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MALAWI 2025 ELECTIONS: Eswatini-led SADC observers brave heat to oversee historic polls

By Kwanele Dhladhla

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MALAWI 2025 ELECTIONS:

Eswatini-led SADC observers brave heat to oversee historic polls

By Kwanele Dhladhla

UNDER the unforgiving Malawian sun, Eswatini's former Deputy Prime Minister, Themba Masuku, now Head of Mission for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), stood shoulder to shoulder with SADC Executive Secretary Elias Mpedi Magosi as Malawians turned out in large numbers to cast their votes in the country's 2025 General Election.

The duo, braving sweltering heat that reached well above 30 degrees Celsius, toured polling stations to witness first-hand the determination of Malawians to shape their democratic destiny.

Their presence symbolised SADC's unwavering commitment to safeguarding democracy across the region.

Speaking to reporters, Masuku praised the people of Malawi for their peaceful participation, noting that the SEOM has so far observed significant progress toward advancing free and fair elections.

The mission, he explained, had monitored the pre-election campaign, polling day itself, and would continue to oversee the post-election process—all guided by the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021).

"Malawi has shown commendable resilience in its democratic journey. What we have witnessed here is a testament to the people's respect for peace, order, and the rule of law," Masuku said.

Reuters reported that the elections, however, were unfolding against a backdrop of



▲ Head of Mission for the SADC Observation Mission Themba Masuku together with Mr. Elias Mpedi Magosi, the Executive Secretary of SADC braved the scorching heat of Malawi to witness Malawians casting their votes for the 2025 General Election.

pressing socio-economic challenges. A cost-of-living crisis and food shortages have dominated the campaign trail, making the outcome of this election crucial for one of the world's poorest nations.

Voters are choosing not only a President but also Members of Parliament and local Councillors.

Among the presidential hopefuls, the spotlight was firmly on the battle between incumbent Lazarus Chakwera (70) and his

predecessor Peter Mutharika (85).

Analysts predict that a run-off between the two heavyweights is the most likely outcome. Yet the ballot also features 15 other candidates, including former president Joyce Banda, adding further intrigue to the contest.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Incoming Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, called upon Malawians to uphold peace, unity, and

democratic principles.

Expressing confidence in Malawi's tradition of stability, His Majesty urged citizens to once again prove their commitment to democracy.

As ballots were counted, the watchful eyes of Masuku, Magosi, and the wider SADC team remained trained on ensuring that Malawi's democratic journey continues to inspire the region. — *Additional reporting by Reuters*

By Kwanele Dhladhla

IN the heart of Malawi's capital, democracy came alive in an extraordinary way when Kina Phiri, the celebrated former Sihlangu Semnikati national coach and Manzini Wanderers football star, stepped forward to cast his vote in the 2025 General Election.

Now serving as Deputy Director for Sports in Lilongwe, Phiri drew cheers and warm applause from fellow voters as he patiently queued alongside ordinary citizens, waiting for his turn under the scorching sun. His familiar face and celebrated sporting legacy added an unexpected flair to an otherwise tense day of polling.

As he emerged from the booth, proudly displaying his ink-stained finger, the atmosphere briefly shifted from quiet anticipation to jubilation. For many in the crowd, Phiri's presence embodied the principle that in a democracy, every vote carries equal weight—whether cast by a sports legend, a politician, or a farmer from the rural outskirts.

"This is a powerful moment. It shows that no matter who you are, you have a respon-

Ex-Sihlangu coach Kina Phiri's ballot cast symbolises Malawi's democratic spirit

sibility in shaping the future of our country," said one young voter, beaming as she watched the football icon make his mark.

The 2025 election was one of the most fiercely contested in Malawi's recent history, with incumbent President Lazarus Chakwera facing off against his predecessor, Peter Mutharika, alongside 15 other candidates, including former president Joyce Banda. With issues such as food insecurity and the cost-of-living crisis dominating the campaign, emotions have run high, and turnout has been strong across the country.

Yet in Lilongwe, it was Phiri's quiet act of civic duty that captured imagination. Once known for his commanding presence on the football pitch and tactical brilliance from the sidelines, Phiri has now taken on a different kind of leadership role—showing by example that public figures must also stand shoulder to shoulder with ordinary citizens when it comes to national duty.

Observers said the moment was a reminder of the universality of democracy in a country often hailed for its peaceful elections and commitment to stability. It was



▲ Manzini Wanderers legend Kina Phiri seen casting his vote in Lilongwe, Malawi. He is Deputy Director for Sports in Lilongwe.

also a symbolic blending of Malawi's love for football with the seriousness of politics and governance.

As the ballots continued to be counted, voters in Lilongwe will remember not only

the historic stakes of this election but also the simple, powerful message Kina Phiri delivered without uttering a single word: in a democracy, power truly lies in the hands of the people.

E851 million SAPEMP MoU set to transform 19 000 farmers sealed

Stories by Kwanele Dhladhla

ESWATINI Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE) Chief Executive Officer Samson Sithole has declared that the Smallholder Agriculture Productivity Enhancement and Marketing Project (SAPEMP) is set to reshape the future of farming for thousands of households across the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Sithole made the remarks on Tuesday during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between EWADE and the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard), which was represented by CEO Bhekizwe Maziya at the Mountain View Hotel.

The partnership, which is under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, has been supported by the Government of Eswatini, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the Green Climate Fund.

The \$45 million (over E800 million) project aims to benefit more than 19,600 smallholder households and an estimated 117,700 people across all four regions of the country.

Sithole explained that EWADE, as the implementing agency, spearheads SAPEMP with a multi-pronged approach. He explained that farmers would be organised into clusters to strengthen collective capacity, while multi-purpose collection centres would be rehabilitated and constructed to support aggregation, grading, and storage facilities.

The CEO further highlighted that farmers would be integrated into the Agricultural Integrated Information System (AIIS), a digital platform that provides real-time access to market intelligence, pricing trends, and extension support.

"Through contracts facilitated with NAMBoard, smallholder farmers will have secure



▲ Partners from EWADE, the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard), the Ministry of Agriculture, the Deputy Prime Minister's Office and international partners pose after the signing ceremony.

markets for their produce, enabling them to transition into commercial farming. This project is not just about improving production; it is about building resilience, raising incomes, and transforming communities," Sithole said.

The CEO emphasised that collaboration was the backbone of SAPEMP's success.

"No institution can achieve transformation alone. The future of agriculture lies in shared resources, coordinated action, and collective accountability," he said.

He stressed that by joining forces with NAMBoard, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, and international partners, EWADE was helping to create a holistic ecosystem that supports farmers from production to market.

EWADE reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, innovation, and inclusivity in implementing SAPEMP. He pointed out that special attention had been placed on empowering women and youth, with tailored interventions also ensuring persons living

with disabilities were not left behind.

"Women's empowerment lies at the very core of this programme, ensuring active participation in agribusiness and financial decision-making. Equally, young people will benefit from job opportunities and agribusiness training to prepare them as the next generation of farmers," Sithole explained.

Francesco Rispoli of IFAD described the MoU as a powerful demonstration of joint commitment to climate-smart agriculture and rural transformation.

"This agreement symbolises our collective determination to scale up sustainable land management and open new pathways for smallholder farmers to thrive. A key innovation in SAPEMP is its support to structure win-win business relationships between smallholder clusters and anchor enterprises, ensuring that farmers are not only producing more but also earning more," Rispoli said.

He added that IFAD, along with its partners, was committed to ensuring that the



▲ EWADE CEO Dr. Samson Sithole delivering his remarks.

availability of funds would not delay implementation or disrupt progress. "Together, we will ensure that SAPEMP delivers tangible impact and contributes to a stronger, food-secure, and more resilient Kingdom of Eswatini."

A new chapter for Eswatini farmers

ESWATINI'S agricultural sector has entered a new era of promise and collaboration following the signing of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE), the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard), the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office.

The agreement, which cements the launch of the Sustainable and Productive Agriculture for Eswatini's Market and Environment Project (SAPEMP), has been hailed as a turning point for the country's rural economy and food systems.

EWADE Chief Executive Officer Samson Sithole described the signing as a milestone in collaborative governance, where each institution contributes its unique strengths toward a shared national vision.

"SAPEMP is expected to not only enhance productivity but also establish a new model of inclusive, climate-resilient rural development for the country," Sithole said.

For the Ministry of Agriculture, the MoU

represents an opportunity to drive policies that transform farming from subsistence into a sustainable, commercialized, and competitive sector. Acting Principal Secretary Nhlanhla Motsa reaffirmed the government's commitment to SAPEMP, noting that its objectives align with Eswatini's top national priorities.

"Our focus is on food and nutrition sovereignty, ensuring that every Liswati has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. We are equally committed to employment creation, especially for youth and women, through agribusiness and value chain development, and to rural economic development by empowering smallholder farmers," Motsa said.

He further pledged that the Ministry would continue to create an enabling environment through supportive policies, access to farming inputs and technologies, and robust extension services.

The Deputy Prime Minister's Office, represented by US Makhosi Simelane, stressed that the agreement was more than just words on paper. "This is a call to action and not merely an agreement. It is a commitment to create a sustainable agricultural sector that



▲ EWADE CEO Dr. Samson Sithole signing the MoU during the event at Mountain View on Tuesday.

works for every Liswati," she said.

The MoU emphasizes climate resilience, inclusiveness, and rural empowerment as cornerstones of SAPEMP. Stakeholders expressed confidence that the project will not only boost productivity but also unlock new opportunities for smallholder farmers to integrate into formal markets and thrive in

agribusiness ventures.

As the ink dries on this historic agreement, all partners issued a collective call to action urging boldness, collaboration, and unwavering dedication to ensure that Eswatini's farmers are equipped to feed the nation, drive rural development, and secure a sustainable agricultural future.

Stories by Kwanele Dhladhla

Parly moves to stop double appointments in parastatal, SOE boards

PARLIAMENT has moved a motion calling for the immediate end of the controversial practice of appointing the same individuals to serve on multiple boards of parastatals and state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

The motion, which was moved by Lobamba Lomdzala (MP), Marwick Khumalo, and seconded by Nhlambeni MP Manzi Zwane, is yet to be tabled in the House of Assembly on Thursday according to the Order Paper, which was issued by Speaker in the House of Assembly, Jabulani Mabuza.

In the motion, Khumalo decried what he termed “glaring conflict of interest and lack of corporate governance” in the management of parastatals. He noted that a growing number of government-appointed directors were sitting on more than one board, despite being full-time employees elsewhere, leading to what he described as poor performance and lack of accountability.

“It is unacceptable that the same faces dominate the boards of our parastatals while their performance leaves much to be desired,” Khumalo argued.

The seasoned legislator pointed out that some senior managers of corporate entities were also chairpersons of other parastatals, a situation he said was both untenable and unfair to ordinary citizens who are qualified but overlooked for these opportunities.

He further lamented that the calibre of individuals appointed to state-owned enterprises had deteriorated over the years, contributing to widespread mismanagement and lack of direction in critical institutions.

The motion also drew attention to financial assistance provided by the African Development Bank (AfDB) for the transformation of the Public Enterprises Unit (PEU).



▲ The motion sets out several key resolutions for the Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg who also serves as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises (SCOPE).

Khumalo insisted that such support should not be wasted but instead be channelled towards enforcing reforms that strengthen corporate governance.

The motion sets out several key resolutions for the Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, who also serves as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises (SCOPE):

No Double Appointments - No individual employed by a parastatal shall be allowed to serve on more than one board of directors. Government officials, however, may be appointed to no more than two statutory boards

Legislative Review - The Minister must urgently review and present to Parliament legislation governing the Public Enterprises

Unit to reinforce its administrative and legislative role in managing state-owned enterprises

Implementation Timeline - The Minister has 60 working days to align parastatals in line with the resolution, to improve efficiency, corporate governance, and accountability

Repercussions for non-compliance - Failure to meet the timelines set may result in serious repercussions during the PEU’s annual budget deliberations

Khumalo emphasised that the reforms were not just about reshuffling seats but about restoring good governance and efficiency in public institutions that play a key role in the national economy.

“This motion is about accountability and ensuring that our parastatals work for the people, not just for a privileged few,” he said.

The debate over board appointments has long been a thorny issue in Eswatini’s governance.

Critics argue that recycling the same individuals across multiple boards stifles innovation and creates conflicts of interest, while also excluding a wider pool of qualified citizens from contributing to national development.

If adopted, Khumalo’s motion could signal a significant shift in how directors of state-owned enterprises were appointed, setting a new precedent for transparency and efficiency in public institutions.

THE House of Assembly is set for a heated debate after Nhlambeni Member of Parliament (MP) Manzi Zwane tabled a motion calling for an urgent investigation into allegations of financial embezzlement, corruption, and governance irregularities at Eswatini Christian Medical University (EMCU). The motion, seconded by Khubuta MP Maphula Mamba, seeks the immediate establishment of a special investigative committee of seven Members of Parliament, with gender balance, to probe mounting concerns around the institution’s management.

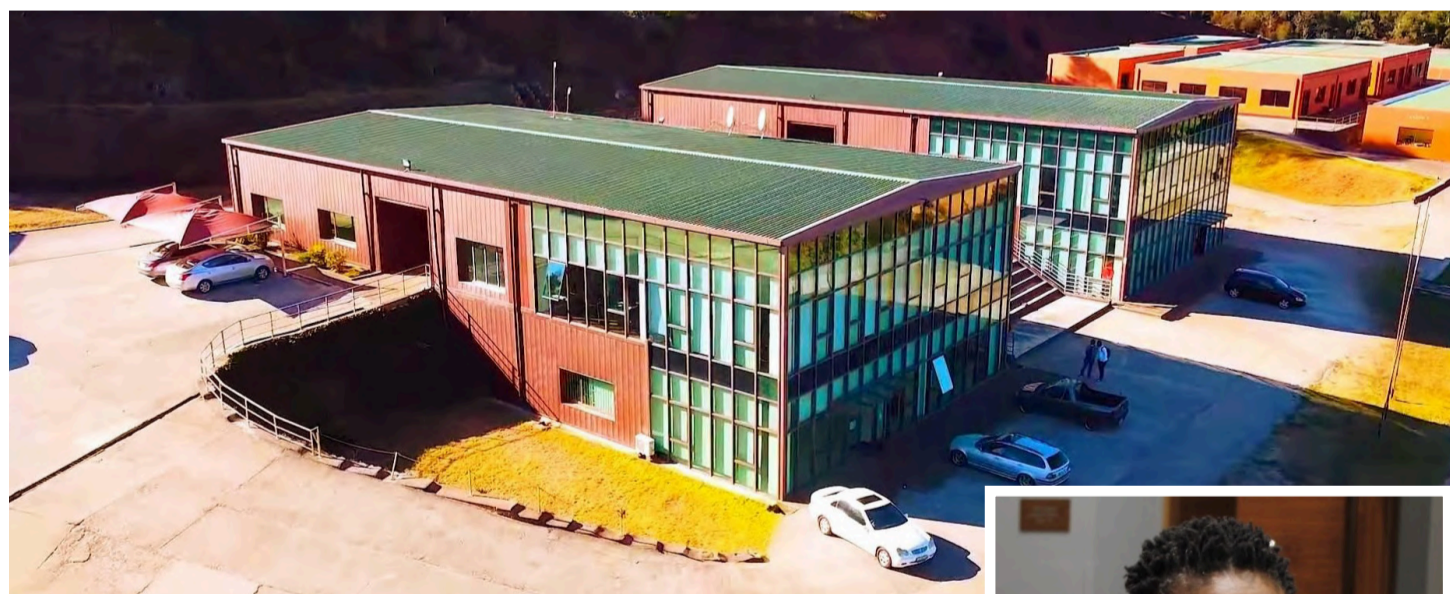
Zwane said the committee’s mandate would cover a broad range of issues, including the alleged suspension and misuse of the university’s provident fund, irregular vehicle acquisitions, preferential incentives, governance gaps, and questionable contract renewals for top executives.

