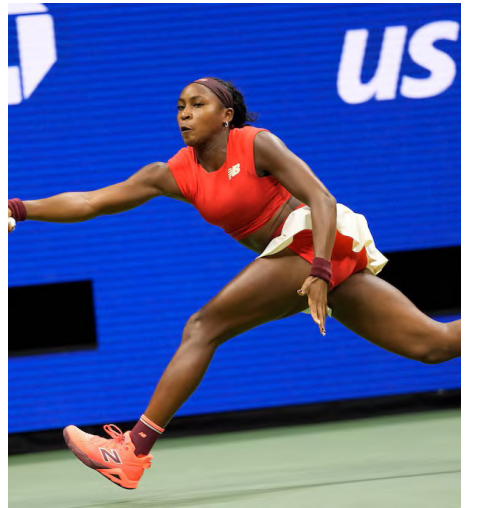
"There were chances for it to be a straight-sets win, but it was tough," Gauff added.

"I felt she was getting so many balls back and I was trying to push her back, and she's standing on top of the baseline. It wasn't the best but I'm happy to go through to the next round."

Tomljanovic, who famously battled past Serena Williams in three sets at Flushing Meadows in 2022, was in need of a similar fightback when twice major champion Gauff built up a 4-2 lead in the second set.

The Australian rallied bravely from there to move ahead 5-4 before squandering two set points, but composed herself quickly and forced a tiebreak, where she raised her game again to make it one set apiece.

A nervous Gauff served consecutive double faults at 5-4 in the decider before regaining composure to surge ahead 6-5 and wrap up the win with a sublime backhand winner



▲ Former champion Coco Gauff.

to massive cheers from the home crowd.

"I had so many chances," said Gauff, who faces another tough outing in the next round against Paris Olympics silver medalist Donna Vekic.

"I was like, eventually they're going to come. I had chances to close it out too. I had chances to go up double break so many times. So yeah, it's just like eventually one of these is going to go my way."

Although she finished with a flourish, Gauff will be aware of the improvement needed after making 59 unforced errors, with 10 double faults. She admitted the last few days preparing for the tournament with a coaching addition had been tough.

"One of the days was mentally exhausting, but I'm trying," Gauff added.

"I mean, it wasn't the best today but ... it came in when it mattered. It's an improvement from last week. I'm just trying to improve with each match."

(Supersport)



▲ Red Bull boss Christian Horner.

Cadillac F1 shut down speculation about possible Horner move

FORMULA One newcomers Cadillac have shut down speculation about ousted Red Bull boss Christian Horner having a role in running the team.

The General Motors-backed outfit, who are due to make their debut next season as the 11th team on the starting grid, appointed Briton Graeme Lowdon as their first principal last December.

Horner, who was the longest serving F1 boss and one of the most successful of all time, left Red Bull last month and there has been speculation about whether he will return and where he might end up.

"There have been no talks with Christian Horner, no plans to do that," Cadillac F1 chief executive Dan Towriss, who also runs TWG Motorsports, told reporters.

"So I'd like to officially shut down that rumour.

"Our support, belief, backing is 100 per cent in Graeme Lowdon."

Cadillac announced on Tuesday their first

ever F1 driver line-up of race winning veterans Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas.

Mexican Perez raced under Horner at Red Bull before the six times race winner was dropped by the team, with two years left on his contract, at the end of 2024 following a woeful run of results as teammate to four times champion Max Verstappen.

As Red Bull boss, Horner took the team from also-rans to champions in the space of five years.

Lowdon is untested as a principal although the Briton was chief executive of the now-defunct Marussia team that was operated by Manor Motorsport.

Cadillac have recruited heavily from other F1 teams, including Red Bull and are already bigger than US rivals Haas.

The team have operations at Indianapolis, in North Carolina and at Silverstone. TWG, the motorsports entity of billionaire Mark Walter's TWG Global, also own Andretti Global in North America. (Supersport)

Pirates coach explains why Mofokeng missed Orbit College match

ORLANDO Pirates head coach Abdeslam Ouaddou has explained Relebohile Mofokeng's absence from the Buccaneers squad for Tuesday's Betway Premiership clash against Orbit College FC.

Mofokeng was a notable absentee from the matchday squad as the Buccaneers edged the Mswenku Boys 1-0 at the Orlando Stadium.

