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▲His Majesty King Mswati III issues instructions to Minister of Home Affairs Princess Lindiwe during tetfulo.

By Kwanele Dhladhla

HIS Majesty King Mswati III has praised the resounding success of this year’s Umhlanga (Reed Dance) Ceremony, describing it as a celebration that continues to inspire pride, unity, and international recognition for the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Speaking at the Ludzidzini Royal Residence on Wednesday, when receiving tetfulo amounting to a staggering E18.9 million, the King said he was deeply impressed by the ever-rising number of maidens who participated in the sacred cultural event. Thousands of Imbali from across Eswatini, joined by delegations of maidens from various African states, graced the ceremony, reinforcing its position as one of the continent’s most cherished cultural festivals.

“The Umhlanga Ceremony is not just an event; it is a symbol of purity, dignity, and African identity,” His Majesty declared. “Every year, the numbers of maidens grow, and this demonstrates the value that families and communities attach to preserving our traditions. It is also a reflection of God’s blessing upon our land, and indeed this year, the rains that accompanied the event were a clear sign of divine favour.”

The tetfulo gifts poured in from all sectors of society, symbolizing national solidarity and appreciation for the values upheld by the Reed Dance. Contributions came from government, princes, politicians, companies, the Pan African Tourism Board, and numerous individuals. The donations included cattle, groceries, toiletries for the maidens, and substantial sums of money.

Among the most notable contributions was the E1 million package from subsidiaries of the Inyatsi Group. Eswatini Mobile, the Clinic Group, Maloma Colliery, Construction Associates, Lidwala Insurance, and Inyatsi Construction each donated E150 000, while Eswatini Meat Industries, under the group, offered E100 000. The King warmly acknowledged these gifts, emphasizing that such generosity strengthens the cultural bond that unites the nation.

“The commitment shown by companies and individuals is a testament to the strong

His Majesty receives E18.9mln tetfulo

... applauds growing success of Umhlanga



▲Lidwala’s Ntokozi Ndzabukelwako, Inyatsi Eswatini MD Sandile Mhlanga and CEO Investments Paul Lwiindi arrive at the Ludzidzini Royal Residence.

partnership between culture and development. When we preserve and honour our heritage, we also build the foundation for progress and prosperity,” His Majesty said.

This year’s Umhlanga was not only a national celebration but also an international spectacle. Distinguished African leaders, including former South African President Jacob Zuma, and tourists from overseas joined the festivities. The King said the growing global interest in the Reed Dance underscored its role as a cultural export that enhances Eswatini’s standing in the world.

“The Umhlanga is now a global attraction. Visitors from across Africa and beyond come to witness this extraordinary display of unity, discipline, and tradition. It showcases the beauty of Eswatini, our people, and our values,” His Majesty noted.



▲Acting PM Thuli Dladla and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Senator Pholile Shakantu follow proceedings.



▲Vehicles carrying tetfulo making way to the Ludzidzini Royal Residence.

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini has on Wednesday toured the new Eswatini Embassy premises in Ethiopia, marking a significant milestone in the Kingdom's diplomatic engagement and regional presence.

This visit not only symbolises Eswatini's commitment to strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations but also sets the stage for the Prime Minister's influential participation in Africa Climate Week, held in Addis Ababa just a day earlier.

The dual focus on diplomatic expansion and climate leadership highlights Eswatini's proactive role in addressing continental challenges through cooperation and innovation.

The newly inaugurated embassy in Ethiopia serves as a strategic hub for Eswatini's diplomatic activities, enhancing its ability to engage with the African Union and other key international partners headquartered in Addis Ababa. Prime Minister Dlamini's tour of the facility underscored the government's dedication to fostering closer ties with African nations and reinforcing Eswatini's voice on the global stage.

At Africa Climate Week, Prime Minister Dlamini delivered a compelling call for urgent international support to accelerate Africa's transition to renewable energy and secure equitable climate financing. The event, themed "Accelerating Global Climate Solutions – Financing for Africa's Resilient and Green Development," convened leaders across governments, civil society, and the private sector to unite around climate action tailored to Africa's unique needs.

Central to the Prime Minister's address was the pressing need for transformative investments to increase Africa's share of renewable energy financing to at least 20 per cent by 2030. He highlighted the continent's significant financing gap, referencing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's

PM tours new Eswatini Embassy in Ethiopia, reinforces diplomatic ties



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini has on Wednesday toured the new Eswatini Embassy premises in Ethiopia, marking a significant milestone in the Kingdom's diplomatic engagement and regional presence.

Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which estimates that Africa requires nearly US\$3 trillion to meet its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030. Despite this vast requirement, climate finance flows to Africa have been grossly inadequate, totalling only US\$30 billion between 2021 and 2022 — a shortfall that threatens the continent's ability to effectively combat climate change and transition to clean energy sources.

"The Kingdom of Eswatini joins the call in the Draft Declaration for transformative climate financing, moving from aid to strategic investments in local innovation," Prime Minister Dlamini asserted. He emphasised the critical importance of equitable access to finance and urged reforms in global

funding mechanisms, including Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), to increase concessional finance and enhance African representation. Furthermore, he advocated for innovative debt instruments that enable climate action without imposing unsustainable burdens on African economies.

A key highlight of the Prime Minister's speech was the emphasis on operationalising critical climate finance instruments. He underscored the necessity of activating the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage and advancing the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance. Additionally, he voiced support for establishing high-integrity carbon markets through initiatives such as the Africa Action Plan on

Carbon Markets (AAPCM), which aim to harness market mechanisms for sustainable development.

However, Dlamini also issued a cautionary note against unilateral measures like the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. He warned that such policies risk penalising developing countries and could cost Africa up to US\$25 billion annually by 2030, thereby jeopardising the continent's development trajectory and undermining global climate justice efforts.

Reaffirming Eswatini's commitment to climate action rooted in African values, the Prime Minister invoked the Tinkhundla system of governance, a decentralised model that places decision-making power in the hands of communities. This approach, he explained, ensures that climate policies are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of citizens. Dlamini pledged to collaborate with all African Member States to uphold these principles and promote climate action that truly benefits the people.

The Prime Minister also expressed strong support for the Africa Climate Innovation Challenge (ACIC) and other mechanisms designed to channel catalytic finance toward youth-led enterprises and nature-based solutions. Recognising the pivotal role of grassroots innovation, he highlighted these initiatives as essential to building climate resilience from the ground up.

In his closing remarks, Dlamini framed Africa's climate resilience as indispensable not only for the continent's survival but also for global stability and prosperity. He urged global partners to view Africa's climate challenges as opportunities for green growth, shared prosperity, and climate justice that will benefit generations to come.

Ex-DPM Masuku launches SADC Electoral Observation Mission in Malawi

By Thokozeni Mazibuko

FORMER Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini, Themba N. Masuku, on Wednesday officially launched the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the forthcoming National and Provincial Elections of the Republic of Malawi.

The ceremony, held in Lilongwe, brought together members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of political parties, government officials, civil society organisations, and the media.

The mission was constituted in line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, which seek to promote transparency, peace, and credibility during electoral processes in the region.

In his keynote address, Masuku emphasised that the deployment of the SEOM underlines SADC's commitment to supporting Malawi's democratic journey. He highlighted that elections are a cornerstone of democracy and that regional solidarity ensures the credibility of such processes.

"The SADC Electoral Observation Mission is here to work hand-in-hand with Malawians in strengthening their democratic institutions. Our task is to observe and assess the conduct of the elections in line with SADC principles, the laws of Malawi, and international best practices," said Masuku.

The mission, comprised of observers



▲ Masuku in a group picture with the Head of Mission Themba Masuku after the launch of the SEOM.

drawn from various SADC member states, will be deployed across Malawi's regions and provinces. Their role will be to monitor pre-election activities, polling day procedures, and the post-election environment. They will also engage with key stakeholders, including the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), political parties, and civil society, to gather insights on the readiness and fairness of the electoral process. Masuku further urged all Malawians, particularly political leaders, to commit to peaceful campaigning, tolerance, and respect for the rule of law. "The legitimacy of any election is not only determined by the counting of votes but also

by the conduct of stakeholders before, during, and after the polls. We appeal for calm, restraint, and responsible leadership as Malawians exercise their democratic right to choose their representatives," he said.

The launch also included a briefing on SEOM's observation methodology, which places emphasis on impartiality, transparency, and cooperation with both state and non-state actors. Observers will document their findings, which will culminate in the release of a preliminary statement shortly after the elections, followed by a comprehensive final report.

Malawi is set to hold its National and Pro-

▲ Former DPM Themba Masuku officially launching the SEOM to the National and Provincial Elections of the Republic of Malawi.

vincial Elections later this month, a crucial moment for the nation's democratic trajectory. The elections will determine members of Parliament, provincial leadership, and lay the groundwork for the next political administration. It should be noted that the presence of the SADC mission is expected to boost confidence in the process while reassuring both the Malawian public and the international community of the region's commitment to democratic governance.

ERS strengthens leadership with key executive appointments

By Lwazi Dlamini
lwazid@rubiconmedia.group

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) has strengthened its leadership with key Executive appointments.

In a press statement, ERS announced that Riccardo Kruger is now Head of Compliance while Pearl Muir-Dlamini is the new Head of Domestic Revenue, effective 01 October 2025.

These appointments, according to the press statement, demonstrate Eswatini Revenue Services' continued commitment to cultivating leadership from within. By prioritising internal growth, ERS ensures that institutional knowledge, organisational culture, and technical expertise are carried forward as the organisation delivers on its mandate.

Riccardo Kruger, previously Director for Client Services, takes on the role of Head of Compliance. "With decades of experience in tax and customs matters, Mr Kruger has been instrumental in shaping ERS client service strategies, driving improvements in taxpayer experience, and embedding service excellence at the centre of compliance programmes. In his new portfolio, he will oversee risk-based compliance initiatives, strengthen enforcement, and deepen stakeholder engagement to promote voluntary



▲ Pearl Muir-Dlamini
compliance and trust in the tax system," the press statement reads in part.



▲ Riccardo Kruger.
Pearl Muir-Dlamini, formerly Director for Projects, assumes the position of Head of

Domestic Revenue. "Pearl also brings a wealth of experience in revenue administration transformation, having successfully led several strategic initiatives that supported the organisation's modernisation journey. In her new role, she will lead strategies to expand the tax base, improve filing compliance, and accelerate digital transformation in tax

administration. Her management expertise and leadership will be pivotal in aligning revenue collection with the Kingdom of Eswatini's broader development goals," reads the press statement in part.

Commissioner General Brightwell Nkam-bule welcomed the appointments, stating:

"The appointment of Riccardo Kruger and Pearl Muir-Dlamini to EXCO reflects our deliberate focus on nurturing leaders within the organisation. They have both demonstrated commitment, deep technical expertise, and leadership capacity over many years of service. By growing our own timber, we are ensuring that the future of ERS is built on experience, continuity, and innovation. These appointments are critical as we advance our 2024-2027 Strategy to be digitalised and data-driven with our partners,"

Riccardo and Pearl will play central roles in enhancing compliance, boosting domestic revenue mobilisation, and supporting sustainable economic development for the Kingdom of Eswatini.

By Kwanele Dhladhla

THE House of Assembly is preparing for a charged sitting on Thursday, with Parliament demanding answers from Prime Minister Russell Dlamini and several cabinet ministers on pressing national issues ranging from police operations and mining impacts to tax refunds and health services.

According to the order paper issued by Speaker Jabulani Mabuza, Mahlangatsha MP Mgcucisi Dlamini will table a pointed question to the Prime Minister regarding the deployment of the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) as escorts for cash-in-transit (CIT) vehicles belonging to private financial institutions and security firms.

The MP wants the PM to confirm whether there was a legal or policy framework obligating the police to provide this service. He will also ask: "Does the Government ensure this does not divert police resources from their core public safety responsibilities?" reads the question in part.

Concerns have grown in recent months that deploying officers for CIT duties could strain police capacity and reduce protection for communities. The MPs are pressing the PM to explain how the government balances economic security with the need for effective public policing.

The order paper also states that Ngudzeni MP Charles Ndlovu will question Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Prince Lonkhokhela on why the government has not mandated corporate responsibility initiatives for mining companies. The MP further wants clarity on whether the Ministry considers the well-being of communities affected

Parly to demand answers on VAT refunds, cash in transit Police escorts to private firms



▲ Parliament in session.
by mining and if it was fully aware of the negative impacts on health, the environment, and local infrastructure, such as roads.
In addition, Ngudzeni MP Ndlovu will call upon the PM to explain why he has discontinued his monthly breakfast meetings with the Eswatini Editors Forum, which were previously hailed as vital for enhancing government transparency. Ndlovu will ask whether the Prime Minister intends to resume these engagements.
Meanwhile, Hhukwini MP Alec Lushaba is expected to direct tough questions at

Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg over the long-standing issue of Value Added Tax (VAT) refunds. Many Emaswati who trade with South Africa have complained that despite filing the necessary claims and proving payment, they have yet to receive refunds from the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS). Lushaba will press the minister to outline solutions and advise affected citizens on how best to recover their money.
Lushaba will also engage the Minister of Health, Mduduzi Matsebula, requesting an update on the long-awaited Memorandum of



▲ Hhukwini MP Alec Lushaba.
Understanding with The Luke Commission. Parliament was previously assured the agreement would be finalised in the last financial year, but MPs now want clarity on why delays persist. "Has the Ministry checked how The Luke Commission is surviving in the midst of the suspension of certain programmes then, and what is the situation now?" Lushaba will ask.
Thursday's session is expected to generate lively debate, with MPs pressing for concrete answers on governance, accountability, and service delivery.

Child killed in road accident, man arrested for illegal firearm possession

Stories By Thokozani Mazibuko

TRAGEDY struck the Mpakeni community on Tuesday afternoon when a four-year-old girl lost her life after being knocked down by a vehicle along the UP112 public road.