“Parliament cannot remain silent while an institution of higher learning tasked with shaping the future of our young people is plagued by serious allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and abuse of authority. This House has a duty to intervene, restore accountability, and protect the public interest,” Zwane said.

The proposed inquiry will also examine possible conflicts of interest involving senior government officials, including the Minister of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, the Principal Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Education, Nanikie Mnisi, and the EMCU Bursar. Concerns have been raised that the absence of a functioning University Council left key decisions unchecked, enabling questionable practices to flourish.

Among the specific issues flagged was the alleged irregular renewal of contracts for top

Push for probe into alleged corruption at EMCU



executives in 2024 despite the inactivity of the University Council. MPs have also questioned the adequacy of internal financial controls within the Bursar’s office, pointing to gaps that may have enabled misappropriation of funds.

The motion further mandates the committee to deliver a comprehensive report with findings and recommendations within 14 calendar days of appointment. MPs argue that the urgency of the matter requires swift intervention to safeguard public confidence in the country’s higher education sector.

Khubuta MP Mamba, in supporting the motion, stressed that corruption allegations at EMCU not only tarnish the credibility of the institution but also threaten the welfare

of staff and students. “This is not just about financial mismanagement; it is about protecting the integrity of education in Eswatini. We cannot allow a culture of impunity to continue unchecked,” he said.

The debate comes amid growing calls from the public for accountability in parastatals, universities, and other state-linked institutions. If approved, the parliamentary committee will have sweeping powers to summon witnesses, scrutinize records, and recommend corrective action.

All eyes will now turn to Parliament as the nation awaits whether legislators will rally behind the motion to root out corruption at EMCU.



▲ Ministry of Education PS Nanikie Mnisi.



Eswatini strengthens climate commitments

... with ambitious NDC 3.0 ahead of COP28

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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THE Kingdom of Eswatini is poised to strengthen its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement in response to escalating climate challenges that have severely impacted the nation's most vulnerable communities.

Increasingly frequent droughts and ex-

treme weather events have underscored the urgent need for more ambitious and comprehensive climate action.

In this context, Eswatini is preparing to submit its third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0), aiming to better align with global climate goals while addressing critical local priorities such as poverty alleviation and the development of resilient infrastructure.

Following the Global Stocktake at COP28 in 2023, which assessed collective progress

toward the Paris Agreement targets, Eswatini has a strategic opportunity to recalibrate its climate strategies. The draft NDC 3.0 reflects this moment, incorporating enhanced emission reduction targets alongside strengthened adaptation measures. These improvements are designed to tackle the multifaceted impacts of climate change across key sectors including agriculture, water resources, and public health, areas vital to the country's socio-economic stability and environmental sustainability.

The Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs recently convened a national stakeholder consultation and validation

workshop to finalise the draft NDC 3.0. This inclusive process brought together representatives from government agencies, civil society, the private sector, and vulnerable communities to ensure that the updated climate commitments are both ambitious and grounded in local realities. The workshop aimed to consolidate feedback from previous consultations, ensuring transparency and broad ownership of the final document.

Recognising that climate change impacts are already being felt, the draft NDC 3.0 places significant emphasis on adaptation. The document outlines comprehensive plans to build resilience in agriculture, water management, and health systems. Adaptation strategies include the promotion of drought-resistant crops, improved irrigation techniques, and the enhancement of water storage infrastructure to mitigate the effects of variable rainfall patterns.

Missing man found dead at Edwaleni

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE search for Vusani, who had been reported missing by his family, has ended in tragedy after his lifeless body was discovered at Edwaleni's Lelimnyama mountain.

The Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) confirmed the discovery in a statement issued yesterday by Chief Police Information and Communication Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati.

"Vusani was found on 15 September 2025 at Edwaleni Lelimnyama mountain, unfortunately he was deceased. An enquiry into his death is ongoing," Vilakati stated.

Police appreciation

While confirming the incident, the police also took the opportunity to commend members of the public for their cooperation in assisting law enforcement agencies with information and support.

"The Royal Eswatini Police Service appreciates the daily support and assistance from members of the public as it works towards ensuring safety and security in the country," read part of the statement.

Details surrounding the cir-

cumstances of Vusani's death remain unclear. Police investigations are ongoing to determine whether foul play was involved or if it was a case of natural causes or an accident. Officers have urged the public to refrain from speculation as the enquiry proceeds.

Community reaction

Residents of the Edwaleni area described the discovery as deeply unsettling. One community elder, who preferred anonymity, said the incident had left villagers shaken.

"We were hopeful that Vusani would be found alive. It is heart-breaking to learn of his passing, and we are waiting for answers about what really happened," the elder said.

Call for vigilance

Authorities have urged members of the public to remain vigilant, especially in mountainous and remote areas, and to report any suspicious activities to the nearest police station.

The police indicated that updates will be provided once the enquiry is completed and relevant findings are made available.

For now, the family of the deceased is left to grieve the tragic loss, while the community awaits clarity on what led to the sad outcome at Edwaleni's Lelimnyama mountain.

Cop arrested allegedly for extortion applies for bail

By Thokozani Mazibuko

WANDILE Derrick Mlilo, one of the police officers, who has since been arrested for an alleged extortion, has had his bail application being opposed by the Crown because he has other similar cases of corruption which are pending before court. This was disclosed by the Crown, Mlindzi Mthethwa yesterday at the Manzini Magistrates Court when arguing why Mlilo's bail application should be dismissed.

This was during a bail hearing, whereby Mlilo (35) of Zombodze area and his co-accused, Zama Mhlanga (47) of Nhlanguano area through their attorneys moved bail applications, which were however, vehemently dismissed by the Crown.

When motivating the bail application, on behalf of Mlilo, lawyer Mongezi Mciza, stated that his client who, intends to plead not guilty to all the charges levelled against him, was a Liswati man who was married through Swati Law and Custom, which allows him to get married to another woman, something which his client intended to do shortly before he was incarcerated.

He mentioned that this shows that he has family ties in Eswatini and will therefore, not evade trial in the event he was admitted to bail.

Mciza further mentioned that his client had three children he duly maintained and that showed that he was a responsible man. He add-

ed that his client was the sole bread winner at home.

He pointed out that it will therefore, not be in the best interest of his family if his client continues to be deprived his liberty, since he was a bread winner.

"There is no dispute that he is a police officer whose further incarceration prejudices him in terms of his employment. He was denied bail during his first appearance in court and this has in the interim affected his dependents, including his wife and children and two of his siblings he supports," he said.

He mentioned that his client's right to freedom has been infringed. He added that his client was a sickly person and his continued incarceration can impact the intake of his medication.

He further stated that the prison facility where his client was kept was overcrowded.

Furthermore, he said his client will abide by all the bail conditions imposed by the court, including not interfering with Crown witnesses

Mciza added that his client was a police officer with a gross income of E15 000 per month. He said this aspect shows that he did not have means to evade the country and go to live a comfortable life in another country.

He added that his client will not temper with police investigations. He further disclosed that his client has pending cases, however he is presumed innocent until proven guilty and that cannot therefore, prevent him from getting bail

In addition Mciza said his client



will not cause any disturbance in the security of the State. He also pleaded with the court to consider that there was a duplication of the charges.

When motivating the bail application on behalf of his client Mhlanga, lawyer Thabiso Mavuso said there was no likelihood that his client may evade trial.

He pointed out that Mhlanga was a Liswati citizen with all his roots; (family, economic and social roots) tied to Eswatini.

"He is a police officer and therefore, he will not evade trial and he undertakes not to interfere with State witnesses," he said.

He added that his client will not undermine the proper functioning of the justice system once he was released on bail.

Mavuso said his client was a police officer, holding the rank of Constable, and he is married to one wife who is unemployed

"He has four children of school going age and he is a sole breadwinner at home," he said.

When responding to the bail applications, the Crown applied that both applications be dismissed.

'Comma-ndable' Treason Charge for Thabo Kunene

By Delisa Magagula

IN an episode that could have been lifted from an American political thriller, the High Court has charged the alleged 'Commander' Thabo Kunene with high treason.

The amendment follows an application by the State, which also joined Kunene and his co-accused, Sibusiso Nkomonye, with four other individuals facing similar offences arising from the civil unrest of 2021-2022.

Under the laws of the Kingdom of Eswatini, high treason is defined as acts intended to overthrow or undermine the authority of the monarchy or the State. Such charges are among the most serious in the country and carry significant legal consequences.

The civil unrest of 2021-2022 involved widespread protests and public demonstrations across several regions, triggered by political and economic grievances.

While citizens expressed dissent, the State maintains that certain organised acts went beyond lawful protest and constituted criminal offences, including acts that threatened public safety and the stability of the monarchy.

Terrorism, in the context of Eswatini, refers to violent acts intended to intimidate or coerce the population or the State to achieve political ends.

The charges against Kunene and his co-accused allege that these offences were carried out in a coordinated manner during the period of unrest, including murder, arson, and other violent activities.

Kunene, who is currently in detention and awaiting trial, has stated that his arrest in Eswatini violates international law and that the country has no jurisdiction to detain him. His co-accused, Sibusiso Nkomonye, shares this claim.

The two accused filed an application at the High Court more than two years after their arrest, seeking immediate release from Eswatini's maximum security prison.

In their papers, they allege that they were unlawfully kidnapped and trafficked from within the borders of South Africa into Eswatini.

Since their arrest on May 31, 2023, Kunene and Nkomonye have instructed their attorneys to pursue the application seeking their liberation.

The court documents cite seven respondents: the Prime Minister of Eswatini, the National Commissioner of Police, the Principal Secretary of Home Affairs, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Attorney General, and the South African High Commission in Eswatini.

In a separate but significant development, the State, through Director of Public Prosecutions Lomvula Hlophe, applied for the co-joinder of the cases involving Kunene, Nkomonye, and the other four accused.

The lawyers argued that while the accused were arrested at different times and carry separate case numbers, holding a single, consolidated trial would prevent unnecessary duplication, save court time, and ensure procedural fairness for all parties.

The High Court granted the application, confirming that procedural requirements for



▲ Pro-democracy Solidarity Forces alleged 'Commander' Thabo Kunene criminal charges amended, now facing high treason.

both amending the charges and joining the cases had been met.

Legal experts say that co-joining the trials will streamline proceedings, reduce delays, and ensure that the State can present evidence in a coordinated manner.

The High Court has acknowledged that Kunene and his co-accused are entitled to challenge the charges and must be afforded access to legal counsel, the ability to review evidence, and fair trial guarantees as prescribed by law.

Any application regarding alleged unlawful arrest or extradition will be considered in accordance with the legal frameworks of Eswatini and relevant international law.

The court also reaffirmed the right of the accused to seek interim relief, including release or adjustments to detention conditions, provided such applications follow established procedural rules.

High treason remains one of the most severe charges under Eswatini law. Conviction carries significant legal consequences, including long-term imprisonment.

The inclusion of high treason in Kunene's indictment underscores the seriousness with which the State treats coordinated acts perceived to undermine the authority of the monarchy or threaten national security.

Charges of treason, combined with terrorism-related offences, place Kunene and his co-accused at the centre of a high-profile legal battle that touches on national security, civil unrest, and cross-border legal jurisdiction.

The unrest of 2021-2022 involved protests across multiple regions. While many citizens participated in lawful demonstrations, the State contends that certain organised acts escalated into violence, destruction of property, and acts that endangered lives.

The alleged actions of Kunene and the co-accused are described as coordinated operations targeting security personnel and public property.

By amending the charges to include high treason and consolidating the cases into a



▲ Kunene, who is currently in detention and awaiting trial, has stated that his arrest in Eswatini violates international law and that the country has no jurisdiction to detain him.

single trial, the State emphasises that these actions are viewed not merely as criminal offences but as attempts to undermine the legal authority of the Kingdom.

The matter has been adjourned to a future date for further proceedings. The High Court will consider the amended charges, the co-joined trial, and any applications related to alleged unlawful arrest and detention.

Kunene and his co-accused are expected to be represented by legal counsel throughout the trial process. The High Court has reiterated that procedural fairness and the

rights of the accused are to be upheld at all stages of the proceedings.

Thabo 'Commander' Kunene's case remains one of the most high-profile legal matters in Eswatini in recent years, intertwining issues of civil unrest, terrorism, treason, co-joined trials, and international legal claims.

The outcome of the proceedings is being closely watched, both nationally and regionally, for its implications on national security, the handling of civil unrest-related offences, and cross-border legal cooperation.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

NAMBoard restricts the importation of sugar beans

THE National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard) has announced a new trade restriction, this time placing a total ban on the importation of sugar beans into the Kingdom of Eswatini. The restriction takes effect on September 22, 2025 and follows a recent assessment that found local bean production has now surpassed national demand.

Stocks firm, dollar down as bets build for Fed rate cuts

SINGAPORE/LONDON — Global shares held near record highs on Tuesday as investors bought U.S. assets on the premise that the Federal Reserve is likely to cut rates, while selling equities in Europe, where borrowing costs look unlikely to fall much further. MSCI's all-country index edged up 0.46 per cent to new record highs. The pan-European STOXX 600 dropped 0.19 per cent, led by declines in rate-sensitive banks and insurers.

Gold dazzles at all-time high as Fed rate cut looms

GOLD surged to a record high on Tuesday, buoyed by a weakening U.S. dollar and growing market anticipation ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting, where a 25-basis-point rate cut is widely expected. Spot gold rose 0.5 per cent to \$3,696.34 per ounce, as of 8:09 a.m. ET (1209 GMT), after hitting a record high of \$3,699.37 earlier in the session. U.S. gold futures for December delivery rose 0.4 per cent to \$3,733.70.

SEL records E11 million interest income

... Contained expenses at E2.6mln

By Delisa Magagula

SWAZILAND Empowerment Limited (SEL) reported interest income of E11 million from fixed-income and money market investments for the year ended March 31, 2025, while operating expenses were contained at E2.6 million.

The investment company delivered dividend income of E34.5 million from its investee companies. Interest expenses stood at E10.1 million, bringing profit before taxation to E32.7 million. After accounting for taxation, SEL posted a net profit of E30.4 million.