His absence from the squad intensified speculation about the forward's future with the latest report suggesting that Major Soccer League outfit Minnesota United have submitted another offer for him.

Ouaddou, however, insists that the reason Mofokeng missed the game against Orbit was because he was advised by the Pirates medical team not to use him.

"Unfortunately, I have to discuss this with my medical department. Of course, they communicated with me about the fact that he cannot be a part of this game. But we still didn't have any feedback on the exam he should do. I hope it's nothing serious because we need him," said Ouaddou.

The Buccaneers were once again unconvincing against Orbit and it took a stunning goal from defender Lebone Seema for them to beat the newly-promoted side.

Ouaddou was not happy with Pirates' display in the first half.

"I think the whole first half we lost



▲ Relebohile Mofokeng.

many balls and didn't have the control of the ball in that first half because the opponent was good, with very good players and a lot of mobility in the middle," said the Moroccan.

Second half subs save Pirates

Ouaddou made three changes at the break, bringing in Sipho Mbule, Thalente Mbatha, and new signing Nkosikhiona Ndaba.

The Moroccan coach was delighted with the impact that his second half changes made in the game.

"I think that the impact of the players changed the match in the second half. It's the image that we are expecting from Pirates all the time, if we are to be ambitious, if we want to quickly reach the top of the log. It's this kind of performance,

this kind of rhythm that we expect from Pirates."

"I don't want to look for excuses, but we played just a few days ago a very important game for the MTN8 final [referring to the second leg of their semifinal tie against Mamelodi Sundowns]," he added.

"So it's understandable that we didn't have a very good first half but in the second half, we played some nice football, going forward and we created some chances, which was the image we expect of Orlando Pirates.

"If we are ambitious and want to reach the top of the log, this is the kind of performance and rhythm we expect from a team of Orlando Pirates."(The Citizen)

Boks arrive in Auckland in high spirits

THE Springboks arrived in Auckland close to midnight local time on Wednesday in high spirits and excited about the challenge of facing their arch-rivals, the All Blacks, in back-to-back test matches in the Castle Lager Rugby Championship in the next three weeks.

The Boks made the long journey from South Africa to Auckland on Tuesday via Sydney, and will have a gym session and recovery day on Thursday before taking the field for their first training session on Friday.

The Boks will battle it out with the All Blacks at Eden Park on Saturday 6 September, and at the Sky Stadium in Wellington a week later on 13 September.

They will then return to South Africa to face Argentina in Durban on Saturday 27 September, before wrapping up their campaign against the Pumas in London on 4 October.

"We travelled well, and although it's a long trip to New Zealand, we are excited to be here and we are looking forward to the challenge ahead," said Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus.

"It's always tough playing here, but the group is in good spirits, and we are fully aware of the magnitude of the task ahead.

"With all four teams in the Castle Lager Rugby Championship having won one match so far and the standings very tight at this stage, there's no doubt that the next two games will be crucial in our campaign, so



▲ Rassie Erasmus.

it's good that we travelled early in the week.

"The time zone and conditions are obviously very different from back home, so it's important that we acclimatise and settle in as quickly as possible to ensure that we are sharp at training and ready to be at our best by the time we face the All Blacks next weekend."

With a week and a half to prepare for the first match, Erasmus said managing the players effectively in the next few days was essential to

get the best out of them on the field.

"We've worked out our training schedule this week in a way that would allow the players to recover from the two physical matches against Australia, while at the same time steadily get into the swing of things for the next two matches," said Erasmus.

"So, we will have only two training sessions this week and then go full throttle into normal test match mode from Monday."

(Superpsport)

Liverpool face Isak dilemma ahead of Arsenal visit to Anfield

LIVERPOOL and Arsenal have combined to spend nearly £550 million (\$742 million) in a transfer arms race, yet the future of Newcastle forward Alexander Isak still hangs over Sunday's showdown between the Premier League title rivals.

Defending champions Liverpool are Isak's preferred destination should the Swede manage to engineer an exit from Tyneside before Monday's transfer deadline.

Yet, the early season showings of Arne Slot's men have raised doubts over whether Liverpool should allocate more major funds to retooling their attack or invest in a defence that has proved porous so far this season.

Newcastle are reportedly holding out for £150 million for Isak, who has publicly declared his desire to leave and is yet to feature this season.

