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PM unveils bold strategy to combat drought, build regional resilience

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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... Eswatini's Nkwe programme anchors ambitious drive for food sovereignty and climate adaptation

THE Kingdom of Eswatini has taken a decisive step toward combating one of Southern Africa's most persistent threats: drought.

At a landmark event held in the serene Ezulwini Valley, aptly called the "valley of heaven," Prime Minister Russell Dlamini officially launched three vital initiatives aimed at strengthening regional and national resilience to climate-induced disasters. These initiatives, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Disaster Risk Reduction Platform, the Eswatini National Platform, and the Eswatini Drought Centre of Excellence, signal a new era of collaboration, innovation, and proactive disaster management across the region.

The Prime Minister opened the event by expressing his profound pride and humility in hosting this historic occasion. He emphasised that the launch reaffirms a collective commitment to "building a safer, resilient, and sustainable future for our region." Central to Eswatini's national strategy is the Nkwe Programme of Action 2024-2029, with a particular focus on Objective 4, which aims to "improve food sovereignty and sustainable development by the year 2029." This objective aligns closely with the forum's theme: "Towards a resilient SADC: advancing regional collaboration and innovation for drought risk management and early warning."

Dlamini highlighted the urgency of addressing drought, describing it as a "silent crisis" that has historically shaped the region's development and continues to threaten livelihoods, economies, and ecosystems. He recalled the devastating 2015-2016 El Niño-induced drought that left nearly half of Eswatini's population in need of humanitarian assistance. The economic toll was staggering, with the drought costing approximately E3.84 billion, about 19 per cent of the national budget at the time and 7 per cent of the country's GDP. This experience underscored the limitations of reactive disaster responses, which are "too costly, both in resources and in human suffering," prompting the country to shift toward more strategic, long-term resilience building.

In response, Eswatini has adopted a comprehensive approach to drought risk management, prioritising infrastructure and policy reforms. The Prime Minister detailed the "Eswatini Water Supply and Sanitation Access Project," financed through a World Bank loan, which improved water access in the drought-prone Shiselweni region. This initiative integrated water infrastructure, sanitation, and disaster risk management, reflecting a holistic strategy rather than a linear, sector-by-sector approach.

The PM reported that most project deliverables have been achieved or are nearing completion. These include the establishment of water infrastructure, development of risk profiles, municipal drought management plans, and the creation of the Composite Drought Index - Eswatini (CDI-E), a drought monitoring tool. The National Drought Policy, a key framework integrating drought risk management into the broader development agenda, ensures that "plan-



▲ Stakeholders pictured at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Disaster Risk Reduction Platform.

ning, budgeting and implementation across sectors are informed by risk and sustainable efforts."

Eswatini's efforts are firmly rooted in global and regional frameworks. The Prime Minister cited the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), which advocates understanding risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and building back better. He also referenced the 2015 Paris Agreement's call to limit global warming while supporting climate adaptation, as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially those focused on food security, water management, climate action, and ecosystem preservation. Regionally, Eswatini aligns with the SADC Disaster Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan 2022, recognising that "only through collective action can we address the shared risks that transcend our borders."

The launch of the SADC Regional Platform and the Eswatini National Platform represents a tangible step toward these ambitions. According to Dlamini, these platforms will facilitate "dialogue, coordination, and joint action," bringing together governments, communities, civil society, the private sector, academia, and development partners to co-create solutions that are "regional in scope but speaking to local realities." They will also act as conduits for information dissemination and governance enhancement in disaster risk reduction.

A centrepiece of the event was the inauguration of the Eswatini Drought Centre of Excellence, envisioned as a hub for research, policy support, and innovation. The Centre will leverage science and technology, including climate modelling and early warning systems, while integrating indigenous knowledge and citizen science, which have long been vital to local communities. By bridging science and practice, the Centre aims to ensure that decisions made at the highest levels are grounded in the realities faced by vulnerable populations.

Dlamini urged the University of Eswatini,



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini making remarks.

the World Bank, and the SADC Secretariat to collaborate closely with the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) to operationalise the Centre for the benefit of the entire African continent. Acknowledging the critical role of international support, the Prime Minister praised the World Bank Group for helping Eswatini shift its perspective on drought from a mere disaster response issue to a broader development initiative. He expressed pride in the NDMA's central role in resilience building, noting that its experience offers valuable lessons for institutions both locally and beyond.

Looking ahead, Dlamini painted a clear vision of the future: one where communities "anticipate risks and respond early and appropriately," where regional solidarity is not just a principle but a "lived reality," and where innovation in risk financing, social

protection, and water management empowers people to "withstand shocks and continue to thrive in the face of multiple hazards."

He called on all participants to make the gathering a defining moment, stating, "Let it be said that in Ezulwini, the 'Valley of Heaven,' in the Kingdom of Eswatini, we chose to strengthen our resolve, reinforced our partnerships, and raised our ambition." He challenged everyone to return home ready to implement the drought risk and resilience assessment methodology.

Concluding with a powerful African proverb, Dlamini reminded the audience: "When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind." His call to action was clear; through unity, commitment, and proactive measures, the region can deepen its roots of resilience and face the future with confidence.

Stories by Thokozeni Mazibuko

IN a bid to enable early and quick case detection of Tuberculosis (TB) to reduce delays in initiating care and ultimately save lives, the Minister of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula has commissioned four AI equipped state-of-the-art mobile TB trucks and 12 motorbikes worth over E21 million.

The commissioning of the mobile trucks and the motorbikes, which will be used by the National TB Control Programme for TB screening purposes, took place yesterday morning at Matsapha Central Medical Stores (CMS).

When making his remarks, the minister said he was pleased to commission the four state-of-the-art mobile TB trucks, three of which came equipped with Computer-Aided Detection and Artificial Intelligence (CAD/AI) technology and Gene-Xpert, along with 12 motorbikes to further strengthen the ministry's outreach capacity.

"The trucks and motorbikes were procured through Global Fund, costing a combined E21 528,552, of which E622 764 was for the motorbikes and E20 905,788 was for the trucks," the minister said.

He stated that yesterday's event marked a significant milestone in the national fight against tuberculosis, a disease that remains one of the country's most pressing public health challenges.

He stated that with an incidence rate of 350 per 100 000 population, TB continues to impact families, disrupt livelihoods, and claim lives that could otherwise be saved through early detection and timely treatment.

"The trucks we are commissioning today (yesterday) are more than just vehicles. They are mobile health facilities that will take cutting-edge diagnostic services to the heart of our communities, particularly those in hard-to-reach areas," said the minister.

He stated that through the integration of CAD/AI technology, they were enhancing their ability to screen and diagnose TB faster

E21mln mobile TB trucks, 12 motorbikes to enhance fight against TB



▲ Minister of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula cutting the ribbon during the commissioning of the mobile trucks and the motorbikes at Matsapha Central Medical Stores.

and more accurately. He said this technological leap will enable early and quick case detection to reduce delays in initiating care and ultimately save lives.

"We have already tested one of these trucks at the recently ended Eswatini International Trade Fair, and we have seen this high efficiency at work. We screened 229 people, identifying eight cases that were referred to health facilities for further interventions," the minister said.

He stated that even the Prime Minister Russell Mmiso Dlamini gave the mobile truck a go and was amazed at the quickness and precision of the technology.

He said they were thrilled that these trucks will now benefit Emaswati countrywide.

"Out of the four mobile units: three are fully equipped with Chest X-Ray and CAD/AI for rapid and precise TB screening in the field. One is equipped with Chest X-Ray only,

complemented by GeneXpert technology for on-site sputum testing and confirmation of TB diagnosis," he said.

The minister said the arrangements have been made to also equip this truck with CAD/AI, and this will be done soon.

He said the benefits of using Chest X-Ray and CAD/AI include amongst others that it helps identify TB cases early, even in asymptomatic individuals or those with unusual presentations.

The minister said CAD/AI tools improve diagnostic accuracy, identifying subtle signs of TB and other conditions such as lung cancer, silicosis, smoking-related damage, and other respiratory diseases.

He added that AI systems analyse chest X-rays or other data in seconds or minutes, speeding up the diagnostic process.

"It facilitates early TB initiation and improves treatment outcomes. Mobile screen-

ing units with AI-integrated X-ray machines can reach communities and still function properly using solar panels," he said.

He stated that once deployed, AI tools can screen large numbers of patients at low marginal cost.

According to the minister, Chest X-Ray is a sensitive tool able to detect lung abnormalities, including TB, even in early or asymptomatic stages.

The minister stated that the newly procured mobile screening trucks will be deployed regionally. He said each region will assume full ownership and responsibility for the use and upkeep of the trucks, with a primary focus on TB screening.

He stated that the trucks will be officially handed over to the Principal Health Administrator (PHA) in each region to support the integration of services at regional level.

He highlighted that this aligns with the ministry of health's broader strategy of integrating health services, ensuring the trucks are utilised collaboratively across various health programmes, while maintaining their core function in TB active case finding.

"In terms of roles and responsibilities, through the leadership of PHAs, the regions will be custodians of the trucks by overseeing their maintenance, security, daily operations, and ensuring proper use of equipment during TB screening activities," he said.

The minister stated that the PHA's will also ensure focused and strategic use of the trucks for TB activities, through the Regional TB/HIV Coordinator. He said they will also work with facilities to mobilise required personnel that is radiographers, microscopists and drivers and will be responsible for fuelling and routine maintenance of the trucks.

'This investment reflects the government's unwavering commitment to ending TB by 2035'

THIS was revealed by the Minister of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula.

According to Matsebula, the commissioning of the mobile TB trucks and the motorbikes also aligns with their pursuit as a ministry of health of universal health coverage and equitable access to essential health services.

Moreover, he said it highlights the power of partnership.

"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners, stakeholders, and dedicated health workers who continue to contribute their time, expertise, and resources to the national TB response," the minister.

The minister said special thanks also goes to the Global Fund for their generous support in funding the procurement of the mobile TB Screening Units and motorbikes, which will significantly strengthen active TB case finding efforts in the country's communities.

The minister also extended the ministry's sincere thanks to Central Medical Stores (CMS) for accommodating and safeguarding this equipment pending its commissioning.

"Let me take this opportunity to reaffirm our ministry's commitment to ensuring that



▲ Minister of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula.

these resources are used effectively and sustainably, reaching those who need them most," said the minister.

He revealed that the ministry's plans focus on strengthening active TB case finding through community outreaches, cluster screenings and other targeted TB screening to enhance early detection, ensure timely intervention, and help curb the spread of TB within communities.

"Together, let us continue to work with determination until we achieve a TB-free Eswatini," he said.



The 12 motorbikes will empower TB adherence officers – Minister

THE Minister of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula has disclosed that the 12 motorbikes that accompanied the mobile TB Screening trucks will empower their TB adherence officers, based at health facilities, to reach communities more efficiently.

The minister said this will enhance active TB case finding, contact tracing, and treatment support, even in the most remote areas of the country, supporting TB patients throughout their treatment journey and ensuring they understand their medication regimen and adhere to it consistently.

He said though the motorbikes, the TB adherence officers will also conduct home visits to provide counselling, monitor treatment progress, and follow up on missed

appointments as well as identifying and screening close contacts of TB patients, particularly within households and other high-risk settings.

He added that through the motorbikes, the TB adherence officers will manage to provide health education to patients, families, and communities on TB prevention, treatment, and the importance of completing therapy and through them (motorbikes), they will also participate in community outreach and mobile screening activities to help identify undiagnosed TB cases and link them to care. "Our fight against TB requires innovation, resilience, and collective effort. These mobile trucks and motorbikes will play a critical role in accelerating our journey towards ending TB as a public health threat," said the minister.

MPs call for probe into allegedly corruption riddled RSTP

By Kwanele Dhladhla

THE Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP) has once again come under intense parliamentary scrutiny, with two Members of Parliament separately set to table motions in the House of Assembly calling for urgent investigations and accountability at the troubled institution.

In the Notice Paper issued by Speaker in the House of Assembly Jabulani Mabuza for Thursday's parliamentary business, Mbabane East MP Welcome Dlamini is expected to move a motion calling for the appointment of a seven-member Select Committee to investigate alleged corruption at the RSTP Advanced School of IT.

The motion, to be seconded by a fellow MP, seeks to probe damning allegations that have cast a shadow over the institution's credibility.

According to the proposed motion, the committee will examine the allegations in detail, assess the impact on students who have lost valuable time and resources, and make recommendations on appropriate compensation for the affected learners. The MPs also want the committee to evaluate whether the institution should continue operating under its current structure. The committee is expected to present its findings and recommendations within 14 days of the adoption of the motion.

In a separate motion, Lobamba Lomdzala MP Marwick Khumalo is expected to address what he termed the "stagnant and paralysed status" of RSTP. He noted that while the Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) had introduced innovations such as the "government in your



▲ Mbabane East MP Welcome Dlamini is expected to move a motion calling for the appointment of a seven-member Select Committee to investigate alleged corruption at the RSTP Advanced School of IT.

hand" initiative, the absence of a substantive Chief Executive Officer remained a major setback for the parastatal.

Khumalo's motion, once adopted, will require the Minister for ICT Savannah Maziya to table in Parliament a comprehensive programme of action to rescue the institution. The minister will also be expected to specify the challenges facing the RSTP and the kind

of support required from the House. This report must be presented within 14 days.

The fresh calls for accountability came just days after the Auditor General Timothy Matsebula's Compliance Audit Report that exposed glaring financial management lapses at RSTP. Among the key findings was the non-remittance of employee Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) taxes to the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS), which resulted in an outstanding liability of E3.24 million at the close of the financial year.

The audit also revealed overdue medical aid contributions to SwaziMed, raising concerns about the institution's governance. Matsebula warned that the failure to comply with the Income Tax Order of 1975 could result in hefty fines and penalties, while also

depriving government of much-needed revenue.

"I am concerned that the non-compliance might result in fines and penalties. I am also concerned that the RSTP is depriving government from receiving revenue in the form of taxes," he cautioned.

The Auditor General has since directed RSTP management to settle the outstanding PAYE balance, provide proof of settlement, and submit updated payroll registers to the Treasury Department every month.

