



By Kwanele Dhladhla

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Malawi's peaceful elections sign of democratic maturity—Masuku

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Arrest me if I'm guilty of collapsing health sector – Ashraff

Stories By Kwanele Dhladhla

SWAZIPHARM Director Kareem Ashraff has rejected in the strongest terms allegations that his company's conduct precipitated the country's health crisis.

During a press conference with the Editors Forum and senior journalists on Thursday at his offices at the Mbabane Industrial Site, Ashraff described the Funduzi Forensic Audit as 'weaponised' and said it was built on guesses rather than verifiable documentary evidence.

To rebut the report's claims, Ashraff disclosed that he hired Randburg Chartered Accountants (RCA), a South African firm he described as 'the best of the best' with blue-chip clients, to conduct an independent assessment of Funduzi's methodology and conclusions.

The RCA review- a detailed assessment supplied to the government and to the media- reportedly identifies serious procedural flaws in how Funduzi was appointed and concludes several headline findings were unsupported.

Central to Ashraff's rebuttal was the allegation that Funduzi misread and misclassified payment records- labelling legitimate, partial payments as duplicate or fraudulent disbursements.

Ashraff called upon the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to summon him so he could produce the

... SwaziPharm Director Kareem Ashraff publicly announces to have all proof to clear his name, family suffering emotionally due to vindication

... He questions why ACC, AG did not come to SwaziPharm to verify prior to publication of contentious Funduzi Forensic Audit

... Ex- SwaziPharm says this is a deliberate attack, AG maintains they were not targeting anyone



▲ Consultant Shaun Morgan displays the proof which demonstrates the innocence of SwaziPharm which they are ready to produce when required to do so while former Director Dave Melvin and Kareem Ashraff look on.

invoices, delivery notes, import permits, and bills of lading, he said prove the medicines were ordered, received, and supplied.

"I have got all the documents. I will show the invoices - call me to PAC so I can respond in public," he said.

He insisted that what was reported as E68 million in 'duplicates' was, in fact, partial payments for separate consignments.

Ashraff recounted repeated but unsuccessful attempts to get public backing

from senior officials. He said he personally tried to speak with Prime Minister Russell Dlamini, Health Minister Mduduzi Matsebula, and Principal Secretary Khanya Mabuza, only to be told privately that there was nothing wrong - yet the authorities failed to make that reassurance publicly.

He questioned why, if the findings were valid, anti-corruption agencies and the report's authors did not come to SwaziPharm to verify records before publication. Many of

these procedural criticisms were echoed in the RCA review, which alleges Funduzi did not grant auditees a right of reply and at times, misinterpreted transaction records.

The RCA assessment also challenges one of Funduzi's most explosive claims- that the state paid for Remdesivir, which had been donated by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The consultant noted a contradiction between Funduzi's allegation and the WHO statements and flagged it as unsupported by verifiable evidence.

Ashraff used this point to argue that the audit's credibility was compromised and that its conclusions should not stand without proper forensic verification.

The unfolding debate comes amid wider controversy over how Funduzi was engaged and whether procurement processes were properly followed. Critics have raised questions about the AG's office and the procurement route that led to Funduzi's appointment- concerns also referenced in wider reporting on the matter.

Ashraff said he was ready to be punished if wrongdoing was proved, but until then, he demands transparency: "If you find any truth, punish me. If not, have the decency to apologise."

This is a heart-wrenching deliberate attack– Ex- SwaziPharm Director

FORMER SwaziPharm Director Dave Melvin has joined his former colleague in a public rebuttal, saying it was disheartening that a company, which he said diligently served the public, was being blamed for collapsing the health sector.

Melvin told Editors and Senior Journalists that SwaziPharm, and its leadership worked to keep medicines flowing to hospitals and clinics during the worst of the shortages, and that accusations to the contrary were politically and personally motivated.

"This is a deliberate attack on SwaziPharm with clandestine intentions," he said, urging investigators to examine procurement and audit processes that led to the Funduzi findings.

Local reporting, mainly by Eswatini's weekly publications, shows that Melvin has also cooperated with investigators and produced paperwork when asked.

Ashraff has publicly challenged the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee to call him to lay out documentation that he said proves deliveries matching government payments.

He claimed delivery notes, bills of lading, import permits, and supplier invoices exist and that they would show the so-called E68 million 'duplicates' were in fact a sequence of partial payments against separate consignments.

The RCA review SwaziPharm commissioned concluded that Funduzi misinterpreted transactional records and did not allow auditees adequate opportunity to respond. Auditor General's Communications Officer



▲ Former SwaziPharm Director Dave Melvin listens attentively as Consultant Shaun Morgan points out flaws in the contentious Funduzi Forensic Audit Report.