The Reds have already committed to a £100 million fee on German midfielder Florian Wirtz, that could rise to a British transfer record £116 million, plus £69 million for French forward Hugo Ekitike.

While Wirtz has so far underwhelmed, Ekitike has three goals in as many games in the Premier League and Community Shield. Liverpool have needed late drama to win both their opening two Premier League games in wild, high-scoring encounters to beat Bournemouth 4-2 and Newcastle 3-2.

Sixteen-year-old Rio Ngumoha was their unlikely hero at a fiery St. James' Park on Monday, with Newcastle fighting to the finish, fuelled by their anger of Liverpool's pursuit of Isak.

Federico Chiesa also made a match-winning contribution for Liverpool after coming off the bench against Bournemouth.

Slot has said he is satisfied with his attacking options despite the sales of Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez and the tragic loss of Diogo Jota, who died last month in a car accident.

"I am happy with the squad

but if we think there is a player who can really make us better then this club has always shown they can bring them in," said Slot.

"But it needs to be everything we want: right transfer fee, right position and the player wants to come to us.

"I don't think (it will be a busy end to the summer transfer window) because (that would mean) I would be unhappy with the squad."

Liverpool have also splashed out on new full-backs Milos Kerkez and Jeremie Frimpong and talented 18-year-old Italian centre-back Giovanni Leoni.

But many believe they need more defensive recruits before the end of the window.

Midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai had to deputise at right-back against Newcastle, while Ibrahima Konate's uncertainty over his future has told in a poor start to the campaign.

"He is not at the races at all," said former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher. "I absolutely shudder to think where Liverpool would be without Virgil van Dijk."

Crystal Palace captain Marc Guehi has been targeted as a potential partner for Van Dijk in central defence.

- Arsenal bank on Gyokeres -

Despite spending slightly more than Arsenal on new arrivals, Liverpool's net spend is drastically smaller after raising over £200 million in sales.

The Gunners resisted the temptation to splash out on Isak to solve their need for a clinical striker, instead spreading their £250 million spend over seven new signings.

Viktor Gyokeres is instead the man signed to get the goals to fire Arsenal to a first title since 2004 after finishing second for the past three seasons.

The Swede scored twice in Saturday's 5-0 thrashing of Leeds.

Eberechi Eze was paraded to a hero's reception at the Emirates before that match after turning his back of a move to north London rivals Tottenham. (Superpsport)



▲ Newcastle United's Swedish striker #14 Alexander Isak wants to play for Liverpool

‘Bull’, ‘Weslians’ must-watch

... While Amawele for kasi flavour in elite debut

By Chris Dlamini

IT’S the 8Bet Trade Fair Cup 2025 and only one team will be crowned champions, come September 7.

As the games get underway with two triple-header fixtures on Saturday and Sunday, there are just teams we all would like to see in action, participating rebranded Mbabane Highlanders AM, back-in-action Manzini Wanderers after a full season in the wilderness, and of course, elite debutants Amawele, the latest team from Msunduzi Location, right from the renowned Skom and bring with them the kasi flavour.

Can they bring the kasi down to Manzini, as did Umbelebele (Inkiliva) back in the day? Be there or be squared. Highlanders and Wanderers will see their games preceded by an intriguing encounter between defending champions Young Buffaloes and back in topflight football Malanti Chiefs. The latter used to be trouble in knockouts, and Buffaloes must be wary of them.

Mbabane Highlanders AM FC vs. Ezulwini United

Date: Sunday, August 31, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 4pm

After being away for over a month for a preseason camp in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa (SA), following the much-publicised Shauwn ‘MaMkhize’ Mkhize takeover, surely, like me, you are also curious to know what they had been cooking.

What we know is they were late to offer players new contracts, and reports suggest not every player is happy with their stay in SA, as seen in one of the dailies on Wednesday that two key players rejected their contract offers and left camp. If it is true that the first-choice goalkeeper Qiniso Nyawo and captain Thando Langa have left due to not agreeing to new offers, then it could mean potential instability.

However, the news of the return of coach Ernest Mavuso still had the supporters excited as he has a good reputation with the club. Mavuso will be the ace card for Highlanders when they face a tricky Ezulwini United on Sunday.