With Parliament now set to take the matter head-on, the future of RSTP hangs in balance as MPs demand swift action to restore accountability and efficiency at one of Eswatini's flagship science and technology projects

Parly's 30-day ultimatum for UNESWA liquor outlets closure inquiry

By Kwanele Dhladhla

THE contentious closure of four liquor establishments near the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) is headed for fresh scrutiny in Parliament, after Mahlangatsha Member of Parliament (MP), Mgucisi Dlamini, is set to table a motion calling for the appointment of a select committee to investigate the matter.

The motion, which appears in the Notice Paper released by House of Assembly Speaker, Jabulani Mabuza, is expected to draw robust debate. Dlamini's proposal is set to be seconded by Kwaluseni MP Sifiso Shongwe.

In the motion, Dlamini argued that the closures have had significant social and economic repercussions, warranting a deeper probe by legislators.

"The committee must engage



▲ The contentious closure of four liquor establishments near UNESWA (Kwaluseni) is headed for fresh scrutiny in Parliament.

stakeholders, examine the decision-making process, and recommend an appropriate solution to Parliament," Dlamini stressed.

According to the proposed terms of reference, the select committee would:

- Engage with the Minister of Commerce, Industry and

Trade, Manqoba Khumalo, to understand the rationale and process that led to the closures.

- Consult widely with affected stakeholders, including the business owners of the establishments, nearby communities, and repre-

sentatives of patrons who frequented the facilities.

Examine evidence and alternative measures that could have addressed concerns without full shutdowns. These alternatives may include phased closures, reduced operating hours, stricter enforcement of regulations, or compen-

sation for employees and business operators.

Assess compliance with the Citizens Economic Empowerment Act of 2023, ensuring that government decisions support rather than hinder local entrepreneurship.

The motion stipulates that the select committee must deliver its findings and recommendations to Parliament within 30 days of its appointment.

The issue has sparked debate in recent months, with some applauding the closures as necessary for student welfare and community safety, while others decry them as a blow to local businesses and job opportunities.

If approved, the inquiry will mark the first structured parliamentary intervention into the matter, signaling MPs' intent to balance regulation with economic empowerment.

Parliament is expected to deliberate on the motion on Thursday, with observers predicting lively exchanges from both supporters and critics of the proposed probe.

Stories by Thokozani Mazibuko

TO improve public financial accountability, efficiency, and transparency, the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) in collaboration with the Office of the Accountant General (AG) has officially launched the Post Graduate Diploma in Public Sector Accounting programme. The official launch of the programme, which was attended by the Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg, who also happened to be the guest speaker during the occasion, took place on Wednesday at the university premises.

When making his remarks, minister said the launch of the Post Graduate Diploma in Public Sector Accounting marked a significant milestone in the nation's trajectory; the beginning of a journey towards fiscal excellence, accountability and transparency through knowledge empowerment.

The minister mentioned that for decades, the prudent management of public resources has powered the engine of the national development. He said the individuals entrusted with this important duty were the country's accountants, auditors, and financial officers in the public service.

"Together they are the guardians of our collective wealth. Their expertise, therefore, is the bedrock upon which public trust is built and upon which effective service delivery depends. Thus, one cannot over emphasise our excitement at an opportunity to continuously sharpen their expertise and skills, with the introduction of PFM Reforms," the minister said.

The minister stated that with this backdrop, the ministry has long recognised a critical gap between the Accountancy skills taught in the country's academic institutions and the specialised competencies required for effective public financial management.

"Our tertiary institutions, including our esteemed UNESWA, have produced accountants, grounded in the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)—the language of the private sector in accounting," the minister said.

The minister pointed out that while this was commendable; nevertheless, public accounting has lagged behind. He said public accounting was a different universe that operates on the principles of transparency, accountability, and stewardship, guided by its

Public Sector accounting programme launched at UNESWA



▲ Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg, who also happened to be the guest speaker during the occasion, took place on Wednesday at the university premises.

own rigorous framework, which was the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

The minister said to expect a professional, trained solely in IFRS, to navigate the complexities of government finance without specialised training, was to ask a navigator to chart a course with the wrong map.

"This gap is what we gather to close today to align the Public Accountant to their correct map. This map is a navigation of public sector governance, ethics, procurement, reporting and auditing components though the Post Graduate Diploma in Public Sector Accounting," he said.

The minister further stated that this pioneering course, a fruit of a visionary collaboration between the University of Eswatini and the Office of the Accountant General,

was a direct and strategic response to this need. He said it represents a powerful synergy where academic excellence meets practical, real-world governance requirements.

Rijkenberg said this initiative could not be more timely. He said as it arrives, the ministry, through the Treasury Department, was vigorously pursuing an agenda of professionalization of the Accountancy cadre across the public service.

"Our mission is clear: to strengthen the safeguards around public resources, enhance fiscal discipline, and ensure that every Lilangeni is accounted for and directed towards the development of our nation and the welfare of our Emaswati," he said.

The minister said this course was not merely an academic programme, but it was an important component of the ministry's

reform agenda. He said it was an investment in the ministry's most valuable asset, the people.

The minister said by equipping the nation's current and future public finance personnel with this specialised knowledge, they were not just teaching them accounting standards, but they were instilling a culture of integrity, empowering them with modern tools, and building a resilient financial infrastructure for the Eswatini Government.

"To the first cohort of students, they are pioneers. They are embarking on a path that will define the future of public accountability in our Kingdom. The knowledge they will gain will place them at the forefront of a new era of financial governance," he said.

The minister extended his deepest gratitude to the UNESWA for its agility and commitment to national service. He stated that they were looking forward to future collaborations with the institution for the betterment of Accountants in the country and the government.

"My appreciation also goes to the Office of the Accountant General for its foresight and relentless drive in identifying this need and championing this solution, may they continue to vigorously pursue excellence and alignment to regional and international standards," he said.

The minister added that this collaboration was a shining example of how government and academia can work hand-in-hand to tackle national challenges.

"It is a model we must celebrate and replicate. It is, therefore, with immense pride and great hope for the future, that I officially launch this Postgraduate Diploma in Public Sector Accounting.

May it strengthen our national treasury, enhance safeguarding measures of our resources, and propel Eswatini towards a future of unparalleled economic stability and prosperity," he said.

'Launch reflects continued commitment to national, regional needs'

"LAUNCHING the Postgraduate Diploma in Public Sector Accounting reflects our continued commitment to responding to national and regional needs through relevant, high-quality academic programmes."

These sentiments were shared by the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) Vice Chancellor (VC), Professor, Justice Thwala.

According to Thwala, the university could not achieve this noble mission without the involvement of stakeholders like the ministry of finance. He said yesterday's launch reflected the university's commitment to developing quality programmes that address national and regional needs.

Thwala said the Postgraduate Diploma in Public Sector Accounting addresses the specifics of Public Sector Accounting in the country.

"We hope that skilling public sector accountants will improve financial accountability, efficiency, and transparency," Thwala

said. He said UNESWA was conscious of the multiple challenges Eswatini and the world face.

"We know that the government's priority areas have increased, so existing resources are insufficient to finance the university's enormous challenges," he said.

Thwala said despite the expanding financing challenges, the university must continue to produce top-quality graduates, improve human lives, generate new knowledge, and provide solutions for community needs, especially public sector accountants.

"I am reliably told that a high number of applicants (120) applied for admission into the programme and a whopping number of 120 students have registered for the programme and I believe that this deserves a huge round of applause," he said.

The VC said the university's 2024-2029 strategic plan highlights focus areas which include Teaching and Learning, Research, Innovation, and Enterprise, Human Resources Development and Management,

Institutional Effectiveness and Efficiency, Stakeholder Engagement and Management and Financial Sustainability.

He mentioned that to achieve the above, the university has decided to change its business model, which empowers Faculties and centres to identify alternative revenue sources.

"I am glad that the Faculty of Commerce has heeded the call. Launching the Postgraduate Diploma in Public Sector Accounting reflects our continued commitment to responding to national and regional needs through relevant, high-quality academic programmes," he said.

He mentioned that public sector accounting was a vital discipline that ensures transparency, accountability, and good governance in the management of public resources.

"With this Postgraduate diploma, we aim to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute effectively to our country's public financial management landscape," he said.



▲ UNESWA Vice Chancellor (VC), Professor, Justice Thwala.

By Delisa Magagula

DATAMATICS Eswatini has earned international acclaim after winning at the 11th International Best Practice Competition 2025, a prestigious global event that celebrates innovation and excellence across industries.

The recognition is particularly significant as Datamatics not only represented Eswatini, but also carried the flag for the entire African continent on the global stage.

The company's winning project a Geographic Information System (GIS) and Management Information System (MIS) for Water-Based Management was singled out for its innovation, measurable impact, and potential to transform resource management.

The Small Enterprises Development Company (SEDCO) has extended heartfelt congratulations to Datamatics Eswatini for this achievement, describing it as both a corporate and national milestone.

"From Eswatini to the world, you've done it. Winning at the 11th International Best Practice Competition and proudly representing Africa on the global stage is a true triumph. This is more than a victory for your company it is a national triumph," SEDCO said in a statement.

The International Best Practice Competition is recognised as one of the foremost platforms for identifying and sharing best practices in business, innovation, and sus-

Datamatics Eswatini shines on the Global Stage



▲ Datamatics Eswatini Director Sibusiso Baartjies.

tainability.

For Datamatics Eswatini, the award validates years of work in developing practical, technology-driven solutions that address pressing challenges in water resource management.

The GIS and MIS solution provides a framework for monitoring, analysing, and optimising water usage, enabling policymakers and stakeholders to make informed decisions in support of sustainability and resilience.

Industry stakeholders have welcomed the recognition as a demonstration of Eswatini's capacity to contribute meaningfully to global innovation.

The achievement is also expected to inspire other local enterprises to think globally, innovate boldly, and pursue excellence.

"Datamatics has shown that best practices developed here in Eswatini can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the best in the world,"



▲ Minister of Commerce Manqoba Khumalo.

Entries open for 2025 Eswatini Quality awards

By Delisa Magagula

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, through the Regulatory and Quality Infrastructure Development (RQID) Department, has officially opened entries for the 2025 Eswatini Quality Awards.

The awards, which promote business excellence, aim to recognize organizations that consistently apply productivity and quality principles in their operations.

They are open to small, medium, and large-scale organizations across the country. According to the ministry, the initiative seeks to encourage businesses to embrace sustainable practices that enhance competitiveness both locally and internationally.

Organizations interested in participating are encouraged to enrol before the deadline on 30th September 2025, at 12:00 p.m. Application forms are available online at: www.gov.sz/index.php/eswatini-quality-awards-category-forms-2025. "Be this year's winner by enrolling for these awards," the ministry stated.

Ministry dispels claims of 'looting' RDF by MPs

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development (MTAD) has moved to set the record straight following what it terms "misleading reports" in a local daily newspaper regarding the alleged misuse of the Regional Development Fund (RDF) by Members of Parliament (MPs).

On Tuesday, 16 September 2025, the newspaper ran a front-page story under the headline "MPs LOOTING RDF – Minister", suggesting that the Minister for Tinkhundla Administration and Development, Hon. S'khumbuzo Dlamini, had accused MPs of corrupting or looting the fund.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry said the report had taken the Minister's remarks out of context. According to the Ministry, Hon. Dlamini's comments, delivered during a budget capacitation meeting at Siteki Town Hall, were meant to stress the importance of proper budgeting and financial planning in the management of the RDF not to level accusations against legislators.

"The Minister did not accuse Members of Parliament of stealing or corrupting the Regional Development Fund," the statement read. Instead, the Minister underscored the need for stronger financial planning within Tinkhundla structures to ensure the Fund benefits the most vulnerable emaSwati.

The Ministry further clarified that the Minister cited findings from an internal RDF impact assessment. These findings showed that in some cases, individuals whose economic circumstances had improved continued to receive RDF support, while poorer and more deserving citizens were left behind.

"This observation was presented in good faith to illustrate the importance of refining eligibility and allocation processes not as an accusation of looting or corruption



▲ Minister of Tinkhundla and Administration Sikhumbuzo Dlamini.

against Members of Parliament," the Ministry explained. Minister Dlamini reiterated his commitment to ensuring that the RDF achieves its intended purpose of uplifting communities, improving local infrastructure, and advancing inclusive national development. He also commended MPs for their ongoing role in encouraging emaSwati to make effective use of the fund.

The Ministry expressed regret over the misreporting of the Siteki meeting and called for a fair representation of the Minister's remarks, noting that sensationalist headlines risk undermining collaborative efforts between government and MPs in driving grassroots development.

It should be noted that the Regional Development Fund has long been a key government initiative aimed at empowering communities across Eswatini. The Ministry maintains that continuous improvements in its administration are essential to ensure fairness, transparency, and maximum impact.

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Eswatini pushes for multi-currency SADC-RTGS

ESWATINI has taken centre stage in the drive to transform the Southern African Development Community's Real-Time Gross Settlement (SADC-RTGS) system into a multi-currency platform, as the Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE) hosts the SADC-RTGS User Group Conference 2025. The two-day meeting, held from Wednesday at the CBE's newly opened Conference Facility, brought together central bankers, financial institutions, and policymakers.

Stocks dip, battered dollar recovers as Fed rate cut looms

LONDON — World stocks held just below recent record highs, gold retreated and the dollar won a reprieve, ahead of a widely anticipated Federal Reserve rate cut later on Wednesday taking place against a backdrop of concern about the future of Fed independence. European shares ceded early gains, U.S. stock futures dipped, Japan's blue-chip Nikkei index pulled back from record highs and the dollar rallied a day after taking a beating on Fed easing bets.

Rand flat ahead of expected US rate cut

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand was little changed in early trade on Wednesday ahead of an expected U.S. Federal Reserve interest rate cut and domestic consumer price index and retail sales numbers. At 0701 GMT, the rand traded at 17.34 against the dollar, up very slightly from Tuesday's close.

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 | |

E6 billion flows daily through SADC-RTGS

By Delisa Magagula

THE Southern African Development Community's Real-Time Gross Settlement (SADC-RTGS) system is handling an average of E8.41 billion (ZAR 8.41 billion) in transactions every day, underlining its central role in facilitating cross-border trade and financial integration in the region.