A fair value adjustment of E163 million was recorded on the revaluation of unlisted investments, largely influenced by external market conditions. This non-cash adjustment resulted in a comprehensive loss of E132 million for the year.

Despite the adjustment, SEL emphasised that



its investment portfolio remains strong and that the fair value loss does not reflect a permanent reduction in asset quality.

The company expects the adjustment to reverse over time as portfolio initiatives mature and market conditions stabilise.

After the financial year-end, SEL acquired a 49% equity stake in UFS International (Proprietary) Limited. The acquisition forms part of the company's diversification strategy and is

expected to support sustainable growth in the medium to long term.

SEL indicated that it remains well-positioned to deliver consistent performance through its balanced mix of listed and unlisted investments. The company has recovery strategies in place and anticipates a reversal of the fair value loss in the coming periods.

The board and management reaffirmed their commitment to corporate governance, citing adherence to the principles of openness, integrity, and accountability as outlined in the King Reports.

SEL has scheduled its Annual General Meeting for October 17, 2025, at 11:00 AM at The Royal Villas in Ezulwini. Shareholders are invited to attend and participate in the company's future direction.

The company's financial statements for the year were audited by SNG Grant Thornton Chartered Accountants (Eswatini), confirming compliance with international reporting standards and transparency in financial disclosures.

By Delisa Magagula

THE Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Manqoba Khumalo, delivered the keynote address at the grand opening of Ashley Eswatini on Monday evening at the Lifestyle Centre in Matsapha.

Ashley, the world's largest furniture manufacturer, has opened its first store in the Kingdom, marking what the minister described as a significant step in Eswatini's economic development and global integration.

"This launch is more than the arrival of a world-class furniture brand, it is a bold step in Eswatini's journey toward economic growth, global integration, and commercial excellence," Khumalo said.

"Ashley, the world's largest furniture manufacturer, has chosen the Kingdom of Eswatini for its first store here, a powerful endorsement of our nation as a preferred investment destination," added Khumalo.

The minister noted that the investment would create jobs, support skills development, and generate opportunities for local entrepreneurs and suppliers, while also strengthening trade relations, including Eswatini's growing partnership with the United States. Highlighting Matsapha's role as a commercial and industrial hub, Khumalo said the Lifestyle Centre provided the ideal location for the launch.

"The Lifestyle Centre itself stands as a beacon of first-world retail development, perfectly aligned with His Majesty King Mswati III's vision for modern, world-class malls," he said.

"To the Al Mansoor Group and the incredible team at Ashley congratulations on this achievement. Your presence reaffirms that Eswatini is open for business, ready to welcome global brands and drive inclusive, sustainable growth," said Khumalo.

The store is operated under the Al Mansoor Group, which oversees Ashley's presence in the country.

Ashley opens Eswatini store at Lifestyle Centre in Matsapha



▲ Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo cuts the ribbon at the official opening.



▲ The Minister being shown furniture.

EswatiniBank

FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	17.0646	17.5272
G.B. Pound	23.1663	23.8331
EURO	20.0924	20.7064
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	

NAMBoard restricts the importation of sugar beans

... After production surpassed national demand

By Delisa Magagula

THE National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard) has announced a new trade restriction, this time placing a total ban on the importation of sugar beans into the Kingdom of Eswatini.

The restriction takes effect on September 22, 2025 and follows a recent assessment that found local bean production has now surpassed national demand.

The move is in line with NAMBoard's mandate to regulate agricultural imports and protect local producers.

According to the notice, the decision was made in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Maize Corporation (NMC), which has been actively supporting farmers to increase production through the Horticulture Revolving Fund.

This is not the first time that NAMBoard has enforced such measures. Earlier this year, the regulator announced restrictions on the importation of tomatoes and beetroots, citing a sharp increase in domestic production.

The tomato and beetroot bans were implemented to ensure that local farmers could access the market without being undercut by cheaper imports.

Now, the restriction on sugar beans represents a continuation of this trend. NAMBoard officials argue that with greater support from government initiatives, development partners, and private sector investment, local farmers are producing more than enough to meet national consumption needs.

In a statement, NAMBoard highlighted that the country has witnessed a significant rise in the production of sugar beans, one of the staple commodities also supported by the NMC.

"After an assessment of the situation by the Ministry of Agriculture, NMC and NAMBoard, it has been established that local bean production has increased beyond the national demand," the notice reads.

As a result, the importation of sugar beans will be totally restricted starting from September 22. The organisation also confirmed that the restriction is not permanent and will be reviewed if domestic supply falls short of market needs.

The restriction is aimed at safeguarding the interests of local farmers who have invested heavily in bean production, while also ensuring that the local market remains stable. By cutting down on imports, NAMBoard hopes to provide farmers with better access to consumers and fairer pricing.

Officials say the move will also reduce the risk of oversupply, which often drives down farm-gate prices, leaving farmers unable to cover production costs.

With the new measure, NAMBoard is confident that farmers will enjoy greater returns and continue investing in increased production.

At the same time, the regulator assured consumers that close monitoring will be conducted to avoid any gaps in the market. If local supplies drop below required thresholds, restrictions will be lifted or adjusted to prevent shortages.

The decision has been made possible by renewed efforts to strengthen Eswatini's food



▲ NAMBoard CEO Bhekizwe Maziya (far right). NAMBoard has announced a trade restriction on the importation of sugar beans into Eswatini.

production systems. Through the NMC's Horticulture Revolving Fund, farmers have been given financial and technical support to increase yields of maize and sugar beans, which are considered priority crops.

NAMBoard's partnerships with development organisations and private sector players have also played a role in equipping farmers with resources such as improved seed varieties, training in modern farming techniques, and access to irrigation facilities.

As a result, production volumes have grown significantly, with officials stating that sugar bean yields now comfortably exceed what the domestic market requires.

The tomato and beetroot restrictions earlier this year serve as an important precedent for the sugar bean ban. When those measures were announced, they were initially met with concern from traders who relied on imports.

However, local farmers were quick to fill the supply gap, and NAMBoard has reported that the restrictions did not lead to shortages.

Instead, farmers benefited from better access to markets, while consumers continued to enjoy consistent availability of produce.

The success of those restrictions is being used as a model for the sugar bean decision, with NAMBoard confident that the

same outcome will be achieved.

The latest restriction underscores Eswatini's broader agricultural policy direction: to encourage self-sufficiency in food production and reduce dependency on imports.

By creating an environment that protects local producers, the government aims to build resilience in the agricultural sector and ensure food security for the nation.

Still, questions remain about how restrictions might affect traders and retailers who traditionally imported produce must meet demand. NAMBoard insists that it will maintain a balance, prioritising the protection of farmers while ensuring that consumers are not disadvantaged.

NAMBoard concluded its statement by assuring the public that monitoring will be continuous. Any changes in production or supply levels will trigger a review of the restriction.

"For any enquiries regarding the above-mentioned notice, please contact the Head of Legal, Trade and Regulation, Bongani Mdluli, at 7802 2963," the statement said.

With tomatoes and beetroots already under import restrictions and sugar beans now joining the list, observers suggest that more commodities could face similar measures in the future if local production continues to expand.

For now, the restriction marks a win for Eswatini's farmers, who are seeing their efforts recognised and supported at a national level. Consumers, meanwhile, will be watching closely to see whether the ban affects prices and availability in the months ahead.



By Rae Wee and Sara Rossi

SINGAPORE/LONDON — Global shares held near record highs on Tuesday as investors bought U.S. assets on the premise that the Federal Reserve is likely to cut rates, while selling equities in Europe, where borrowing costs look unlikely to fall much further.

MSCI's all-country index edged up 0.46 per cent to new record highs. The pan-European STOXX 600 dropped 0.19 per cent, led by declines in rate-sensitive banks and insurers which stand to lose out if the European Central Bank does not cut euro zone rates much more.

"Markets are probably realising that there will be no further cuts by the ECB and this is offsetting expectations of Fed resuming its easing path," said James Rossiter, head of global macro strategy at TD Securities in London.

Money markets are pricing in just a 40 per cent chance of the ECB cutting by 25 bps by June 2026 from around 50 per cent last week.

Stocks scale new heights

The markets' mood has been buoyant over the past few sessions and stocks scaled new highs on Wall Street on expectations of imminent Fed rate cuts.

S&P 500 futures and Nasdaq futures were up 0.2 per cent, pointing to another rally at the opening bell, after both indexes scaled all-time highs in Monday's trading session.

Stocks firm, dollar down as bets build for Fed rate cuts



▲ U.S. Dollar banknotes are seen in this illustration.

Futures already have over 127 bps worth of Fed cuts priced in by July 2026, meaning the bar could be high for policymakers to keep investors optimistic.

"There do seem to be quite a few rate cuts priced in now. On balance, maybe that suggests that the bar for a hawkish surprise is a little lower than that for a dovish one," said Thomas Mathews, head of markets for

Asia Pacific at Capital Economics.

"It's likely though that the Fed will stick with its cautious communication approach and not give much away."

With so much focus on the Fed decision, markets hardly reacted to news that the U.S. Senate narrowly confirmed Stephen Miran to the central bank's Board of Governors, and a U.S. appeals court separately declined to let

President Donald Trump fire Fed Governor Lisa Cook.

Neither move was seen as likely to shift the needle for the Fed's decision on Wednesday, where a 25-basis-point cut is fully priced in.

The Bank of Canada is also expected to cut rates by a quarter point this week, and the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England are both expected to hold rates steady.

Elsewhere, U.S. and Chinese officials said on Monday they had reached a framework agreement to switch short-video app TikTok to U.S.-controlled ownership which will be confirmed in a Friday call between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Pressure on the dollar

The Fed cut bets have in turn kept pressure on the dollar, which on Tuesday fell to its lowest since July 4 against a basket of currencies.

Euro traded near its highest since early July, which in turn was the highest since September 2021. It was up 0.4 per cent at \$1.1811. Sterling climbed to its highest in over two months at \$1.3641.

U.S. Treasury yields were little changed after falling in the previous session, with the two-year yield last at 3.5345 per cent. The benchmark 10-year yield was almost flat at 4.0432 per cent. (Reuters)

Oil prices rise as market weighs Russia supply risk, US rate decision

By Ahmad Ghaddar

LONDON — Oil prices rose on Tuesday as markets weighed a potential disruption of supplies from Russia due to Ukrainian drone attacks on its ports and refineries as well as the prospect of a U.S. central bank interest rate cut.

Brent crude futures gained 53 cents, or 0.8 per cent, to \$67.97 a barrel by 1221 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$63.93, up 63 cents, or 1 per cent. On Monday, Brent settled up 45 cents at \$67.44, while WTI settled 61 cents higher at \$63.30.

Russia's oil pipeline monopoly Transneft has warned producers they may have to cut, opens new tab output following Ukraine's drone attacks on critical export ports and refineries, three industry sources said on Tuesday.

Ukraine has intensified attacks on Russia's energy infrastructure in an attempt to impair Moscow's war capabilities, as talks to end their conflict have stalled.

"An attack on an export terminal like Primorsk is aimed more at limiting Russia's ability to sell its oil abroad, affecting export markets," said JP Morgan analysts.

"More importantly, the attack suggests a growing willingness to disrupt international oil markets, which has the potential to add upside pressure on oil prices," they said.

Goldman Sachs estimates that the Ukrainian attacks have taken out about 300,000 barrels per day of Russian refining capacity in August and so far this month.

"While the uncertainty around secondary tariffs and additional sanctions remains



▲ A view shows oil pump jacks outside Almet'yevsk, in the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia.

high, we assume only modestly lower Russian production as Asian buyers continue to signal willingness to import Russian crude," the bank said.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Monday said the government would not impose additional tariffs on Chinese goods to encourage China to halt purchases of Russian oil unless European countries hit China and India, the biggest buyers of Russian crude, with duties of their own.

Also on investors' radar is the U.S. Federal Reserve's September 16-17 meeting, at which the bank is widely expected to cut interest rates. While lower borrowing costs typically boost fuel demand, analysts were cautious on the health of the overall U.S. economy.

Markets were also factoring in the likelihood of crude inventory declines in the U.S. last week, with official data expected on Wednesday at 1430 GMT.

U.S. crude inventories likely fell 6.4 million barrels for the week ended September 12, following a 3.9 million build a week earlier, energy strategist Walt Chancellor at Macquarie Group said in a client note.

A Reuters poll on Monday showed analysts expected U.S. crude oil and gasoline stockpiles to have fallen last week, while distillate inventories likely rose. (Reuters)



▲ Jewellery is displayed at the Gold Souk market in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Gold dazzles at all-time high as Fed rate cut looms

By Anushree Ashish Mukherjee

GOLD surged to a record high on Tuesday, buoyed by a weakening U.S. dollar and growing market anticipation ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting, where a 25-basis-point rate cut is widely expected.

Spot gold rose 0.5 per cent to \$3,696.34 per ounce, as of 8:09 a.m. ET (1209 GMT), after hitting a record high of \$3,699.37 earlier in the session. U.S. gold futures for December delivery rose 0.4 per cent to \$3,733.70.

The dollar fell to a more than two-month low against rivals. A weaker greenback makes gold less expensive for other currency holders.

"Global growth uncertainty and geopolitical risk continue to keep haven demand high but the gold rally is being driven largely by anticipation of aggressive rate cuts from the Federal Reserve," said Zain Vawda, analyst at MarketPulse by OANDA.

"If the dot plot shows a shift to two rate cuts in 2025, this could fuel the gold rally

and push it beyond the \$3,700/oz mark with \$3,800/oz a real possibility."

Traders are pricing in a near-certain 25 bps rate cut at the end of a two-day meeting on September 17, with a small chance of a 50-bps reduction, according to the CME Fed-Watch tool, opens new tab.

U.S. President Donald Trump in a social media post on Monday called for Fed Chair Jerome Powell to enact a "bigger" rate cut. Meanwhile, U.S. Senate narrowly confirmed Stephen Miran to the central bank's board of governors.

Non-yielding bullion tends to do well in a low-interest rate environment.

Commerzbank raised its gold price forecast to \$3,600 per troy ounce by the end of this year and to \$3,800 by the end of 2026.

Bullion has surged about 41 per cent this year and notched multiple record highs on the back of sustained central bank purchases, diversification away from the U.S. dollar, resilient safe-haven demand amid geopolitical and trade frictions.

Elsewhere, spot silver was up 0.2 per cent at \$42.81 per ounce, the highest level since September 2011. Platinum gained 0.6 per cent to \$1,407.70 and palladium rose 1.6 per cent to \$1,203.19. (Reuters)

INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGY DAY:

The Clinic Group to offer electrophysiology services and enhanced cardiac care in Eswatini

By Siphesihle Dlamini and Ntsika Mabuza

THE Clinic Group, a leading healthcare institution in Eswatini, is set to become the first hospital in the country to offer electrophysiology services and enhanced cardiac care.

This was confirmed by The Clinic Group Medical Director Khotso Ramphela.

“As the medical community comes together to celebrate Interventional Cardiology Day, we take this opportunity to highlight the vital role of electrophysiology, a rapidly evolving subspecialty of cardiology focused on the diagnosis and treatment of heart rhythm disorders.