According to a police report, the accident occurred on 09 September 2025 at around 14:00 hours. A Toyota LDV driven by a 68-year-old man of Mpakeni allegedly hit the minor as she attempted to cross the road. The child sustained severe injuries and was immediately rushed to Matsanjeni Health Centre, where she was unfortunately certified dead-on arrival.

Police investigations into the circumstances surrounding the accident are ongoing. Road safety authorities have once again urged motorists and pedestrians alike to exercise extreme caution, particularly in residential and rural areas where children are often found near roadways.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, the police recorded a breakthrough in arms and ammunition control.

At 15:00 hours on the same day, officers from Mankayane Police Station arrested a 33-year-old man from Mkhitsini for unlawful possession of a firearm. The suspect was found in possession of a 9mm pistol with an empty magazine while at Mapoweni area. Police say he was unable to produce a valid license for the firearm and was immediately

taken into custody.

He has since been formally charged and is expected to appear in court soon to face charges of illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition.

The Royal Eswatini Police Service reiterated its commitment to ensuring public safety by clamping down on the illegal circulation of firearms in communities.

Chief Police Information and Communication Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati, confirmed both incidents in a statement issued yesterday, extending condolences to the bereaved family of the young girl and applauding the swift action of Mankayane police officers in curbing gun-related crimes.

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“According to a police report, the accident occurred on 09 September 2025 at around 14:00 hours. A Toyota LDV driven by a 68-year-old man of Mpakeni allegedly hit the minor as she attempted to cross the road”



▲ Chief Police Information and Communication Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati.

Suicide, fatal road accident reported

THE Shiselweni region was struck by two separate tragedies over the weekend, claiming three lives and leaving one person hospitalised.

This was confirmed in a statement issued by the Chief Police Information and Communication Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati, at Nhlangano.

Suicide case

On Friday evening, 5 September 2025 at around 6:00 p.m., a case of suspected suicide was reported at Nkawini. According to police reports, Mandla Boy Simelane (45) of Ngwabi discovered that his younger brother, Machawe Haizo Dlamini (38) of Ntshanini, had ingested a poisonous substance, identified as Master 900, inside his rental flat.

Dlamini was immediately rushed to the Nhlangano Health Centre, where medical personnel tried to save his life. Sadly, he succumbed to the poison while undergoing treatment. Police have registered the matter under Nhlangano Enquiry File (E/F) 240/2025.

Counselling

Authorities have since urged members of the public to seek counselling and psychosocial support when faced with personal difficulties, reminding communities that suicide leaves behind untold pain and trauma for families.

Fatal road traffic accident

In another incident, a devastating collision occurred the following day, 6 September 2025 at around 4:00 p.m., along

the Nhlangano–Hlathikhulu public road (MR9) near Mahlabinkhomo.

Police reports indicate that a VW Sedan (registration QSD 416 BH), driven by Lucky Dlamini (32) of Mehlwabovu, lost control and collided head-on with a Toyota Kombi (registration YSD 609 AM), branded Orteen Trans, driven by Sicelo Motsa (45) of Makhosini.

The impact was severe. Motsa and his passenger, Nathi Dlamini (31) of Makhosini, sustained critical injuries and were rushed to the Nhlangano Health Centre. Unfortunately, both men were certified dead on arrival.

Injuries

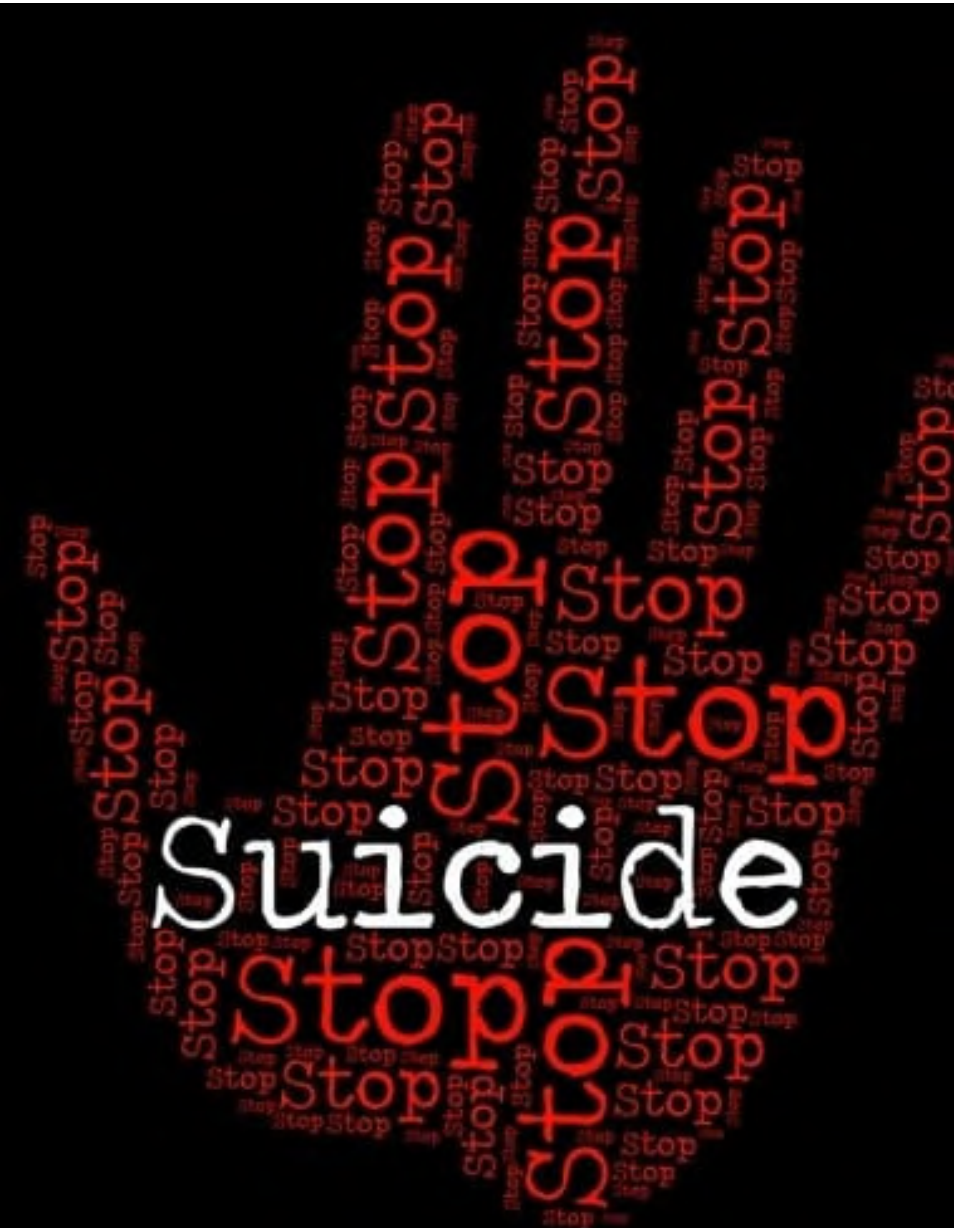
The driver of the VW Sedan, Lucky Dlamini, survived but sustained serious injuries.

He was transferred to Hlathikhulu Government Hospital, where he remains admitted under medical care. Both vehicles were extensively damaged on their front ends, reflecting the force of the collision.

Senior Superintendent Vilakati extended condolences to the bereaved families and reminded motorists to always exercise caution, especially when travelling along public roads.

“Lives are lost unnecessarily due to preventable accidents. Drivers must always observe speed limits, road conditions, and ensure their vehicles are roadworthy,” she said.

Police investigations into both the suicide and the fatal accident are continuing.



Men account for 80% of suicides in Eswatini

By Delisa Magagula and Taonga Nkhata

MEN continue to bear the heaviest burden of suicide in Eswatini, with official figures showing that 80 per cent of recorded cases between 2022 and 2024 involved men.

According to the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS), a total of 486 people lost their lives to suicide in the two-year period. Poisoning accounted for 52 per cent of the cases, followed by hanging at 44 per cent.

The trend has continued into 2025. In just the first four months of the year, 104 people were reported to have died by suicide, averaging nearly one death per day.

Globally, Eswatini ranks among the most affected countries. WHO data shows the country's national suicide rate at 31.8 per 100,000 people, nearly three times the African regional average. Among men, the figure is even higher 54.2 per 100,000, the highest male suicide rate in the world.

Minister of Health Mduduzi Matsebula, speaking at the first-ever World Suicide Prevention Day commemoration in Mbabane, said harmful cultural messages discourage people from seeking help.

"Statements such as indvodza ayikhali (a man does not cry) discourage men from speaking out. Behind every number is a family, a community, and a story of unrealised potential," he said.

WHO Representative Dr. Susan Tembo highlighted that 83 per cent of people who die by suicide had contact with a health worker in the year before their death, yet many never received mental health support.

She called this a 'missed opportunity' for prevention, urging a multi sectoral approach that tackles poverty, gender-based violence, unemployment, and social isolation.



▲ World Health Organization (WHO) Eswatini Representative Dr Susan Tembo posing with Minister of Health Mduduzi Matsebula.

The 2022–2024 STEP survey revealed that 30 per cent of Emaswati reported having suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives, while 21.8 per cent reported depressive symptoms.

Treatment gap

Of those, 88 per cent never received care, reflecting a wide treatment gap. Health officials identified key risk factors linked to suicide in Eswatini, including prior attempts, depression and other mental illnesses, substance abuse, gambling, gender-based violence, bullying, and relationship breakdowns.

Methods used included poisoning, hanging, firearms, self-inflicted injuries, and in some cases, people throwing themselves

in front of moving vehicles.

Mental health official Sindiso Bhembe urged Emaswati to be alert to warning signs.

"People do talk about wanting to end their lives. They may say things like, no one will miss me if I go. We must take such words seriously and act," he said.

Bhembe added that the ministry aims to reduce suicide rates by 30 per cent from 2015 levels by 2030, through expanding mental health services, training health workers, and raising awareness in communities.

The commemoration ended with a moment of remembrance for those lost to suicide, and a united call to break silence with dialogue, stigma with compassion, and despair with hope.

... Poisoning, hanging account for most suicides

MINISTER of Health Mduduzi Matsebula has revealed that the majority of suicides in Eswatini are carried out through poisoning and hanging.

"These figures point to a crisis in our hands, and they compel us to act. Behind each number is a family, a community, and a story of unrealised potential."

The Minister explained that the patterns underline the need for urgent prevention strategies, including limiting access to harmful substances, raising community awareness, and providing timely mental health support.

Health officials emphasised that focusing on common methods is critical in suicide prevention because it can guide policy and interventions such as safe storage of pesticides, medicines, and firearms.

The event, held under the theme 'changing the Narrative: Start the Conversation' highlighted that Eswatini continues to rank among the countries with the highest suicide rates globally, with men making up the majority of cases.

66
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BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

EITF records 7.1% rise in visitors

THE 2025 Eswatini International Trade Fair (EITF) drew a record-breaking 75 000 visitors, marking a 7.1 per cent increase from last year's 70 000. This surge in attendance comes as the fair continues to strengthen its role as one of the kingdom's largest platforms for trade, business networking, and investment promotion. The increase of 5 000 visitors underscored the growing public interest in the event, which ran at the Mavuso Trade and Exhibition Centre in Manzini.

'Trump urges pressure on China, Russia'

WASHINGTON — U.S. President Donald Trump urged EU officials on Tuesday to hit China with tariffs of up to 100 per cent as part of a strategy to pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a U.S. official and an EU diplomat. Trump also encouraged the European Union to slap India with similarly expansive tariffs, said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

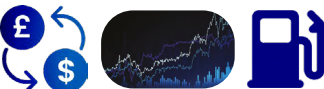
Oil prices up, but over-supply caps gains

LONDON — Oil prices rose on Wednesday after Israel attacked Hamas leadership in Qatar, Poland shot down drones and the U.S. made a push for new sanctions on buyers of Russian oil, but concerns over crude oversupply capped further gains. Brent crude futures were up 66 cents, or 1 per cent, at \$67.05 a barrel, at 1208 GMT, and U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose 68 cents, or 1.1 per cent, to \$63.31 a barrel.



FX RATES

Notes/Cash		
	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	17.1473	17.6155
G.B. Pound	23.1962	23.8812
EURO	20.1046	20.7150
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	



Gross official reserves hold at E11.8 billion

By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI'S gross official reserves stood at E11.8 billion in August 2025, reflecting a 1.2 per cent decline month-on-month but a solid 16.5 per cent increase year-on-year, according to the Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE).

This balance illustrates both short-term pressures and longer-term resilience.

The reserves are a crucial barometer of economic stability, covering the nation's import needs and serving as a cushion against external shocks. In August, the import cover stood at 2.9 months, the same as in July.

This means that Eswatini could finance almost three months' worth of imports without new foreign inflows a level that remains close to regional benchmarks, though ideally higher coverage would strengthen security against global volatility.

Analysts note that the annual growth in reserves is encouraging, pointing to stronger export performance and possibly improved inflows from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) receipts.

However, the month-to-month dip raises questions about rising import demand or foreign debt obligations that could be weighing on the balance.

Sustaining reserves above E11 billion gives policymakers some room to manoeuvre, but the consistent pressure from global oil prices, food imports, and currency fluctuations remains a key concern.

Going forward, the balance between using reserves to stabilize the economy and maintaining adequate cover for imports will be vital.

Credit to the private sector records slight dip

Credit extended to the private sector fell slightly in July 2025, dipping by 0.6 per cent month-on-month to settle at E21.5 billion. However, the year-on-year picture is more optimistic, with credit growth of 8.1 per cent.

The modest monthly contraction may reflect businesses adopting a cautious approach amid economic uncertainty.

Rising borrowing costs, linked to the current prime lending rate of 10.25 per cent, may also be tempering appetite for credit.