The figures were released as Eswatini hosts the 6th SADC-RTGS User Group Conference, bringing together central bankers, regulators, and financial institutions from across the 15 SADC member states.

In August 2025 alone, the system processed 152,660 transactions worth E218.56 billion (ZAR 218.56 billion). Since inception, it has settled transactions valued at E17.56 trillion, equivalent to nearly USD 1 trillion.

Hosting the conference at its new, eco-friendly headquarters in Mbabane, the Central Bank of Eswatini said the statistics show the system's impact and future potential.

"This system allows banks to settle payments directly and efficiently across borders, while reducing costs," read the report.

Meanwhile the Governor Dr Phil Mnisi said, Eswatini is proud to host this platform at a time when daily flows exceed E6 billion and participation continues to grow.

The SADC-RTGS currently connects 87 banks across the region, with peak monthly activity recorded in October 2024, when 183,013 transactions were processed.

Discussions in Mbabane are focusing on multi-currency settlement, extending operating hours, and cyber risk management to strengthen the system's resilience.

Eswatini pushes for extended RTGS operating hours

Delegates attending the 6th SADC-RTGS User Group Conference have been urged to consider extending settlement system operating hours and possibly adding a Saturday processing day.

According to the Central Bank of Eswatini Governor Dr Phil Mnisi, client demands and shifting consumer behaviours have necessitated more responsive settlement operations.

"The operating hours of the SADC-RTGS have gradually been increased to meet the wider operating windows of our retail clients. It is time to deliberate on further extensions to provide more convenience," he said.

If approved, the move would make regional transactions faster and more accessible, aligning SADC with global financial market practices.

Cyber security tops Agenda

Cyber threats have emerged as a major concern for the SADC Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system, with financial institutions urged to intensify risk management strategies.

Addressing delegates at the SADC-RTGS User Group Conference, the Governor of the Central Bank of Eswatini warned that while risks in pay-



▲ CBE Head of Communications and Strategy Mandla Luphondvo and other members of the SADC delegation.



▲ CBE Governor Dr. Phil Mnisi.

ment systems cannot be entirely eliminated, cyber resilience is critical.

"Cyber perpetrators target payment systems because they know we are vulnerable. Institutions must endeavour to mitigate these risks at all costs," he said.

Participants are expected to deliberate on strengthening cyber risk management programmes to ensure the continuous safety and stability of regional financial market infrastructures.

Plans are underway to expand the Southern African Development Community's Real-Time Gross Settlement (SADC-RTGS) system into a fully functional multi-currency platform, the Governor of the Central Bank of Eswatini has revealed.

Currently, the system processes cross-border payments primarily in South African Rand (ZAR), but work is on-going to on-board additional currencies, including the US Dollar and selected SADC domestic currencies.

"This will enhance intra-trade and allow our region to gradually reduce reliance on single-currency settlements," he noted.

The conference has dedicated sessions to

policy and operational frameworks for multi-currency settlement, including managing liquidity, pricing dynamics, and monetary policy implications.

Experts believe that multi-currency functionality could significantly strengthen regional trade and financial integration.

CBE debuts state of the art Conference room

Stunner!

This best describes the newly unveiled Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE) conference room.

The bank showcased its new modern conference centre, part of its E1 billion-plus headquarters project, by hosting the 6th SADC-RTGS User Group Conference.

The new facility comprises three units, each seating 300 delegates, with the ability to merge into a hall accommodating nearly 1,200 people.

Designed with sustainability in mind, the headquarters features embedded green technologies aimed at reducing environmental impact while promoting energy efficiency.

"This project not only supports economic modernization but also sets a benchmark for eco-conscious infrastructure in the Kingdom of Eswatini," said the Governor Dr Phil Mnisi.

The CBE's futuristic headquarters is expected to become a landmark in Ezulwini, symbolizing innovation in finance, architecture, and environmental stewardship. Mnisi further mentioned that the building of the complex commenced in November and was somehow stalled.

Worth mentioning is that, is the Central Bank of Eswatini is undergoing a complex relocation and development in Ezulwini, Eswatini, with a new, multi-phase complex including an 18-storey headquarters, museum, and innovation hub, aiming for completion by the end of 2025, though construction of the new facility has been on-going.

The Bank acquired the property in 2023 and has already moved some departments to Ezulwini, with the Banking Hall remaining in Mbabane for now.

Eswatini pushes for multi-currency SADC-RTGS



▲ Central Bank of Eswatini Governor Dr Phil Mnisi with the delegates at the SADC-RTGS User Group Conference 2025.

By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI has taken centre stage in the drive to transform the Southern African Development Community's Real-Time Gross Settlement (SADC-RTGS) system into a multi-currency platform, as the Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE) hosts the SADC-RTGS User Group Conference 2025.

The two-day meeting, held from Wednesday at the CBE's newly opened Conference Facility, brought together central bankers, financial institutions, and policymakers from across the region to chart the next phase of the RTGS renewal project.

Governor of the Central Bank of Eswatini Dr Phil Mnisi told delegates that preparations are advanced to allow the platform, which currently settles mainly in the South African Rand (ZAR), to accommodate the US Dollar and selected SADC domestic currencies.

"This will enhance intra-regional trade and gradually reduce reliance on a single settlement currency," the Governor said, emphasising Eswatini's commitment to supporting financial integration within SADC.

Launched in 2013, the SADC-RTGS has settled over ZAR 9 trillion in cross-border transactions annually.

However, its reliance on the rand has long been cited as a limitation, especially for member states outside the Common Monetary Area.

The move towards multi-currency settle-

ment aims to:

1. Expand access for all 16 SADC countries,
2. Ease foreign exchange bottlenecks,
3. Reduce settlement costs and delays, and
4. Build resilience against global currency volatility.

Speakers, including Adv. Magedi-Titus Thokwane and Daniel Mohau, noted that the technical infrastructure to support multiple currencies is already in place.

The choice of Eswatini as host was symbolic. The conference was the first major event at the new CBE Conference Facility, part of the bank's wider headquarters expansion project.

Officials said this milestone highlighted the country's role as a regional hub for policy dialogue and financial cooperation.

"This is not just about payments. By hosting this conversation, Eswatini is helping to

shape how the region trades," one participant noted.

The renewal project includes migration to the ISO 20022 messaging standard, liquidity management upgrades, and pricing frameworks to make the system sustainable.

Delegates stressed that while the rand will remain part of the system, adding other currencies marks a step towards monetary cooperation and economic independence within SADC.

The SADC-RTGS User Group Conference 2025 in Mbabane forms part of broader media outreach and engagement to build understanding of the system.

By anchoring the discussion in Eswatini, the region has highlighted the host's growing financial leadership and the strategic importance of multi-currency settlement for SADC's future.

By Delisa Magagula

THE Governor of the Central Bank of Eswatini Dr Phil Mnisi has urged regional financial institutions to strengthen their defences against cyber risks while embracing the shift towards a multi-currency payment platform under the Southern African Development Community's Real-Time Gross Settlement (SADC-RTGS) system.

Speaking at the opening of the 2025 SADC RTGS End User Conference, hosted at the Central Bank of Eswatini's new conference facility in Ezulwini, the Governor told delegates that cybersecurity remains one of the most pressing risks facing modern financial systems.

"Payment systems are attractive targets for cybercriminals because of their inherent vulnerabilities and the value of transactions they process," he said.

The two-day conference, which runs from September 17-18 has drawn more than 200 participants from all 15 SADC member states, including central banks, commercial banks, and payment service providers.

The event marks the first major regional meeting to be hosted at the new Central

Bank of Eswatini Complex, underlining Eswatini's growing role as a hub for financial sector dialogue.

Delegates are expected to deliberate on the renewal of the SADC RTGS platform, which has been in operation since 2013 and currently processes high-value cross-border payments mainly in South African Rand (ZAR). In his address, the Governor highlighted ongoing technical and policy work to expand the system to accommodate additional currencies, including the US Dollar and selected SADC domestic currencies.

"I encourage you to engage actively in these discussions and contribute meaningful insights. Your input will be vital in shaping the operational and policy frameworks needed to onboard more SADC currencies. This initiative will significantly boost intra-regional trade and reduce reliance on a single settlement currency," he told participants.

Officials noted that the multi-currency upgrade forms part of a broader renewal project, which also includes migration to ISO 20022 messaging standards, liquidity management tools, and new pricing models to enhance efficiency and sustainability.

Governor calls for cybersecurity and currency expansion



▲ CBE Governor Dr Phil Mnisi.

While the promise of multi-currency settlement could deepen financial integration across the region, the Governor warned that these innovations would only succeed if they were matched with robust safeguards against fraud and cybercrime.

"Cyber resilience is not an option it is a

necessity," he said, calling on all participants to share strategies, build capacity, and coordinate efforts to protect the system.

The SADC RTGS has processed trillions of rand in payments since its launch, and its renewal is seen as central to advancing regional trade and financial stability.

Stocks dip, battered dollar recovers as Fed rate cut looms

By Dhara Ranasinghe

LONDON — World stocks held just below recent record highs, gold retreated and the dollar won a reprieve, ahead of a widely anticipated Federal Reserve rate cut later on Wednesday taking place against a backdrop of concern about the future of Fed independence.

European shares ceded early gains, U.S. stock futures dipped, Japan's blue-chip Nikkei index pulled back from record highs and the dollar rallied a day after taking a beating on Fed easing bets.

The Fed is expected to cut interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point to the 4.00 per cent-4.25 per cent range later on Wednesday, with the focus on any comments from Fed Chair Jerome Powell on the outlook for monetary policy.

The September meeting also takes place under unusual circumstances - Steven Miran, on leave from the Trump administration, has joined the Fed board while Fed governor Lisa Cook has so far fought off efforts by President Donald Trump to oust her.

"A (25 bp) rate cut is fully priced in. There were some questions around a 50 bp cut given the doves on the board but I think that's less likely," said Nina Stanojevic,



▲Euro and U.S. dollar banknotes are seen in this illustration.

senior investment specialist at St. James's Place.

"What will be interesting is the narrative that comes out of the meeting and where the trajectory of rates is going to be."

The dollar index, which tracks the dollar against a basket of currencies of other major trading partners, edged up 0.2 per cent after falling on Tuesday to the lowest since early July.

The euro slipped 0.25 per cent to \$1.1840, after touching \$1.1867 on Tuesday, its highest

level since September 2021. But the dollar was a touch softer at around 146.33 yen following a 0.6 per cent slide in the previous session.

"A dovish shift in the Fed's stance would lead to more monetary policy easing in 2026 than may be warranted", ABN AMRO analysts said in a note. "This could also partly explain the extent of rate cuts currently priced in by market."

Money markets price in almost 70 bps of Fed easing by year-end.

Staying firm

World stocks held just below Monday's record highs while in Asia Hong Kong's benchmark Hang Seng Index jumped 1.8 per cent, buoyed by signs of progress of a deal to allow the Chinese-owned social media platform TikTok to keep operating in the U.S.

News that Japan's exports fell for a fourth straight month in August highlighted the toll on major economies from the wide-ranging tariffs imposed by the Trump administration.

The Bank of Canada is also expected to cut rates on Wednesday to contend with a flagging labour market and trade frictions.

In Europe, data showing UK inflation holding at 3.8 per cent in August reinforced expectations for no rate change at Thursday's Bank of England meeting.

Sterling was a touch softer around \$1.3637 Elsewhere, Indonesia's central bank delivered another surprise interest rate cut, its sixth cut since it kicked off an easing cycle in September last year, saying economic growth needed to be strengthened.

Indonesian markets have been unsettled by two weeks of protests and unrest across many cities from late August and then last week's abrupt sacking of respected finance minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati.

Spot gold eased 0.75 per cent to \$3,665 per ounce, after the yellow metal crossed \$3,700 for the first time in the previous session. (Reuters)

SA rand flat ahead of expected US rate cut, local inflation print



▲South African Rand coins are seen in this illustration.

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand was little changed in early trade on Wednesday ahead of an expected U.S. Federal Reserve interest rate cut and domestic consumer price index and retail sales numbers.

At 0701 GMT, the rand traded at 17.34 against the dollar, up very slightly from Tuesday's close.

Markets are certain the Fed will cut rates when it makes its policy announcement on Wednesday, and bets are on a 25-basis-point cut.

"Recent economic indicators, including a softening labour market and inflation showing limited tariff pass-through, strengthen the case for this move," said ETM Analytics in a research note.

"Investors will particularly be focused on the Fed's forward guidance, with markets

pricing in up to 100 basis points of cuts over the next year."

Like other risk-sensitive currencies, the rand often takes cues from global drivers like U.S. monetary policy in addition to domestic data points.

Local investors will look to CPI data for August at 0800 GMT with analysts polled by Reuters expecting headline inflation to edge up to 3.6 per cent from 3.5 per cent in July.

Statistics South Africa will also release July retail sales figures at 1100 GMT, which will offer further clues on the health of Africa's most industrialised economy.

The rand is expected to continue trading in a tight range as domestically focused traders await the South African Reserve Bank's rate decisions on Thursday. South Africa's benchmark 2035 government bond was also flat in early deals, as the yield rose half a basis point to 9.24 per cent. (Reuters)



▲Smoke rises from chimneys at Hwange Power station in Hwange, Zimbabwe.

Zim agrees \$455mln power plant refurbishment deal with Jindal

HARARE — Zimbabwe has agreed a \$455 million, 15-year concession deal with the Africa-focused unit of India's Jindal Steel for the refurbishment of a 920 megawatt coal-fired power plant, the energy minister said.

The work on six ageing units at the Hwange thermal power station is expected to take four years, July Moyo said during a post-cabinet briefing late on Tuesday.

Jindal Africa will recover its investment from revenue generated by electricity sales from the plant.

The Southern African nation currently

only meets around half of its 2,000 MW electricity demand and experiences frequent, extended power cuts due to diminishing capacity at its ageing power plants.

The 1,520 MW Hwange plant, the country's largest, was upgraded in 2023 with the commissioning of two units, which added 600 MW. But its older units were built in the 1980s and are operating at a third of their capacity due to breakdowns.