Bongile Mavuso has defended the audit process, stressing that the Auditor-General's office audits ministries and departments and does not set out to target individual suppliers.

Mavuso said the AG's team conducts due diligence on all documentation provided during audits and invited anyone with contrary information to forward it to the relevant ministry for review. The office's response frames its work as routine public-

sector accountability rather than a campaign against single firms.

For his part, Ashraff alleged that he tried formal legal routes: he said he reported alleged falsehoods to the police and sought to sue, but that progress had been slow, with some files reportedly lingering at the DPP's office.

He warned that prolonged public ridicule based on what he calls flawed reports damages both reputations and public

confidence in institutions.

"If you think I'm guilty, point a finger- sue me. But don't ridicule me on social media with things I never did," he said.

As the row continues, calls grow for an open PAC session where documents can be laid, and questions answered in public.

SwaziPharm insists transparency could clear its name; critics said the company must still satisfy lawmakers and investigators that every supply chain step was beyond reproach.

Stories by Kwanele Dhladhla

Malawi's peaceful elections sign of democratic maturity– Masuku

THE Head of Mission for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), Eswatini's former Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku, has praised the peaceful conduct of Malawi's 2025 General Elections.

Delivering the mission's preliminary statement in Lilongwe on Thursday, Masuku said the polling and pre-election phases were generally conducted in a calm and orderly manner, reflecting Malawi's growing democratic maturity.

"The Mission observed that the pre-election and voting phases of the 2025 General Election in the Republic of Malawi were generally conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. The peaceful atmosphere is testimony to the commitment of Malawians to strengthen democracy through tolerance and respect," Masuku said.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Incoming Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, had called upon Malawians to uphold peace, unity, and democratic principles. Expressing confidence in Malawi's tradition of stability, His Majesty urged citizens to once again prove their commitment to democracy.

At the time of going to press, results announced by the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) according to Malawi Freedom Network showed that former President Peter Arthur Mutharika leading with 62 percent of the national vote, while incumbent President Dr. Lazarus Chakwera trailed at 34 percent. Final results were still being compiled.

The SADC mission, deployed across the country's regions, monitored key aspects of the electoral process, including the political environment, voter registration, voting procedures, and the role of state institutions. According to Masuku, observers found that Malawians participated in large numbers and polling officials carried out their duties with professionalism.

"Polling stations opened on time, materials



▲ The SADC Electoral Observation Mission poses for a group picture after successfully observing the Malawi National Elections.

were delivered without major disruptions, and security personnel conducted themselves with neutrality," Masuku noted.

Commended

He further commended Malawian stakeholders, political parties, civil society, faith leaders, and the media for fostering an environment that enabled peaceful participation. The mission encouraged stakeholders to preserve this calm spirit until the final announcement of results.

"Peace, tolerance, and calm are the cornerstones of credible elections. We urge all political actors and supporters to exercise

patience and allow the electoral process to conclude within the legal framework of the Republic of Malawi," he said.

Masuku added that, in line with SADC's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, SEOM would issue a comprehensive final report within 30 days. He explained that this would detail the mission's overall findings and provide recommendations for strengthening Malawi's electoral system.

In its preliminary statement, the mission also urged parties and candidates dissatisfied with the outcome to utilise Malawi's



▲ Themba Masuku, Head of the Malawi SADC Elections Observer Mission, described the elections as peaceful and orderly except for a few hiccups.

established dispute resolution mechanisms.

"Democracy is best nurtured through dialogue, not violence. We encourage all stakeholders to respect the rule of law and channel grievances through appropriate legal platforms," Masuku said.

The mission's early verdict has been welcomed by both regional observers and many Malawians, who view the peaceful elections as a step forward for the nation. For now, attention remains fixed on the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) as it prepares to announce the results that would determine Malawi's next chapter.

... SADC mission calls for reforms in Malawi's electoral process

WHILE praising the peaceful nature of Malawi's 2025 General Elections, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) has called for significant reforms to improve future polls.

Presenting the mission's preliminary findings in Lilongwe, Head of Mission and Eswatini's former Deputy Prime Minister, Themba Masuku, outlined recommendations that target gaps in voter registration, legal frameworks, media fairness, and gender representation.

"The mission observed commendable levels of peace and order. However, it also noted challenges that, if addressed, will strengthen Malawi's electoral democracy," Masuku said.

The mission urged the government of Malawi to ensure that law enforcement agencies address electoral-related criminal acts promptly. It emphasised that the credibility of future polls depends on maintaining security while safeguarding the rights of all participants.

On voter registration, SEOM called for legal amendments to establish a continuous registration system.