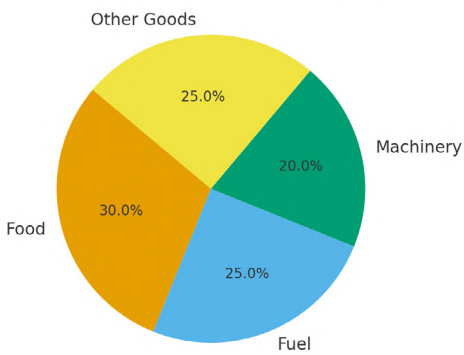
On the other hand, the annual growth suggests that businesses have been steadily expanding operations and investing in new ventures over the past year.

Sectorial distribution of the credit is likely to highlight key areas of growth such as construction, retail trade, and agriculture, where borrowing has typically supported expansion.

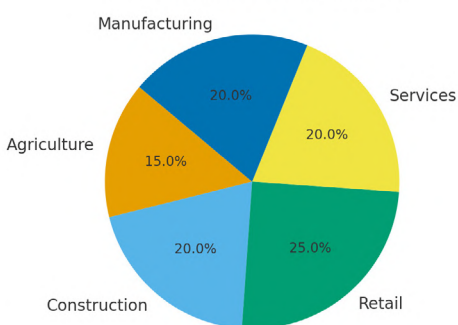
Analysts suggest that the contraction may also signal a slowdown in certain industries or repayment of existing loans.

The CBE's steady stance on interest rates is designed to balance inflationary risks while maintaining stability in the lending environment. For small and medium enterprises, consistent access to affordable credit remains a pressing concern.

Import Cover Composition



Credit Distribution by Sector



Sustained year-on-year growth in private sector credit indicates resilience, but the monthly slip underlines the need for continued policy support to keep financing channels open.

Money supply and domestic liquidity grow by 7%

Eswatini's broad money supply (M2) grew robustly to E25.2 billion in July 2025, marking a 7.9 per cent month-on-month increase and a 4.2 per cent annual rise, according to the latest CBE data. This growth indicates an expansion in overall liquidity circulating within the economy.

At the same time, domestic liquid assets amounted to E8.0 billion, reflecting a 15.4 per cent month-on-month increase and a 2.6 per cent annual increase.

The simultaneous rise in money supply and liquid assets points to improved liquidity conditions, which can support economic activity if directed into productive investment.

The figures suggest that households and businesses may be holding more cash or near-cash assets, providing some cushion against short-term shocks.

However, policymakers will be watching closely to ensure that this expansion does not translate into excessive inflationary pressure.

For businesses, the availability of liquid assets and a rising money supply can ease financing conditions, improve transaction flows, and encourage investment.

This will however depend heavily on the private sector's confidence and the broader macroeconomic climate.

The discount rate remains at 6.75 per cent, while the prime lending rate stands at 10.25 per cent, both unchanged in August.

These stable

rates aim to provide predictability in the lending environment, supporting the growth of liquidity while keeping inflation expectations anchored.

Stable interest rates anchor monetary policy

The Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE) maintained key interest rates unchanged in August 2025, providing a measure of stability for borrowers and investors in a volatile regional and global climate.

The prime lending rate remains at 10.25 per cent, the discount rate at 6.75 per cent, and the repo rate at 7.25 per cent.

This steady stance underscores the Bank's cautious approach in balancing inflationary pressures against the need to stimulate economic activity.

Analysts note that while inflation has moderated compared to the previous quarter, global fuel and food prices continue to pose risks that could filter through into domestic costs.

By keeping lending rates stable, the CBE is signalling confidence in the resilience of the financial system.

For businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, predictable borrowing costs provide an environment conducive to planning and investment.

However, some sectors argue that rates remain relatively high, potentially constraining new borrowing despite a favourable liquidity environment.

From a household perspective, stable rates mean that repayments on variable-rate loans, such as mortgages, remain unchanged, offering relief to families navigating cost-of-living pressures.

On the other hand, savers may find the return on deposits modest in real terms, given the prevailing inflation outlook.

Overall, Eswatini's unchanged monetary policy stance is designed to keep financial conditions predictable, reduce volatility in credit markets, and ensure that the flow of money supports productive investment rather than speculative activity.

CBE Governor
Dr. Phil Mnisi.



EITF records 7.1% rise in visitors

By Delisa Magagula

THE 2025 Eswatini International Trade Fair (EITF) drew a record-breaking 75 000 visitors, marking a 7.1 per cent increase from last year's 70 000.

This surge in attendance comes as the fair continues to strengthen its role as one of the kingdom's largest platforms for trade, business networking, and investment promotion.

The increase of 5 000 visitors underscored the growing public interest in the event, which ran at the Mavuso Trade and Exhibition Centre in Manzini.

According to the Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA), which coordinates the fair, the attendance target for 2025 was not only met but surpassed.

EIPA Trade Promotion Manager, Sipheshile Nkhabindze, attributed the rise in visitor numbers to a combination of factors, including expanded marketing efforts, wider product offerings, and the fair's reputation as a showcase for Eswatini's economic potential.

"The increase in visitor numbers is a positive outcome for us and I am pleased to say we have met our target for attendance. We also welcomed an international company for the first time, which opens the door to more international participation in the future. We hope this development will encourage further global interest and more exhibitors next year," Nkhabindze said.

While visitor numbers surged, the fair saw a slight dip in exhibitor participation. In 2024, the trade fair hosted 250 exhibitors, but this year the number stood at 230.

Despite the decline, the presence of regional companies, local entrepreneurs, and one international participant highlighted the fair's ability to attract diverse players.

The exhibitors showcased a wide range of products and services, from agriculture and manufacturing to ICT, financial services, retail, and creative industries.

For many small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the fair provided visibility and access to potential buyers and partners.

Nkhabindze acknowledged the decline but stressed that the influx of visitors more than compensated for the reduction in stands.

"The turnout reflects that the fair is not only about exhibitor numbers but about the impact and opportunities generated through business-to-business engagements and public participation," he said.

One of the notable highlights of the 2025 edition was the participation of an international company for the first time in the history of the fair. Organisers described this as a milestone, signalling Eswatini's potential to attract global businesses.

EIPA Chief Executive Officer Sibani Mngomezulu said this development was expected to pave the way for more international exhibitors in the coming years.

The inclusion of an international company also aligned with Eswatini's broader economic vision of integrating into regional and global trade networks.

The EITF continued to be a vital platform for local businesses to engage with both domestic consumers and regional buyers.

Exhibitors from sectors such as textiles, handicrafts, food processing, and technology used the fair to launch new products, promote services, and establish business link-



▲ His Majesty King Mswati III flanked by Former SA President Jacob Zuma, Former Botswana President Ian Khama and PM Russell Mmiso Dlamini during the official opening of the 2025 EITF.



▲ Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo touring one of the EITF stalls.

ages.

Financial institutions also had a strong presence, using the platform to promote access to credit facilities, insurance products, and financial literacy campaigns.

This underscored the fair's role not only as a commercial event but also as a development platform linking financial services with SMEs and households.

In addition, government ministries and parastatals exhibited to showcase national projects, public services, and regulatory frameworks relevant to the private sector.

These stands allowed the public to access

information while providing a window into Eswatini's policy priorities.

Beyond public attendance, the fair served as an arena for networking between private businesses, investors, and development partners. Seminars and side events were hosted alongside exhibitions, focusing on themes such as trade facilitation, innovation, entrepreneurship, and regional integration.

According to the organisers, these engagements are crucial in positioning Eswatini as an investment destination.

The fair's format provided opportunities for joint ventures, supply contracts, and

partnerships that could extend well beyond the ten-day exhibition period.

The EITF also maintained its cultural and social appeal, with live performances, traditional displays, and food stalls forming part of the experience.

This mix of business and leisure contributed to the fair's ability to draw large crowds. Families attended in large numbers, blending economic engagement with entertainment.

The trade fair is widely regarded as an engine for economic activity, generating revenue for exhibitors, service providers, and the tourism sector.

Hotels, transport operators, and small traders around Manzini benefitted from increased activity during the fair period.

Nkhabindze noted that the fair's broader economic contribution extended beyond direct trade.

"The Trade Fair not only demonstrates Eswatini's commitment to enhancing trade relations but also highlights the nation's potential as a hub for commerce and innovation," he said.

By bringing together diverse players, the EITF provided a snapshot of Eswatini's evolving economic landscape.

For local entrepreneurs, it was an opportunity to test products with consumers. For policymakers, it was a chance to gauge business sentiment.

For visitors, it offered exposure to innovation and trade opportunities within the region. Organisers believe that the record visitor numbers and the inclusion of an international exhibitor have set the stage for even greater participation in the future.

While exhibitor numbers dipped this year, EIPA expressed optimism that the visibility and momentum generated in 2025 will encourage more companies both local and foreign to participate in 2026.

The challenge moving forward will be to sustain the growth in attendance while increasing exhibitor participation.

Strategies being considered include targeted outreach to international firms, strengthening partnerships with regional chambers of commerce, and expanding support for SMEs to access exhibition space.

‘Trump urges EU to impose 100% tariffs on China, India to pressure Putin’

By Gram Slattery and Andrew Gray

WASHINGTON — U.S. President Donald Trump urged EU officials on Tuesday to hit China with tariffs of up to 100 per cent as part of a strategy to pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a U.S. official and an EU diplomat.

Trump also encouraged the European Union to slap India with similarly expansive tariffs, said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

China and India are major purchasers of Russian oil and, as such, they play a vital role in keeping Russia’s economy afloat as it continues to pursue its expanded invasion of Ukraine, which began in 2022.

Trump made the request, which was conveyed via conference call, to EU sanctions envoy David O’Sullivan and other EU officials. The EU delegation is currently in Washington to discuss sanctions coordination.

The EU diplomat said the U.S. had indicated it was willing to impose similar



▲ A European Union flag and a “tariffs” label are seen in this illustration.

tariffs if the European Union heeded the U.S. request.

“They are basically saying: We’ll do this but you need to do it with us,” the diplomat said.

The U.S. request, if heeded, would result in a change of strategy for the EU, which has preferred to isolate Russia with sanctions rather than tariffs.

China firmly opposes the U.S. applying

such so-called economic pressure, its foreign ministry said at a regular press briefing on Wednesday, adding that it also opposed the using of China in discussions on Russia.

Trump, whose request was first reported by the Financial Times, has frequently threatened to impose tariffs on India and China as punishment for their purchases of Russian crude.

While Trump did hike tariffs on India over the summer by 25 percentage points in part due to its economic relationship with the Kremlin, Trump has yet to pull the trigger on the more punishing options he has floated.

At times, he has complained that Europe itself has not fully decoupled from Russia, which supplied about 19 per cent of EU gas imports last year although the bloc says it is committed to fully ending its dependency on Russian energy.

Later on Tuesday, Trump suggested that the U.S. could in fact boost trade with India, writing in an evening social media post that the U.S. and India are working to address trade barriers between the nations. He added that he was looking forward to speaking with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. (Reuters)



▲ U.S. one hundred dollar notes are seen in this picture illustration taken in Seoul .

Dollar firm as geopolitics heat up; investors await US inflation data

By Amanda Cooper

LONDON — The dollar held steady on Wednesday ahead of U.S. inflation data this week that could help shape the outlook for Federal Reserve policy, while a fraught geopolitical backdrop underpinned the likes of the Swiss franc.

Employment data in the last week has shown the U.S. economy created far fewer jobs in the last year than expected, which has made a rate cut from the Fed next week look like a certainty.

Yet it has not dented confidence in the equities market, where stocks trade at record highs, nor has it had much immediate impact on the dollar itself, even as investors weigh up the chances of a jumbo half-point cut from the Fed next week.

Israel’s attempted killing of Hamas leaders with an airstrike on Qatar on Tuesday, along with Poland shooting down drones that

entered its airspace during a Russian attack in western Ukraine on Wednesday, were keeping investors nervous.

“The market has made up its mind, and probably quite rightly, that the Fed is going to be cutting interest rates. But for one, there’s been quite a lot in the price in terms of between now and the end of next year,” said Jane Foley, head FX strategist at Rabobank.

“On the other hand, playing in the same direction is the geopolitical uncertainty. There is the Poland news, there is the Qatar news. None of that is reassuring,” she said.

The euro was subdued against the dollar, but jumped as much as 0.5 per cent against the Polish zloty to 4.268 zloty, set for its biggest one-day rise in three months at one point .

In terms of Fed expectations, traders are fully pricing in a quarter-point cut next week, with a minor chance of a half-point cut. This week’s reports on wholesale inflation due on Wednesday, and consumer inflation on Thursday, could affect that outside prospect of a larger cut, analysts said. (Reuters)

Oil prices up, but oversupply caps gains

By Shadia Nasralla

LONDON — Oil prices rose on Wednesday after Israel attacked Hamas leadership in Qatar, Poland shot down drones and the U.S. made a push for new sanctions on buyers of Russian oil, but concerns over crude oversupply capped further gains.

Brent crude futures were up 66 cents, or 1 per cent, at \$67.05 a barrel, at 1208 GMT, and U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose 68 cents, or 1.1 per cent, to \$63.31 a barrel.

Prices had settled 0.6 per cent higher in the previous trading session after Israel said it had attacked Hamas leadership in Doha.

Both benchmarks rose nearly 2 per cent shortly after the attack, but then retraced much of their gains.

Elsewhere, geopolitical tensions also rose when Poland shot down drones during a widespread Russian attack in western Ukraine on Wednesday, marking the first time a NATO member fired shots in the war. However, there was no immediate threat of a supply disruption.

“The dark cloud of surplus ahead is ... hanging over the market with Brent trading two dollars lower than last Tuesday. Geopolitical risk premiums in oil rarely last long unless actual supply disruption kicks in,” SEB analysts said.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump has urged the European Union to impose 100 per cent tariffs on China and India - major buyers of Russian oil - as a strategy to pressure Moscow, according to sources.