The Kariba hydropower station, built in the 1960s, completed a 300 MW upgrade in 2018, which boosted its capacity to 1,050 MW. However, its generation capacity has in recent years been affected by drought. (Reuters)

UN report details ‘systematic looting’ by South Sudan’s rulers as citizens went hungry

U.N. investigators on Tuesday accused South Sudanese authorities of plundering their country’s wealth, including by paying \$1.7 billion to companies affiliated with Vice President Benjamin Bol Mel for road construction work that was never done. The payments from 2021 to 2024 were just one example of “grand corruption” in the impoverished nation, according to the report by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, where average gross domestic product per capita is now a quarter of what it was at independence in 2011.

“The country has been captured by a predatory elite that has institutionalised the systematic looting of the nation’s wealth for private gain,” said the commission, which was created in 2016 by the U.N. Human Rights Council.

The report cites an annual budget allocation to the president’s medical unit that exceeded health spending across the entire country.

In an official written response sent to the U.N. commission, Justice Minister Joseph Geng said the report was based on figures that do not match the government’s own data and attributed South Sudan’s economic problems to conflict, climate change and falling sales of its chief export, crude oil.

A spokesperson for Bol Mel declined to comment.

CONFLICT HAS RAGED SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Since 2011, South Sudan has endured repeated bouts of armed conflict, including a 2013-2018 civil war in which an estimated 400,000 people died.

Last week, the government charged, opens new tab First Vice President Riek Machar - whose forces opposed soldiers loyal to President Salva Kiir in the civil war - with crimes against humanity, escalating a feud that has fuelled fighting in recent months.



▲ South Sudan’s Vice President Benjamin Bol Mel attends the burial of General David Majur Dak, the commander of the South Sudan People’s Defense Force (SSPDF) who was killed when a United Nations helicopter trying to evacuate people from Nasir came under attack by the White Army militia, at the Heroes Cemetery at Simba Grounds in Juba, South Sudan.

South Sudan is also contending with steep cuts to the foreign humanitarian aid it receives each year.

But the report said corruption best explains its sustained economic and humanitarian woes, with nearly two-thirds of its 12 million people facing crisis levels of hunger or worse.

The commission said the report was based on 173 targeted meetings and interviews from late 2022 to late 2024 as well as government documentation and financial data.

It said its focus on corruption was warranted because graft has undermined the government’s ability to meet its human

rights obligations and directly fuelled armed violence.

“Locked in a zero-sum competition for power and control of resources and territory, South Sudan’s elites continue to pursue partisan political ends, mobilising and exploiting ethnic differences and tensions,” it said.

OFF-BUDGET ‘OIL FOR ROADS’

The 101-page report spotlights companies associated with Bol Mel, whom President Salva Kiir elevated to one of South Sudan’s five vice-presidential positions in February.

The U.S. government sanctioned Bol Mel and two companies it said were associated

with him in 2017, saying one of the firms had allegedly received preferential treatment from high-level government officials to do road work in the country. The U.S. sanctioned two more of his companies in 2021.

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.

(Reuters)

Guinea to vote on constitution that would let coup leader run for office



▲ Guinea’s President Mamadi Doumbouya addresses the 78th Session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York City, U.S.

GUINEA is set to vote on Sunday in a referendum on a new constitution that would permit junta leader Mamadi Doumbouya to run for president, something he vowed not to do when he seized power four years ago.

Wednesday is the final day of campaigning for the referendum, the latest attempt at a political transition in West and Central Africa, where eight coups between 2020 and 2023 reshaped the regional political landscape.

A transition charter adopted after the September 2021 coup said junta members would be barred from standing in the next national and local elections, but the new constitution does not include that language.

Doumbouya has not said what his plans are. His critics have criticised the referendum as a power grab.

Exiled opposition leader Cellou Dalein Diallo on Monday urged Guineans to boycott what he called a “masquerade”.

Diallo’s Union of Democratic Forces party is currently suspended, along with ousted President Alpha Conde’s Rally of the Guinean People, for failure to comply with administrative and financial disclosure requirements imposed by the junta. The parties have not been permitted to campaign against the new constitution.

Human Rights Watch has accused Doumbouya’s government of disappearing political opponents and arbitrarily suspending media outlets. The government has denied any role in disappearances but has vowed to

investigate such allegations.

The government missed a December 31, 2024 deadline it set for a return to a civilian administration. The presidential election is currently expected to take place in December.

The new constitution would lengthen the presidential term from five years to seven, renewable once, and create a Senate. The president would directly appoint one-third of senators, with two-thirds selected by municipal and regional councils.

More than 6.7 million voters are registered, and the new constitution would be adopted if more than 50% of those voting approve it.

Ibrahima Camara, a civil servant, has changed his social media avatars to a picture featuring the word “Yes”, signalling his support.

“It’s the most clear-sighted choice,” he said. “We need a vote so Guinea can be governed by a constitution, a first step towards normalising the country.”

But in opposition strongholds, scepticism runs deep.

“I won’t vote because the process isn’t transparent,” said Abdoulaye Diallo, a resident of Hamdallaye, also in Conakry. “You can’t talk about voting in Guinea without the main parties. In the long run, this will create unnecessary tensions.”

(Reuters)

YouTube, new leader of US media industry, bets on AI as key for creating content

ON its 20th birthday, YouTube is unrecognizable as the scrappy video site that began as the domain of young amateur users publishing unpolished, low-budget clips.

Commanding 2.7 billion users, including celebrities like British pop star Dua Lipa who share professional-grade content, YouTube has become the most popular way for Americans to watch TV and is expected to eclipse industry leader Disney's (DIS.N), opens new tab media revenue this year.

On Tuesday at the company's annual Made on YouTube product launch event, executives at the platform - owned by Alphabet's (GOOGL.O), opens new tab Google - laid out a vision of how YouTube planned to dominate the airwaves in the coming decades: with AI.

YouTube spent much of the event championing its video creators as the future of media who could now work without constraints placed by media executives. They would be helped, instead, by a host of artificial intelligence-enabled tools that would either reimagine the production process or create new content entirely - a concept that Hollywood fought against during a months-long strike in 2023.

YouTube CEO Neal Mohan and other presenters dismissed the idea, reiterating that the rapid expansion of AI capabilities would not replace the jobs of content creators.

"These are tools, and really just that," Mohan said. "Make no mistake: no studio, network, tech company, or AI tool will own the future of entertainment."

Rather, Mohan said, making videos on YouTube should be seen as a "viable, respectable and sustainable career path" as AI increasingly comes to the fore of the creation process over YouTube's next 20 years.



▲ Graeme Lowdon.

Backed by Google's deep pockets and market-leading AI know-how, YouTube has stretched its lead over Disney, which dominated the market for most of 2024, according to Nielsen data. YouTube captured 13.4% of U.S. viewership in July, versus 9.4% for Disney.

Analysts at MoffettNathanson recently predicted that YouTube's revenue this year would surpass Disney's as well. That storied entertainment company made nearly \$60 billion in media revenue last year, they estimated.

Alphabet does not regularly report YouTube's revenue, but it disclosed that combined YouTube ad and subscription revenue surpassed \$50 billion in the four quarters ending September 2024.

AI BOOSTS ROLL-OUT OF NEW TOOLS

YouTube on Tuesday showcased new products by tapping personalities who have enjoyed success on its platform including Dua Lipa, Mark Rober, Smosh and Brandon B.

For some, these content creators - each

of whom runs channels with at least 16 million subscribers - have taken the place of late-night TV show hosts whose viewership has slumped. In some cases, these creators have subscribers that rival followers of Hollywood stars on social media, underscoring their appeal to a new generation of media consumers.

On stage, Lipa credited YouTube for helping her connect more intimately with her fans. Asked by Reuters in an email how Lipa intended to use the AI features and if she had concerns, a spokesperson did not immediately respond with a comment.

Mohan said YouTube had paid out more than \$100 billion to content makers over the past four years. Some video makers have reinvested some of their earnings into building production facilities in the style of Hollywood studio lots as they make increasingly elaborate and professional videos.

The company tripled the number of new features it introduced this year compared to last year's event.

Most of the more than 30 new tools that it revealed incorporated AI to either revamp the production process or create new content. The tools have features to automatically embed relevant shopping links into videos or to almost instantaneously edit a bunch of clips into the first cut of a video. YouTube also unveiled AI-generated videos to accompany audio-only podcasts and a speech-to-song generator.

Amjad Hanif, a vice president at YouTube who manages creator-oriented products, told Reuters in an interview that the pace of rapid product development could partly be attributed to YouTube staffers themselves using AI to ideate more rapidly.

(Reuters)

UK and US agree \$42 billion tech pact to mark Trump's visit

BRITAIN and the United States have agreed a technology pact to boost ties in AI, quantum computing and civil nuclear energy, with top U.S. firms led by Microsoft pledging 31 billion pounds (\$42 billion) in UK investments.

The "Tech Prosperity Deal" is part of U.S. President Donald Trump's second state visit to Britain, which will include a day of pomp at Windsor Castle on Wednesday, hosted by King Charles and the royal family.

Britain said the pact included joint efforts to develop AI models for healthcare, expand quantum computing capabilities and streamline civil nuclear projects. It added that it would support economic growth, scientific research and energy security in both countries.

STARMER UNDER PRESSURE TO BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the deal had the potential to shape the future of millions of people on both sides of the Atlantic, and deliver growth and security.

The U.S. is Britain's single largest country trading partner, and its big tech companies have already invested billions of dollars in their UK operations.

Starmer, under pressure to reverse years of weak economic growth, now wants to pitch Britain as a destination for further investment by opting for the light touch regulation favoured by the United States in areas such as AI, as opposed to the more interventionist approach of the European Union.

The Trump administration has criticised European online safety laws and digital tax-



▲ President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump are greeted by Viscount Henry Hood, representing Britain's King Charles, as they arrive for their state visit to Britain, at London Stansted Airport near London, Britain.

es, including those in Britain, but they were not part of the discussions over the pact.

US TECH FIRMS INVEST IN THE UK

Under the deals announced, chipmaker Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab said it would deploy 120,000 graphics processing units across Britain - its largest rollout in Europe to date.

It is working to deploy up to 60,000 Grace Blackwell Ultra chips with UK-based Nscale, which will partner OpenAI in a UK leg of the

U.S. company's giant Stargate project and tie-up with Microsoft to establish Britain's largest AI supercomputer.

Microsoft said it would invest 22 billion pounds in total to expand cloud and AI infrastructure as well as in the supercomputer, which will be in Loughton, north-east London.

Satya Nadella, chair and CEO of Microsoft, said it wanted to ensure that America remained a trusted and reliable tech partner

for Britain. Its president, Brad Smith, said relations had improved hugely since the "dark days" before the UK's antitrust regulator dropped its opposition to Microsoft's acquisition of Activision Blizzard, saying he felt "enormously better".

David Hogan, vice president for enterprise at Nvidia, told reporters the investments would "truly make the UK an AI maker, not an AI taker".

(Reuters)

Trump begins historic state visit to UK amid pomp and protests

KING Charles and other British royals greeted Donald Trump on Wednesday as the U.S. president's historic second state visit to Britain began with unprecedented pomp, intense security, technology investments and protests. Trump and his wife Melania arrived at Windsor Castle, the oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world and family home to British monarchs for almost 1,000 years. He was met by the monarch, his wife Queen Camilla, heir Prince William and his wife Kate before a carriage procession through the grounds.

Ahead of a lavish banquet there will be a military flypast, part of what Britain has said would be the largest military ceremonial welcome for a state visit in living memory.

Trump, an overt royal fan, has made little secret of his delight at being not just the first U.S. leader, but the first elected politician to be invited by a British monarch for two state visits.

On his arrival, he told reporters he loved Britain. "It's a very special place," he said.

UK HOPES VISIT WILL CEMENT 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'

Prime Minister Keir Starmer is hoping to use that sentiment to Britain's advantage as his government seeks to cement the two nations' "special relationship", deepen economic ties, secure billions of dollars of investment, discuss tariffs and press the U.S. president on Ukraine and Israel.

Companies including Microsoft, Nvidia, Google and OpenAI have already pledged 31 billion pounds (\$42 billion) in British investments over the next few years, in AI, quan-



▲ The Prince and Princess of Wales receive President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump at Windsor Castle in Windsor, Berkshire, tum computing and civil nuclear energy.

Starmer also wants further progress on trade, after Britain secured the first deal with Trump to lower some tariffs. Talks may touch on remaining levies on steel, whisky and salmon.

"They want to see if they can refine the trade deal a little bit," Trump said when he left the White House for Britain on Tuesday.

But while Starmer is banking on the unrivalled royal allure helping cajole the anglophile president, whose mother came from Scotland, many pitfalls for Britain's prime minister remain.

Polls show Trump is widely unpopular in Britain and Starmer, faced with plummeting

poll ratings of his own and economic woes, will need to show that his royal trump card can reap benefits.

Starmer, last week, sacked Peter Mandelson as Britain's ambassador in Washington over his ties to Epstein, which could lead to questions for both Starmer and Trump, whose own relationship with the financier has also come under scrutiny.

While there was a massive police operation in place in Windsor, police said four people had been arrested on Tuesday after images of Trump alongside Epstein were projected onto one of the castle's towers. Trump was not there at the time.

Large protests are also expected in Lon-

don on Wednesday with 1,600 officers deployed to deal with a demonstration by the "Stop the Trump Coalition".

Commuters in the capital had mixed views about the visit, with some angry about the invitation and others saying it was smart politics and a good use of Britain's soft power.

"We're looking to sort of make the best of a bad situation," said lawyer Kirstie Robertshaw, 54.

TRUMP TO BE DAZZLED BY PAG-EANTRY

Wednesday will be dominated by ceremony. Trump and his wife Melania were first greeted by the king's "very handsome" elder son Prince William - as the president has called him - and Kate.

Charles and his wife Queen Camilla then joined the Trumps on the carriage procession, with the route lined by 1,300 British service personnel.

The president, occasionally chatting and smiling with the king, then inspected a guard of soldiers wearing scarlet uniforms and bearskin hats.