He may have to make do without the two key players, but the belief is that they signed some foreigners from SA to boost their squad which still has Siyabonga Mkhonto, Vusi Vilakati, Ndumiso Mabuza, and Vusi ‘Giggs’ Mabundza among some of those they



▲ Mbabane Highlanders’ Siyabonga Mkhontofo.

had last season.

Ezulwini on the other hand will return with most of their squad from last season and a few new signings. The Stingers, as Ezulwini fondly go, had the last laugh with a 1-0 margin the last time they met Inkunz’emnyama but it was a league fixture. This is what Highlanders must overcome to avoid an early exit.

HEAD-TO-HEAD:
Season 2024/25
(25/01/2025)
Ezulwini 1-0 M. Highlanders
12/01/2024
M. Highlanders 2-1
Season 2023/24
(03/02/2024)
Ezulwini 0-1 M. Highlanders
(04/10/2023)
M. Highlanders 3-1 Ezulwini

Green Mamba vs. Manzini Wanderers

Date: Sunday, August 31, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 6:30pm

Dula Weseli! This is one of many taglines Manzini Wanderers has and their supporters are expected to cram the hub arena, the Mavuso Sports Centre on Sunday after going a full season without kicking the ball but fighting relegation in the country’s courts.

They won the case but it was a little too late for them to play as they also had not obtained their licence to register from the Confederation of African Football (CAF).



▲ Ezulwini United’s Bhékani Mthembu.

Wanderers make their return in the 8Bet Trade Fair Cup against tough opposition in Green Mamba. The latter could simply be favourites given that their squad was not tempered with by the senior national team Sihlangu Semnikati call-ups.

They only had new signing in midfielder Lindani ‘Rio’ Matsenjwa and goalkeeper Xolani Gama called up after the announcement of the initial squad.

However, the duo had not reported for camp since Monday. They could turn up against Liweseli, as Wanderers is passionately known. Led by veteran coach Nyanga ‘Crooks’ Hlophe, they are not expected to be a walkover despite the odds being against them.

Wanderers know this is a knockout and can work on a strategy to frustrate Green Mamba and fund themselves advancing to the quarterfinals, which also look set to be tougher as Royal Leopard is potentially next. Otherwise, welcome back Manzini Wanderers!

HEAD-TO-HEAD:
Season 2023/24
(16/04/2024)
M. Wanderers 1-0 G. Mamba
(04/11/2023)
G. Mamba 3-0 M. Wanderers

Royal Leopard vs. Amawele
Date: Monday, September 1, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 5pm



▲ Green Mamba’s Sabelo Ndzinisa.

If you follow the now annual KasizKasi Soccer Tournament by domestic players, then you will understand why Msunduzi folk cannot wait to cheer their newly promoted outfit, Amawele. The team has the kasi flavour hailing from the busy Msunduzi Location in Mbabane.

This is what Amawele bring to the top-flight, the fans from Ekasi and the kasi football flair as well. They will be expected to represent likasi well, emulate Umbelebele who was once a force to be reckoned with in the country’s elite football, but relegation struck them to even beyond the second-tier league.

It’s going to be a tough match against a solid and star-studded Royal Leopard who should not struggle amid six starters being with the senior national team Sihlangu Semnikati.

However, for a side looking to win the tournament, not having your regulars for the duration of the knockout is a factor that threatens that ambition.

Leopard is in a country over club situation like Nsingizini Hotspurs who have five in the national team. Will Leopard play without all six and win? Can Amawele cause an upset and announce their arrival in style? You’ve got to be there to see for yourself.

HEAD-TO-HEAD:
- Amawele will be making their top flight football debut, making this their first-ever fixture against Leopard.



Swimming national team geared for Zone IV championships

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

READY to salvage national pride. Eswatini national team is geared up for the 2025 Africa Aquatics Zone IV championships.

This was revealed by the national team coach, Welcome Nhlabatsi, ahead of the international regional championships swimming championships between September 3-7, 2025 in the country.

“We are looking forward to the games, and I am confident that the swimmers will perform well in the various categories. Preparations in the camp are smooth as we enter the last week,” he said.

The association president Pedro Nunes said they are happy to host the games.

“We are pleased to host the games for the second time in 30 years and are committed to delivering an outstanding event. Our swimmers are prepared to make the nation proud,” he said.

Nunes also thanked sponsors and the Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council for supporting the games.