With European Union officials in



▲ Rising stock graph and 3D printed oil barrels miniature are seen in this illustration.

Washington to discuss Russia, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday the bloc was considering a faster phase-out of Russian fossil fuels as part of new sanctions against Moscow.

Traders expect the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates at its September 16-17 meeting, which would boost economic activity and demand for oil.

But the supply outlook remains bearish. The U.S. Energy Information Administration cautioned global crude prices will be under significant pressure in the coming months because of rising inventories as OPEC+ increases output.

U.S. crude, gasoline and distillate stocks rose last week, market sources said, citing American Petroleum Institute figures on Tuesday. Government data is due at 1430 GMT . (Reuters)



▲ Her Excellency Honourable Margarida Adamugy Talapa, Speaker of the Parliament of Mozambique visited Embiveni Meat Industries (EMI) Factory where she visited the newly opened Halaal shop. She was in the company of distinguished delegates.



▲ Her Excellency Margarida Adamugy Talapa (right) with EMI's MD Phindile Matsebula and Senator Linda Dlamini.

By Nontsikelelo Dlamini

THE Embiveni Halaal Shop, recently opened inside the Eswatini Meat Industries (EMI) Factory in Matsapha, proudly hosted an esteemed delegation on Wednesday, September 10, 2025.

The delegation was led by Her Exoelleny Hon. Margarida Adamugy Talapa, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Mozambique, and Senate President Pastor Lindiwe Dlamini, together with other high-ranking Mozambican and Eswatini dignitaries.

The visit marked a significant milestone for Embiveni Meat Market, showcasing its growing role in catering to diverse communities within Eswatini and beyond. The Halaal shop was opened in response to the needs of the Muslim community, living and working in Eswatini, who had long sought convenient access to Halaal-certified meat products. Halaal meat refers to products prepared strictly in line with Islamic principles, ensuring purity, cleanliness, and respect for faith. At Embiveni's Halaal Shop, customers can find a wide range of premium beef cuts including Picanha, Thiock Rump, Silverside, Fillet Super, Chuck Super and Stewing Beef, etc, all processed under the highest hygiene and safety standards.

The presence of Mozambique's Speaker of Parliament highlighted not only the cultural and religious significance of the shop but also the economic opportunities it unlocks. By establishing a reliable supply of Halaal-certified products in Matsapha, Embiveni is positioning itself to serve both Eswatini and Mozambican markets, strengthening cross-border trade and reinforcing Eswatini's role as a regional hub in the meat industry.

As part of the visit, the delegation spent a significant amount on our various Halaal products, demonstrating their confidence in Embiveni's offering. In a gesture of goodwill, Embiveni presented Her Excellency Hon. Talapa with a special gift of meat products,

Mozambican Speaker of Parliament visits Embiveni's newly opened Halaal shop



▲ Her Excellency Hon. Margarida Adamugy Talapa, Speaker of the Parliament of Mozambique, alongside Mr Salvador Talapa, posed for a picture with EMI's MD Phindile Matsebula and other distinguished delegates.

symbolizing the company's appreciation for the support and recognition of its new venture.

Inclusivity

Speaking on behalf of Embiveni, management noted that the shop is more than just a retail outlet; it is a symbol of inclusivity and cultural respect, ensuring that no community in Eswatini is left behind. The initiative directly supports His Majesty

King Mswati III's vision of a First World Eswatini, where businesses not only grow economically but also cater to the needs of a modern, diverse society. By respecting religious practices and broadening access to quality food, Embiveni contributes to national development goals and a more integrated Eswatini.

"This visit is not just a recognition of our shop, but a celebration of our role in serving

the Halaal community," said an Embiveni MD, Phindile Matsebula. "We are proud to provide meat that meets both religious and health standards, ensuring that every customer feels respected and valued. For us, this is about more than business – it is about building trust and lasting relationships with all communities we serve."

The visit of such high-ranking officials from Mozambique underscores the regional importance of Embiveni's Halaal Shop, positioning it as a hub for cross-border cultural and economic exchange. It also highlights how Embiveni continues to pioneer innovative solutions in Eswatini's meat industry, ensuring accessibility, quality, and inclusiveness for all. Emaswati are also encouraged to visit the Embiveni Halaal Shop in Matsapha to experience the difference for themselves.

All meat sold at the shop is 100% Halaal certified, processed with the utmost care to meet strict Islamic requirements while maintaining Embiveni's high standards of quality and hygiene. Customers can shop with full confidence, knowing that every product is both authentic and trustworthy.

By opening the Halaal Shop, Embiveni is embracing diversity within Eswatini. Whether Muslim or non-Muslim, all Emaswati are welcome to enjoy the wide selection of fresh, premium Halaal meat, assured of its authenticity and nutritional value.

Phephisa Umndeni wakho ngenyama lepotjoliwe yasEmbiveni.

ESWATINI MEAT INDUSTRIES

A Shop That Respects Your Choice

100% Certified Halaal Products for Your Family's Peace of Mind.

1KG RUMP SUPER

E179⁴⁴

1KG STRIPLOIN SUPER

E174⁵⁹

1KG CHUCK SUPER

E117³⁶

1KG BRISKET WHOLE

E118⁹⁹

1KG FILLET SUPER

E296³⁶

1KG BEEF MINCE LEAN

E147³⁶

2KG BEEF SAUSAGE

E209⁹⁸

Visit Embiveni Halaal, in Matsapha Today!

Making Meal Times Special

Quality IN EVERY CUT

By Kwanele Dhladhla

THE Eswatini International Trade Fair (EITF) roared to life when His Majesty King Mswati III, accompanied by former South African President Jacob Zuma, visited the dazzling Eswatini Tourism Authority (ETA) stand. Their presence turned the already buzzing display into the heartbeat of the Trade Fair, breathing fresh energy into the nation's drive to position Eswatini as Africa's preferred investment and tourism destination.

Welcomed with warmth and pride by Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Mkhonta-Simelane, ETA Chief Executive Officer Vusi Dlamini, and the Board of Directors, His Majesty was briefed on how Eswatini's unique identity sets it apart in a competitive global tourism market.

"Our culture and heritage are not just traditions - they are the very soul of our nation," the Minister told His Majesty, underscoring how culture remains deeply woven into daily life.

Indeed, Eswatini offers more than just a holiday. Visitors are embraced by the overwhelming friendliness of its people, who ensure that every guest feels safe, welcome, and at home. Add to that the country's jaw-dropping scenery - from misty mountains and rolling valleys to lush forests and endless plains - and it's easy to see why Eswatini is increasingly being recognised as a gem in Africa's crown.

The ETA stand, a custom-built showcase of the Kingdom's treasures, was a hive of activity throughout the trade fair. Emakhosikati, Prime Minister (PM) Russell Dlamini, Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Thuli Dladla, Cabinet Ministers, tourists, and ordinary citizens all flocked to the stand, eager to share in the excitement of the royal visit. Laughter, song, and the colours of Eswatini's cultural identity filled the air, creating an atmosphere that was both festive and deeply inspiring.

Wildlife enthusiasts were reminded that Eswatini is home to the legendary Big Five, while thrill-seekers were drawn to the adventure activities on offer - from hiking and horse riding to white-water rafting.

Festival

Festival lovers were enticed by a calendar that blends ancient traditions with modern flair, from the world-renowned Umhlanga Reed Dance to the vibrant Bushfire Festival.

At the heart of the stand was ETA's bold showcase of the Top 10 Reasons to Visit Eswatini, dangling before both locals and international guests a tantalising promise: a warm and friendly nation, vibrant culture, unrivalled safety and peace, breathtaking landscapes, abundant wildlife, thrilling adventures, and world-class arts and crafts.

The presence of His Majesty and Jacob Zuma did more than turn heads — it lit a fire under Eswatini's tourism vision. Their visit reaffirmed ETA's message that Eswatini is not just a destination to be visited, but an experience to be lived, loved, and invested in.

With such royal endorsement and a stand that left visitors enchanted, the Eswatini Tourism Authority proved that the Kingdom is more than ready to take its place on the world stage- small in size, yet mighty in offering.



▲ The Eswatini Tourism Authority stand at the Eswatini International Trade Fair (EITF) was a hive of activity as it was honored by the visit of His Majesty King Mswati III, former President of the Republic of South Africa, Honorable Jacob Zuma, and other distinguished guests. The visit took place during His Majesty's tour of the 2025 Trade Fair stands at the EITF.

King, Jacob Zuma bring spotlight to Eswatini Tourism at Trade Fair



▲ Welcomed with warmth and pride by Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Mkhonta-Simelane, ETA Chief Executive Officer Vusi Dlamini, and the Board of Directors, His Majesty was briefed on how Eswatini's unique identity sets it apart in a competitive global tourism market.



▲ Inkhosikati LaMahlangu and Inkhosikati LaMashwama receiving gifts from the minister.



▲ Inkhosikati LaMashwama receiving a gift from the minister.



▲ From left; ETA Vusi Norman Dlamini, Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Mkhonta-Simelane, Board Chairperson Penelope Mkhwanazi and ETA Marketing Manager Wakhile Zwane.



▲ Singer Nomalungelo Dladla and the minister.



Poland downs Russian drones in first time a NATO member has fired during Ukraine war

POLAND shot down drones in its airspace on Wednesday with the backing of military aircraft from its NATO allies, the first time a member of the Western military alliance is known to have fired shots during Russia's war in Ukraine.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told parliament it was "the closest we have been to open conf

Moscow denied responsibility for the incident. European leaders, who have lately been trying to persuade U.S. President Donald Trump to join them in tightening sanctions on Russia and boosting support for Kyiv, said it justified a collective response. There was no immediate response from Washington.

Poland said 19 objects had entered its airspace during a large Russian air attack on Ukraine, and that it had shot down those that posed a threat. Tusk called the incident a "large-scale provocation" and said he had activated Article Four of NATO's treaty, under which alliance members can demand consultations with their allies.

A NATO spokesperson said NATO chief Mark Rutte was in touch with Polish leadership and the alliance was consulting closely with Poland.

A source said NATO was not treating the incident as an attack but as an intentional incursion. Polish F-16 fighter jets, Dutch F-35s, Italian AWACS surveillance planes and mid-air refueling aircraft jointly operated by NATO were involved in the overnight operation, according to the source.

Russia's top diplomat in Poland, cited by RIA state news agency, called the accusations of an incursion "groundless" and said Poland had not given any evidence that the



▲ A Polish police officer stands near a unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) fragment, after Russian drones violated Polish airspace during an attack on Ukraine and some were shot down by Poland, in Czesniki, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland.

drones shot down were of Russian origin.

Tusk said some of the drones had entered Polish airspace directly from Russia's ally Belarus, rather than from Ukrainian airspace.

During the incident, the Operational Command of the Polish Armed Forces urged residents to stay at home, with three eastern regions at particular risk.

"This is an act of aggression that posed a real threat to the safety of our citizens," it said.

Several Polish airports were temporarily closed, including one that has been used as the main access point for Western officials and supplies travelling to Ukraine over land.

Countries bordering on Ukraine have reported occasional Russian missiles or drones entering their airspace in the past during the war, but not on such a large scale, and they are not known to have shot them down. Two people were killed in Poland in 2022 by a Ukrainian air defence missile that went astray.

Reuters footage showed a blackened spot in a brown field in southeastern Poland where drones fell.

'INTENTIONAL'

Early indications suggested the entry of Russian drones into European airspace was intentional, not accidental, the EU's top dip-

lomat Kaja Kallas said on Wednesday.

"Russia's war is escalating, not ending. We must raise the cost on Moscow, strengthen support for Ukraine, and invest in Europe's defence," Kallas said. "The EU plays a major role and we will support initiatives like the Eastern Border Shield defence line," Kallas wrote in a post on X.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio had been briefed, CNN reporter Kaitlan Collins said on Tuesday. The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia used 415 drones and 40 missiles in attacks on Ukraine overnight, adding that at least eight Iranian-made shahed drones had been aimed towards Poland.

"An extremely dangerous precedent for Europe," he said. "A strong response is needed - and it can only be a joint response by all partners: Ukraine, Poland, all Europeans, the United States."

Russia has long said it has no intention of stoking a war with NATO, and that Western European countries suggesting it is a threat are trying to worsen relations.

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen called for more sanctions on Russia, and said the EU was preparing sanctions on 'shadow fleet' tankers that transport its oil and third countries that buy it.

Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky called for NATO to strengthen air defences on its frontline.

Most of Ukraine, including western regions of Volyn and Lviv which border Poland, had been under air raid alerts nearly all night, according to Ukraine's air force.

(Reuters)

Israel will kill Hamas leaders next time if they survived Qatar attack

IF Israel failed to kill Hamas leaders in an air strike on Qatar on Tuesday, it would succeed next time, the Israeli ambassador to the United States said after the operation, which raised concerns it would torpedo efforts to secure a ceasefire in Gaza.

"Right now, we may be subject to a little bit of criticism. They'll get over it. And Israel is being changed for the better," Yechiel Leiter told Fox News' "Special Report" programme late on Tuesday.

Israel attempted to kill the political leaders of Hamas with the attack in the Qatari capital Doha on Tuesday, escalating its military action in the Middle East in what the U.S. described as a unilateral attack that does not advance American and Israeli interests.

The airstrike took place shortly after Hamas claimed responsibility for a shooting on Monday that killed six people at a bus stop on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

The widely condemned Doha operation was especially sensitive because Qatar has been hosting and mediating in negotiations aimed at securing a ceasefire in the Gaza war.

"If we didn't get them this time, we'll get them the next time," Leiter said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has defied global condemnation of operations like the one that struck Doha, extending military operations across the Middle East and severely weakening Israel's Iran-backed enemies since Hamas attacked Israel in 2023.

On Wednesday, Israel struck the Yemeni capital Sanaa, after killing Houthi Prime Minister Ahmad Ghaleb al-Rahwi and other senior figures in an attack in late August.