Considering increasing cardiovascular concerns in Eswatini, The Clinic Group is excited to announce expanded services, including pacemaker implants, cardiology consultations, and ongoing monitoring to better serve the community’s heart health needs,” he said.



▲ *Interventional cardiology is fundamentally about minimally invasive, catheter-based techniques that restore blood flow and repair heart structures, offering life-saving alternatives to traditional open-heart surgeries.*

its natural pacemaker (the sinoatrial node) fails to do so effectively. Pacemakers are particularly beneficial for patients experiencing bradycardia (abnormally slow heart rates) or certain types of heart block, improving symptoms and enhancing the quality of life,” Dr Ramphela revealed.

With cardiovascular disease becoming a leading health concern in Eswatini, the establishment of specialized electrophysiology services marks a significant step towards improving cardiac care in the region. By expanding access to electrophysiology consultation and interventions like pacemaker implantation, we aim to enhance patient outcomes, reduce complications related to arrhythmia, and empower individuals to take charge of their cardiovascular health.

Patient safety and comfort

Patient safety and comfort are paramount at The Clinic Group. Dr. Hailu highlighted that “we prioritise patient safety and comfort in our non-invasive diagnostic services.” The Clinic Group adheres to strict clinical protocols and best international practices to minimise risks during diagnostic procedures. Dr. Hailu explained, “For our diagnostic services, we adhere to strict clinical protocols, safety guidelines, and international best practices to minimise risks and ensure accurate results.” A critical aspect of cardiac care at The Clinic Group is patient education. Dr. Hailu stressed that “we emphasise thorough patient education in all aspects of cardiac care.”

Multidisciplinary collaboration and teamwork

The Clinic Group’s strength lies in its specialists, cardiologists, general practitioners,

nurses, laboratory technologists, radiographers, and pharmacists. This collaborative approach enables comprehensive care that spans early detection, risk assessment, and timely treatments.

Investment in excellence

Dr. Hailu participates regularly in training, and professional development to keep abreast of evolving cardiovascular practices and technologies.

He follows the latest guidelines and research from leading cardiology organisations such as the European Society of Cardiology and the American Heart Association to inform diagnostic protocols and referral practices. “I closely fol-

low the latest guidelines and research to ensure our practices remain current and evidence-based,” he stated.

Patient follow-up and rehabilitation

Dr. Hailu explained, “We are actively involved in post-procedural monitoring, follow-up consultations, and ongoing risk factor management as part of their rehabilitation process.” This continuity of care is essential for long-term recovery and prevention of future cardiac events.

Guided by values, driven by vision

At the heart of The Clinic Group’s journey toward advancing cardiac care is a strong foundation of values that guide every service and interaction. Agility ensures that the institution remains responsive to the fast-evolving landscape of cardiology and patient needs, swiftly adapting to new technologies and medical practices. Accountability drives the team to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards, ensuring that every decision and action prioritises patient safety and outcomes.

With unwavering commitment, The Clinic Group continually invests in world-class expertise, state-of-the-art equipment, and patient-centered programs designed to save lives.

By choosing to embrace change, the organisation recognises that innovation is essential for progress, positioning itself at the forefront of modern healthcare delivery in Eswatini.

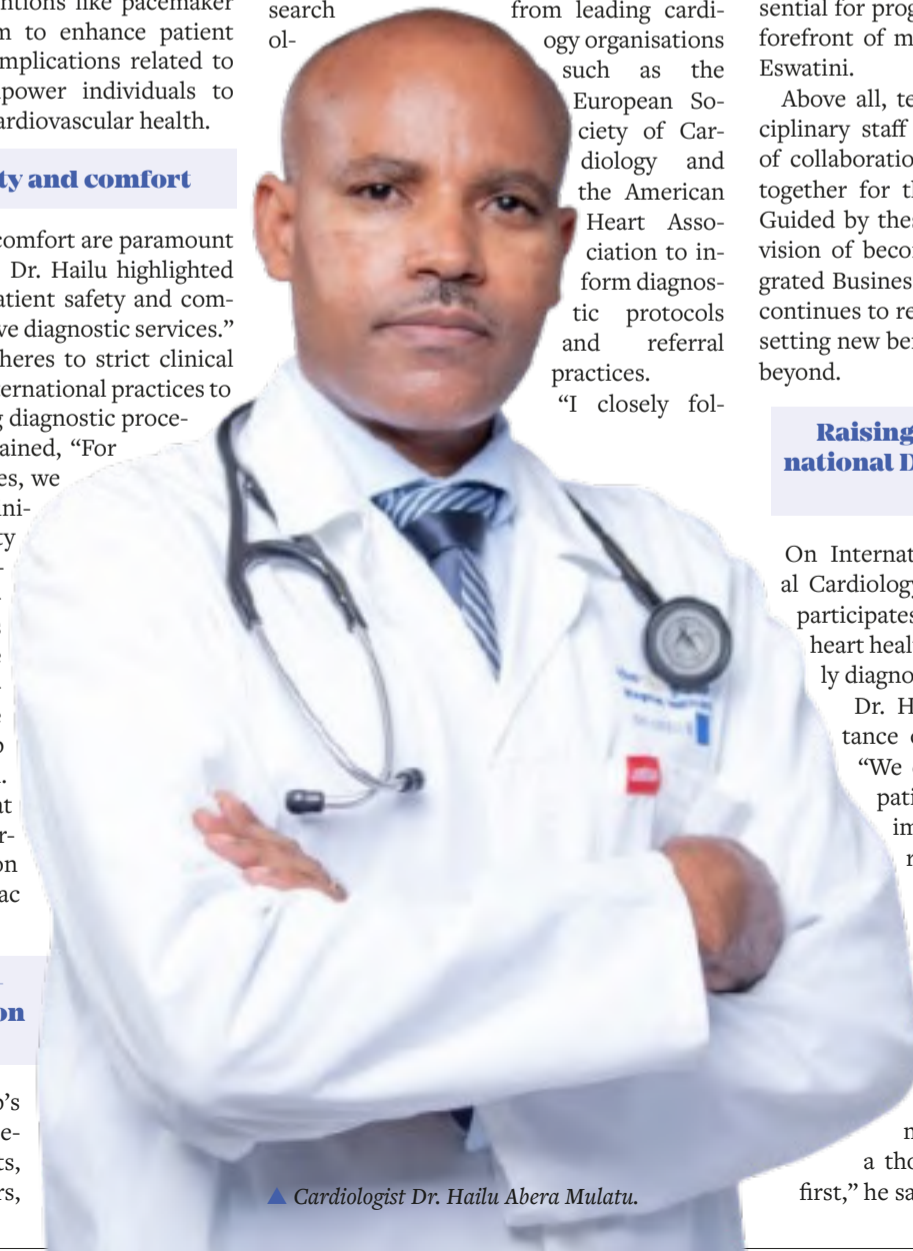
Above all, teamwork binds the multidisciplinary staff together, creating a culture of collaboration where diverse skills come together for the benefit of every patient. Guided by these values and inspired by its vision of becoming “Africa’s Leading Integrated Business Partner,” The Clinic Group continues to redefine healthcare excellence, setting new benchmarks in cardiac care and beyond.

Raising awareness on International Day for Interventional Cardiology

On International Day for Interventional Cardiology, The Clinic Group actively participates in raising awareness about heart health and the significance of early diagnosis and prevention.

Dr. Hailu emphasised the importance of public education, stating, “We can participate by educating patients and the public about the importance of heart health, the role of interventional procedures, and the significance of early diagnosis and prevention.”

For patients contemplating interventional cardiology treatments, Dr. Hailu advised a cautious and informed approach. “I recommend that patients undergo a thorough diagnostic evaluation first,” he said.



▲ *Cardiologist Dr. Hailu Abera Mulatu.*

The role of interventional cardiology in modern cardiac care

Interventional cardiology is fundamentally about minimally invasive, catheter-based techniques that restore blood flow and repair heart structures, offering life-saving alternatives to traditional open-heart surgeries. Dr. Hailu, a respected cardiologist at The Clinic Group, emphasised that “interventional cardiology is crucial for diagnosing and treating cardiovascular diseases, especially for restoring blood flow and repairing heart structures through catheter-based techniques.” He pointed out that these procedures have revolutionised cardiac care by reducing recovery times, minimising complications, and improving patient outcomes.

The Clinic Group’s vision for a comprehensive electrophysiology program

Recognizing the growing demand for specialized cardiac care, The Clinic Group is committed to establishing a comprehensive electrophysiology program that offers an array of services:

- **Cardiology consultations:** Patients will have direct access to trained cardiologists who can evaluate symptoms, perform diagnostic testing, and develop tailored treatment plans.
- **Monitoring and follow-up:** Ongoing monitoring is critical for patients with heart rhythm disorders or those with implanted devices. TCG will employ telemetry and remote monitoring systems to keep track of patients’ heart health, allowing for timely interventions when necessary.
- **Pacemaker implantation:** The Clinic Group’s skilled electrophysiologists will perform minimally invasive pacemaker procedures, using advanced technology to ensure optimal outcomes. This intervention provides patients with immediate benefits, such as improved heart function and symptom relief.

“One of the key interventions offered within electrophysiology is pacemaker implantation. A pacemaker is a small device that helps regulate the heart’s rhythm when

low the latest guidelines and research to ensure our practices remain current and evidence-based,” he stated.

Trump says US has a buyer for TikTok



▲ Teenagers pose for a photo while holding smartphones in front of a TikTok logo in this illustration.

PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Tuesday that the U.S. and China have a deal that would keep TikTok operating in the United States, transferring its U.S. assets to U.S. owners from China's ByteDance, potentially resolving a saga that has lingered for nearly a year.

A deal on the popular social media app, which counts 170 million U.S. users, stands as a breakthrough in months-long talks between the world's No. 1 and No. 2 economies that have sought to defuse a wide-ranging trade war that has unnerved global markets.

"We have a deal on TikTok ... We have a group of very big companies that want to buy it," Trump said, without providing further details.

He lauded the trade deal reached with China, calling it an upgrade for both countries, and said it would preserve tens of billions of dollars of value.

"The kids want it so badly, I have parents calling me up. They don't want it for themselves. They want it for their kids," Trump said.

Any agreement could require approval by the Republican-controlled Congress, which

passed a law in 2024 during the Biden Administration that required divestiture due to fears that TikTok's U.S. user data could be accessed by the Chinese government, allowing Beijing to spy on Americans or conduct influence operations through the app.

The Trump administration has repeatedly declined to enforce a law requiring the app to shut down due to worries it would anger users and disrupt political communications, instead extending the divestiture deadline on three separate occasions.

Trump has credited the app with helping him win re-election last year, and his personal account has 15 million followers. The White House launched an official TikTok account last month.

CNBC reported Tuesday that the deal is expected to be closed within the next 30 to 45 days, and that the agreement will include existing investors in TikTok's China-based parent ByteDance and new investors.

Reuters has not independently verified CNBC's report. However, the details are in line with Reuters' reporting in April that the deal would spin off TikTok's U.S. operations into a new company based in the U.S. and majority-owned and operated by U.S. investors.

TARIFFS AND TIKTOK

A deal for TikTok had been in the works in the spring, but was put on hold after China indicated it would not approve it following Trump's announcements of steep tariffs on Chinese goods.

Washington has maintained that TikTok's ownership by ByteDance makes it beholden to the Chinese government and Beijing could use the app to collect data on Americans.

The company has said U.S. officials have misstated its ties to China, arguing its con-

tent recommendation engine and user data are stored in the U.S. on cloud servers operated by Oracle while content moderation decisions that affect American users are also made in the U.S.

CNBC also reported on Tuesday that Oracle will keep its cloud deal with TikTok as part of the agreement. Reuters reported earlier this year that the White House was working on a plan to tap Oracle along with a group of outside investors to take control of the app's operations.

As part of the plan, Oracle would have been responsible for addressing national security issues, Reuters had then reported.

Shares of Oracle pared some gains on Tuesday following the news on TikTok and were last up nearly 3%.

A framework agreement was reached by officials from both countries on Monday, marking a breakthrough after months of intense talks. The White House has been involved to an unprecedented level in the closely watched deal talks.

Amid escalating trade tensions, U.S. and China delegations discussed the divestment as part of broader disputes over tariffs and tech export control regulations.

A final confirmation on the deal is expected on Friday in a call between Trump and President Xi Jinping.

Several suitors including former Los Angeles Dodgers owner Frank McCourt, a startup run by OnlyFans founder and Amazon had expressed interest in the fast-growing business that analysts estimate could be worth as much as \$50 billion.

(Reuters)

Meta to debut costlier smart glasses with display at annual Connect event

META, opens new tab is expected to double down on AI-powered augmented reality products with new smart glasses at its annual Connect event on Wednesday, even as the company faces scrutiny over its handling of child safety on its social media platforms.

At its Menlo Park, California-based headquarters, CEO Mark Zuckerberg is expected to unveil Meta's first consumer-ready smart glasses with a built-in display, a device that analysts predicted will retail for about \$800.

Internally codenamed "Hypernova," the glasses are expected to be launched as "Celeste," analysts said, and will feature a small digital display in the right lens for basic functions such as notifications.

The new glasses are the latest in Meta's effort to stay relevant in the AI race, where it is lagging rivals such as OpenAI and Alphabet's, opens new tab Google, but analysts said the device's hefty price tag could deter buyers.

The product will likely be much less advanced than the "Orion" prototype glasses that Meta showcased at last year's event, a device that Zuckerberg called "the time machine to the future." The company did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment on the new glasses.

Meta, which expects to launch Orion in 2027, currently offers two lines of glasses - in collaboration with Ray Ban and Oakley - that incorporate artificial intelligence features, cameras, hands-free control and livestreaming to Meta's social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram.

Zuckerberg, who has poured more than \$60 billion since 2020 into Meta's augmented reality unit, has said that smart glasses



▲ People walk behind a logo of Meta Platforms company, during a conference in Mumbai, India.

will be the company's main conduit to integrate superintelligence - a hypothetical concept where AI surpasses human intelligence in every possible way - into everyday human lives.

In the effort to catch up in AI, Zuckerberg has sparked a billion-dollar talent war, aggressively poaching researchers from rivals, while whistleblowers have said Meta was putting profit over user safety.

Reuters reported last month that Meta's AI policies allowed its chatbots to engage children in provocative conversations about sex and race, and whistleblowers said earlier

this month Meta's researchers were told not to investigate harms to children using its virtual reality technology so that the company could claim ignorance of the problem.

Meta told Reuters previously that it has removed portions in its policies that stated it was permissible for chatbots to engage in romantic roleplay with children.

BIG TICKET PRICE MAY DETER BUYERS

At the two-day Connect conference, the company is also expected to launch its first wristband that allows users to control the new glasses with hand gestures. It is also ex-

pected to show an updated Ray-Ban line that comes with better cameras and battery life and supports new AI features, analysts said.