Later, the royals will show the president and first lady historical items from the Royal Collection relating to the U.S., before the Trumps visit St George's Chapel, the final resting place of Queen Elizabeth, who hosted Trump for his first state visit in 2019, where he will lay a wreath on her tomb.

There will be a flypast including UK and U.S. F-35 military jets, a symbol of U.S.-British defence collaboration, before an opulent state banquet where the king and president will make speeches. (Reuters)

Israel opens new route out of Gaza City, death toll passes 65,000

THE Israeli military said it was opening an additional route for 48 hours that Palestinians could use to leave Gaza City as it stepped up efforts on Wednesday to empty the city of civilians and confront thousands of Hamas combatants.

Hundreds of thousands of people are sheltering in the city and many are reluctant to follow Israel's orders to move south because of the dangers along the way, dire conditions, a lack of food in the southern area and fear of permanent displacement.

"Even if we want to leave Gaza City, is there any guarantee we would be able to come back? Will the war ever end? That's why I prefer to die here, in Sabra, my neighbourhood," Ahmed, a schoolteacher, said by phone.

At least 50 people were killed by Israeli strikes and gunfire across the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, including 39 in Gaza City, local health authorities said.

They said the latest fatalities took the Palestinian death toll from the two-year war between Israel and Hamas past 65,000. Palestinian officials and rescue workers say the true figure is likely to be higher as many people's remains are trapped under the rubble of destroyed buildings.

The war was triggered by the Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies.

TANKS EDGE FORWARD, OFFICIAL SAYS ASSAULT WILL TAKE MONTHS

Gaza health authorities also reported a drone attack on a specialist children's hospi-

tal, which did not cause casualties but forced young patients and their families outside.

Israel estimates about 400,000 people, or 40% of those who were in Gaza City on August 10 - when it announced plans to take control - have already fled. The Gaza media office says 190,000 have headed south and 350,000 have moved to central and western areas of the city.

A day after Israel announced the launch, opens new tab of its ground offensive to seize control of Gaza's main urban centre, tanks had moved short distances towards the city's central and western areas from three directions, but no major advance was reported.

An Israeli official said military operations were focused on getting civilians to head south and that fighting would intensify over the next month or two.

The official said Israel expected around 100,000 civilians to remain in the city, which would take months to capture, and the operation could be suspended if a ceasefire was reached with the Hamas militant group.

The prospects of a ceasefire appear remote after Israel attacked Hamas political leaders in Doha last week, infuriating Qatar, a co-mediator in ceasefire talks.

Defying global criticism of the attack, including a rebuke by Israel's stalwart ally, the United States, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel would strike Hamas leaders anywhere.

NO CASUALTIES REPORTED AFTER DRONE HITS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

The Hamas-run government's Ministry of Health said an Israeli drone had dropped grenades on one floor of the Rantissi chil-



▲ Displaced Palestinians, fleeing northern Gaza due to an Israeli military operation, move southward after Israeli forces ordered residents of Gaza City to evacuate to the south, in the central Gaza Strip.

dren's hospital on Wednesday. No casualties were reported but the ministry said some 40 families took their children away.

"This hospital is the only specialist facility for children with cancer, kidney failure, and other life-threatening conditions - but even these gravely ill children are not spared from relentless bombardment," said Fikr Shalltoot, Gaza director at the UK-based charity Medical Aid for Palestinians.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In leaflets dropped over Gaza City, the military said Palestinians could use the newly reopened Salahudin Road to escape towards the south and that they had until lunchtime on Friday to do so.

But the situation remained chaotic and dangerous for civilians, who have been streaming away on foot, by donkey cart or in vehicles in recent days.

Much of Gaza City was laid to waste early in the war in 2023, but around 1 million Palestinians had returned there to homes among the ruins. Forcing them out would mean confining most of Gaza's population to overcrowded encampments in the south where a hunger crisis is unfolding.

ISRAEL FACING INTERNATIONAL CENSURE OVER NEW OFFENSIVE

The United Nations, aid groups and foreign governments have condemned Israel's offensive and the proposed mass displacement. (Reuters)

SA top poet Zamoh Cofi for Poetry In Comfort

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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THE Poetry In Comfort lineup has reached fever heights as South African wordsmith Zamoh Cofi has been added.

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, M Age, Gcayi, and Siya Imbongi. 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



▲ Zamoh Cofi.

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."

DaMabusa to ignite Afterwork Chillout Vibes

SOUTH African musician DaMabusa is poised to captivate audiences at the upcoming Afterwork Chillout Vibes event.

This event is scheduled for September 26, 2025, at Mdzimba View Shisanyama. The Afterwork Chillout Vibes event will not only showcase DaMabusa but also feature an impressive lineup of supporting acts. Artists like Thulas, Lady Zee, Tap Tap, Tracksoul, MaWillies, Bandora, and Slim Deep will bring a rich variety of sounds and styles to the stage, ensuring a diverse and engaging musical experience for attendees. Castle will also be present, adding to the festive atmosphere. Ticket pricing for the event is designed to accommodate a wide audience. General entry costs E70 before 9 pm and E100 after, while VIP tickets are priced at E200 before 9 pm and E300 thereafter. This pricing structure allows fans to choose their preferred experience, whether it be an intimate VIP setting or the lively general admission area. The headline act, DaMabusa, is a multi-platinum-selling artist whose rise in the South African music scene has been nothing short of remarkable. Born Johan Sifiso Sithebe in Kwamhlanga, Mpumalanga, he began his

musical journey in 2007 as part of a clap and tap choir. His passion for music and leadership skills led him to form his own choir in 2019, marking the start of his dual career as both a musician and entrepreneur.

DaMabusa's breakthrough came in 2022 with the release of his debut single, "Umama Owangizalayo," which quickly achieved triple gold status. This success catapulted him into the spotlight as a formidable independent artist. Building on this momentum, he released the EP "Izipho" later that year, followed by the single "Syke." His entrepreneurial spirit culminated in the launch of his own record label, under which he has continued to release chart-topping hits. Some of his most notable tracks include the "Umama Owangizalayo 2.0 Piano Remix" and "Ithuba," both of which achieved platinum sales. His collaborations span a diverse range of artists, including South African talents like Shebeshxt, Lungelo Hlongwane, Mduduzi Ncube, and Leon Lee, as well as international stars Nutty O and Rayvanny. Sharing stages with renowned performers such as Makhadzi and Nkosazana Daughter has further cemented his reputation as a dynamic live performer.



▲ DaMabusa.



▲ Xowla.

Xowla joins Umuthi Fest 2025 lineup

THE anticipation for the second edition of Umuthi Fest is reaching new heights with the exciting announcement that South African producer Xowla has officially joined the festival's lineup.

Set to take place on October 18, 2025, at the Mavuso Trade Centre, this event promises to be a landmark celebration of music, culture, and talent. Xowla's addition to the roster places him alongside some of South Africa's most celebrated artists, including the dynamic duo Blaq Diamond, the soulful Mlinda The Vocalist, the vibrant Mawelele, the iconic Kwesta, the star Lwah Ndlunkulu, and the gifted Naledi Aphiwe.

Ticket sales have been strong, reflecting the growing enthusiasm surrounding Umuthi Fest. General admission tickets are attractively priced, with early bird tickets available at E150, pre-sale tickets at E200, and gate tickets at E250. For attendees seeking more exclusive experience, VIP tickets offer premium access, priced at E400 for early birds, E500 during presale, and E600 at the gate. This tiered pricing strategy ensures that the festival is accessible to a wide audience while catering to those who desire added comfort and exclusivity.

Prominence

Xowla, often hailed as the "Prince of the South African music industry," has rapidly risen to prominence through his captivating performances and distinctive sound. Born in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal, and raised in Malvern East, his musical journey began at the young age of 13. This early start allowed him to hone his talents as a singer, songwriter, and producer, laying the foundation for a career marked by creativity and innovation.

His breakthrough came with the release of the single "Voicemail" on June 24, 2022, a collaboration featuring heavyweight artists Big Zulu, Lwah Ndlunkulu, Mduduzi Ncube, and Siya Ntuli. The track quickly became a hit, resonating deeply with fans and establishing Xowla as a formidable force in the music scene. Currently signed to Inkabi Records, a label founded by Big Zulu, Xowla continues to evolve artistically, consistently delivering music that pushes boundaries and captivates audiences.



▲ Upscale Live artists Lyriikal Busta and As 4 JerryP (far left).

Upscale Live stars to rock Swazi Plaza Nights

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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SWAZI Plaza Nights is gearing up for an electrifying evening on September 26, 2025, featuring some of the most exciting talents in the local music scene.

The event, free to the public and hosted by Mainstream, promises to deliver a memorable experience with performances by Upscale Live stars As 4 Jerry P, Lyriikal Busta, and Virtuousouls. As 4 Jerry P is an emerging multi-talented artist making waves with his hit single 'Mlentengamunye.' Fresh off his victory at the ENCAC Talent Show, he brings fresh energy and creativity to the stage, captivating audiences with his unique style and compelling performances.

Alongside him, Virtuousouls, a dynamic DJ

and producer duo, will take the crowd on a musical journey. Known for their innovative fusion of genres, Virtuousouls push the boundaries of electronic music, redefining the soundscape with their eclectic beats and captivating rhythms.

Adding to the star power is Lyriikal Busta, a multi-award-winning musician celebrated for his mastery of Afrobeat and hip-hop. With a rich catalogue of hits, Lyriikal Busta's presence guarantees a night filled with crowd favourites and powerful performances. He will deliver an unforgettable set with his fellow Upscale Live stablemates that highlights the best of contemporary Swazi music.

Swazi Plaza Nights is set against the inviting and vibrant backdrop of the Food Court, creating an atmosphere that appeals to all ages. The event is thoughtfully designed to offer something for everyone.

Parents can enjoy sundowners or a relaxing dinner under the stars, while children engage in a variety of group games offered by the different restaurants. This family-friendly approach makes Swazi Plaza Nights an ideal weekend outing, blending entertainment, relaxation, and community spirit.

A defining feature of Swazi Plaza Nights is its commitment to inclusivity and community building. Beyond just a night of entertainment, the event fosters a welcoming environment where attendees from all walks of life can come together. The evening sessions provide a more laid-back alternative to the typical all-night party scene, allowing guests to enjoy vibrant music and socialising without the pressures of late-night events. This inclusive approach ensures that everyone, regardless of age or background, feels comfortable and valued.

'Senibeketele' visuals hit 70 000 views

ESWATINI music star Young Zesh is making waves in the Eswatini music scene with his latest single, 'Senibeketele' has hit 70,000 views in five days on YouTube.

The visuals elevate the song's already soaring popularity. Since its release, 'Senibeketele' audio has quickly gained traction, amassing over 36,000 views on YouTube, showcasing the growing influence of Young Zesh in the local music industry. This impressive reception marks a significant milestone for the artist, who is also debuting the single under his newly registered label, Mabonwa Abulawe Records.

'Senibeketele' is more than just another song in Young Zesh's growing discography; it is a heartfelt tribute to the unwavering support he has received from his fans throughout his musical journey. In an exclusive interview, Young Zesh shared the inspiration behind the song, highlighting the importance of his loyal fanbase.

"This song was inspired by my lovely fans who have been there for me since

day one," he expressed, emphasising how their encouragement has fueled his passion for music. The track aims to convey love and appreciation, serving as a heartfelt acknowledgement of the crucial role his fans play in his life and career.

The creative process behind 'Senibeketele' was nothing short of electrifying. Young Zesh collaborated closely with renowned producers DJ Citie and Jimmy Boy SD, creating an environment filled with creativity and energy.

"DJ Citie and I created the song together. He was making the beat while I was writing the hook. It's an African Trap song, produced by DJ Citie NTM. S/O to him for the wonderful work," he said, reflecting on the synergy that fueled the creation of the track.

Young Zesh is actively encouraging his fans to engage with the song. "I would love to plead with everyone to share the link, stream, like, and comment," he urged, recognising the power of social media and digital platforms in amplifying his music and connecting with listeners.



▲ Young Zesh.



▲ Dr Shakes.

ECOFEST launches comedy search to campaign

THE Eswatini International Comedy Festival (ECOFEST) is gearing up for an exciting activation at the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) in Kwaluseni on September 19, 2025.

Founded by the charismatic Bonginkosi Dlamini, popularly known as Dr Shakes, ECOFEST, set for September 26, 2025, has quickly become a beacon for comedy in Southern Africa. Now entering its second edition, the festival aims to surpass the success of its inaugural event by expanding its reach and impact. Dlamini's vision centres on showcasing diverse comedic voices from across the region while providing a platform for emerging local artists to shine. "This year, 2025 marks the 2nd edition of ECOFEST, and we aim to make it bigger and better than the inaugural event," he stated.

ECOFEST will feature a stellar lineup of comedians including Bongiswa, Darren, Boldwin Bals, and Ndosh, among others. These performers represent a vibrant cross-section of comedic styles and backgrounds, promising a night that caters to a wide range of humour preferences. The event will serve as a prelude to the main festival, which is scheduled to take place at the Sibane Sami Hotel in Ezulwini, further amplifying the excitement around ECOFEST 2025.

Tickets

Ticket sales are already underway, with early bird tickets priced at E120 available exclusively through Delta Pay. Pre-sale tickets will be sold at E150, while those purchasing at the gate can expect to pay E200. A significant new feature of ECOFEST 2025 is the introduction of a comedy search initiative targeting university students.

This competition aims to discover and nurture local comedic talent by offering the winner the rare opportunity to perform alongside internationally acclaimed comedians. The festival's international dimension is another key highlight. ECOFEST 2025 will feature comedians from countries such as China, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, and Eswatini itself.

Dlamini's enthusiasm for the upcoming festival is palpable. He promises that this year's edition will be "bigger, better, and bolder than ever before," with an exciting roster of performers and surprises yet to be announced. "If you thought last year was good, wait until you see what we have planned for the 2nd edition. This year's festival will be an evening rich in humour, stand-up brilliance, and a lively atmosphere," he said.

Pearl Thusi’s chilling encounter with Thabo Bester raises questions

I WOULDN’T have been as interested as I was in watching the new Netflix documentary, “Beauty and the Bester”, had it not been for the fact that Thabo Bester and Nandipha Magudumana were so hell bent on it not releasing. Their failure to block the documentary only fueled my curiosity, so as soon as it showed up on the streaming platform, there I was on it like white on rice.