Witnesses said the Wednesday attack tar-

geted the Houthi defence ministry, while Israeli Army Radio reported that Houthi headquarters and military camps were among the targets.

The Israeli military confirmed it had attacked Yemen in a statement.

The Houthis have attacked vessels in the Red Sea in what they describe as acts of solidarity with the Palestinians since the beginning of the war in Gaza.

LEADER'S SON KILLED IN STRIKE

Hamas said five of its members were killed in the Doha attack, including the son of its exiled Gaza chief and top negotiator Khalil al-Hayya. It said its top leaders survived.

The attack generated a flurry of diplomacy between Arab states.

United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan arrived in Qatar on Wednesday, UAE state news agency WAM reported.

Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein is also expected to visit Qatar on Wednesday, while Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is expected to arrive in Doha on Thursday, an official with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The visits were a show of regional solidarity with Qatar following the Israeli strikes, the official said.

The European Commission will propose sanctioning extremist Israeli ministers and the suspension of trade-related measures in a European Union agreement with Israel, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

The proposals reflect growing EU criticism of Israel's conduct of the war in Gaza and increased pressure on the bloc's executive body to take action.

Germany, one of Israel's staunchest sup-



▲ A damaged building, following an Israeli attack on Hamas leaders, according to an Israeli official, in Doha, Qatar.

porters, has taken note of those proposals targeting Israel and will participate in a dialogue about future measures, Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said on Wednesday.

The Doha airstrike followed an Israeli warning to Palestinians to leave Gaza City, an area once home to about a million people, as it tries to destroy what is left of Hamas.

Residents there expressed alarm the Doha strike might destroy chances for a ceasefire.

MISSILES HIT HIGH-RISE BUILDING

Families, some carrying their belongings on vehicles, donkey carts and rickshaws, continued to stream out of Gaza City along the coastal road in anticipation of a major

Israeli offensive.

"Does this mean there is no hope a ceasefire can be reached? I am afraid that now Israel would speed up its occupation of Gaza City," said Um Tamer, 65, a mother of five.

At least 30 people have been killed across the enclave on Wednesday, according to medics.

IMPACT ON CEASEFIRE TALKS UNCLEAR, US SAYS

Asked how the strike would affect ceasefire negotiations, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee told Reuters:

"The honest answer is, we simply don't know.

(Reuters)

Young Zesh to headline Ecembeni 4th Anniversary

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI music superstar Young Zesh is gearing up to captivate audiences beyond his home country with a major performance in Nkomazi, South Africa.

The acclaimed artist, best known for his hit single 'Liphasela,' will headline the much-anticipated Ecembeni 4th Anniversary event, scheduled for September 27, 2025, at Ecembeni Lifestyle. The event promises an exciting celebration of music, running from 4 pm until late into the night, with free entry for all attendees.

This milestone anniversary event is set to be a vibrant showcase of talent, featuring not only Young Zesh but also prominent South African artists Cbuda Q and Becca as co-headliners. The lineup is further enriched by a diverse array of supporting acts, including Tracksoul, Eskay, Mkay, K-Master, Sleg, Nibs, and Quan, ensuring a dynamic and eclectic musical experience that spans genres and styles.

In a recent interview, Young Zesh expressed his enthusiasm about leading the bill at this cross-border event. He highlighted the significance of international performances for his career and brand development. "International shows are very important for the Young Zesh brand. We always love tapping into the international markets, as it aligns with our ethos of having the music break into global markets," he explained. This statement underscores his ambition not only to entertain but also to expand the reach of



▲ Young Zesh.

Eswatini's vibrant music scene on the world stage.

Young Zesh is renowned for his energetic and authentic SiSwati performances, and he assured fans that this concert would be no exception.

He pledged to deliver a 100 per cent SiSwati set, showcasing the rich cultural heritage and musical traditions of his homeland. "As always, we will represent Eswatini music, on and off stage. We are

looking forward to the event. We will bring our A-game as always," he said confidently.

Fans and music lovers in Nkomazi and beyond can expect an unforgettable evening filled with powerful performances, vibrant rhythms, and a strong sense of community. With Young Zesh at the forefront, the event is poised to elevate the profile of Eswatini's music on an international platform, inspiring a new generation of artists and audiences alike.



▲ Zweli.

More star performers join Itallo Mountain View show

ACCLAIMED Afro-Jazz trumpeter Itallo, a multi-award winner, will deliver his mesmerising jazz performance at the Mountain View International Hotel on September 26, 2025.

He will be joined by a talented lineup of musicians including Zwile on saxophone, Musa Cage Dlamini on keyboards, Ndumiso Ndura Mamba on bass, Sihlanganiso Taribo Dube on drums, and Joseph Bwalya on guitar. This highly anticipated event, hosted by The Jazz Gallery, will commence at 7 pm. and tickets are available for E350. Itallo has garnered acclaim for his soulful trumpet playing, which masterfully weaves traditional African rhythms with contemporary jazz influences. His performances are not merely concerts; they are celebrations of life and culture, showcasing a profound connection to African musical traditions. With a rich discography and a reputation for electrifying live shows, Itallo has become a beloved figure in the jazz community.

Classic

Fans can look forward to an exciting twist at the upcoming event, as Itallo is set to unveil some new music alongside his classic hits. This blend of the old and the new promises to create a dynamic and engaging experience for attendees. In an exclusive interview, Nelisa Lawton, the director of Into Music Society and The Jazz Gallery, shared her enthusiasm for the event. "Our patrons have been asking for an Itallo show for quite some time, and we are happy to oblige," she stated. "This event is also an opportunity for Itallo to present some new music alongside old favourites. We also have new patrons who have never experienced an Itallo show."

Lawton emphasised the importance of this performance, noting that Itallo's music resonates deeply with audiences, making it a must-see event. "People should attend because Itallo never disappoints; a great time is guaranteed," she added, urging jazz enthusiasts and newcomers alike to join in the celebration.

The Jazz Gallery has a reputation for hosting exceptional musical events, and this concert is expected to be no different. With Itallo at the helm, the evening will be filled with rich melodies, intricate rhythms, and an atmosphere of joy and celebration. Attendees can expect a night where the boundaries of jazz are pushed, and the audience is invited to take part in a musical journey that transcends genres.

Uncle Waffles ready for US tour

ESWATINI-born global superstar Uncle Waffles is gearing up for an exciting performance in the United States, marking a significant milestone in her rapidly rising career.

The acclaimed artist, known for her infectious hits and captivating stage presence, will headline a show on September 14, 2025, at the Rooftop at Pier 17 in New York City. This announcement has generated considerable buzz among fans and music enthusiasts alike, as Uncle Waffles continues to expand her international footprint.

Taking to social media to share the news, Uncle Waffles expressed her excitement, stating, "NYC, tickets available. See you all on the 14th of September! I hope you all have been practising. So excited!" This reflects her eagerness to connect with her growing fanbase in the U.S., where the amapiano genre is steadily gaining popularity.

Uncle Waffles, whose real name is Lungelihle Zwane, has captivated audiences worldwide with her unique blend of Amapiano music, a genre that originated in South Africa and combines elements of house music with African rhythms. Her dynamic dance moves and engaging performances have further solidified her status as a must-see artist.

Originally from Eswatini and now based



▲ Uncle Waffles.

in South Africa, Uncle Waffles has rapidly ascended to become a household name in the music industry. Her debut single, "Tanzania," has been nothing short of phenomenal, soaring to the top of the charts in South Africa and earning a remarkable 7x platinum certification.

The song's infectious beat and catchy lyrics have resonated with listeners, establishing her as a formidable force in the amapiano scene. Billboard has even dubbed her the 'Princess of Amapiano,' a title that underscores her influence and appeal in the

genre.

The upcoming New York show is part of Uncle Waffles' broader efforts to reach international audiences and showcase the vibrant sounds of amapiano on a global stage. This performance is particularly significant as it represents a growing trend of African artists gaining recognition and acclaim in the U.S. music market. With the increasing popularity of genres like amapiano, Afrobeats, and Afropop, Uncle Waffles is poised to be at the forefront of this musical movement.

uMafikizolo brings Maskandi vibes to Limuva Arts Festival

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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TALENTED South African maskandi star uMafikizolo is set to headline the Limuva Arts Festival.

The Festival Director M Nation revealed in an exclusive interview that the 2025 edition will take place at the Mkhuzweni Technical Centre on October 25, marking a strategic shift aimed at engaging a broader audience, particularly from the northern part of the Hhohho region.

“We want to grow the festival and have everyone mostly on the Northern side of Hhohho since we are doing it at Mkhuzweni Technical Centre this year. We want the Hhohho people to know the festival and own it since we are doing it for them,” M Nation explained. This relocation underscores the festival’s commitment to inclusivity and regional cultural celebration, making it more accessible to communities that have previously been less involved.

This year’s Limuva Festival promises a vibrant lineup of cultural activities throughout the day, designed to offer something for everyone. Attendees can expect traditional dances, craft exhibitions, storytelling sessions, and interactive workshops that highlight the rich heritage of Eswatini’s northern communities. Adding to the excitement, there will be numerous prizes to be won, encouraging participation and fostering a lively, competitive spirit among festivalgoers.

“We are introducing a lot of cultural activities with a lot of prizes to be won, so it’s so different from the past one,” M Nation said, emphasising the festival’s evolution from previous editions. This approach aims to deepen community engagement and create a festive atmosphere that celebrates both tradition and creativity.

Safety remains a top priority for the organisers, who have put comprehensive measures in place to ensure a secure and enjoyable environment for all attendees.



▲ Limuva Arts Festival Director M Nation and South African maskandi sensation uMafikizolo. “There is going to be a lot of fun, and their safety will be our priority,” M Nation assured, highlighting the festival’s dedication to providing a worry-free experience.

Cool Drop to release soulful album ‘Emakhaya’

ESWATINI musician Cool Drop is preparing to release his much-anticipated new album titled Emakhaya.

This project marks a significant milestone in his artistic journey, reflecting deep personal growth and a rich tapestry of experiences that have shaped him both as an artist and an individual. The artist describes Emakhaya, whose release date is still in wraps, as more than just a compilation of tracks; it is a cohesive narrative that explores a wide range of emotions. From moments of struggle and perseverance to times of hope and celebration, the album captures the complexity of life’s journey. Cool Drop emphasises that the album is designed to resonate with listeners from diverse backgrounds, especially those in Eswatini who share common challenges and triumphs.

Musically, Emakhaya is a fusion of genres, blending house, Afro-soul, hip hop, and traditional African elements. This eclectic mix not only showcases Cool Drop’s versatility but also anchors the album firmly in African identity. He explains that while experimenting with different sounds,

maintaining authenticity was paramount. “I aimed to showcase versatility but also remain authentic to who I am as Cool Drop,” he stated.

The album’s title, Emakhaya, which translates to “at home,” encapsulates the emotional core of the project. The songs reflect the feelings of a man who has spent considerable time away from his homeland.

Appreciation

Cool Drop shares how being distant from home has heightened his appreciation for simple yet profound moments, laughing with parents, the love of a partner, and the warmth of family and community. These themes permeate the album, inviting listeners into an intimate space of reflection and connection.

The creative process behind Emakhaya was deeply emotional and introspective. For Cool Drop, writing the album involved more than crafting melodies and lyrics; it required delving into personal memories and emotions tied to his experiences of separation and longing. This vulnerability is woven throughout the music, allowing audiences to engage in the artist’s story on a heartfelt level.



▲ Cool Drop.



‘Ngiyahamba’ gains over 3 million views

LADYSpshesh’s latest hit song “Ngiyahamba” has become an instant sensation, amassing over 3 million views on YouTube in eight months since its release.

The Amapiano track, which blends rhythm, emotion, and powerful messages, is quickly making waves in the music scene, and fans are already calling it a game-changer for the artist. In an exclusive interview with Lady Spshesh, the rising star shared the inspiration behind the song, as well as the journey she took to bring it to life. “Ngiyahamba” reflects real-life situations, filled with raw emotion and a message of resilience and hope.

When asked about the inspiration for “Ngiyahamba”, Lady Spshesh revealed that the song is deeply personal, born from her own experiences and those she’s observed around her. “The song is inspired by real-life situations that many people can relate to,” she explained. “It reflects on love, struggle, celebration, and aims to connect with listeners on an emotional level.”

Resilience

She continued by describing how “Ngiyahamba” speaks to the human experience, the highs and lows that come with life. “The message behind the song is resilience, love, unity, and fun. It’s a reminder that no matter the challenges we face, there’s always hope and a reason to push forward. I want the listeners to feel inspired and motivated whenever they hear it,” she added. The creative process behind “Ngiyahamba” was one filled with collaboration, passion, and hard work. Lady Spshesh revealed that she worked closely with producer Amjay to bring the track to life. Together, they created a sound that is both fresh and unique, capturing the essence of amapiano while adding their own signature touches.

“It was an amazing creative process,” she shared. “I worked closely with Amjay, and together, we brought the concept to life. It’s an amapiano track with a unique sound that blends the traditional elements of the genre with something new and exciting. From writing to recording, it was a journey filled with creativity and passion.”

With the overwhelming success of “Ngiyahamba”, Lady Spshesh is grateful for the outpouring of support from her fans and encourages everyone to continue streaming and sharing the song. “Your support means the world to me,” she said. “Every stream helps share this beautiful message with more people, and I’m so grateful for the love I’ve received.” Lady Spshesh emphasised the importance of creating a movement around the song. “Let’s make it a movement, download, share, and enjoy. Every listener has the power to help spread the message of resilience, love, and unity,” she added.

DJ Miss Pru addresses ‘fallen off’ comments and shares her vision

SOUTH African DJ and record producer Miss Pru, whose real name is Prudence Sebalo, has responded to comments suggesting that she has “fallen off”.