"A permanent electoral roll will provide greater access and accuracy in voter registration. This should include consultations on extending registration and

voting rights to Malawian citizens in the diaspora," Masuku said.

The mission further recommended amending the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Elections Act to make it mandatory for voters' lists to be displayed outside polling stations before election day. According to observers, this measure would enhance transparency and allow voters to verify their details early.

Another key recommendation involves the adoption of electronic systems for electoral activities, particularly the transmission of results. Masuku explained that digitisation could reduce delays and improve efficiency, provided the systems are backed by legislation and proper safeguards.

Coverage

The role of the media also came under scrutiny. SEOM urged the government to align the Malawi Public Broadcasting Corporation with international best practices, ensuring impartial coverage of political activity.

"Fair and balanced reporting is essential to building voter confidence," Masuku stressed. The mission also expressed concern about low female representation in parliament and political positions. It called on government, political parties, and civil society to adopt "concrete measures" that empower women's participation in leadership. In conclusion, Masuku reiterated SEOM's appreciation for Malawi's peaceful



▲ The SADC Election Observer Mission led by former DPM Themba Masuku delivers the preliminary report.

elections, while emphasising the need for reforms before the next poll.

"We encourage stakeholders to promote peace, tolerance, and calm as the nation awaits the final results. Equally, we call for the adoption of the reforms necessary to advance Malawi's democracy," he said.

At press time, Malawi Freedom Network reported that former President Peter Arthur Mutharika remained ahead with 62 percent of the vote, while incumbent Dr. Lazarus Chakwera trailed at 34 percent. The electoral commission was expected to announce the official results in the coming days.

By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihle@rubiconmedia.group

BOOSTING youth entrepreneurship and innovation, Standard Bank Eswatini has contributed E100,000 to support the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) Luyengo Campus ENACTUS team as they prepare to represent Eswatini at the prestigious Enactus World Cup, taking place from September 25 to 28, 2025.

This funding marks a critical investment in the future of Eswatini's young entrepreneurs and underscores the bank's commitment to driving economic development through education and grassroots business support. The UNESWA Luyengo Campus team recently clinched the title of 2025 Enactus Eswatini National Champions with their groundbreaking project, Nutri Plume.

This innovative initiative produces organic fertiliser from broiled chicken feathers, a resource that would otherwise contribute to environmental pollution if improperly disposed of. Their success at the national level has earned them the honour of representing Eswatini at the Enactus World Cup in Bangkok, Thailand, where they will compete against teams from over 35 countries.

Global platform

The Enactus World Cup is renowned as a global platform where innovation meets impact, showcasing projects that combine entrepreneurial spirit with social and environmental responsibility. The UNESWA Luyengo team's Nutri Plume project not only addresses agricultural productivity but also tackles critical issues of water, land, and air pollution, positioning Eswatini as a contender on the world stage for sustainable solutions.

The Eswatini team is scheduled to depart for Bangkok on September 23, 2025, and will return on September 30, 2025. This journey is more than a competition; it is an opportunity for the team to gain exposure to cutting-edge innovations, exchange best practices with peers from around the world, and return home inspired to amplify their impact on Eswatini's economy and environment.

Standard Bank pumps E100 000 into UNESWA Luyengo ENACTUS World Cup journey



▲ Standard Bank pumps E100,000 to UNESWA Luyengo Enactus World Cup journey.

Mlamuli Hlatshwayo, Head of Business & Commercial Banking at Standard Bank Eswatini, emphasised the bank's deep-rooted commitment to the country's growth through its Corporate Social Investment (CSI) strategy. "Eswatini is our home, and our CSI projects are designed to drive Eswatini's growth," said Hlatshwayo. He highlighted education as a cornerstone of the bank's CSI efforts and expressed pride in supporting the UNESWA Luyengo ENACTUS team.

"Entrepreneurship development is vital, especially supporting businesses at the grassroots levels. We are proud of such programmes and will continue to support them. Hoist the Eswatini flag," he added, underscoring the bank's role as more than just a sponsor but a true partner in empowering young entrepreneurs.

Sabelo Dlamini, ENACTUS Eswatini Country Director, echoed the sentiments of partnership and long-term investment. He described Standard Bank's funding as more than just financial travel support; it is an investment in Eswatini's future. "When we send the team to represent us at the World

Cup, we don't just want them to participate; we want them to have a transformative experience," Dlamini stated.

He elaborated on the importance of exposure to global innovation and best practices, which the team will encounter among the 35 participating countries. This experience is designed to ignite a passion that will propel the team to increase its impact upon returning home, fostering a ripple effect of entrepreneurship and innovation within Eswatini.