However, one segment in particular, featuring actress Pearl Thusi, raises questions about its relevance.

Thusi’s encounter with Bester is chilling. She recounts how, back in 2011, Bester reached out to her for a fake television hosting job via Facebook.

“He’s genuinely crazy”, Thusi says.

Instead of a normal interview setting, they spent 25 minutes driving around. Bester then confronted her with a knife, and during this tense moment, she managed to talk him down. “I’ve never felt so stupid. I think I asked him ‘Why are you doing this?’ ... For me as a young Christian woman, this was an opportunity to do the right thing, and I really believed that I was about to help someone.” Attempting to guide Bester, she took him to a church and even gave him a Bible.

“We prayed together and then him and I left. I saw a police van and said, ‘Oh, I can ask the police to drop you off.’”

After that day, Thusi never saw Bester again.

At the time she didn’t report the incident to the police. She thought that he could be “saved” - then later discovered that Bester went on to kill his girlfriend, model Nomfundo Tyhulu.

In the doccic she starts to sob and wipes away tears while saying that if only she had reported it to the authorities, then maybe she could have saved Tyhulu. She basically blames herself for what Bester went on to do following their encounter.

“That day I dropped him off, cos they put him in the back of the police van, I could have told them what had happened and maybe I could have gotten him locked up and that I could have saved someone’s life, like someone who actually needed to be saved,” she confesses.

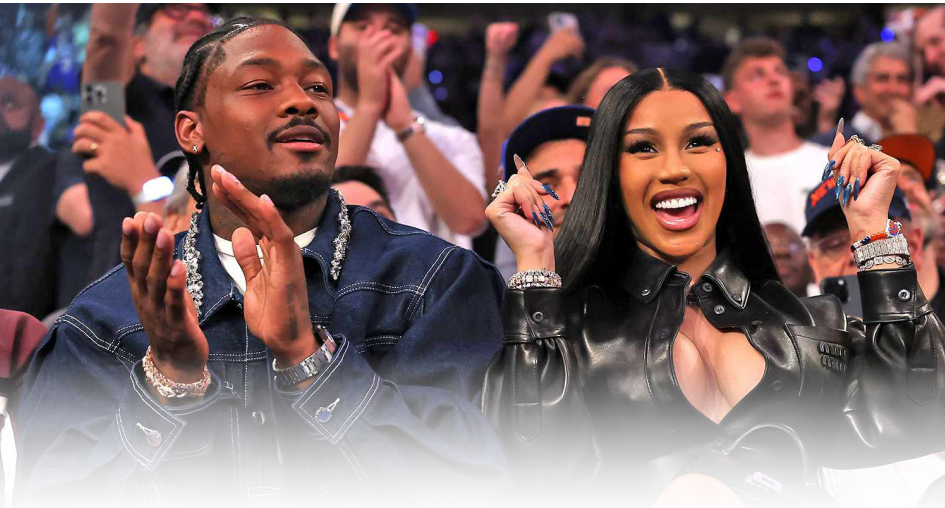
She could have stopped at the point where she never saw him again. The water-works and guilt trip was totally unnecessary and her 5 minutes didn’t really add substantial value to the overall production.

“Beauty and the Bester” succeeds in drawing attention to a terrifying narrative of manipulation and deceit, but Thusi’s story, while emotional, feels somewhat misplaced within its framework.

- “Beauty and the Bester” is currently streaming on Netflix. (IOL)



▲ Radio and TV personality Pearl Thusi.



Cardi B confirms her pregnancy with NFL player Stefon Diggs

CHART-topping star Cardi B has publicly announced that she is expecting her first child with her boyfriend NFL player Stefon Diggs. This is the rapper’s fourth child, she has three with her estranged husband rapper Offset.

In an exclusive interview with Gayle King on CBS Mornings, Cardi B shared the news, which her fans have been speculating for weeks.

“I’m having a baby with my boyfriend Stefon Diggs, I feel strong. I feel happy.” she told King. Diggs and Cardi B went public with their relationship earlier this year when they went to a basketball game together.

“I feel like I’m in a good space. I feel very strong. I feel very powerful that I’m doing all this work,” she added. “But I’m doing all this work while I’m creating a baby, and me and my man, we’re very supportive of each other.” The “UP” rapper explained that she despite the public speculation she kept her pregnancy under wraps because she wanted to say it at her own time and terms.

“Let me close some deals first... and you don’t want to really say right away that you’re pregnant. Let me see a couple more sonograms. Let my baby be healthy,” she said.

Cardi B indicated that that her baby was due in the new year, before she starts her tour in explained 2026. She shared that they both are happy about the pregnancy, which happened because of them having a little too much fun.

Cardi B opened up to King about dating after her rocky divorce from Offset, and how she had to let herself be vulnerable to new love.

The award-winning rapper is gearing up for the release of her second album “Am I The Drama” and urged fans to get her album, especially now that she’s going to be a mother of four and will need to but pampers. (IOL)

‘The Tinder Swindler’ arrested in Georgia on Interpol Red Notice

SIMON Leviev, the infamous con-man who shot to notoriety through Netflix’s hit documentary The Tinder Swindler, has been arrested in Georgia following an Interpol Red Notice. Authorities confirmed that Leviev, whose real name is Shimon Yehuda Hayut, was detained on Sunday at Batumi International Airport.

“He was stopped upon arrival and taken into custody,” Georgia’s Interior Ministry spokesperson Tato Kuchava told international media, as reported by Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Faux heir apparent

The 35-year-old Israeli became a global household name after the 2022 Netflix documentary detailed how he masqueraded as the wealthy heir to a diamond empire on Tinder, manipulating women into “lending” him vast sums of money to fund his jet-set lifestyle. His victims, spread across Europe, were conned out of an estimated \$10 million between 2017 and 2019.

One of the most high-profile victims, Norwegian woman Cecilie Fjellhøy, revealed in the documentary that she lost over \$270,000 to Leviev’s schemes. Fjellhøy later fronted her own series, Love Con Revenge, advocating for victims of online scams.

Criminal past

Leviev’s arrest in Georgia is the latest chapter in a long criminal history. In 2011, he fled Israel while facing charges of fraud and theft. He later served a prison sentence in Finland in 2015 for defrauding three women.

In 2019, after a joint investigation by Interpol and Norwegian journalists, he was arrested in Greece and extradited to Israel, where he served just five months of a 15-month sentence before being released early for good behavior.

Despite his criminal record, Leviev attempted to reinvent himself. He briefly profited from personalised video shout-outs on Cameo, charging up to £146 per clip, and recently announced plans to publish a book titled The Story Behind the Man.

It remains unclear what prompted the latest Interpol Red Notice. Such notices usually request the arrest of an individual pending possible extradition, but Georgian officials have not confirmed whether the case is linked to his earlier scams or new allegations.

Leviev’s lawyer, speaking to Israeli outlet Walla, said his client had been “traveling freely” before the arrest and insisted the move was unexpected.

Victim support groups have welcomed the development, with many hoping this signals real progress toward justice. “For years he has lived without accountability while his victims continue to struggle financially and emotionally,” one group told AFP.

Leviev is expected to remain in custody in Georgia while extradition discussions unfold. (Sunday World)

WHEN you were a kid, you might’ve wanted pizza, cheeseburgers, and ice cream for every meal.

And as a young adult, maybe you scraped by on heavily salted instant noodles, rice, and beans. But as you get older, what you eat plays an extra important role in your overall health. Diet fads come and go. Low-fat this and sugar-free that line the shelves. Yet one of the largest and most important parts of a healthy diet for adults over 50 is the often misunderstood carbohydrate.

What Are Carbs?

They can be your friend or enemy, especially when you’re older than 50.

Good carbs, bad carbs. Carbs are naturally in many foods, such as fruits, veggies, and grains. These are often called “good” carbs. They’re also added as sugars or starch to processed foods, such as sodas, chips, and candy. These are called “bad” carbs.

Processed foods that have bad carbs are the worst for your health. They overload your body with extra sugar, starch, and other unhealthy stuff. By choosing natural alternatives, you’re giving your body healthier amounts of sugar, starch, and fiber.

What carbs do. Good carbs have many jobs, including:

- ▶ Giving you energy
- ▶ Lowering your chances of getting health problems like heart disease, obesity, and diabetes
- ▶ Helping you control your weight

Numbers and Carbs

Good carbs should make up about half of your daily calories. Processed foods with bad carbs are “empty” calories that lack nutrients. They don’t give you the health benefits of good carbs. To keep track of your numbers, read the “Nutrition Facts” on your food labels. Following a healthy diet after 50 doesn’t need to involve number crunching and avoiding carbs completely. Simply being mindful of where your carbs come from can make a big difference.

Benefits of Choosing Good Carbs

Diet and nutrition. As you get older, a balanced diet helps you stay healthy. Since carbs make up about half your diet, good carbs are the key to a healthy eating plan.

- ▶ Healthy eating habits can:
 - ▶ Help your body’s defenses, or immune system.
 - ▶ Help you stay at a healthy weight.
 - ▶ Lower your odds for conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure, and bone loss.
- Good nutrition may also:
- ▶ Boost your focus, alertness, and memory.
 - ▶ Lower the risk of Alzheimer’s disease.
 - ▶ Lift your mood.
 - ▶ Improve the appearance of your skin and hair.

Carbs to Avoid, Plus Better Bets

▶ **Sugary drinks, sodas, and fruit juices.** These often have added sugar. You can replace them with sparkling seltzer water that has real fruit juice or with lightly sweetened teas.

▶ **White bread.** Simply substitute your normal sandwich bread for a whole grain or whole wheat option.

Worst carbs for adults over 50

GOOD CARBS



BAD CARBS



▶ **Pasta.** Like bread, opt for the whole-grain or whole-wheat types of your favorite pasta. Or use vegetables like zucchini and squash to make “veggie noodles”.

▶ **French fries and potato chips.** Even fat-free and low-sodium chips are packed with bad carbs. Chips made from sweet potatoes or black beans can be a healthier option. You can also make a variety of veggie chips at home.

▶ **Cookies, cakes, and pastries.** You probably won’t be shocked to know that the amount of sugar and butter in most baked goods is bad for you. Try satisfying your

sweet tooth with fresh, frozen, or dried fruit.

▶ **Candy, chocolate, and ice cream.** As with baked goods, fresh fruit is a good substitute for these types of junk food.

▶ **White rice.** It’s not as bad as other processed foods, but it’s not as healthy as whole-grain alternatives like brown rice or quinoa.

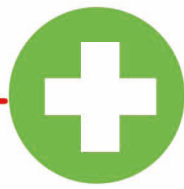
▶ **Flavored yogurts.** It takes a bit of extra work, but adding fresh or frozen fruit to your favorite plain yogurts will cut out a lot of the bad carbs that are in flavored

yogurts.

▶ **Sugary cereals.** Most of these have a lot of bad carbs. Consider replacing sugary cereals with natural, whole-grain versions. Or switch to unprocessed oatmeal with fresh fruit.

Shop Carefully

Even when you’re thinking about buying food that’s labeled “low fat” or “sugar free,” always double-check the Nutrition Facts to understand what you’re getting. Choose a natural alternative when you’re considering a low-fat or sugar-free option. **WebMD**



GETTING adequate sleep is a must for all of us.

Yet, the Sleep Foundation discovered that 35% of Americans sleep fewer than seven hours a night, and 50% of Americans feel sleepy three to seven days a week. One of the critical ways to fall asleep and stay asleep is to read books before bed. Here are some reasons why.

1. Break From Screen Time

The link between poor sleep and looking at screens could not be more apparent. Screens do not only include televisions and laptops; your iPad, phone, and e-reader all use screens. Looking at screens for up to 1.5 hours before bed reduces the natural surge of melatonin that your body produces. Additionally, devices with screens can often be stimulating, which interferes with your general relaxation levels and can delay you from trying to fall asleep.

On the other hand, regular old-fashioned books can be a much-needed escape from the haunting light of technology. Simply looking at something that is not emitting bright lights lets your body naturally release tension and relax into sleep.

2. Stress Relief

Not only does reading give you a break from looking at a screen, but the actual activity of doing it has been found to reduce stress up to 68%. In addition, it has been found to be even more effective than other de-stressors like drinking tea or listening to music. Often, people cite how reading's ability to transport you to a life that is not your own is a significant reason for its relaxing properties.

Of course, if you are explicitly trying to relax and de-stress before bed, pick a relaxing book. At least, choose one that won't make you feel more stressed. Novels about topics you love, wellness books, or maybe even something where you learn about a hobby could be great ideas for books to read before bed.

3. Improved Sleep Quality

Reading is an activity that works your brain without active physical stimulation, because you can read while lying down. It slowly relaxes your body and mind into falling asleep. It allows you to leave the present of your reality and engage in something else.

This improves your sleep quality because it relaxes you into sleep rather than artificially trying to insert yourself into a restful state. This often makes you feel more well-rested when you wake up.

Additionally, most people have trouble going to sleep due to stress and anxiety. Physiologically, you become stimulated by the hormones that are released when you begin to feel that pressure and stress. Therefore, you are more likely to not fall asleep or wake up if they are present. Reading helps you break this cycle within yourself as it can take you out of your own experience.

4. Empathy

We all have neurons called mirror neurons. These neurons are fired both when we see someone doing something, or when we do something ourselves. This proves the neuroscientific existence of empathy.

Benefits of reading before bed

6 reasons why you should pick up your book before bed



One study suggests a correlation between these neurons and reading. This finding perhaps suggests reading as a way to feel more empathy.

Another study also found some ground to scientifically prove that readers actually put themselves into the protagonists' bodies in the books they read. Moreover, the study showed just how deep this connection could be; there was even some correlation between reading and altering of the parts of the brain that deal with sensory feelings.

5. Long Term Effects on Cognition

A 2013 study on the effects of reading on

the brain found that reading improved the brain's "connectivity," or the brain's ability to understand stories, and critically think about them was a significant short-term benefit of reading.