Writing on Facebook, she addressed the criticism directly and explained her journey as an independent artist. “To those who keep saying I ‘fell off,’ I see the comments, I’ve even glanced at some of your profiles and lol, but I’m not going to feed into negativity,” she wrote.

“Truth is, every artist goes through phases. For some, it’s growth, for others it’s struggle, and for me, it’s been about figuring out how to move in this new space, especially as an indie.”

She admitted that there are moments when she loses her spark, but returning to her mixes always brings her back to her purpose.

“Whenever I dive back into doing my mixes, it reminds me why I started in the first place. That’s my foundation, and it keeps me grounded,” she said.

Pru also expressed gratitude to her supporters. “To those who continue to ride with me through all my ups and downs: . Even though I’ve been more intentional about stepping back from social media, I still see your love, and it means everything.”

She revealed that fans have been asking whether she will release another hip hop track. While she has shifted focus, she did not rule it out completely.

“Honestly, part of me resisted because of the path I’m on now, but if the right record comes along, I’ll drop one last one. That’ll be in 2026.

“Until then, I need the space to re-



▲ South African DJ and record producer Miss Pru.

build, refocus and give you the part of me that’s most true right now: the mixes #GrooveRoster. That’s my little crash-out moment. Ok bye,” she concluded.

Pru is best known for hit songs such as “Ameni”, “Price to Pay”, “Phumelela” and “Ugesi”. Her contribution to South African music, particularly hip hop and house, has made her a recognised figure in the industry.

Over the years, she has received awards and nominations that reflect her influence as both a DJ and producer.

In 2020, she reflected on her 11 years in the industry, describing them as a period of growth and constant learning.

“The past 11 years have been a

learning curve. In the first couple of years, I learned how to improve my DJing skills. Then, I was mentored by someone, and fortunately, I got to meet many people in the industry.”

“Every two years or so, I get to learn something from different people who would help me get to where I am right now.”

Beyond music, Pru has invested her energy into business. This year, she marked the second anniversary of her beauty spa, Sedi Beauty Wellness.

The spa, which turned two years old, has become another outlet through which she connects with people outside of the recording booth and performance stage.

(Reuters)

Miguel announces the birth of his first child in a heartfelt birthday celebration

IN a delightful revelation that has taken fans by surprise, 39-year-old singer Miguel has confirmed that he became a father last year. The multi-talented artist and his partner, Margaret Zhang, welcomed their first child in September 2023. Miguel shared this joyous news through a heartfelt video on social media, marking their little one’s milestone first birthday.

On Instagram, Miguel posted a video celebrating the occasion where he can be seen lovingly interacting with his child, whose face was respectfully blurred out for privacy.

“Our baby turned 1 today !!!! HAPPY BIRTHDAY ANGELITO !!!” the musician wrote, accompanied by three heart emojis. “We love you so much! So proud and honored that you chose us to be your parents.”

He added a personal touch by revealing that he had written a song for the child, hoping it would always remind them of their abundant love.

In the video, the “Adorn” singer radiates joy as he encour-

ages his little one to mimic his gestures, fostering a sweet and playful connection that showcases the bond between father and child. The candid moment of Miguel encouraging the toddler to clap, all while wearing a beaming smile, has charmed fans across the globe.

Margaret Zhang, 32, a renowned Australian and Chinese filmmaker and former editor-in-chief of Vogue China, also shared the video on her Instagram Story.

Miguel, who is gearing up for the release of his fifth studio album, “CAOS”, scheduled for October 23, also shared the song dedicated to his child on his creative incubator platform, Schedule One Concepts (S1C).

This initiative is aimed at uplifting diverse talents within the Black, Brown, and Latin diaspora, showcasing Miguel’s commitment not only to his artistry but also to fostering creativity in the community.

This happy announcement comes nearly three years after Miguel’s childhood sweetheart (Reuters)



▲ Miguel.

Prince Kaybee questions God after mom’s death: ‘She’s faithful but suffered’

DJ and producer Prince Kaybee recently lost his mother, who had been battling an unknown illness for some years.

Prince Kaybee, real name Kabelo Motsamai, has opened up about her suffering and questioned God’s existence in this time.

The 36-year-old Free State-born musician announced his mother’s passing, stating he was with her when she took her last breath.

“Holding you as you sat on the chair that you died on, feeling your neck get stiffer as I kept on begging you not to leave me,” he penned on social media.

“I cannot define how torn apart I am, broken into pieces that will never be one. Thank you for everything, Oulady.”

Moment of introspection

Through the grieving process, the Bano-moya hitmaker has had many revelations and moments to introspect.

“I just wanna discuss God, if he exists,” he said.

“My mother was one of the most faithful people I know, kept the loyalty and faith in her God,” he said.

“She prayed on average twice a day, sometimes overnight. I used to listen to her cry in prayer throughout the night. Because my room was right next to hers,” he said.



▲ DJ and producer Prince Kaybee recently lost his mother.

“But oh boy, she suffered. I saw in her eyes how excruciating the pain was; she walked. And I could hear her breathe through the

pain in the most difficult gasps through her mouth. She went through financial exhaustion.”

He said that through this, people who love her like him also suffered looking at her go through all that.

Wants answers from God

“What kind of a sick God allows all this to happen if he is all-powerful and all-knowing? What kind of sick plan is at play here?”

After renovating her house in 2018, he gifted her a Mercedes-Benz for Christmas.

He said that although his mom didn’t understand the music business, she eventually supported him.

“She would say, ‘Go be a policeman, soldier, or taxi driver. Your time is running out, and your son is growing,’” he said.

“I have lost the oldest person who loved me through all my flaws. The only person in this world I can share anything with without being judged.”

“But guess what? She is dead, and for some reason, there’s a God that is all-powerful and capable of everything and anything that is orchestrating all this as part of his plan,” he added.

“If she had to die, let her die. But not like this, not to a point she can’t speak or hold her own hand up.”

(IOL)



ULTRA-processed foods can increase the risk of multiple chronic health conditions, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

A new study found that a diet heavy in ultra-processed foods can harm male reproductive health and reduce sperm quality.

The researchers say that ultra-processed foods may contain molecules found in plastics that are known to disrupt hormonal systems in the body.

A new study reports that ultra-processed foods may be linked to a decline in male reproductive health, including sperm quality. The research, published on August 28 in *Cell Metabolism*, states that regular consumption of ultra-processed foods has several effects on a person's health.

These include higher cholesterol levels and increased body weight. They noted that participants in their study gained more than a kilogram of weight when they ate ultra-processed foods. The amount of fat mass in their bodies also increased.

The researchers added that "sperm quality trended toward impairment" when participants were on an ultra-processed diet. The researchers pointed out that these health effects occurred even when a person on an ultra-processed diet consumed the same number of calories as a person on another type of diet. "This study provides evidence that consumption of ultra-processed food is detrimental for cardiometabolic and reproductive outcomes, regardless of excessive caloric intake," the study authors wrote.

Philip Werthman, MD, a urologist and director of the Center for Male Reproductive Medicine and Vasectomy Reversal in Los Angeles, says the study is proof that what you eat can be more important than how much you eat. "It's not the calories you're getting. It's the type of calories you're getting," Werthman told Healthline.

Effects of an ultra-processed diet on sperm quality

For their study, researchers recruited 43 males ages 20–35. Each participant spent three weeks on both a diet primarily of ultra-processed foods and a diet of unprocessed foods, with a 3-month "washing out" period between the two diets. Half of the participants started on the unprocessed diet while the other half began with the ultra-processed diet. Half of the men from each group were also put on a diet that included 500 extra calories per day. Researchers noted that subjects on the ultra-processed diet experienced an increase in the phthalate cMINP, a substance found in plastics that can disrupt hormones. Those on the ultra-processed diet also saw decreases in their testosterone levels and follicle-stimulating hormones, which are crucial for sperm production.

The researchers said some of the endocrine-disrupting substances may come from the plastic packaging used for ultra-processed foods. They note that the introduction of ultra-processed foods in the 1970s seems to fall in line with a 60% decline worldwide in sperm count.

Kristin Kirkpatrick, president of KAK Consulting and a dietitian at Cleveland Clinic's Department of Wellness & Preventive Medicine, said the research sends a clear message.

"The study found that endocrine disrupters and other components altered hormone levels in men, even if the men

were healthy," she told Healthline. "This means, even if you're healthy based on other parameters, yet consume a diet higher in ultra-processed foods, you still are at risk for increases in chronic conditions." Werthman added that a man's general health can also affect their reproductive system. For example, a person who has gained weight, developed type 2 diabetes, or experienced a rise in cholesterol levels may see a decline in reproductive health measures such as sperm quality. "The reproductive system is a function of your overall health," Werthman explained. "The reproductive system is quite sensitive." Michael Eisenberg, MD, a professor of urology at Stanford University, had one caution about the study's conclusions.

"While none reached statistical significance, there does appear to be a decline in semen quality when examining the summative data," he told Healthline. "However, it's important to note that the intervention was for three weeks, and a cycle of sperm production typically takes between two to three months."

Health impacts of ultra-processed foods

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports Trusted Source that ultra-processed foods account for an average of 55% of total calories consumed by people in the United States.

It notes that people under 19 years of age

tend to eat slightly more ultra-processed foods than adults 19 years and older. The agency states there is little difference in ultra-processed food consumption between men and women.

The CDC says ultra-processed foods tend to be "hyperpalatable, energy-dense, low in dietary fiber, and contain little or no whole foods, while having high amounts of salt, sweeteners, and unhealthy fats."

It states that sandwiches (including burgers), sweet bakery products, sweetened beverages, and savory snacks are among the top sources of calories from ultra-processed foods. A July 2025 study reported that ultra-processed foods are a major contributing factor to obesity as well as increasing a person's for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and sleep apnea.

An April 2025 study estimated that ultra-processed foods were linked to 124,000 preventable deaths in the United States during a two-year period.

A May 2024 study revealed that ultra-processed foods may also increase the risk of stroke and cognitive decline. Kirkpatrick said there are a number of reasons for these impacts, including what a person is not eating. "Consuming ultra-processed foods means that other foods, which are found to help in the prevention of heart disease (like fresh fruit and vegetables, healthy fats, and fiber) are not being consumed," she said.

"Further, excess sugar and sodium consumption has been found in multiple studies to pose a significant risk to heart

health. Sugar and sodium are common ingredients in ultra-processed foods."

Werthman said the pattern is clear. "This study is another confirmation that the food industry has been poisoning us for the past 20 to 30 years," he noted. "We see the effects of that now."

Tips to improve male reproductive health

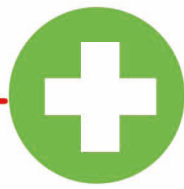
Experts say there are lifestyle habits that can help improve and maintain male reproductive health. "In general, good diet (whole grains, fruits, vegetables), exercise, and maintaining a good body weight will help overall and reproductive health," said Eisenberg. Werthman says a healthy diet is "a big component" of that equation, but noted that men, especially those in the process of trying to have children, should exercise regularly as well as avoid alcohol and tobacco. Kirkpatrick agreed.

"Eating a diet high in nutrient density, such as the Mediterranean diet, as well as regular exercise, adequate sleep, stress management, maintaining a healthy weight, and abstaining from tobacco and alcohol, may all play a role in better reproductive health," she said.

Werthman noted that heat sources such as saunas and hot tubs can temporarily impact sperm quality and quantity.

"All these things affect the reproductive system," he said. "The body is an integrated system." **Healthline**





NEW research suggests that people who use their phone while sitting on the toilet are 46% more likely to develop hemorrhoids.

The findings indicate that scrolling for longer periods of time on the toilet increases rectal vein pressure.

Experts say constipation, straining, and prolonged sitting are contributing factors for hemorrhoids.

Simple lifestyle changes, like more fiber, hydration, movement, and less scrolling, can help reduce the risk.

Scrolling on your phone while sitting on the toilet may come with an uncomfortable side effect: a higher risk of hemorrhoids.

A new study published on September 3 in PLOS One Trusted Source looked at the toilet habits of 125 adults undergoing colonoscopies at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston.

Nearly two-thirds admitted to scrolling while on the toilet, and those who did were found to be 46% more likely to develop hemorrhoids compared to those who didn't.

Researchers found that phone users tended to linger on the toilet significantly longer, often five minutes or more per visit.

Toilet phone users also reported getting less physical activity overall, suggesting that both toilet and lifestyle habits may increase hemorrhoid risk.

Toilet phone use and hemorrhoids

Michael J. Allen, MD, a family medicine and primary care physician at Houston Methodist Clear Lake, explained that sitting on the toilet for extended periods can put rectal veins under pressure. Allen wasn't involved in the study.

"Blood tends to pool, and that swelling makes hemorrhoids more likely," he told Healthline. "Think of it like kinking a garden hose; the longer you do it, the more backpressure builds up."

The combination of sitting for prolonged periods of time and the leaning forward position that's become synonymous with phone use could lead to straining and swelling.

"This position causes continuous pressure on the delicate veins, resulting in swelling and increasing the chances of hemorrhoids developing," Snieguole Geige, medical doctor at It's Me & You Clinic, told Healthline. Geige was likewise not involved in the study.

"It can't be compared to sitting on a chair where the pelvis has some support," she said. "As the pressure persists minute after minute, often without you even realizing it, these vascular cushions become engorged and stretched."

The main contributing factors to hemorrhoids are anything that increases pressure in the lower rectum.

"The big ones are constipation, straining, sitting too long (whether on the toilet or at a desk), pregnancy, chronic diarrhea, and low fiber diets," Allen said. "All of these make the veins swell and bulge, and that's what creates hemorrhoids."

Hemorrhoid symptoms to watch out for

While habits like scrolling can make hemorrhoids more likely, it's important to recognize the signs early so you know when self-care is enough versus when it's time to seek medical advice.



Phone scrolling in toilet raises risk of Hemorrhoids

"Most people notice itching, some discomfort, or swelling around the anus, and at times some blood after a bowel movement," said Geige. "Some patients also develop a sore lump that can easily be felt."