Meta is the rare Big Tech company to gain consumer traction in smart glasses, selling about two million pairs of the Ray-Ban line it makes with EssilorLuxottica (ESLX.PA), opens new tab since 2023, in a market where rival bets such as Google Glasses have stumbled. But the unit has posted billions in losses.

CNBC has reported the Hypernova glasses could feature Prada (1913.F), opens new tab branding, as the Italian label is known for thick frames and arms that could house many of the necessary components. Prada did not respond immediately to an emailed request for comment.

Still, analysts said the expected \$800 sticker price for the glasses - much higher than the \$299 starting price for the Ray-Ban line and \$399 for the sportier Oakley glasses - will mean that the device will have a negligible share of the market.

"These glasses will be somewhat bulky ... not the most consumer-friendly design. It is also going to be pretty expensive. So the volumes are going to be fairly low," said Jitesh Ubrani, research manager for International Data Corp's worldwide mobile device tracker.

He estimated the device would sell "a few hundred thousand units at most" but could help get more developers on board to build apps for it. "This is a step to eventually build a much-better mass-market headset."

As part of efforts to attract developers, Meta is also expected to open its smart glasses to third-party developers with a new software kit.

(Reuters)

UN inquiry finds top Israeli officials incited genocide in Gaza

A United Nations Commission of Inquiry concluded on Tuesday that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza and that top Israeli officials including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu incited these acts - accusations that Israel called scandalous.

The U.N. report, issued as Israel announced the start of a ground operation in Gaza City, cites examples of the scale of the killings, aid blockages, forced displacement and the destruction of a fertility clinic to back up its genocide finding, adding its voice to a scholars' association and rights groups that have reached the same conclusion.

"Today we witness in real time how the promise of 'never again' is broken and tested in the eyes of the world. The ongoing genocide in Gaza is a moral outrage and a legal emergency," Navi Pillay, head of the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and a former International Criminal Court judge, told a Geneva press briefing.

"The responsibility for these atrocity crimes lies with Israeli authorities at the highest echelons who have orchestrated a genocidal campaign for almost two years now with the specific intent to destroy the Palestinian group in Gaza."

ISRAELI OFFICIALS DISMISS REPORT

Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who was also named in the report, condemned its findings, which he said misinterpreted his words.

"While Israel defends its people and seeks the return of hostages, this morally bankrupt Commission obsesses over blaming the Jew-



▲ Mourners react during the funeral of Palestinians killed in Israeli fire, according to medics, at Al-Shifa hospital, in Gaza City.

ish state, whitewashing Hamas's atrocities, and turning victims of one of the worst massacres of modern times into the accused," he said.

Israel's ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, Daniel Meron, called the report "scandalous" and "fake", saying it had been authored by "Hamas proxies".

"Israel categorically rejects the libellous rant published today by this commission of inquiry," Meron told journalists.

Israel accuses the commission of having a political agenda against Israel and diverging from its mandate, and declined to cooperate with it.

Asked to respond to Israel's comments,

Pillay said: "I wish they would tell us where we went wrong on these facts, or just cooperate with us."

The commission's 72-page legal analysis is the strongest U.N. finding to date but the body is independent and does not officially speak for the United Nations. The U.N. has not yet used the term 'genocide' but is under increasing pressure to do so.

Pillay said she hoped U.N. rights chief Volker Turk and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres would read the report and "be guided by the facts".

Israel is fighting a genocide case at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. It has rejected such accusations, citing its right

to self-defence following the deadly October 7, 2023, Hamas attack that killed 1,200 people and resulted in 251 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

The subsequent war in Gaza has killed more than 64,000 people, according to Gaza health officials, while a global hunger monitor says part of the territory is suffering from famine.

The 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention, adopted in the wake of the mass murder of Jews by Nazi Germany, defines genocide as crimes committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such".

ISRAEL 'DEHUMANISING' PALESTINIAN POPULATION

To count as genocide, at least one of five acts must have occurred.

The U.N. commission found that Israel had committed four of them: killing; causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of the Palestinians in whole or in part; and imposing measures intended to prevent births.

It cited as evidence interviews with victims, witnesses, doctors, verified open-source documents and satellite imagery analysis compiled since the war began.

The commission also concluded that statements by Netanyahu and other officials are "direct evidence of genocidal intent." It cites his letter to Israeli soldiers in November 2023 comparing the Gaza operation to what the commission describes as a "holy war of total annihilation" in the Hebrew Bible.

(Reuters)

Israel says 'Gaza is burning' as it launches ground assault

ISRAEL unleashed a long-threatened ground assault on Gaza City on Tuesday, declaring "Gaza is burning" as Palestinians there described the most intense bombardment they had faced in two years of war.

An Israel Defence Forces official said ground troops were moving deeper into the enclave's main city, and that the number of soldiers would rise in coming days to confront up to 3,000 Hamas combatants the IDF believes are still in the city.

"Gaza is burning," Defence Minister Israel Katz posted on X. "The IDF strikes with an iron fist at the terrorist infrastructure and IDF soldiers are fighting bravely to create the conditions for the release of the hostages and the defeat of Hamas."

BODIES TRAPPED UNDER RUBBLE, THOUSANDS FLEE

In launching the assault, Israel's government defied European leaders threatening sanctions and warnings from even some of Israel's own military commanders that it could be a costly mistake.

U.S. President Donald Trump sided with Israel, telling reporters at the White House that Hamas would have "hell to pay" if it used hostages as human shields during the assault.

In the latest expression of international alarm, a United Nations Commission of Inquiry concluded that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza. Israel called the assessment "scandalous" and "fake".

Gaza health officials reported at least 50 people killed on Tuesday, most in Gaza City, as airstrikes swept across the city and tanks

advanced.

Where a missile had destroyed two multi-storey residential buildings in the middle of the night, people clambered over an immense mound of dislocated concrete to pry out victims, footage obtained by Reuters showed. A woman cried as a small child's body was pulled from the wreckage, hastily wrapped in a green blanket and carried away.

Abu Mohammed Hamed said several of his relatives had been wounded or killed, including a cousin whose body was trapped by a concrete block: "We don't know how to take her out. We have been working on it since 3 a.m."

Israel renewed its calls on civilians to leave, and long columns of Palestinians streamed towards the south and west in donkey carts, rickshaws, heavily laden vehicles or on foot.

"They are destroying residential towers, the pillars of the city, mosques, schools and roads," Abu Tamer, a 70-year-old man making the gruelling journey south with his family, told Reuters in a text message. "They are wiping out our memories."

RUBIO OFFERS US SUPPORT, EU PLANS NEW SANCTIONS

Hours before the escalation, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in Jerusalem that, while the United States wished for a diplomatic end to the war, "we have to be prepared for the possibility that's not going to happen".

But in Brussels, a spokesperson for the EU executive said it would agree on Wednesday to impose new sanctions on Israel, including suspending certain trade provisions.



▲ Smoke rises from the Al-Ghefari tower after it was hit by Israeli air strikes.

British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper called the assault "reckless and appalling" and called for an immediate ceasefire.

SOME WON'T FLEE: 'IT'S LIKE ESCAPING TOWARDS DEATH'

Some residents were staying put, too poor to secure a tent and transport or because there was nowhere safe to go.

"It is like escaping from death towards death, so we are not leaving," said Um Mohammad, a woman living in the suburb of Sabra, under aerial and ground fire for days.

The IDF said it estimated 40% of people in Gaza City had left. Hamas said 350,000 had left their homes in the eastern parts of the city, heading to displacement shelters in its central or western areas, while another 175,000 people had fled the city altogether,

heading south.

Much of Gaza City was laid to waste in the early weeks of the war in 2023, but around 1 million Palestinians had returned there to homes among the ruins. Forcing them out means confining most of Gaza's population to overcrowded encampments along the coast further south lacking food, medical supplies and space.

Three more Palestinians died of malnutrition and starvation in the past 24 hours, Gaza's health ministry said on Tuesday, raising total hunger deaths to at least 428, most in the last two months, in what a global monitor calls a man-made famine. Israel says the extent of hunger has been exaggerated.

(Reuters)

Usimamane to headline Hipnotik

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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SOUTH African rapper Usimamane has been revealed as the second act for the eagerly awaited Hipnotik Festival.

The event has also confirmed Mzansi rap sensation Tony Dayimane.

Scheduled for October 4, 2025, the festival returns after a seven-year hiatus, promising to reignite the country's creative spirit and youth culture with an electrifying lineup and a renewed mission. Tickets for the 2025 event are now available, with general admission at E400, VIP access at E800, and exclusive Golden Circle tickets priced at E1,500.

The festival's revival transcends entertainment; it is a strategic initiative designed to rejuvenate Eswatini's creative economy and empower young people

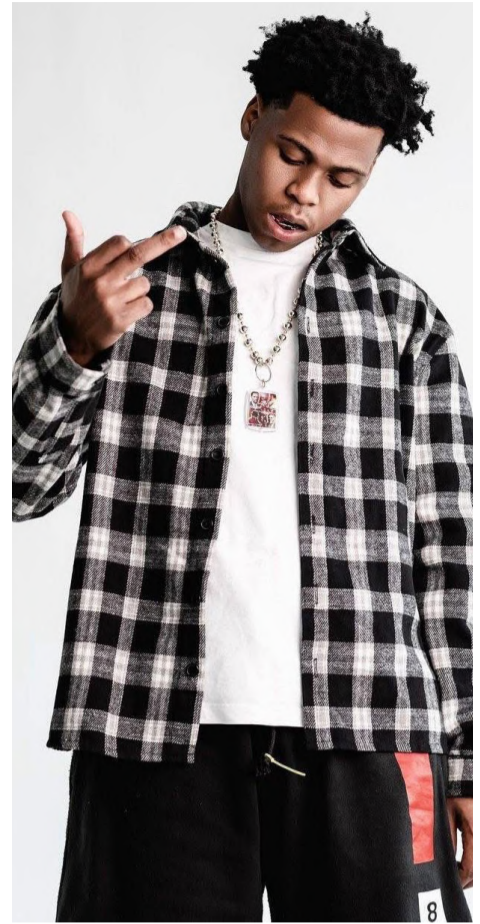
nationwide. In an exclusive interview, festival director and founder Sakhile Nkambule shared his excitement and vision for Hipnotik's return. "We're incredibly excited. The return of Hipnotik isn't just nostalgic, it's strategic," Nkambule said, emphasising the festival's role as a critical platform for local creatives, entrepreneurs, and service providers. He described Hipnotik as "a proven youth-led economic vehicle" that extends far beyond music and entertainment.

The seven-year pause allowed the organisers to reflect on the evolving needs of the creative community and the broader market. Nkambule acknowledged the festival's absence and its negative impact on Eswatini's entertainment ecosystem. "We've seen what the absence of Hipnotik did to the local entertainment ecosystem. Now, we're here to restore that pulse and take it further," he explained. While the festival promises an immersive and fun experience, Nkambule

stressed that empowerment remains the goal: "It's business time now, fun is the by-product, but empowerment is the product."

Hipnotik was founded on the belief that Eswatini's youth possess immense talent and ambition but often lack the platforms, business skills, and networks necessary to thrive. "Talent alone is insufficient; it requires platforms, business knowledge, networks, and brand equity. Hipnotik is that convergence point," Nkambule noted.

Looking ahead, Nkambule envisions Hipnotik as a premier youth development platform anchored in entertainment. He described it as a catalyst for job creation, small and medium enterprise (SME) development, digital storytelling, and brand partnerships. "This event is a catalyst for job creation, SME development, digital storytelling, and brand partnerships," he said.



▲ South African rapper Usimamane.

Eswatini Kota Festival postponed to September 2026 amid low ticket sales



THE much-anticipated Eswatini Kota Festival, a vibrant celebration of local cuisine and culture, has been officially postponed to next year.

The announcement was made by the Kota Festival Organising Committee, citing lower-than-expected ticket sales as the primary reason for the rescheduling. Originally slated to take place on Saturday, September 27, 2025, at Malkerns Country Club, the festival has now been moved to Friday, September 26, 2026.

This decision, though difficult, reflects the organisers' commitment to delivering an event that lives up to the high expectations of attendees, vendors, and partners alike.

In an official statement, the committee expressed sincere regret over the postponement, emphasising that the move was necessary to ensure the festival's success and sustainability. "After careful consideration and in light of lower-than-anticipated ticket sales, we have made the difficult decision to reschedule the event to next year," the statement read.

The Eswatini Kota Festival has grown in popularity over the years, becoming a key fixture on the country's cultural calendar. It celebrates the beloved 'kota,' a local street

food delicacy, alongside music, arts, and community engagement. The festival not only promotes local flavours but also serves as a platform for small businesses and artisans to showcase their talents and products.

The organisers highlighted that postponing the festival will provide them with the necessary time to enhance the event's offerings, increase public engagement, and ultimately deliver a more memorable experience. "As organisers, we remain committed to delivering an event that meets the highest standards and provides a memorable experience for all attendees, vendors, and partners. Postponing the festival will allow us the necessary time to improve our offering, increase engagement, and ensure the event reaches its full potential," the statement added.

Supporters of the festival have been assured that all tickets already purchased will remain valid for the new date in 2026, minimising inconvenience for those who had planned to attend. The committee also extended heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the festival thus far, acknowledging the community's enthusiasm and anticipation.

SPAK, Qayke Hills unite for new single 'Grinding'

SPAK and Qayke Hills are gearing up to make waves in the Eswatini music scene with their upcoming single titled "Grinding."

This fresh hip-hop/rap track, set for release on Friday, 26 September 2025, also features the dynamic artist Criss Tino, promising a vibrant blend of voices and styles that reflect the country's rich musical diversity.

The collaboration brings together artists from different corners of Eswatini, from Siteki and from Mbabane, symbolising a powerful unity in the nation's creative community. Their joint effort is a testament to the growing momentum of Eswatini's urban music scene, where storytelling and authentic expression take centre stage.

"Grinding" delves deep into themes of ambition, perseverance, and the everyday hustle that defines many young lives.