More studies need to be conducted on the long-term effects of reading on your brain connectivity to say whether or not they empirically exist. However, it cannot be denied that reading as a hobby exposes you to new ways of thinking, lets you view new perspectives, and challenges you to understand concepts you would otherwise not encounter. In general, this forces you to use creativity and mental agility.

6. Short Time Investment

The average recommendation is that adults read at least twenty minutes a night in order to garner the benefits of reading. However, comparatively speaking, that is a concise amount of time to relax, and you do not need to do much.

As odd as it may sound, reading is a better time investment than most other forms of relaxing your body and mind. There is no special training, equipment, or even preparation you need to do. Just keep a book near your bed.

WebMD

News In Pictures



▲ Britain's King Charles and U.S. President Donald Trump sit in a carriage during a procession through Windsor Castle, in Windsor, Britain.



▲ Catherine, Princess of Wales, leaves Westminster Cathedral at the end of the Requiem Mass, on the day of the funeral of Britain's Katharine, Duchess of Kent, in London.



▲ Nolan Ferraro, 13, closes his eyes during a rally hosted by members of the Michigan Republican Party to remember conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who was fatally shot during an event at Utah Valley University, in Lansing, Michigan.



▲ Cast member Teyana Taylor attends the London premiere for the movie "One Battle After Another" in London.



▲ Former U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Susan Monarez, who was ousted after resisting changes to vaccine policy that were advanced by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.,



▲ Members of the Danish armed forces perform a military drill on a Danish navy vessel after being lowered from a helicopter, as Danish and French armed forces perform military drills off the coast of Nuuk, Greenland.

Man City ‘apparently’ not Champions League contenders – Guardiola

PEP Guardiola acknowledged that Manchester City are not considered among the favourites to win the Champions League ahead of their opening game against Napoli on Thursday.

City have regularly reached the sharp end of Europe’s top club competition in recent years, winning the trophy for the first time in 2023.

They suffered a painful early exit last season, losing to 15-time champions Madrid in a two-legged play-off with a place in the knockout stages at stake.

According to the bookmakers Liverpool, Barcelona, Arsenal and defending champions Paris Saint-Germain are all considered more likely winners of this season’s Champions League.

Guardiola was asked at his pre-match press conference on Wednesday whether he saw City as contenders.

“Apparently, we are not,” he said. “And (we must) just enjoy the moment, the journey. We are happy to be here.

“In the past, we have been. We just won once, so that is a lot of difficulty. (We are) Just focusing tomorrow on the game we have to play, starting this competition well.”

City are intent on making their mark after finishing last season without a trophy for the first time in eight years.

They started the Premier League



▲ Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola. season slowly, with two defeats in their first three games, but bounced back to crush Manchester United 3-0 on Sunday.

Guardiola has rebuilt his squad over the past two transfer windows, with a clutch of long-serving players exiting the club, including Kevin De Bruyne, Ilkay Gundogan and Eder-son.

Thursday’s game against the Italian champions will feature an emotionally charged return to the Etihad for De Bruyne, who joined Napoli in June after a 10-year trophy-laden stint in Manchester.

Guardiola said he was looking forward to seeing the midfielder but only “after the game”

The City boss said it was no surprise that De Bruyne had settled quickly in Italy.

“The players in that level don’t need much time to adapt and perform well,” he said, praising his former player’s “talent and vision”.

City’s new goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma also spoke to reporters on the eve of the match against Napoli, underlining that the club had been his top choice.

The Italy international won the Champions League with PSG in May but was deemed surplus to requirements by the French club, completing a £26-million (\$36 million) deadline-day switch to City.

(Supersport)

Bryanston leads as first GolfRSA Women in Golf Charter Signatory

GOLFRSA is proud to announce that Bryanston Country Club has become the first golf club in South Africa to sign the GolfRSA Women in Golf Charter, marking a landmark commitment to greater inclusion, diversity and opportunity for women and girls in the sport.

Launched in association with The R&A, the Charter sets out a clear vision to transform the culture of golf and create an inclusive environment where women and girls can thrive. By signing, Bryanston Country Club has pledged to drive gender balance across all areas of the game – from participation and leadership to governance and visibility.

“From grassroots heroes to elite champions, women’s golf journeys deserve equal stages, equal coverage, and equal recognition. Through the Women in Golf Charter, led by The R&A, GolfRSA is committed to elevating women’s golf across South Africa, ensuring women and girls are seen, heard, and celebrated,” said GolfRSA CEO Grant Hepburn.

“Bryanston Country Club’s decision to sign our Charter is a milestone moment for South African golf. As the first club to formally pledge its support, Bryanston is leading the way in showing how clubs can actively break down barriers, provide opportunities, and create spaces where women and girls feel welcome in every aspect of the game.”

As part of its Charter commitments, Bryanston Country Club has pledged to expand programmes for women and girls, including coaching clinics and beginner pathways, increase female representation in decision-making and leadership roles, foster a more welcoming culture through education, awareness and communication, and track and report on progress to ensure accountability and long-term impact.

“Signing the GolfRSA Women in Golf Charter reflects our belief that golf is for everyone and that every person, regardless of gender, should feel welcome

and supported within our club environment,” said Andrew Rogers, General Manager of Bryanston Country Club.

“This commitment is about more than just words on paper – it’s about creating opportunities, removing barriers, and ensuring that women and girls have the same chance to participate, develop and succeed in the game.

“We are proud to set the standard as the first club in South Africa to take this step, and we hope our example will encourage many others to follow. By working together as a golfing community, we can build a more inclusive and sustainable future for the sport we all love.”

GolfRSA will continue to work with clubs, unions and stakeholders nationwide to roll out the Charter, providing guidance, resources and support to ensure meaningful progress.

“This is just the beginning,” said Janyne Marais, GolfRSA Club Liaison and Women in Golf Charter Ambassador. “Bryanston’s leadership shows that real change is possible. By adopting the Charter’s principles, they will not only create opportunities within their own club but also inspire clubs across the country.”

Earlier this year, GolfRSA has launched the first Women in Golf Leadership Foundation Programme, a flagship initiative backed by The R&A to cultivate a new generation of female leaders in South African golf. The programme equips women with the skills, confidence and opportunities to excel beyond playing – in coaching, administration, governance and club management.

Through workshops, mentorship and practical training, the initiative develops professional competencies while driving cultural change, ensuring women are represented at every level of decision-making. The first cohort of 25 participants will graduate on 25 and 27 November 2025.

(Supersport)



▲ Andrew Rogers, Julie Bruyns-Leach and Janyne Marais.

Beam adds American spirit to F1 debutants Cadillac

KENTUCKY bourbon brand Jim Beam and Formula One newcomers Cadillac announced a partnership on Wednesday highlighting their historic ties and adding to the team’s American spirit.

The multi-year deal makes Jim Beam the official spirits partner of the General Motors-backed outfit, who will debut as Formula One’s 11th team next season. No financial details were provided.

“This partnership represents two American originals driving forward together on a mission to usher in a new era by welcoming even more people into Formula One,” they said in a joint statement.

The whiskey, part of Japanese-owned Suntory Global Spirits, is the U.S.-owned team’s second F1 partner after New York fashion brand Tommy Hilfiger was announced in June as apparel provider and lifestyle sponsor.

JIM BEAM ALSO PARTNERS LA DODGERS

Jim Beam also partners the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team, whose billionaire owner Mark Walter is chief executive of holding company TWG Global which in turn controls the Cadillac F1 team.

Rashidi Hodari, managing director of the James B. Beam Distilling Company, told Reuters the two brands had a shared history.



▲ Graeme Lowdon.

He recalled how the company founder owned a Cadillac in the 1930s, placing a mason jar of his prized yeast on the front seat before driving home every evening.

“Our seventh generation master distiller drives a Cadillac. When you show up in Clermont for a visitor’s tour at our distillery, the first stop when we explain the process of bourbon, we have a replica 1939 Cadillac.

“When we found out that the Cadillac F1 team was getting a chance to join the grid in 2026, it felt seren-

dipitous,” he added.

While Cadillac will compete with Ferrari engines initially, and will have Finland’s Valtteri Bottas and Mexican Sergio Perez as drivers, they have American Colton Herta in a test role and intend to race with GM units from 2029.

The team are the first new outfit in Formula One since Haas, also U.S.-owned, in 2016.

Hodari said Formula One’s global growth, and soaring popularity in the United States where many fans are new to the sport, (Supersport)

2010 FIFA World Cup ranked ‘greatest ever’: a celebration of South African culture

THE 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa left a lasting impression on both the country and the world.

From the streets of Johannesburg to Cape Town, the nation was alive with excitement as people came together to celebrate football.

The tournament has since been ranked the “greatest World Cup of all time” by Sport Bible, a recognition of its global impact and historic significance.

This was the first World Cup ever hosted on African soil. It offered fans iconic moments, from Siphwe Tshabalala’s powerful opening goal to Spain’s rise as champions.

Beyond the matches, the tournament highlighted African culture, giving the world a closer look at the continent’s music, dance and traditions. The official mascot, Zakumi, a leopard with green hair, became a familiar symbol of the event.

The tournament reached an unprecedented worldwide audience. Reports shared by Africa View Facts on Facebook indicate that nearly 3.2 billion people watched matches either on television or online platforms.

The 2010 World Cup not only showcased football but also brought African music and fashion into the global spotlight.

Fashion played a key role during the tournament. Fans and players alike embraced vibrant colours, traditional prints and local designs.

National team jerseys were celebrated, with South Africans proudly wearing the



green and gold of Bafana Bafana.

Fans across the globe also wore shirts, scarves and hats that reflected African patterns and themes.

Street vendors and markets became hubs for World Cup merchandise, while designers and brands took inspiration from African heritage in creating tournament-inspired clothing lines.

Music and dance were central to the celebration. Several songs became unofficial

anthems of the World Cup.

Shakira’s “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)” was performed during the opening ceremony and quickly became a global hit.

K’naan’s “Wavin’ Flag” captured the spirit of hope and unity, while “Game On”, the official mascot song, brought an upbeat energy to the stadiums.

American singer R. Kelly collaborated with the South African gospel choir Soweto Spiritual Singers on “Sign of a Victory”, blending

international and local sounds.

A version of “Shosholozza” featuring Ter-nielle Nelson, Jason Harman, Uju, Louise Carver, AYA and Deep Level added further cultural depth to the event.

These songs were accompanied by dance challenges that spread across social media and stadiums, giving fans a way to express themselves while celebrating the tournament.

The combination of sport, culture and music made the 2010 World Cup a unique experience.

Stadiums were filled not only with cheering supporters but also with performances and displays of local traditions. Television broadcasts brought the energy of South African cities into homes around the world, highlighting the country’s hospitality and the passion of its people.

Looking back, the 2010 FIFA World Cup stands as a milestone in football history. It was more than a tournament; it was a global cultural moment.

From the opening goal to the final whistle, from the fashion on the streets to the music on the radio, it brought the world together through sport and celebration.

It remains a reference point for how a major international event can showcase not only athletic skill but also the cultural richness of its host country.

(IOL)

Ukraine reach BJK Cup semifinals for first time

UKRAINE reached the semifinals of the Billie Jean King Cup for the first time with gritty performances from Elina Svitolina and Marta Kostyuk against Spain on Wednesday.

Svitolina defeated Paula Badosa 5-7, 6-2, 7-5 to wrap up the quarterfinal tie for Ukraine in the women’s team competition.

Kostyuk beat Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 earlier in the day in Shenzhen.

The Ukrainians will now take on defending champions Italy on Friday.

“I had to really dig deep for this win,” said Svitolina, the world number 13.

“I’m super-pleased with the team performance, not only my performance today, because you know it takes a lot of people.

“All the guys here in the tracksuits of Ukraine, and the crowd as well made it really special for us today.

“It was a really important point, not only for our team but also for our country for the first time to be in the semifinals.”

The Shenzhen Bay Sports Centre holds good memories for Svitolina, who reached the championship match of the prestigious WTA Finals when they were held there in 2019.

Badosa was playing her first match since Wimbledon, having been sidelined with a back injury.

Svitolina and Badosa are two of the biggest fighters of the game and their two-hour eight-minute battle



▲ Billie Jean.

was testament to that.

Badosa let a break advantage slip away and saved a set point while serving at 4-5 before she grabbed the opening set after 52 minutes.

Svitolina swiftly responded, sailing ahead 3-0 in the second frame to level the match.

She looked in control of the decision when she leapt to a 4-1 advantage but Badosa pegged her back and was soon on level terms.

The Spanish former world No 2 had an opportunity to break at 5-5 but Svitolina stayed resolute and swatted away the break point en route to victory.

In the first match of the tie, Kost-

yuk survived the big-hitting Bouzas Maneiro to improve her singles record in the competition to 9-3.

“Just to represent my country here in the World Cup, just being here, doesn’t matter I win or lose, is such a big honour,” said Kostyuk.

BUOYANT BRITAIN

Britain face Japan in the quarterfinals on Thursday while the United States take on Kazakhstan.

Anne Keothavong, captain of the British women’s team, is without Emma Raducanu after she pulled out to play in South Korea.

(Supersport)



▲ Emma Raducanu.

Raducanu wins after rain delay to set up Krejcikova clash

EMMA Raducanu was made to wait at the rain-hit Korea Open on Wednesday before setting up a meeting with fellow former Grand Slam champion Barbora Krejcikova.

Britain’s Raducanu, the 2021 US Open winner and eighth seed in Seoul, came back from 1-3 down in both sets to beat Jaqueline Cristian of Romania 6-3, 6-4.

The first-round match was originally scheduled for Tuesday but was pushed back by heavy rain in the South Korean

capital.

“It hasn’t been easy, I feel like I’ve played this match for the last three days,” Raducanu said afterwards.

She next plays Czech Krejcikova, who won the 2021 French Open and last year’s Wimbledon crown.

Top seed and six-time major champion Iga Swiatek faces Romania’s Sorana Cirstea on Thursday as the Pole gets her title bid under way.

(Supersport)

It's time for Insingizi, Ingwe to rise

By Chris Dlamini

THE past few weeks have not been good for Eswatini football.

From the embarrassing COSSASA Games where our school soccer team was humiliated, then the senior national team Sihlangu Semnikati got battered away in Cameroon and Libya before our National Under-17s suffered the same in Zimbabwe in the Africa Cup of Nations 2026 Qualifiers under the COSAFA Region.