For most people, hemorrhoids are simply an uncomfortable ailment that can cause embarrassment. However, there are serious symptoms that can be cause for concern.

Allen said you should see your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- ▶ persistent or heavy bleeding
- ▶ pain isn't improving with over-the-counter measures
- ▶ symptoms last longer than a week
- ▶ dark, black, or tarry stools

How to reduce your risk of hemorrhoids

Leaving your phone out of the bathroom is an obvious choice to reduce your risk of hemorrhoids. If your phone must accompany you to the toilet, there are a few things you can do.

Geige recommended placing a small footstool under your feet. "This brings your knees up slightly, putting your body in a

better position to go without straining," she explained.

One of the best things you can do outside of the bathroom is eat foods that limit your risk of constipation.

Allen noted that a high fiber diet is often key. "A high fiber diet softens stool and makes it easier to pass, reducing straining, while low fiber, processed foods can make constipation worse," he said.

"Increase your intake of dietary fiber," he continued. "[Aim for] around 25-30 grams daily from fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains is a good target."

Hydration is also helpful. "Without enough fluid, fiber can 'dry things out' down there instead of helping," Geige said.

"I try to drink water regularly throughout the day, and I suggest patients anchor it to meals. Simply drinking a glass with breakfast, lunch, and dinner can make a real change over time," she added.

Finally, both experts agreed that exercise can help promote regularity and reduce the risk of constipation. Even light walking counts. "If you are lifting heavy things, make sure you bend at your knees and keep your back straight. Otherwise, you're putting

pressure right where you don't need it," Geige said.

What are the treatment options for hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids can be easily treated in most cases.

"Mild cases often improve with over-the-counter creams or suppositories," Allen explained. "Sitz baths can also be helpful, while cold compresses can ease swelling."

To dull the pain, he recommended oral pain relievers like ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

While most mild cases can be managed at home, medical procedures may be necessary if symptoms are severe or recurrent, bleeding is significant, and conservative treatment has failed. "Procedures can include rubber band ligation, sclerotherapy, or surgical removal. However, it's important to remember surgery is rare and reserved for stubborn cases," Allen said. While hemorrhoids are very common, you can reduce your risk with small lifestyle tweaks. The bottom line? Eat more fiber, drink more water, and spend less time on your phone while on the toilet.

Healthline

News In Pictures



▲ A person runs with a flag as they take part in “cacerolazo”, a protest by Free DC that calls upon residents to bang pots and pans and make noise for five minutes at 8pm every night to protest the deployment of the National Guard and increased presence of federal law enforcement in Washington.



▲ Displaced Palestinians transport their belongings in a vehicle as they flee amid an Israeli military operation, following an Israeli evacuation order, in Gaza City.



▲ A masked protester holds a red flare during a demonstration at the Place de la Republique during a day of protests in Paris as part of a grassroots protest movement called “Bloquons Tout” (“Let’s Block Everything”) calling for nationwide all-day disruptions, in France.



▲ A member of the Polish Army inspects a damaged house, after Russian drones violated Polish airspace during an attack on Ukraine and some were shot down by Poland, in Wryki, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland.



▲ People react in front of a new mural by anonymous artist Banksy on the Royal Courts of Justice in London, Britain.

Veteran Vardy ready to silence doubters in Cremonese adventure

JAMIE Vardy is determined to prove he's not at Cremonese for a retirement party as the former Premier League winner prepares to start a new adventure at the newly-promoted Serie A club.

At 38 years old Vardy is one of a clutch of veteran stars to move to Italy this summer, alongside Napoli's Kevin De Bruyne and Luka Modric, who plays for AC Milan and turned 40 on Tuesday.

Vardy has arrived at a team surprisingly level on a perfect six points at the top of Serie A with reigning champions Napoli but one likely to be fighting against relegation come the season's end, even with the backing of local billionaire steel magnate Giovanni Arvedi.

And Vardy said on Wednesday he wants to bring to Cremonese the same desire and commitment that he had in 13 years at Leicester City, where he arrived from non-league Fleetwood Town in his mid-20s and in 2016 was an integral part of one of the most romantic stories in recent football history.

"Throughout my career I've been doubted. Always have, probably always will. What I've always managed to do is turn that around and prove them all wrong," Vardy told reporters in the ornate surroundings of Cremona's violin museum.

"Speaking with the manager (Davide Nicola), there was a lot of doubt in Italy



▲ Jamie Vardy.

about Cremonese being able to stay in the league. With how the manager is and the passion he's got and his work ethic, that's not what he wants.

"With how the lads have started, it's been unbelievable. We know it's a long season but that's the road he's wanting to go down. It's wanting to be the underdogs that are over-

achieving."

Vardy added: "Being able to be a part of that and prove people wrong and fight for this badge, that was definitely one of the reasons (for the move)."

The ex-England forward joined Cremonese last week on a one-year deal with an option for another season should they man-

age to stay in the top flight, and he was open about his intention to have a new experience in a football culture he admires.

'FOOTBALL ITS OWN LANGUAGE'

He told the largely Italian press pack of how as a child he would watch Serie A matches on British terrestrial television, citing Alessandro Del Piero as a particular inspiration.

"The one thing that's always constant is football is its own language. You can always talk through football," said Vardy.

"So being able to train with the lads and being able to feel welcome has been a great start and definitely a great first week."

Vardy most famously won the Premier League under Claudio Ranieri but it was another Italian former Leicester manager in Enzo Maresca who convinced him to move to Cremonese.

"There's only one of those I've been speaking to for the entire summer, we still keep in touch as much as possible, which is Enzo," he said.

"I managed to have a really good chat with him once we knew it was going to be a possibility, and he did nothing but sing the praises of the club itself and the surrounding areas, Cremona as a city, everything.

"It was his advice for me to come here and that was it. I managed to sit down with my family and talk about it, it was the only one place I was going to go."

(Reuters)

Scheffler has dual goal in first US PGA Tour start in Napa

WORLD No 1 Scottie Scheffler is eyeing his sixth title of the season as he tees it up in the US PGA Tour Procore Championship with the Ryder Cup on his mind.

Scheffler is among 10 US Ryder Cup players entered this week in Napa, California, where the field for the Fall event more usually features golfers jockeying to improve or secure their Tour status for the following year.

US Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley is using the week to build team chemistry ahead of the biennial match play showdown with Europe later this month.

It's what drew Scheffler to the event for the first time, but now that he's here the top-ranked American says that amid the Ryder Cup buzz this week's title is his immediate priority.

"I'm present. I'm ready to play this week. I didn't show up to Napa to talk about the Ryder Cup for four days," Scheffler said. "I'm here to play a golf tournament."

That said, Scheffler acknowledged that he's always preparing and practicing with big events – like major championships and the Ryder Cup – in the back of his mind.

His five titles this season include two majors, at the PGA Championship and the Open Championship.

With a victory this week he could add a first title in California to his resume.

While that's at the forefront, Scheffler acknowledged that in targeting this particular tournament early in the year it was with an eye to staying competition-sharp with the Ryder Cup coming.

Two years ago, only two US Ryder Cup team members played in Napa, and a couple of weeks later the Americans got off to



▲ World No 1 Scottie Scheffler.

a slow start on the way to a loss to Europe in Rome.

"Basically, the conclusion that we came to was it would be nice to have some competition going into the Ryder Cup," Scheffler said.

"And it would be unusual for me to have four or five weeks off before the Masters or the US Open or something like that, so there's no reason that I should be doing that going into the Ryder Cup.

"I'm always focused on my preparation, that's most important to me. So in order to stay sharp – you can practice and do all you can at home, but there's something different about playing competition, getting ready for a tournament and I think this will be good prep."

(Reuters)



Ex-France goalkeeper Mandanda calls time on club career

FORMER France international goalkeeper Steve Mandanda, a World Cup winner in 2018, announced his retirement on Wednesday.

The 40-year-old former Crystal Palace and Marseille player's contract with Ligue 1 club Rennes expired last July.

"I needed to take my time to accept it, because it's not easy, but yes, I'm stopping," Mandanda, who was capped 35 times, told French sports daily L'Equipe.

"I had a long period of reflection because I had a lot of calls but I said no every time."

Born in Kinshasa, Mandanda moved to France as a child, living with his family in Normandy, before starting his footballing career in Ligue 2 with Le Havre.

His breakthrough came in his first season with Marseille in 2007-2008.

He went on to spend 14 seasons in total with the southern French side winning six

trophies including Ligue 1 in 2010 under Didier Deschamps who would go on to take over as France coach.

After earning his first French cap in May 2008 under Raymond Domenech, Mandanda established himself as a starter before losing out in 2009 to Hugo Lloris.

In 2016 he moved to England to play for Crystal Palace but failed to make an impact returning the following year to Marseille, where he played for five seasons before moving to Rennes.

He remained Lloris' backup for many years, participating under Deschamps in the Euro 2016 final on home soil and the 2022 World Cup final in Qatar, and was notably in the squad for the second world title won in 2018 in Russia.

He announced the end of his international career in January 2023.

(Reuters)

West Ham re-sign free agent Fabianski on one-year deal

POLISH goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski has rejoined West Ham United on a one-year contract after the 40-year-old left the London side as a free agent in the close season, the Premier League club said on Wednesday.

Fabianski, who made 216 appearances in a seven-year spell with West Ham, was one of many senior players who were released by the club when their contracts expired at the end of the 2024-25 campaign.

However, West Ham decided to offer a one-year deal when they had only two senior goalkeepers in the squad – Mads Hermansen and Alphonse Areola – after Wes Foderingham joined Cyprus side Aris Limasol on a permanent deal on Tuesday.

“Regardless of him being here previously, the main factor is that he is still a top goalkeeper and a top professional, and the perfect choice for the role we needed to fill,” West Ham coach Graham Potter said in a statement.

“It’s a signing that makes perfect sense for everyone. Lukasz knows the club extremely well, is very well respected and popular among everyone here. His personality and character will be a great example, es-



▲ Polish goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski.

pecially to our younger players.

“He is someone who really cares about West Ham United and wants

to help us in any way he can. We are

very happy to have him back with us.” (Supersport)

England must use win over Serbia as a template for World Cup, says Kane

ENGLAND captain Harry Kane said their 5-0 demolition of Serbia on Tuesday in World Cup qualifying should be the template for how they want to play following criticism of their start to coach Thomas Tuchel’s tenure.

England had won all four of their Group K qualifiers coming into the match in Belgrade but Tuchel’s tactics and team selections came in for scrutiny following laboured wins over Andorra, Albania and Latvia.

Tuchel’s side were much more impressive on Tuesday, however, with Kane, Noni Madueke, Ezri Konsa, Marcus Rashford and Marc Guehi all getting on the scoresheet.

“There’s been a lot of noise around the outside, but we’ve been happy with what we’ve been doing,” Kane told broadcaster ITV.

“It’s not always been easy against opposition who are sitting in a block of 11 when we have to break them down and be patient.

“We knew tonight would be a really big test against better opposition and better players, we said we wanted to show what we can do especially without the ball with the high pressure and make it difficult for them.”

England are now within touching distance of qualifying for next year’s World Cup finals in North America and Kane said they must use the win over the Serbs as a template.

“This is the time when the competition starts, the formation and the way we play and the style is going to be set in stone,” he added.



▲ England captain Harry Kane.

“Of course, there might be a few games where we have to change a little bit depending on opposition, but we want to play our way – we want to be on the front foot and win the ball back quick and when we lose the ball, recover well...

“You could say today was the perfect template and we’re going to have difficult games from now until the World Cup but we’ll use this as a starting point and the standard’s been really high.”

(Supersport)

Hewitt handed suspension for pushing anti-doping official at Davis Cup

AUSTRALIAN Davis Cup captain Lleyton Hewitt was handed a two-week suspension and a fine of A\$30 000 (\$19 803) after being found guilty of pushing a doping control official, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said on Wednesday. Hewitt was charged in January for engaging in offensive conduct towards a doping control official after he pushed a 60-year-old volunteer anti-doping chaperone following their semifinal loss to Italy last November.

Hewitt denied the charge and cited self-defence, but an independent tribunal upheld the charge, saying the Australian’s behaviour was “not reasonable and proportionate” and that his actions did not meet the requirements of self-defence.

“Anti-doping personnel play a fundamental role behind the scenes in upholding the inte-

grity of tennis, and they should be able to go about their roles without fear of physical contact,” ITIA CEO Karen Moorhouse said in a statement.

“In this case, that line was clearly crossed, and we had no other option but to take action.”

Hewitt’s suspension, which will be effective from 24 September until 7 October, will prevent him from taking part in all tennis-related activities – including coaching, mentoring, playing, captaincy and other associated roles.

Australia host Belgium in the second round of qualifiers in Sydney from 13-14 September and the tribunal’s chair Michael Heron said they did not want to be “unduly punitive” on Hewitt by impacting his Davis Cup schedule.

Hewitt, a former Wimbledon and US Open champion, may also appeal the decision, with the ITIA saying no appeal has been lodged yet. (Supersport)



▲ Australian Davis Cup captain Lleyton Hewitt.

De Minaur says Australia ready to snap Davis Cup title drought

ALEX de Minaur says his ultimate tennis goal is to win the Davis Cup, with the world No 8 confident Australia have the goods to secure their first title since 2003.

Australia have lifted the trophy 28 times, second only to the United States, but going the distance has long proved elusive.

They lost in the semifinals last year to Jannik Sinner’s Italy, having been runners-up in the two editions before that to Italy and Canada respectively.

Australia, captained once again by Lleyton Hewitt, host Belgium this weekend in a second-round qualifier at Sydney’s Ken Rosewall Arena.

“These weeks are the funnest in my schedule, that’s for sure, because it’s a very lonely sport throughout the year,” said De Minaur, who lost in the US Open quarterfinals last week. “For me, the ultimate goal is

to lift the title. That’s been a priority of mine for my whole career. That’s why I prioritise these weeks, no matter when it was in the schedule.”