SPAK's verse resonates with a grounded sense of reality, as he

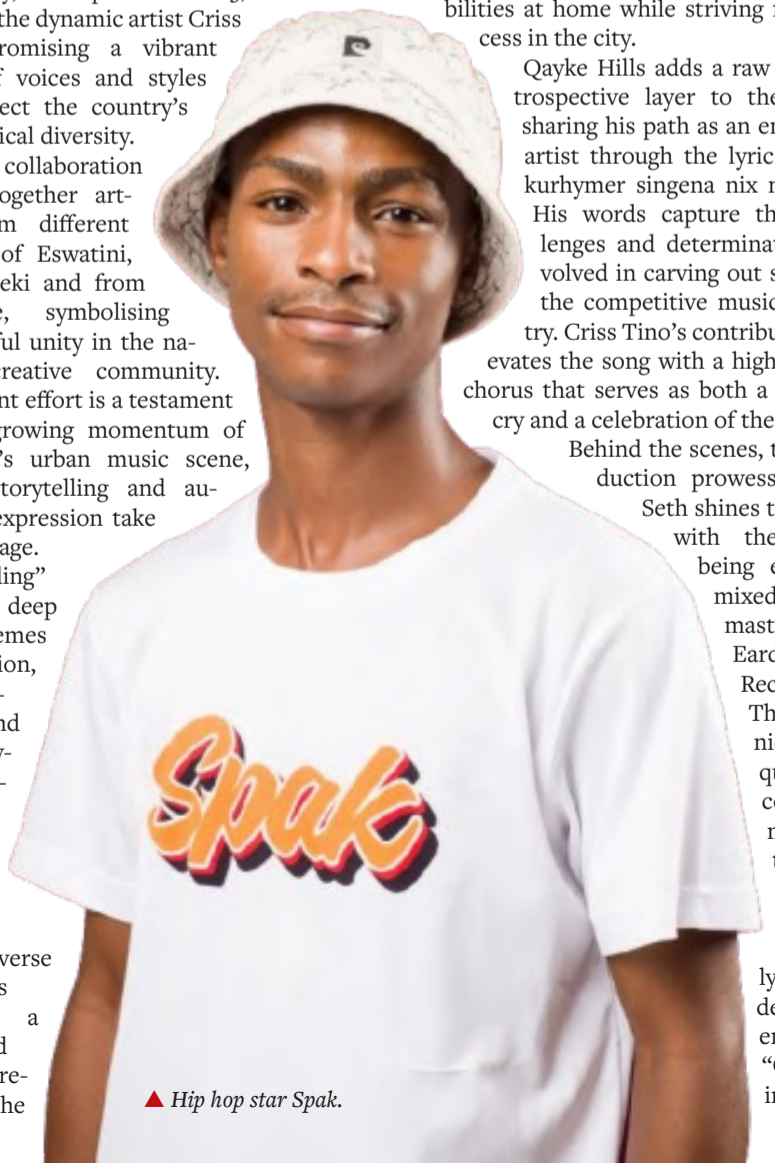
raps about his personal journey and values, highlighting the importance of family and education with the line, "nasekhaya nangihamba ngamcela make kutsi ngiye kuyo fundza eMbabane." This phrase reflects the common experience of balancing responsibilities at home while striving for success in the city.

Qayke Hills adds a raw and introspective layer to the track, sharing his path as an emerging artist through the lyric, "Scale kurhymer singena nix ntanga." His words capture the challenges and determination involved in carving out space in the competitive music industry. Criss Tino's contribution elevates the song with a high-energy chorus that serves as both a rallying cry and a celebration of the grind.

Behind the scenes, the production prowess of M.

Seth shines through, with the track being expertly mixed and mastered at Eardrumzz Records.

The technical quality complements the raw emotion and lyrical depth, ensuring "Grinding"



▲ Hip hop star Spak.

Jaziel Brothers slated for Swazi Polo

Stories By Sipheshle Dlamini
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FUN lovers are in it for a treat as renowned South African duo Jaziel Brothers are to headline the Swazi Polo.

The event will also be headlined by Enhle Mbali. Fashion lovers should mark their calendars for October 4, 2025, as Yellowstone, Swazi Lizkhar is set to transform into a vibrant hub of culture, sport, and community spirit from 11 am to 6 pm.

This year's event will be a spectacular affair, centred around the lively theme of "Polka Dot." Attendees can expect a day filled with live entertainment, high-end fashion shows, and an array of gourmet delicacies that showcase the best of Eswatini's culinary offerings.

Jaziel Brothers are a South African duo, consisting of Luthando and Ntobeko Ngizela, known for their Afro-pop, soul, and gospel-influenced music.

They began singing in church before studying music technology and collaborating with other musicians. Beyond their own music, they are also successful songwriters, producers, and talent scouts, shaping the careers of other South African artists and contributing to hit songs by artists like Jub Jub and Kelly Khumalo.

In an exclusive interview with Swazi Boy Entertainment's Public Relations Officer, Nduduzo Dankos, the inspiration behind the Swazi Polo event was unveiled. "The Swazi Polo event draws inspiration from Eswatini's rich cultural heritage and breathtaking natural beauty. It merges the timeless elegance and thrill of polo, a sport steeped in tradition with a distinctly local flair, symbolised by our vibrant polka dot theme. The

GET ready to laugh until your sides hurt, as Eswatini comedy star Cedric is set to entice fun lovers at the highly anticipated stand-up special, "Thenjiwe Unplugged."

The event is set to be held at Mbabane Theatre Club on October 4, 2025. After a whirlwind tour that has taken her from Edinburgh to Johannesburg, Thenjiwe is ready to deliver an unforgettable night of humour, honesty, and heart at Mbabane Theatre Club.

With a reputation for her sharp wit and relatable storytelling, Thenjiwe has captivated audiences around the globe. Fresh off a successful global tour with her show 'The Mandela Effect' and a sold-out run at the prestigious Edinburgh Festival, she is excited to return to her roots and share her unique perspective on life, love, and everything in between.

In a recent interview, Thenjiwe opened about the inspiration behind 'Thenjiwe Unplugged'. "To be honest, this show



▲ Eswatini comedy star Cedric.



▲ Jaziel Brothers.

imagery of galloping horses and lush green landscapes reflects the strength, grace, and vitality of our beloved nation," Dankos explained.

The choice of October 4 as the date for the event is particularly significant. "This date is a deliberate nod to unity and community spirit, aiming to position Eswatini as a hub of cultural celebration and sporting excellence on a global stage," he added. He further assured attendees of a fun-filled experience that goes beyond the sport itself.

"Swazi Polo is more than a sporting event; it's a full-day celebration. Attendees can look forward to exhilarating polo matches, gourmet food stalls, lively entertainment, and a festive atmosphere highlighted by the cheerful polka dot theme. I warmly invite everyone to mark their calendars for October 4, 2025. Bring your family, gather your friends, and join us for a memorable day in the heart of Eswatini. Let's celebrate our heritage, elegance, and community spirit, together," he concluded.

Cedric to rock 'Thenjiwe Unplugged'

is inspired by two things: my love for laughter and my desire to wear five costume changes without being judged," she quipped.

But the show is more than just jokes; it represents a full-circle moment for the comedian. "I've performed in London, Lagos, Lusaka, and even Bangkok. But there's something about home soil that hits differently. I wanted to start the tour in Durban, my hometown, and Eswatini, my favourite country, because it feels like I'm performing not just for fans, but for ancestors with front-row VIP seats."

Thenjiwe's goal for the show is clear: "I want to bring the best African comedy to the stage and prove that laughter is the one export we don't need visas for." The comedian promised a fun-filled experience that will leave attendees

in stitches. "Look, if you come to this show and don't laugh, you might need spiritual deliverance or a battery change," she joked. "This isn't just a comedy show, it's a healing. You will laugh in Zulu, in SiSwati, in English, even in tongues if the spirit leads!"

To elevate the experience, Thenjiwe is bringing along an all-star line-up of comedians. Among them is 'Thando Mseleku,' known as Baba ka WorldCup, who will be making his debut in Eswatini. "I've told him so many good things about the country that he packed his suitcase in June for an October show. He's ready," Thenjiwe shared.

Also joining Thenjiwe is 'Flymotion,' the first South African comedian she ever collaborated with on comedy skits before they became a trend. "I've always wanted to share the stage in Eswatini with him, but every time I came, he'd be 'booked and busy.' This year, the comedy gods opened the calendar, and it's finally happening," she exclaimed. The show will also feature one of the funniest guys in Eswatini, Mdura.

In a bid to showcase local talent, Thenjiwe is on the lookout for Eswatini's rising comedy stars. "I want to showcase local talent because laughter should be a shared currency. If you're funny and from Eswatini, slide into my DMs (respectfully) and let's make history," she encouraged.

Three legendary poets amplify Poetry In Comfort lineup

THE Poetry In Comfort lineup becomes even more enticing with the addition of three legendary poets: M Age, Gcayi, and Siya Imbongi.

Poetry In Comfort, one of the premier poetry shows in the Kingdom, is poised to make a grand return on December 6, 2025.

The show has also announced acts Anthonimass, Christian Maz, Poet Amandla, and Timcane The Poet. This event promises to be a celebration of both established and emerging poets, offering a unique blend of art and luxury in an outdoor setting. In an exclusive interview, Project Manager Mnqobi Tsabedze shared insights into the vision behind this year's show.

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

The event will feature distinct segments designed to enhance the overall experience for participants and attendees alike. The first segment focuses on Talent Search/Talent Appreciation, where young and undiscovered poets will be given a platform to showcase their skills on a significant stage. "This segment allows us to crown the best poets of the day," Tsabedze noted. "We believe that this will change the poetry industry; it is what it needs now. We aim to award all the amazing undiscovered talent a stage to showcase what they have to the world." Tsabedze emphasised the importance of maintaining a classy and manageable event, which is why they are limiting the number of entries. "We want to ensure that the event remains intimate and allows for meaningful interactions," he added.

Attendees can anticipate an experience unlike any other. "Poetry lovers should expect a memory they will keep forever," Tsabedze stated. "We urge poetry lovers, art lovers, and young people to buy tickets to support this great initiative, which looks at empowering youth and uplifting the art space in the country."

The Poetry In Comfort initiative is more than just a show; it is a movement aimed at uplifting the art scene in the Kingdom. By providing a platform for young poets, the event seeks to inspire the next generation of artists and encourage them to pursue their passion. "We believe that art is a powerful tool for change," Tsabedze remarked. "By empowering young poets, we are not only enriching the cultural landscape of our country but also fostering a sense of community and belonging among the youth."



▲ M Age for Poetry In Comfort.

Maskandi's lasting impact on South African music and how artists keep its legacy alive

MASKANDI, the Zulu folk music rooted in rural storytelling, remains a central voice in South Africa's music culture.

Born as a form of social commentary, it has shaped sounds from Afro-pop to contemporary hip hop.

Musicians today carry it forward by blending traditional guitar riffs, poetic lyrics and modern production, keeping the genre alive for new audiences.

At this year's South African Music Awards (Samas), Khuzani and the group Imithente are nominated for the Best Maskandi Album alongside Umafikizolo, Phuzekhemisi and Ntencane.

They spoke about the tradition they represent.

Khuzani said, "Maskandi is more than music, it is history, storytelling and identity carried through melody and rhythm. I keep isiZulu language, cultural idioms and indigenous instruments at the heart of my sound."

"At the same time, I take Maskandi into new spaces, from big stages and festivals to digital platforms, so younger generations inherit the genre and feel proud of it as a living global expression of who we are."

He added, "Being rooted in Maskandi has shaped me as an artist and as a person.

It taught me discipline, respect for culture and the power of music to speak to people's experiences. Recognition on this platform is not only about me, it is about every Maskandi pioneer whose footsteps I follow."

Imithente, a group that has been performing for nearly three decades, shared a similar commitment. "We have contributed by making original music and singing about things that build people, young and old," they said.

"Each year, we teach children the roots of Maskandi and show them how to write songs. First, they must understand the culture and become part of it to carry it forward."

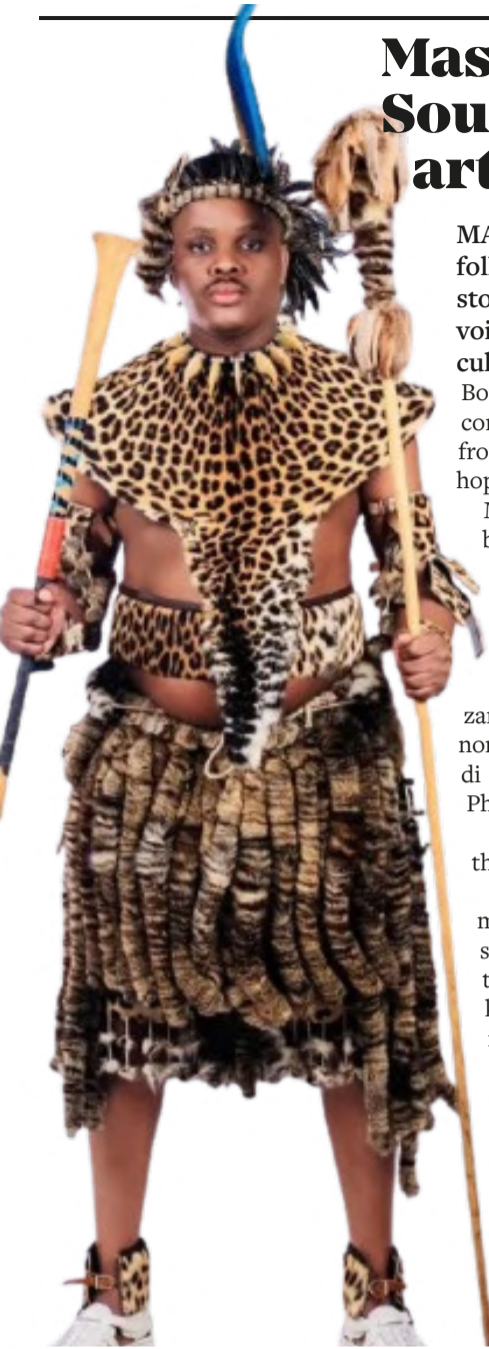
The group described their nomination as an honour, especially after the recent passing of their founder, Dumisile Manana Mthale.

"Winning this award will give us strength to move forward," they said.

"Maskandi is challenging because there is always something new happening. Followers notice immediately if you lose your sound, and it is not easy to come back. We stay rooted while still doing new things."

They remain focused on themes central to the tradition.

"We sing about courtship, how a woman should behave in the community, how virgins should carry themselves and we guide young boys on the respect they should give to elders and to women. We also sing about our style and confidence as the Bhinca Nation."



▲ Khuzani has helped bring Maskandi to a wider audience.

Black Motion releases 'Monateng' and celebrates their Samas nominations

BLACK Motion has returned with their latest single, "Monateng".

The track features percussion from Spice Drums and contributions from longtime collaborator DJ Buckz.

Together, they create a rhythmic experience that reflects the essence of African dance music.

Commenting on the single, the duo said, "Monateng is about joy, connection and the energy that music brings. It is an invitation to move together as one."

Sung in SePitori, the dialect of Pretoria, the track blends Afro house grooves with Latin-inspired rhythms. It is driven by hypnotic drums, layered percussion and chants, elements that have defined Black Motion's sound for more than a decade.

The song aims to connect listeners to the movement, music and culture that shape the duo's work.

The release of "Monateng" coincides with a milestone for Black Motion.

They are currently nominated for four South African Music Awards (Samas). The nominations include Best Collaboration for the single "Takala", Best Dance Album for "The Cradle of Art", Best Engineered Album for "The Cradle of Art" and Best Produced Album for the same record.



▲ Black Motion.

These nominations highlight the group's consistent contributions to South African music over the years.

Adding to the momentum, they will host their flagship event, Friends of Black Motion (FOBM), on September 20 at The Lion & Safari Park in Johannesburg. The event aims to bring fans closer to the duo's music and energy, offering a shared experience of culture and community.

In a press statement, they addressed the schedule change.

"Dear friends of Black Motion, we would like to sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused, but due to our recent Sama nominations and the opportunities that have come with them, we have decided to postpone FOBM from 6 September to 20 September."