“We appreciate the support from the council and our sponsors. Their contributions will help advance sports development in the country,” he said.

The national team comprises top swimmers Hayley Hoy, Luca Fraser, Damien de Souza, Siwakhile Dlamini, and Chadd Ning.



▲Swimmers with national team coach Welcome Nhlabatsi at Mavuso Sports Centre.

Siwakhile and Chadd recently represented the country in the 2025 World Aquatics Championships in Singapore, where the Australia-based Siwakhile was elected to the World Athletics commission.

The full squad

Head Coach: Welcome Nhlabatsi
Assistant Coach: Baphelele Masilela
Team Manager: Illana George

Team A

Kai Du Pont
Ivile Myeni
Joao Nunes

Harper Payne
Tsailin Barbosa
Portia Mabila
Sivikelwe Shongwe
Leah Dlamini
Sekukahle Mtsetfwa
Rachel Dlamini
Josea Potgieter
Kendra Mo Namara
Gabriel Paiva-Jarvis
Danika Wilsoh
Sinovuyo Dlamini
Daniella Nunes

Milani Ndzinisa
Sihlelelwe Shongwe
Emmanuel Dlamini
Bahle Simelane
Luca Fraser
Hayley Hoy
Tristan Way
Siwakhile Dlamini
Jordan Ryan
Tiano Fraser
Damien De Sousa
Chadd Ning
Simphiwe Dlamini

Simanga Dlamini
Team B
Bayanda Dlamini
Mukelwe Zwane
Fezubunye Mayabane
Esther Mlambo
Tumelo Sihlongonyane
Joy Maphalala
Vuyo Kunene
Hlelolwenkhosi Dlamini
Mukelwe Maziya
Wakhile Maseko
Wakhile Sambo

Zimbabwe rules in COSSASA Games



▲Zimbabwe basketball national team.

By Chris Dlamini

THE COSSASA GAMES Eswatini 2025 concluded on Wednesday with Zimbabwe proving the best.

While the full results compilation for all the track and field, and ball games were yet to be compiled, Zimbabwe, with over 400 athletes, were already winners in most disciplines. At a closing event held at Somhlolo National Stadium in Lobamba, Zimbabwe were crowned basketball, volleyball and soccer champions in the under-18 division.

They won the boys, and girls' categories respectively. The boys' under-18 soccer final

was the last event at Lobamba. Zimbabwe was ahead within seconds and went 5-1 ahead by the break.

Worth noting is that Eswatini, amid hosting the event, was second to Zimbabwe in volleyball and basketball in the under-18 age group. Eswatini earned silver in these sporting codes, and had already won silver and bronze medals from various track and field events, including athletics. Competing countries were Eswatini, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Lesotho. Meanwhile, Zimbabwe won 6-1 in the boys' under-18 soccer over Lesotho. The latter missed a penalty in the opening half that would have made it 2-1 but Zimbabwe quickly punished them with a third goal.



▲Nhlabeni teams and MPs during the grand closing of the Nhlabeni Zonal League.

Tsabeni FC crowned Nhlabeni Zonal League champions

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

CURTAINS for have finally fallen in the Nhlabeni Zonal League.

This follows the crowning of Tsabeni, who went home E12 000 richer plus a trophy, during the grand closing held over the weekend at Nhlabeni Sports Ground.

Coming second was New Revolution, who received E8 000, while Magumedzeni Fighters came third, walking away with E5 000.

The league is sponsored by Nhlabeni

member of parliament Manzi Zwane, who attended the grand closing with Kukhanyeni member of Parliament Apollo Maphalala.

The league chairman, Samkeliso Mdluli, said they are happy with the proceedings of the league.

“We are pleased with the progress of the league, and kudos to the champions for their achievement. We commend teams for their good behaviour throughout the season,” he said.

Mdluli also thanked their member of parliament for continued support.

“We are grateful for the sponsors who contribute to the development of the sport in the country,” he said.

Stories By Chris Dlamini

EMASWATI can get their passports ready to hit Botswana next month.

This follows the country’s Confederation of African Football (CAF) envoys Nsingizini Hotspurs and Royal Leopard’s away preliminary round fixtures scheduled for Botswana. Nsingizini will represent Eswatini in the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League after winning the league last season, while Leopard will be in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup after lifting the Ingwenyama Cup 2024/25.