However, there is hope for redemption this week when elite soccer teams Nsingizini Hotspurs and Royal Leopard take on their TotalEnergies CAF Champions League and TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup rivals, Simba Bhora from Zimbabwe and Young Africans from Namibia respectively.

How ready are our teams? Do they have the quality and experience needed to get past their preliminary stage rivals? Let's get to it here.

Insingizi Yezulu can stun Simba

Simba Bhora vs. Nsingizini Hotspurs
Tournament: TotalEnergies CAF Champions League

Date: Sunday, September 21, 2025

Venue: Obed Itani Chilume Stadium, Francistown, Botswana

Kick-off: 8pm

The MTN Premier League champions are here because they worked hard for it. They are certainly one team to beat in the new season domestically, but it is currently the international stage they need to capture and hoist the country's flag. With just over E1 million guaranteed to hit their account from the Confederation of African Football (CAF) for merely being in the preliminary round, it should be a motivation to get to the real bucks, the group stage where we are now talking over E7 million (US\$700 000). For Nsingizini Hotspurs or Insingizi Yezulu as they are fondly known, it is a case of once tasted, always wanted as they recently received close to E1 million from CAF for last year's TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup participation. They did not get past the preliminary round after losing to South Africa's (SA) Stellenbosch but that was valuable experience for them. Winning the second

... Eswatini envoys Nsingizini Hotspurs, Royal Leopard hit Botswana for the first leg matches



▲ The MTN Premier League champions are here because they worked hard for it.

edition of the 8Bet Trade Fair Cup about a couple of weeks ago when they missed five regular starters due to Sihlangu Semnikati's World Cup 2026 Qualifiers, is a good sign that they are into something great and could once again go all the way to defend their first-ever league title.

The Signings and Experience:

Without a doubt, they have the quality for the Champions League and to beat a team from Zimbabwe whose football is no longer as great as it was over a decade or two ago. Let's look into the quality, and of course the experience in the squad.

- Insingizi has signed players from Mbabane Swallows in the last two seasons who have played this tournament in the red and blue of Swallows. These are Neliswa 'Tiger' Dlamini, Kwakhe Thwala, Ayanda Gadlela, and lately Kingsley Kwakyi. These are all stars who have vast experience and as a plus,

the locals have all but Gadlela been in the senior national team Sihlangu Semnikati under coach Zdravko Logarusic so they know what to expect in the international scene. So, talk about quality and experience, they have it.

Add the likes of their talented stars in Thubelihle Mavuso, Sambulo Masoso, both have been in Sihlangu, then bring in goalkeeper Khanyakwezwe Shabalala from Sihlangu as well, and last season's Player of the Season Sizwe 'Yeki' Khumalo. We can expect positive results from coach Mandla Qhogi's team on Sunday.

2nd Leg:

- The second leg will be played at Somhlolo National Stadium, Lobamba in Eswatini a week later.

Specific date: Sunday, September 28, 2025

Kick-off: 3pm

Who's next if Nsingizini wins?

- The green and white outfit from the Shiselweni Region has it tough in the second preliminary round before the group stage. On their path to the big bucks is Tanzania's Simba SC or Botswana's Gaborone United.

New signings (Foreigners):

1. Kingsley Kwakyi (Ghanaian Centre-back from Mbabane Swallows)
2. Joel Madondo (Ugandan centre forward - ex-Wydad Casablanca)

Why play the Zimbabwe team in Botswana?

- Simba Bhora has no approved home venue under the CAF requirements for a stadium to host category A matches. For that reason, Simba took their home match to Francistown in Botswana.

Leopard has quality, experience

Young Africans vs. Royal Leopard

Date: Saturday, September 21, 2025

Venue: Obed Itani Chilume Stadium, Francistown, Botswana

Kick-off: 3pm

By virtue of being the Ingwenyama Cup 2024/25 champions, the experienced police side missed Champions League football by just a whisker - only a point was the difference between them and eventual league champions Nsingizini Hotspurs last season.

Leopard is the most experienced side of the two Eswatini envoys having played in the Champions League for five editions, only running short of making the group stage. However, Leopard did stun Algerian giants JS Kabylie in the 2021 edition of the Confederation Cup to make the group stage.

They are back in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup again this term and will aim to get past their Namibian rivals Young Africans on Saturday when the two sides clash on a neutral venue - the first leg is

home away from home for Young Africans who also have no CAF-approved venue for the match.

Quality and Experience:

Without a doubt, Ingwe Mabalabala, as Royal Leopard fondly trade, has all the required experience and they are not short of quality too. Such experience stems from their Champions League and CAF Confederation Cup campaigns in recent years and the fact that they have dominated the national team Sihlangu Semnikati for some time now.

- It is stars like Junior Magagula, Felix 'Fela' Badenhorst, Muzi 'Mzoro' Dlamini, Mlamuli Makhanya and Mzwandile Mabelesa they can count on among others. These have been there, done that, and seen it all at both club and national team levels.

- The coach, Edwin Matsebula has also been with the side for years now and knows what these competitions bring.

2nd Leg:

The match will be played a week later in



▲ Leopard is the most experienced side of the two Eswatini envoys having played in the Champions League for five editions, only running short of making the group stage.

Eswatini.

Venue: Somhlolo National Stadium, Lobamba

Date: September 27, 2025

Kick-off: 3pm

New Signings (Foreigners):

1. Mike Mohammed (Ghanaian forward - Ex-Mbababe Swallows, Al-Wahda SC, Free State Stars, Polokwane City and Maritzburg

United among others)

Who's next for Leopard after Young Africans?

- Should Leopard successfully get past the Namibians, they will take on Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) AS Maniema Union or Pamplemousses from Mauritius next month in the 2nd preliminary round.

By Sibusiso Masilela
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SBS juniors' tourney on talent nurturing mission



▲Male juniors Phiwokuhle Sibandze and Zwelethu Mkhonta with Tennis Association president Ncaba MkhaliPhi.

THE future of tennis is bright. The Eswatini National Tennis Association is on a mission to nurture young talent through the ongoing Swaziland Building Society junior tournaments.

The association recently staged a junior tournament at Olymp Africa Centre, where the duo of Zwelethu Mkhonta and Singcebo Ntshalinshali emerged victorious.

The two winners were awarded with trophies in the boys' and girls' under-16 categories.

The next edition of the ongoing tournaments will take place on Saturday at Matsapha University tennis courts.

ENTA President Ncaba MkhaliPhi said they are happy with the progress of the ongoing tournaments.

"We are pleased with the progress of the junior tournaments. We urge teams to continue attending the tournament to keep the youngsters fit and the junior's national team will be chosen from the active pool," he said.

The president further thanked the sponsor for continued support.

"We are grateful for the support of the sponsor, which contributes to the development of the sport in the country," he said.

Autism golf event on September 27

By Sibusiso Masilela
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TEEING for a good course.

Autism Eswatini will host its fundraising golf tournament on September 27, 2025, at Ubombo Country Club.

The tournament was announced by Autism Eswatini representative Bongiswa Fakudze.

"Autism Eswatini is thrilled to announce its upcoming Fundraising Golf Tournament, taking place on 27 September 2025 at Ubombo Country Club, Big Bend. This highly anticipated event aims to raise crucial funds for the establishment of a One-Stop Centre in the Manzini Region, which will provide holistic rehabilitative services for children with autism and other neurodevelopmental

conditions. Additionally, proceeds from the tournament will go towards the sustainability of Autism Eswatini's operations and the expansion of services across the country," Fakudze said.

He further appealed for the support of the tournament from the nation.

"This tournament is more than just a sporting event; it is a call to action for the nation to come together to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for children and families affected by autism. Autism Eswatini invites the public, businesses, and other partners to amplify this cause. By supporting this event, you are directly contributing to strengthening.

Eswatini's support systems for persons with autism and ensuring access to much-needed," he said.



▲Golfers in action during the previous edition of the Autism Golf Tournament.

RES Boxing Club to stage tournament early next month

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE Royal Sugar Eswatini boxing club has aligned itself with the Eswatini Boxing Association's mandate to host domestic competitions.

The Sugar belt side will host competition on October 5, 2025, at the Tshaneni Club 5 Bar on 4 October 2025. The tournament is sponsored by Footing Investment plant and hire construction company.

RES has followed Stepping Razor in hosting a domestic competition following the recent competition held at Coronation Park, Mbabane.

This was revealed by RES boxing club coach Thembinkosi Gina.

"We look forward to the tournament that will be attended by local clubs. The aim of the tournament is to promote the standard of boxing in the country. We would like to thank the Eswatini Boxing Association for continued support," he said.

He also thanked the sponsor for bankrolling the tournament.

"We are grateful for the support of the sponsor, which will play a key role in nurturing young talent," he said.

Some clubs that will attend the competition include Titans, Emaselesele, Ezulwini, Olymp Africa, Stepping Razor, Correctional, Manzini, and Ingwe Boxing Club, among others.



▲RES Boxing Club boxers during a recent local tournament.

It's a Loga split

By Sibusiso Masilela
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IT'S a Loga split.

The Eswatini Football Association has parted ways with Sihlangu head coach Zdravko Logarusic. The decision was taken during an emergency meeting held at Sigwaca House on Wednesday between the coach and EFA executive members.

The outspoken Croatian mentor recently led the nation's pride to back-to-back FIFA World Cup defeats against Cameroon and Libya. He was left with two months in his one-year contract with the mother body, which will elapse in October.

A source close to the matter asserted the news to the Eswatini Daily News.

"The organisation and the coach agreed to part ways by mutual consent. The two parties are now working on the termination logistics. There are several factors that were considered, including the safety of the coach, including his safety due to a string of poor results," the source said.

Eswatini Football Association Chief Executive Officer Frederick Mngometulu could not be reached for comment when compiling this report.

Sihlangu is left with two matches in the ongoing qualifiers against Cape Verde and Angola.



▲ Mbabane Swallows' Bongikhosi 'Karas' Magagula and Philiso Newman.

'Birds' suspends 'Karas', Philiso

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

IS the Birds nest being rattled?

Capital city giants Mbabane Swallows have suspended their two stars, Bonginkhosi 'Karas' Magagula and Philiso Newman.

The two players will appear before the club's Disciplinary Committee for allegedly attending a meeting that was facilitated by the Swallows Pty (Ltd) faction.

Swallows are rocked by a power struggle between the two factions led by Absalom Ngwenya and Princess Lungile.

Princess Lungile is the widow of the club's late Boss Victor 'Maradona' Gamedze.

A source within the Swallows camp revealed the news that the two players have been put on ice.

"Karas and Newman have been suspended. They will both appear before the DC in due course," the source said.

Swallows FC confirmed that they have suspended two players for alleged misconduct without revealing their names through a press statement.

The club stated that the suspension was sparked by a meeting between the players and individuals who are accused of destabilising the team.

The club further stated that it has paid players' salaries, and they have a plan in place to cushion the wage bill throughout the season.



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs with EFA President Peter 'Samora' Simelane and HRFA Chairman Comfort Shongwe who is head of delegation for the trip.

'We will make nation proud'

By Sibusiso Masilela
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CAF Champions League envoys Nsingizini Hotspurs have promised to make the nation against Simba FC.

The reigning MTN Premier League champions' coach, Mandla Qhogi made the promise during their farewell function held on Wednesday at Sigwaca House.

The Shiselweni-based side will face Simba Bhora in the preliminary round first leg encounter slated for Obed Chilume Stadium on Sunday.

"We are ready for the assignment and will do our level best to hoist the country flag against Simba Bhora. We have done necessary preparations for the tie and my players are ready for war," he said.

Eswatini Football Association (EFA) President Peter 'Samora' Simelane implored the team to make the nation proud during the



assignment.

"We believe in our capabilities, and you should represent us well during the assignment," he said.

Simelane further announced Hhohho Regional Football Association Chairman Comfort Shongwe as head of delegation for the trip.

Simba Bhora FC is hosting its match in Botswana due to a lack of FIFA-recognised stadiums in Zimbabwe.



▲ Mbabane Swallows (Pty) LTD faction representatives Luke Malinga, 'Maria Maria' Fakudze Bhekithemba Ginindza during their meeting with the PLE executive comiteee.

Don't drag our name through the mud – PLE tells Pty faction

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE Premier League of Eswatini has warned the Mbabane Swallows FC faction against dragging their name through the mud.

This was revealed by the top-flight football entity Chairman Polycarp Dlamini during their meeting with the aggrieved faction on Wednesday at Sigwaca House.

"We request from the Mbabane Swallows FC family. It is very disturbing to see reports where we are being labelled as thugs. We have got a brand to protect as an organisation," he said.

The Chairman further revealed that they are not interfering in member clubs' disputes.

"Clubs are allowed to run their affairs independently and we will meet as an executive committee to look at ways on how we can assist on this matter," he said.

Swallows Pty (Ltd) board Chairman Bhekithemba Ginindza requested transparency from the football bodies when handling such matters.

"We request the PLE and the Football Association to be neutral on such matters. All we want is the smooth handover of the team back to us as it was agreed last season," he said.

The Swallows FC faction claimed that the Pty (Ltd) faction is reluctant to meet them; instead, they are meeting football bodies without them.

A black and white photograph of Pep Guardiola, the Manchester City manager, gesturing with his hands while speaking.

**‘Man City apparently
not Champions
League contenders’**

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**‘Birds’
suspends
‘Karas’, Philiso**

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The logo of Mbabane Swallows FC, featuring a red circle with a white bird in flight, a soccer ball, and the text 'MBABANE SWALLOWS FC' and 'Umkhonto kaShaka'.

Eswatini Thursday 18
Daily News September, 2025

Sport

A large photograph of Zdravko Logarusic, the Croatian mentor of the Eswatini national football team, sitting at a table with his hands clasped. He is wearing a light blue polo shirt. In the foreground, there is a collage of the Eswatini national football team players in their kit, holding a trophy.

**It's a Loga
split**

... Eswatini Football Association (EFA) part ways with outspoken Croatian mentor Zdravko Logarusic two months before expiry of his one-year contract. *Page 23*