"The decision allows us to create a bigger and better experience, one that celebrates this milestone with the energy and excellence you deserve."

Jojo Robinson bids farewell to her McLaren 570S and explores new supercar options

SOUTH African reality TV star Jojo Robinson took to social media to share that she is parting ways with her beloved McLaren 570S car.

Taking to Instagram, Robinson shared that she made the difficult decision to sell the car after purchasing it two years ago and reflected on her journey with the car.

"Said goodbye to our beautiful McLaren today after 2 years together. We made the call to sell her. We had so many good memories in that car, but sometimes you need a little something different," she said.

The price tag for a new McLaren supercar costs around R10 million, while a used model is estimated to cost around R4 million.

Even though she is selling the yellow McLaren car, she said that she is preparing to purchase a new car when she comes back to SA, revealing which two car options she has her eyes on.

"So once we get back from Dubai and Abu Dhabi next month, we will start looking for a new Supercar baby to add to the family.

She asked, "My top picks are the Lamborghini Huracan or the Ferrari 488 GTB ... any suggestions?"

"We obviously still have our other cars, so we need something in the SUPER car categories to replace her... we aren't in a rush," she added.

The "Real Housewives of Durban" star also playfully threw shade by sharing that the dress she is wearing while posing beside the flashy and luxurious car costs R135, and it is from Shein.

Proving that while she might not compromise when it comes to her impeccable taste for expensive cars, she still wears clothes that cost a reasonable

amount of money.

Robinson has proved that she is a car enthusiast and never shied away from showing off her love for supercars.

Last October, she celebrated purchasing a new grey Ford Mustang GT, making her the first person to get her hands on the seventh-generation car.

In addition, The Mustang Dark Horse is the first new performance name for the brand since Mustang Bullitt was introduced in 2001.

The supercar costs R1.5 million and was launched in 2024.

Jojo, who is known for her glamorous lifestyle, made it clear that she's not done with luxury wheels just yet. She revealed her top contenders for the next ride are the Lamborghini Huracán and the Ferrari 488 GTB.

"Any suggestions? We obviously still have our other cars, so we need something in the SUPER car category to replace her. We aren't in a rush, we want the right car for us — something we haven't already owned. So until we find her..."

For context, the McLaren 570S is one of the most desirable performance cars in South Africa, with used models typically priced between R2.8 million and R3.9 million, depending on the year and condition.

If Jojo does decide to go with one of her dream options, she'll need to dig even deeper into her pockets. A Lamborghini Huracán in South Africa can cost anywhere from R5 million to R7 million, while a Ferrari 488 GTB is priced in a similar range, often between R4.5 million and R6.5 million. Clearly, Jojo has her eyes on only the best of the best when it comes to replacing her McLaren.

She even added a playful note about her outfit in the photos, saying her dress was from Shein and cost only R135



▲ South African reality TV star Jojo Robinson.



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 disruptors 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

Ultra-processed foods may harm male reproduction



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 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 risk 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."

(Health Line)



Why weight loss can be challenging:

AN expert in obesity medicine explains the real reasons weight loss is so difficult and what you can do to work with your body rather than fight against it.

Weight loss is often framed as a simple equation of “eat less, move more,” but for many, the journey feels anything but simple. If you’ve ever struggled with slow progress, plateaus, or weight regain, you’re not alone, and it’s not your fault.

According to Dr. Jennah Siwak, a board-certified Family and Obesity Medicine physician (and known as @drjennahsiwak on social media), the reasons behind these challenges are deeply rooted in biology, genetics, environment, and even the design of our brains.

In this guide, Dr. Siwak shares evidence-based insights and compassionate advice to help people understand why weight loss is hard, and how to navigate it with more self-compassion and success.

Your brain is wired to fight weight loss

“Much of our eating behavior occurs beneath our conscious awareness,” explains Dr. Siwak. “Nobody wakes up thinking ‘I want to overeat and harm my health.’” But our brains, particularly the hypothalamus, have evolved to regulate and defend body weight, especially against weight loss.

While this system isn’t fixed and can adapt over time, it tends to resist weight loss more strongly than weight gain, reflecting an evolutionary bias toward preventing starvation.

This “lipo-stat” system responds to fat loss by triggering hunger and cravings, often without us realizing it. Leptin, a hormone produced by fat cells, drops when we lose weight, signaling to the brain that we’re starving. As a result, the brain ramps up hunger and slows metabolism.

“This system was built for survival in an environment where food was scarce,” says Dr. Siwak.

“Now it’s operating in a world of ultra-processed, calorie-dense foods. Our ancient brain circuits are overwhelmed.”

Genetics plays a bigger role than you might think

“Some people seem to eat whatever they want and not gain weight, while others have to be incredibly careful,” Dr. Siwak notes. That’s not just anecdotal. Genetic research backs it up as well.

Research suggests that 40-70% of body mass index (BMI) Trusted Source is genetically determined. However, Dr. Siwak emphasizes that genes interact with environment and lifestyle. “Genetics load the gun, but environment pulls the trigger.”

In other words, weight isn’t just a matter of willpower: it’s also biology.

Metabolism slows down during weight loss

One of the most frustrating aspects of weight loss is how it gets harder the longer you do it. That’s because your metabolism adjusts Trusted Source.

“When you lose weight, your body sees it as a threat,” says Dr. Siwak. “Hunger increases, metabolism slows, and you burn

... Why weight loss can be challenging: an obesity doctor shares insights and support



fewer calories, even at rest.”

This metabolic adaptation is your body’s way of protecting itself.

For people with obesity, the body may defend a higher baseline weight, making long-term weight loss maintenance especially challenging.

Dr. Siwak uses the analogy of a thermostat: “Imagine your body is set to 80°F. You can open a window to cool it down, but the heating system kicks in to bring it back to 80. That’s what your brain is doing with fat stores.”

Stress, sleep, and emotions affect eating behavior

Stress and limited sleep don’t just affect your mood; they also directly impact hunger hormones, decision making, and self-control.

“Impulsivity increases when we’re sleep-deprived or stressed,” explains Dr. Siwak, meaning the brain’s logical control center is less able to override cravings and urges.

Chronic stress can trigger emotional eating, while poor sleep disrupts key appetite-regulating hormones like ghrelin and leptin.

That’s why Dr. Siwak emphasizes prioritizing sleep and stress management as essential strategies for supporting your weight goals.

Considering environmental and medical challenges

Where you live, where you work, and what you have available can significantly impact your ability to lose weight. Dr. Siwak points



out that people working long or irregular hours, like night shifts, often experience disrupted circadian rhythms that affect hunger and metabolism.

In food deserts, where healthy options are limited, people may rely on processed, high calorie foods.

“If you don’t have a healthy lunch packed, you’re likely to grab what’s fast and convenient,” she says.

Certain medications can also contribute to weight gain. These include:

- Antidepressants (e.g., paroxetine,

amitriptyline)

- Mood stabilizers (e.g., lithium, quetiapine)
- Diabetes medications (e.g., insulin)
- Steroids, antihistamines, and some birth control methods

“Sometimes these medications are necessary and their benefits outweigh the risks, but talk with your doctor before stopping any medication,” Dr. Siwak advises. (Healthline)

News In Pictures



▲ Police officers stand at a security fence installed around the Long Walk in front of Windsor Castle, ahead of U.S. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump's arrival for their state visit to the country, in Windsor, Britain.



▲ A woman wearing a "Free Luigi" T-shirt walks at the Manhattan Supreme Court on the day Luigi Mangione.



▲ Cordell Tinch of the U.S. celebrates crossing the finish line to win the final ahead of Jamaica's Orlando Bennett and Jamaica's Tyler Mason in the Men's 110m Hurdles Final at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo..



▲ A passenger plane flies in the sky past the moon in the background over Belgrade, Serbia.



▲ Demonstrators confront U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers during a protest outside an ICE facility in Broadview, Illinois.



▲ Gerry and his horses Elton John and Larry prepare to compete in the horse ploughing event at the Irish National Ploughing Championships in Scraggan, Ireland.

Cardoso wants to see a better start against Gallants

MAMELODI Sundowns head coach Miguel Cardoso has stressed the importance of managing his players as they make a quick turnaround against Marumo Gallants at the Dr Petrus Molemela Stadium on Wednesday, 17 September.

After the 2017 sanctions were announced, South Sudan's government denied the U.S. characterisation of him as Kiir's personal financial adviser and said the decision to blacklist him was based on misleading information.

South Sudanese officials have been asking U.S. President Donald Trump's administration to lift those sanctions during recent bilateral discussions, Joseph Szlavik, a lobbyist working for Juba in Washington, told Reuters last month.

Those conversations have also touched on sending more U.S. deportees to South Sudan following the arrival in July of eight men, including seven from third countries, Szlavik said.

The State Department told Reuters it does not provide details on private diplomatic communications, but called on Juba to "begin using public revenue to address the public need of the people of South Sudan rather than rely on international assistance".

According to the U.N. report, South Sudan's government disbursed an estimated \$2.2 billion from 2021 to 2024 to companies

affiliated with Bol Mel through its off-budget "Oil for Roads" programme.

In some years, this programme consumed around 60% of all government disbursements, the report said.

Despite the outlays, the companies affiliated with Bol Mel completed less than \$500 million worth of driveable roads, inflating the value of construction contracts by overstating the length of the roads, overcharging relative to industry standards and building fewer lanes than agreed, the report said.

The report did not specify how the companies are affiliated with Bol Mel, but two of the three that it cited by name were those sanctioned by the U.S. in 2021.

Bol Mel has never publicly responded to the accusations against him.

In his response, Justice Minister Geng dismissed the allegations about road spending, saying sums cited in the report were absurdly high given South Sudan's economic realities.

He pointed to anti-corruption legislation enacted before independence and in July 2024 as proof of the government's "serious commitment and will to combat corrupt practices".

PUBLIC SPENDING DOES NOT MEET PUBLIC NEEDS

More broadly, the report said public spending priorities did not reflect the government's obligations to its citizens.

Little of the more than \$23 billion raised



▲ Mamelodi Sundowns head coach Miguel Cardoso.

from oil exports since independence has gone to address pressing needs like education, healthcare and food security, it said.

For example, in the 2022-2023 national budget, more money was allocated to the Presidential Medical Unit than to the community, public, secondary and tertiary public healthcare systems across the entire coun-

try, it said.

The government's response did not specifically respond to this point, but said it was working to promote the well-being of its citizens. The minister of presidential affairs did not respond to a request for comment.

(The Citizen)

Alcaraz is a gift for tennis – Corretja

"CARLOS Alcaraz is a gift to tennis, just when it appeared that a golden era of the men's game was drawing to a close," says former world No 2 and fellow Spaniard Alex Corretja.

The retirement of 22-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal after the end of 20-time Grand Slam champion Roger Federer's career left a huge hole in the men's game.

But Alcaraz, 22, has already taken his Grand Slam tally to six with this month's US Open triumph while forming an intense rivalry with Italian Jannik Sinner, who has four Grand Slams.

"It's a blessing to have a player like Carlos Alcaraz. He is truly a gift to the sport," Corretja told website BolaVIP.

"It is nearly a miracle to be honest. We have had so many great players in the past, but after Rafael Nadal, our legend of the sport, all of a sudden we have Carlos, who is comparable."

"He is winning Grand Slams, he is the world No 1. It is something very unexpected and (we are) very fortunate to have him."

Alcaraz reclaimed top spot in the rankings after beating Sinner in the New York final. He and Sinner have shared the past eight Grand Slams between them.

"I think we really need to appreciate it, because what he is doing is very, very difficult and he is only 22 years old and has already won six Grand Slams," Corretja said.

(Supersport)



▲ Carlos Alcaraz.



▲ Paris Saint-Germain's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

PSG forward Kvaratskhelia in doubt against Atalanta

PARIS Saint-Germain's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia remains a doubt for the holders' midweek Champions League game at home against Atlanta with the forward training separately from his teammates on Tuesday.

The 24-year-old Georgian injured himself in Sunday's 2-0 win over Lens but has not been included in the club's official medical update, meaning his presence on Wednesday remains possible, according to a source close to the squad.

The reigning European champions' sporting advisor, Luis Campos, had ex-

pressed his "optimism" about the Georgian's participation on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Ballon d'Or favourite Ousmane Dembele and Desire Doue, injured playing for France during the international break, are "continuing their treatment," the club said, while Lucas Beraldo, injured against Lens "remains in treatment due to a sprained ankle".

Striker Lee Kang-in, who also came off against Lens, was in training without any apparent discomfort.

(Supersport)

Nabi explains why Mayo is a priceless signing for Chiefs

KAIZER Chiefs head coach Nasreddine Nabi says new striker Khanyisa Mayo's lifelong love for Amakhosi only be a plus for the club.

Mayo has joined Chiefs on a season-long loan from Algerian giants CR Belouizdad.

The 27 year-old is the son of Patrick Mayo, who played up front for Chiefs between 2003 and 2007.

Chiefs' Nabi – 'We believe he will adapt quickly'

Chiefs tried to sign Mayo ahead of Nabi's first season at the club. But he eventually moved to Belouizdad from Cape Town City. Now, however, the Mthatha-born striker has got his move to Naturena.

"Mayo is a player that in my first pre-season, the club was working to get him," said Nabi this week at the Chiefs Village.

"It didn't materialise and he went to Algeria. But this is a boy that since he was very young, his family were Chiefs fans. He feels this is the opportunity of a lifetime and you cannot put a price on that.

"You know a player like that will do everything he can. He has experience, he has already been at teams where there is a lot of pressure.

"We believe he will adapt quickly and we are hopeful he can bring us a different style of play."

The Chiefs head coach confirmed that Mayo is fit after a full pre-season in Algeria. Mayo, however, is



▲ Kaizer Chiefs head coach Nasreddine Nabi.

unlikely to feature in the Betway Premiership against Sekhukhune on Tuesday as he waits for his registration to be confirmed.

Bafana players

Nabi, meanwhile, was delighted that two Chiefs players – Thabiso Monyane and Mduzuzi Shabalala – were with the Bafana Bafana camp for the recent Fifa World Cup qualifiers against Lesotho and Nigeria.

Monyane even came on against

Nigeria at the Free State Stadium and impressed as South African held on for a 1-1 draw.

"It is always an honour to have players from Chiefs representing the nation. We are hopeful in the future we will have even more players. But that requires a lot of work and sacrifices from the players to be at their consistent best."

(Supersport)

Verstappen cleared to race GT3s at Nordschleife

FOUR-TIME Formula 1 world champion Max Verstappen raced at Nurburgring Nordschleife over the weekend and obtained the permit necessary to get behind the wheel of a GT3 class car at the famed German track.

Red Bull Racing cleared the 27-year-old Dutchman, arguably the world's best race car driver, to make his debut in the Nurburgring Langstrecken-Serie (NLS), which holds all its races at the motorsports complex in Nurburg.

His fame and status aside, Verstappen still had to sit for a theory exam to gain access to the series. Saturday, he competed in a four-hour race alongside British driver Chris Lulham, driving a Porsche GT4 Cayman in the Verstappen.com Racing x Red Bull livery.