With seven singles players and seven doubles players ranked inside the ATP top 100, Australia have the firepower to contend for a 29th crown and De Minaur believes they are well-equipped to challenge once again.

“We know we’ve got all the ingredients,” he said. “We’ve shown all that we’re capable of.

“A couple of years ago, we were all probably not as good versions of ourselves than we are right now. Over the years, we’ve kept on improving, putting ourselves in good positions, and we gel really well together.

“I think we show the passion, and when it comes to Davis Cup, we always step up.”

De Minaur will be partnered in singles by 40th-ranked Alexei Popyrin, (Supersport)

By Chris Dlamini

IT is derby time once again in the Sphana Investments E45 000 Manzini/Matsapha Zonal Pool League.

As the second round resumes next Saturday, the highlight of the fixtures is the match between home buddies, Manzini Pool Club (MPC) and Manzini Masters. These are two teams under one roof at MPC and they are all experienced.

The odds favour the star-studded and younger MPC who are at the summit of the standings.

MPC will be the home team in this second round fixture at 4pm. This is interestingly the third meeting between these clubs this season. MPC just humbled Masters 13-4 in the inaugural Sphana Investments E10 000 Pool Teams Knockout.

They also clashed in the league first round, with MPC winning the well-contested tie. Masters will be looking to avenge their humiliating knockout defeat while aiming to break into the top four in the final round.

The game will be preceded by yet another big one between third-placed Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) Pool Team and fourth-

placed Ludzeludze Lions at noon (12pm) before second-placed Give Thanks and fifth-placed Ludzeludze Tigers face off at 2pm.

In other fixtures, ERS B will be home to Zakhele Potters in Matsapha Police Academy at 2pm ahead of Green Archers and ERS A at 4pm on Saturday, September 13.

Sphana Investments E45 000 Manzini/Matsapha Zonal Pool League fixtures:

Saturday, September 13, 2025

Matsapha Police Academy:

ERS B vs. Zakhele Potters 2pm

Green Archers vs. ERS A 4pm

Manzini Pool Club:

REPS vs. Ludzeludze Lions 12pm

Ludzeludze Tigers vs. Give Thanks 2pm

MPC vs. Manzini Masters 4pm

MPC, Masters in revenge derby clash



▲ Manzini Masters during a local tournament.



▲ Manzini Pool Club.



▲ Queens star Ncobile Dlamini cuing during the Mlu and Lee Investment knockout tournament.

E1 000 registration fee for MRPA teams

THERE is a new sponsor in town, and it is not Dixie's International.

The MRPA has secured a new league sponsor in Mlu & Lee Investment, replacing Dixie's International after five years as their sponsor. MRPA stands for Manzini Regional Pool Association.

Ahead of the league kick-off at a date yet to be announced, registration of clubs and players is already ongoing.

"Each team pays E1 000 registration fee to be able to play in our new league which also has a few new teams," affirmed MRPA Secretary Musa Dlamini.

Among the new teams is Mlandvo Pool Team. The MRPA debutants have already announced their arrival with a big statement when they won the inaugural Mlu & Lee Investment Teams Knockout on September 7, just over the past weekend.

Dlamini said they were pleased to finally make progress after their five-year E40

000 Dixie's International sponsorship unceremoniously left them without prizes for the knockout. The league was midway through when Dixie's International vanished as a sponsor.

He encouraged the old and new members to register and get ready for the league, with more details to follow in due course.

The MRPA member teams expected in the league are listed in this article.

MRPA League teams:

1. Way Inn Pool Team
2. Bhunya Pool Club
3. Ntondozi Pool Team
4. Malkerns Pool Team
5. Figareido Pool Team
6. Mlandvo Pool Team
7. Dvudvusini Pool Team
8. Blackball Queens

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You have read the rest, now read the best

National U-17s geared up for COSAFA opener

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE National Under-17 team prepares to step confidently onto the international stage.

The local lads' head coach, Sindiso Gama, reaffirmed the squad's readiness ahead of their Group A opener against the Comoros Islanders on Thursday at Ngoni Mwsos Stadium.

"Preparations for the match are proceeding smoothly. We are finalising certain areas and are confident that the boys will come to the party on the day," he said.

The local lads will take on Zimbabwe and Mozambique in the other Group A fixtures.

Two local referees, Zamani Simelane and Banele Tfwala, are part of the match officials during the annual regional showpiece devel-

opment showpiece between September 11-20, 2025, in Harare.

The tournament will also serve as a qualifier for the 2026 CAF Under-17 championships.

Group A

Teams: Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Comoros, Eswatini

Fixtures:

Sept 11: Comoros vs Eswatini (noon, Ngoni Mwsos Stadium)
Sept 11: Zimbabwe vs Mozambique (3pm, Ngoni Mwsos Stadium)
Sept 13: Mozambique vs Comoros (noon, Ngoni Mwsos Stadium)
Sept 13: Zimbabwe vs Eswatini (3pm, Ngoni Mwsos Stadium)
Sept 15: Eswatini vs Mozambique (3pm, Hearts Stadium)
Sept 15: Zimbabwe vs Comoros (3pm, Ngoni Mwsos Stadium)



▲National U-17 male team players in full sprints during their training session at EFA Technical Centre.

Local taekwondo ref for Region V Games course

By Sibusiso Masilela
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LOCAL taekwondo referee Bongani Nxumalo is off to Lesotho to attend the Region V Technical Course.

The course is aimed equipping regional referees ahead of the 2026 Region V games to be held in Maputo, Mozambique.

Eswatini Taekwondo Federation (ETF) Secretary Mbongeni 'Ndo' Sibandze confirmed the latest news.

"We have sent Bongani Nxumalo to attend a technical course for referees and officials. The course is organised by Region V, and it is aimed at equipping referees in the region and empowering them in preparation for the next edition of the youth games," he said.

Nxumalo is among the internationally qualified local referees, which include Sizwe Mabuza, Zakhele Dlamini, Bongani Manyatsi, and Sandile Mchunu, among others.

The taekwondo national team will feature in the new African Taekwondo Union series competition later this month in Maputo.



▲Taekwondo national team at a recent competition.

'Sluga' happy with the Africa Aquatics proceedings

By Sibusiso Masilela
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MELULEKI 'Sluga' Simelane, technical head of the Eswatini Swimming Association, has expressed pride in officiating at the 2025 Africa Aquatics Zone IV championships.

This follows the conclusion annual regional swimming championships held at Enjabulweni Independent School.

"It was the honour of my career to lead colleagues in delivering one of the biggest championships ever hosted in Eswatini. It was not just a responsibility but a privilege. It reaffirmed my belief that no one will make swimming great for us but ourselves," he said.

Simelane further said the competition gave them international exposure.

"The championship proved that our officials could manage high-pressure situations

at the same level as other countries. We were able to showcase our talent to the entire region and look forward to the next international assignment," he said.

Simelane is a multi-talented sports administrator and Moneni Pirates Public Relations Officer (PRO).

Athletics Eswatini Chief Operations Officer Mathokoza Dlamini was part of the officiating panel.

Technical officials are the guardians of fair play. They ensure that every race follows the rules, times are accurate, and every swimmer gets an equal opportunity to compete.

From the starter firing the gun, to stroke judges watching technique, to timekeepers recording results

The panel applies international rules from World Aquatics using both electronic timing and manual back-up systems.

Some of the sponsors for the recent competition included Eswatini Royal Insurance Corporation (ESRIC), MTN Eswatini, Jenny Internet, Extreme Trade, Eswatini Air, and Coca-Cola, among others.



▲Local swimmers cheering their teammates during the recent Africa Aquatics Zone IV championships.

By Chris Dlamini

'JAY JAY' OKOCHA'S ADVICE TO 'DINO' DLAMINI

Eswatini youngsters need discipline, focus

A historic meeting!

Nigerian football legend Austin 'Jay Jay' Okocha has shared crucial advice with Manzini Central High School Principal and Eswatini Sport and Recreational Council (ESRC) Board Chairman Celucolo 'Dino' Dlamini. The two head honchos randomly met during breakfast in Rwanda where they are both on separate business.

"It was a random meeting but I must say Okocha is a humble man. He gave me 30 minutes of his time after we met and I introduced myself. He was excited that I come from Eswatini, telling he once visited the kingdom," said Dlamini who is expected home on Friday or Saturday at the latest.

Dlamini said he had quite a good conversation and he asked Okocha how Eswatini's youth could emulate him and be as successful as he was in his football career.

"His response was quite straightforward. He said every youngster with talent and willing to use it successfully, needed self-discipline, focus and extra training," said Dlamini.

He said it was an honour to meet such

a great footballing legend who is even respected by the world's most gifted player in Brazilian legend, Ronaldinho.

"I'm certain our meeting will go a long way in helping us shape our soccer team and other athletes in my school ahead of next year's school's sports. Okocha even revealed that extra training, even when its off-season, helps a great deal. He was speaking from experience," said Dlamini.

Meanwhile, Dlamini is in Rwanda on ESRC business since Monday. It is also worth mentioning that Okocha played his football in Europe for Bolton Wanderers, Hull City in England, Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in France, and Eintracht Frankfurt as well as Fenerbache among others in a club career spanning from 1990 to 2008. He last appeared for Nigeria in 2006.



▲ Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council Chairman Celucolo 'Dino' with Nigerian legend Austin 'Jay Jay' Okocha.

We want to compete – Mlamuli Mabuza

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

NEW Manzini Wanderers director Mlamuli Mabuza says the club intends to contend for top honours this season. The former Khubutha member of Parliament said this following his appointment as the club's co-director with Sibani Mngometulu.

"We want to restore the image of the team by competing for the available trophies. We have already done the postmortem after the 8 Bet Trade Fair Cup and identified certain areas that need to be strengthened before the start of the league," he said.

The Nyanga 'Crooks' Hlophe led side suffered an early exit in the 8 Bet Trade Fair Cup with a 2-0 loss to Green Mamba during the last 16 of the annual knockout tournaments.

Mabuza further appealed for support from the entire 'Weslians' family.

"We call upon the entire Wanderers family to support the team to achieve our goal," he said.

Mabuza once served as a General Manager for the crowd pullers between 1999 and 2005.

The two local businessmen were officially endorsed during a meeting held at Manzini Club on Tuesday.



▲ New Manzini Wanderers director Mlamuli Mabuza with assistant manager Mbuso Mvubu.

The meeting further saw the appointment of a new Management committee headed by Mfanukhona 'Gravvy' Stewart, who is the team manager.

Stewart is assisted by Mbuso Mvubu.

The maroon and white outfit is also having

a new Public Relations Officer, Mongie Simelane.

The supporters' structure will be headed by two popular officials Vusi 'Majayivane' Dlamini and Kwaluseni Indvuna Yenkundla Mthunzi Dlamini.

It's a three-horse race for referees' chairmanship

IT's a three-horse race for the Eswatini Referees Association Chairman position.

Incumbent Chairman Simanga Nhleko will be against Mbongiseni Fakudze and Esrom Dlamini during the elective Annual General Meeting scheduled for September 21, 2025, at a venue still to be confirmed.

Fakudze has also been nominated for the vice Chairman position with Phinda Ndzimandze, Sifiso Nxumalo, Sabelo Kunene, Thulani Nkonyane, and Libnar Sibiya.

Current Secretary Mbongeni Shongwe will be reinstated after being nominated unopposed for the position.

Thulani Nkonyane and Sifiso Nxumalo are vying for the vice Secretary position.

Match commissioner Kuhle Mkhathsha will assume the Treasurer position after being the only candidate for the seat.

Two female candidates are contesting for the executive committee member position in Lungile Nxumalo and Thembi Mathonsi.

The female duo is facing competition from the likes of Petros Mbingo, Sandile Mkhabela and Thamie Ginindza, among others. The candidates were confirmed by Chairman of Eswatini Football Association Ethics Committee Siphosini Dlamini on Wednesday at Sigwaca House.

Let's carry momentum forward – Ubombo Sugar FC Chairman

By Chris Dlamini

SUGARBELT outfit Ubombo Sugar FC aims to build on their 8Bet Trade Fair Cup 2025/26 performance.

After finishing in the semi-finals and losing to Manzini Sea Birds in the third-place playoff, the elite side's Chairman Gcina Ndwandwe has applauded the team, its supporters, partners Ubombo Sugar Limited and sponsors like PRIMO. He expressed confidence that their 8Bet Trade Fair Cup journey has

been nothing short of remarkable and they can build from it in their strife to improve.

"As we prepare for the new season, let us carry this momentum forward. We've set a standard that we are determined to uphold. We remain committed to improvement, striving for excellence, and making our supporters proud.

"The challenges ahead will be met with the same spirit of unity and determination that has defined our journey thus far," said Ndwandwe in his statement.

Ndwandwe noted that their team has shown resilience, determination and an unwavering spirit that

embodies the essence of their club. He said every player, coach and staff member poured their heart and soul into each match, appreciating the dedication of the technical team for the quality squad they have assembled.

"We would also like to express our deepest gratitude to the leadership of Ubombo Sugar Limited, particularly the Country Managing Director and Exco members. Your belief in vision and your generous support have been pivotal in our journey," he noted.

Ndwandwe said such support was not only financial but their presence at the stadium inspired



▲ Ubombo Sugar FC players pose.

them and showed the partnership was built through values and mutual respect.

"To our passionate fans, your support has been a driving force

behind our performance," he said.

Ndwandwe shared that the supporters' cheers, belief and loyal presence on the stands fuelled the players to push beyond limits.

**West Ham re-
sign free
agent
Fabianski**

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September, 2025

Sport



Eswatini youngsters need discipline, focus – Okocha

● Nigerian legend Austin 'Jay Jay' Okocha met the Manzini Central High School, ESRC Board Chairman Celucolo 'Dino' Dlamini in Rwanda on Tuesday. **Page 23**