Both teams will have their first preliminary round away fixtures in Botswana due to their rivals having no qualifying hosting venues. Nsingizini take on Zimbabwe’s Simba Bhora while Leopard will face off with Namibia’s Young Africans. Simba Bhora president Simba Ndoro confirmed the news of hosting away from home due to a CAF stadium ban.

The Shamva side will have the first leg fixture at the Obed Itani Chilume Stadium in Francistown on September 19.

“We have decided to host Nsingizini in Botswana because we felt that it would be a perfect venue which would also suit our budget,” said Ndoro as quoted by Zimbabwe’s Herald Online.

Meanwhile, Leopard’s seasoned Public Relations Officer (PRO) Frank Hurube also affirmed on Monday that their Namibian rivals Young Africans also had no CAF-approved home venue.

“We will be hosted in Botswana by Young Africans. That has been officially confirmed by Young Africans and EmaSwati can get ready for the trip,” he said.

Leopard, Nsingizini CAF games in Botswana

... The country’s CAF envoys Royal Leopard and Nsingizini Hotspurs will face their opponents in preliminary round away in Botswana



▲ Royal Leopard players celebrating.

Hurube said Botswana was closer to home and they expected support from Eswatini as this was a road trip. Leopard also play Young Africans on the same weekend as Nsingizini and CAF interclub competition debutants Simba Bhora, before the return legs at the provisionally approved Somhlolo National Stadium in Lobamba.



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs will face Zimbabwean team Simba Bhora.



▲ Zim team Simba Bhora.

We have to make our mark – Nsingizini rivals

SUPPORT is what Simba Bhora is banking on to get past Nsingizini Hotspurs in their first-ever TotalEnergies CAF Champions League. It is now only a matter of around three weeks before Nsingizini travel to take on Zimbabwe’s Simba Bhora.

The two debutant sides were drawn against each other in the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League 2025/26 preliminary round. Speaking to Zimbabwe’s Herald Online on Tuesday, Ndoro said they had their hopes on local support. He made note of the fact that they would not play Nsingizini Hotspurs at home due to CAF not approving the Zimbabwe National Sports Stadium.

He confirmed to HeraldOnline that Botswana was their preferred and chosen host nation for the preliminary round first leg match.

“The plan is to make the most of the little that we have and we are quite confident that Zimbabweans in Botswana will give us enough support to progress to the next round of the competition,” declared Ndoro.

He said they were aware that there were many Zimbabweans in Botswana who they expected to rally behind them.

“We are not too ambitious but everyone associated with the club knows that we have to make our mark on our first attempt,” added Ndoro.

Interestingly, both teams are debutants at this stage but Nsingizini will be boosted by their TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup preliminary stage experience last year. The Eswatini champions played South Africa’s Betway Premiership outfit Stellenbosch but were hammered on both legs.

They expect to gain more experience in their Champions League debut as they target the cash-spinning group stages. Furthermore, Nsingizini will have home ground advantage in the second leg to be played a week later from the September 19 first leg fixture in Francistown, Botswana, inside the Obed Itani Chilume Stadium.

Wanderers legend ‘Botsotso’ Manyatsi passes on

By Sibusiso Masilela
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DEATH has struck the Manzini Wanderers family.

This follows the demise of the ‘Weslians’ legend, David ‘Botsotso’ Manyatsi, after a battle with an undisclosed illness. The former midfield maestro is a second Wanderers legend to pass on after Adam ‘Ankel’ Dlamini. A ‘Weslians’ legend who preferred to speak on condition of anonymity revealed the news.

“We have been informed that our teammate is no more, and the team authorities are still going to meet with his family. He is one of the greatest players to have donned the maroon and white jersey, and we will forever cherish the time we spent with him in the club,” he said.

No immediate comment could be obtained from the Manyatsi family.

Wanderers Managing Director Wellington Motsa could not comment on the matter after his cellphone rang unanswered.

The late Manyatsi played with the likes of William ‘Cool Cat’ Shongwe, Oscar Maphalala, Stan Nxumalo, and Landcruiser Mahlalela, among others under the guidance of Malawian coach Kinah Phiri.



Ouaddou explains why Mofokeng was benched

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Nsingizini rivals





Leopard, Nsingizini CAF games in Botswana

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