Verstappen completed his objective of driving 14 laps around the track split between two cars. But one of the cars, the No. 89 car, sustained damage during qualifying and left Verstappen unable to turn a wheel.

The committee overseeing permit decisions, however, reviewed Verstappen's case and granted him the DMSB Permit A.

"I had fun, but that's always the case here," Verstappen said afterwards, per Motorsport.com. "It was also good to drive those stints in



▲ Four-time Formula 1 world champion Max Verstappen.

race conditions with traffic, so both faster and slower cars. There was a 'code 60' neutralization, double yellows and yellow flags.

"I drove in the rain, on a dry track, and in between. I learned where there is more and less grip and did a start as well. It was nice to gain more experience on this circuit."

Verstappen can enter the ninth round of the NLS two weeks from now -- and he'll be eligible to drive a GT3 car, which are more powerful than GT4s.

Verstappen also indicated that he

wants to compete in the Nurburgring 24 Hours.

"There is only one circuit like the Nordschleife," Verstappen said. "It's a challenging track: today we saw that on such a long lap it can be dry in one section while wet in another. The asphalt also varies depending on the place. That makes it difficult to connect everything together, and that's what makes it so special. To race here for 24 hours in a GT3 car would be amazing."

(Supersport)



▲ James O'Connor.

Leicester-bound Wallaby O'Connor hopes to be back for All Blacks tests

FLYHALF James O'Connor flew out of Australia on Monday with no guarantee he will play another test for the Wallabies but let everyone know he wants to be back for the final Rugby Championship clashes against New Zealand.

O'Connor signed for Leicester Tigers in June and had planned to join up with them after the British & Irish Lions series, but the 35-year-old was retained in Joe Schmidt's Rugby Championship squad due to the Wallabies' injury list.

However, with Ben Donaldson returning from a thigh injury and fellow flyhalf Tom Lynagh expected to be available for the All Blacks tests after a hamstring strain, O'Connor was released from the Wallabies squad to head to England.

The 68-test playmaker posted a picture of himself with his dog before his flight, with the caption: "This is not goodbye.. It's see you soon.. Hopefully.. Bledisloe."

The final two tests of the Rugby Championship against New Zealand at Eden Park on 27 September and in Perth the following week double as the Bledisloe Cup, the annual series contested between Australia and the All Blacks.

Coming back to test rugby this season after a three-year hiatus, O'Connor has been among the Wallabies' top performers in the Rugby Championship.

He played a big part in their drought-breaking win over world champions South Africa at Ellis Park last month and helped inspire their comeback win over Argentina in Towns-

ville with a busy cameo off the bench in the second half.

He was the driving force again in the Wallabies' late rally against the Pumas in Sydney last Saturday replacing Tane Edmed, who struggled in his first test as starting flyhalf.

With O'Connor in good form, and Edmed, Lynagh and Donaldson boasting less than 30 tests between them, home fans and rugby media have bemoaned O'Connor's release with the Wallabies eyeing a rare chance for silverware.

Australia lead the Rugby Championship on 11 points, one ahead of South Africa and New Zealand, who suffered a record defeat to the Springboks in Wellington over the weekend.

Schmidt praised O'Connor's performance after the 28-26 loss to Argentina in Sydney on Saturday but was non-committal when asked whether he would include him in his squad for the All Blacks' tests.

"I will definitely be having a chat to James this evening or tomorrow morning because we have to make a decision pretty much straight away," Schmidt told reporters.

Rugby Australia declined to comment on whether any decision had been made.

Teammates have endorsed O'Connor's involvement in the Wallabies' setup, saying his experience had been invaluable.

"He backs himself, and that confidence that he brings, brings everyone with him as well," scrumhalf Tate McDermott said over the weekend.

"I think there's definitely a place for him long-term, 100 per cent."

(Supersport)

We will restore national pride – Artwell

Stories by **Sibusiso Masilela**
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NATIONAL Women Under 20 head coach Artwell Dlodlu has vowed to restore the nation's pride during the 2026 World Cup Women 20 qualifiers. Dlodlu said this during the squad media day held on Monday ahead of the first leg encounter against South Africa slated for the Somhlolo National Stadium on Friday.

"We are looking forward to the match against South Africa. My players are geared up for the task ahead of them following the recent international friendly match against Mozambique, where we were able to assess the players. We will do our level best to salvage the national pride during this tie and give the nation something to smile about," he said.

The squad captain, Bethusile Mathonsi, said they are ready for the match.

"We look forward to the match and have done the necessary preparations for the match. We will put in a good and not underestimate the opposition by putting in a gallant display," she said.

LEGENDARY former Young Buffaloes and Sihlangu goalkeeper Nhlanhla Gwebu has been appointed national Under-20 team goalkeeper coach.

The award-winning one-time Malanti Chiefs goalkeeper is part of the junior squad technical bench headed by former Denver Sundowns mentor Artwell Dlodlu.

He recently ventured into goalkeeping courses since hanging up his gloves two seasons ago. Gwebu is part of the national side preparing to face South Africa in the 2026 FIFA World Cup Under 20 on Friday at Somhlolo National Stadium.

Dlodlu said he is happy to have Gwebu in the technical bench.

"I am pleased to have Nhlanhla in the technical bench. His presence will inspire our young goalkeepers who are still in the development stage," he said

Other members of the national team include Manzini Wanderers ladies team legend Simphiwe Khoza and Ezulwini United medic Ncamsile Nkambule.

The 2026 African U-20 Women's World Cup qualification is the 13th edition of the



▲ Women national Under 20 at training at the EFA technical centre in preparations for the 2026 FIFA World cup under 20 championships qualifier against South Africa. INSET National Under 20 women coach Artwell Dlodlu making remarks.

Nhlanhla Gwebu joins Under 20 women's team

African U-20 Women's World Cup qualification, the biennial international youth football competition organised by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to determine which women's under-20 national teams from Africa qualify for the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup.

Players born on or after 1 January 2006 are eligible to compete in the tournament.

Four teams qualified from this tournament for the 2026 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in Poland as the CAF representatives.

The full squad

Goalkeepers

Gwebu Lindelwa
Mbuyisa Lindokuhle

Defenders

Gama Nozenzo
Mathonsi Bethusile
Mabaso Nomsilo

Sibandze Teddy
Mngometulu Lihle
Dlamini Thubelihle
Gamedze Londiwe
Ngwenya Siphesihle

Midfielders

Dlamini Zwakele
Msibi Sphesihle
Mpanza Sipheselele
Maseko Siphesihle
Gerra Nonhlanhla
Sacolo Nkosephayo
Mabila Amanda
Matsebula Simphiwe
Nhamposi Silethudumo
Sukati Sinethemba

Strikers

Dlamini Lindiwe
Ngoamphalala Siphokazi
Dlodlu Nonhle
Shongwe Sakhe



▲ Goalkeeper coach Nhlanhla Gwebu drilling goalkeepers Lindelwa Gwebu and Lindokuhle Mbuyisa.



▲ Manzini Wanderers striker Lindiwe Dlamini making remarks.



▲ Players doing minor exercises.

Sept. 27 kick-off for Mlu&Lee Pool League

By Chris Dlamini

THE newest Mlu&Lee E30 000 Pool League is set to kick off towards the end of this month.

The league will play under the guise of the Manzini Regional Pool Association (MRPA), replacing Dixie's International which had been sponsoring the MRPA for five consecutive years to the tune of E40 000.

"Teams are still busy with registration of players but all is taking shape. Our league kick-off has been confirmed for September 27," said MRPA Secretary Musa Dlamini.

He said they were hopeful that every team would have successfully registered by then and be ready to play their first fixtures under the new sponsorship.

"Registration is ongoing and each new team pays E1 200, while it's E1 000 for old member clubs," said Dlamini.

The secretary also confirmed they had eight teams for the new league, four fewer than in the previous Dixie's International 40 000 sponsored league. Some of the giant member clubs under MRPA broke away to start a zonal league, currently outside of the association's statutes.

These include Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS), Correctional, Ludzeldzwe Lions and Ludzeldzwe Tigers.

Meanwhile, MRPA's new members are Dvudvusini, Blackball Queens and Mlandvo Pool Team.

The latter has made a massive introduction into the MRPA by clinching the Mlu&Lee Investment Teams Knockout Tournament just under a month ago, beating experienced sides like Way Inn and Malkerns in the semis and final.



▲ Players in action during the last Mlu&Lee pool tournament at Luyengo.

'Bharuka' maintains unbeaten run

By Chris Dlamini

HE is smooth-sailing. That is Manzini Pool Club (MPC) decorated player Eddie 'Bharuka' Mondlane. The star player began the Sphana Investments Open Singles League second round on a high note over the weekend.

Mondlane ensured he continued where he had left off when the first round ended about a month ago.

He has retained his unbeaten run in 20 games now, taking his points tally to 60. The MPC star, whose team is also holding the summit in the teams league, has gone 15 points clear of his nearest rival, Flag Nxumalo.

The latter has played 21 games and has 45 points after suffering six defeats. However, Nxumalo moved from third to second over the weekend, while Sonico Dlamini dropped to fourth after his second defeat in 16 games.

Interestingly, one of the defeats Dlamini suffered, came from Mondlane.

This has left Dlamini occupying fourth with 42 points.

He is tied with Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) gifted player, Khanyokuhle 'PlayStation' Simelane who is in third place.

Dlamini remains very much in the

chase for the honours as he has played four matches fewer than Mondlane.

The second-round games resumed over the past weekend.

Meanwhile, Mondlane beat Nxumalo 7-3 and had the last laugh against Sibusiso Nhlabatsi in two of his five fixtures while Dlamini lost 7-4 to Menzi Ngomane.

Sphana Open Singles League Results:

Flag 7-1 Linda
Dinoh 7-1 Mbingo
Dinoho 7-0 Goina
Flag 7-0 Goina
Ebenezer 7-5 Mkhabela
Menzi 7-5 Ndumiso
Flag 7-0 Ndumiso
Menzi 7-4 Sonico
Eddie 7-2 Ndumiso
Eddie 7-3 Flag
Flag 7-1 Lushaba
Eddie 7-2 Mkhabela
Eddie 7-0 Lushaba
Langza 7-6 Flag
Langza 7-1 Celmusa
Celmusa 7-6 Menzi
Sibusiso 7-5 Linda
Eddie 7-4 Sibusiso
Menzi 7-6 Mbingo
Langza 7-6 Lushaba
Khanyokuhle 7-0 Celmusa
Khanyokuhle 7-1 Linda
Khanyokuhle 7-2 Mbingo
Celmusa 7-2 Mbingo
Langza 7-1 Mkhabela



▲ Pool star Eddie 'Bharuka' Mondlane.

Stories By Sibusiso Dlamini
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THE Mbabane Swallows ownership wrangle has taken a new twist.

The Swallows Pty (Ltd) faction stormed the Sigwaca House on Tuesday, demanding answers from the Eswatini Football Association and Premier League of Eswatini.

The attempt of the Pty (Ltd) faction hit a snag as they did not meet both EFA and PLE representatives, who were reportedly held up by other work commitments.

The Princess Lungile-led regime wants to repossess the team from the Swallows FC faction led by former Elders Chairman Absalom Ngwenya.

Handover

The aggrieved faction representative, Bhekithemba Ginindza, said they want the two football bodies to facilitate the handover of the team back to them.

“We humbly request the Eswatini Football Association and PLE to facilitate a meeting with the other faction. This will enable the smooth handover of the team back to us as it was agreed last season,” he said.

Ginindza further stated that they will now take the legal route since the matter has not

‘Birds’ Pty (Ltd) faction invades Sigwaca House

been addressed.

“We have no choice but to take the legal route since the football authorities are not taking us seriously. Our lawyer John Hlophe is working on the matter,” he said.

EFA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Frederick Mngomezulu could not comment on the matter when compiling this report after his cell phone rang unanswered.

Attempts were also made to get PLE CEO Pat Vilakati, but his cell phone rang unanswered.

Swallows FC Public Relations Officer (PRO) Knowledge Ngwenya was also not reached for comment as his cell phone rang unanswered.

EFA recently endorsed the newly formed Arbitration Committee that will address football disputes in a bid to avoid taking football matters to court.



▲ Mbabane Swallows players.

Sicelo Mkhonta retains Sea Birds Chairmanship

MANZINI Sea Birds veteran administrator Sicelo Mkhonta has retained his Chairmanship position at the club.

Mkhonta also represents the club on the Premier League board of governors. He is also an elected executive member for the top-flight football entity.

Other members of the hub outfit executive members include General Manager Sibusile Mamba, Thami Cebe (Public Relations Officer), and Mlungisi Mamba (head of Security).

The club further retained head coach Friday Myeni in the hot seat.

Former strong defender Thembumenzi Mayisela is the physical trainer, while Nhlanganiso Macwele is the goalkeeper coach.

Myeni recently led the club to a third-place

finish in the 2025 8Bet Trade Fair cup.

Mkhonta said he was confident that the new structure would take the team to greater heights.

“We look forward to a successful season and call upon the entire Sea Birds family to rally behind the team,” he said.

The full structure

Chairman - Sicelo Mkhonta.

General Manager - Sibusile Mamba.

Logistics Manager - Sandile Mkhize.

PRO - Thami Cebe.

Head of Security - Mlungisi Mamba.

Kit Manager - Bonginkhosi Dlamini.

Head coach - Friday Myeni.

Trainer - Thembumenzi Mayisela.

Goalkeeper coach - Nhlanganiso Macwele.

Team medic - Bhekizwe Mohale.



▲ Zesco United and Eswatini international defender Lindo Mkhonta.

Lindo in the Confed Cup assignment

ESWATINI international defender Lindo Mkhonta will be involved in interclub competitions this weekend.

Mkhonta will be part of the Zesco United squad that will face the Gabonese side Football Canon FC in the CAF Confederation Cup.

The first leg match will be played on Saturday at the Franceville Stadium.

The ex-Young Buffaloes defender said preparations for the tournament are proceeding smoothly.

“We are looking forward to the match and will do our level best to make our supporters. This tournament is a perfect platform for me to explore my career on the continent,” he said.

Mkhonta has recently reunited with former Mbabane Swallows head coach Honour Janza, who is the technical director for the Ndola-based side.

Mkhonta is part of the country’s five foreign-based players, which include Justice Figareido (Zesco United, Zambia), Mxolisi Mkhonto (Jwaneng Galaxy, Botswana), Banele ‘Stiga’ Ndzabandzaba (Botswana Defence Force), and Alakhe Mdluli (Amazulu FC).

He was left out of the Sihlangu squad that competed in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Cameroon and Libya.

The player has numerous Sihlangu caps under the guidance of various coaches such as Kostadin Papic, Dominic Kunene, and the incumbent Zdravko Logarusic.



▲ Sea Birds players.



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‘Birds’ Pty (Ltd) faction invades Sigwaca House

● **The Mbabane Swallows ownership wrangle takes a new twist as faction stormed Sigwaca House on Tuesday, demanding answers from the Football Association and Premier League of Eswatini. *Page 23***