National flag

While the UNESWA Luyengo team will carry the national flag at the World Cup, Dlamini reminded the public of the many other promising projects that emerged from the national competition. "Only one team can win to represent the country, but we witnessed many other teams with incredible ideas," he said. ENACTUS Eswatini is committed to supporting these teams in scaling up their projects, ensuring that the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship continues to thrive across the nation.

The Nutri Plume project exemplifies the power of youth-led innovation to address real-world challenges. By transforming chicken feathers, a waste product often linked to pollution, into a valuable organic fertiliser, the team is contributing to sustainable agriculture and environmental preservation. Their journey to the Enactus World Cup is a testament to the potential of young entrepreneurs to drive meaningful change. Standard Bank Eswatini's investment not only facilitates this journey but also signals confidence in the capacity of Eswatini's youth to lead economic transformation.

FINCORP, in collaboration with FINSURE, Launches Sambulelo Funeral Cover

By Taonga Nkatha

FINSURE Assurance, a subsidiary of the Eswatini Development Finance Corporation (FINCORP), has officially launched its latest product, the Sambulelo Funeral Cover, in a ceremony held at FINCORP's Rooftop on Thursday.

The ceremony, attended by FINCORP Group Managing Director Dumisani Msibi, represented a significant advancement in the Group's commitment to expanding financial access and delivering development-oriented solutions to the citizens of Eswatini.

During his address, Msibi underscored FINCORP's objective of establishing a comprehensive resource for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), while also addressing the needs of individuals and communities. "Funerals are not only moments of grief but also times of immense financial strain for families and many families. Sambulelo is our response, providing an inclusive, adaptable, and readily available solution. We are committed to ensuring prompt and immediate disbursements upon claim approval. We assure you that this plan is designed to be affordable for all," he stated.

Chief Insurance Officer, Nozipho Dlamini emphasized that the Sambulelo Funeral Plan is tailored to accommodate the varied circumstances of the populace of Eswatini.

"Our core value rests on inclusivity and ease of access, irrespective of whether you are an SME owner, a sugarcane grower, or a street vendor. This plan can be modified to suit your specific needs and financial circumstances," she explained.

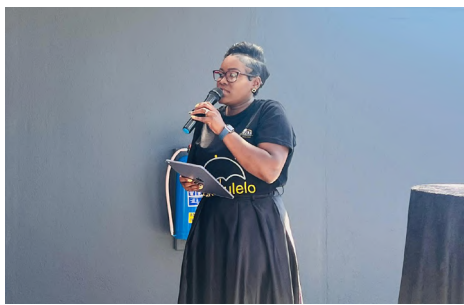
Key aspects of the Sambulelo Funeral Plan include:

- Coverage choices for individuals, immediate family members, and extended family members.
- Coverage amounts from E5,000 to E50,000, with senior citizens eligible for coverage up to E10,000.
- Coverage for children up to age 21, extended to 25 for students, and throughout their lives for those with permanent disabilities.
- Claim settlements processed within 24 hours or less.
- Affordable group coverage available for 20 members or more, reflecting Eswatini's community values.

The plan provides adaptable payment options, structured to correspond with the income schedules of various client demographics. "We are not dictating a plan, but delivering a vital solution structured in line with the needs of our communities," Dlamini affirmed.

Standard exclusions apply and include:

- Death by suicide within 24 months of policy inception.
- Death resulting from exclusions de-



▲ Chief Insurance Officer, Nozipho Dlamini.

tailed in the policy documentation, including:

- Active involvement in war, warlike actions, civil conflict, or rebellion constituting a widespread uprising.

The utilization of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, or any radioactive contamination stemming from them.

Any attack or sabotage targeting facilities and storage sites that results in the discharge of radioactivity or nuclear, biological, or chemical warfare agents.

Requirements for group onboarding:

Group Policies:

1. Certificate of incorporation/constitution/ registration license/etc.
2. Entity's proof of physical address.
3. Signed application form.
4. List of covered members with their identification numbers.
5. Identification documents of directors/ authorized signatories.

6. Proof of physical address for directors.

Individual Policies:

1. Signed application form.
2. Identification document of the insured.
3. Bank statement of the insured for debt order clients.
4. Pay slip of the insured for source deduction clients.
5. Proof of residence of the insured.
6. Proof of birth certificate.

Required Documents for Claim Submission (Certified Copies):

1. Identification document of the deceased.
2. Death Certificate.
3. Medical certificate verifying the cause of death or a letter from the local authority (Umphakatsi) if death is not medically certified.
4. Confirmation letter from the mortuary housing the body of the deceased.
5. Identification document of the beneficiary.
6. Bank statement of the beneficiary.

As FINCORP approaches its 30th anniversary in April 2026, the introduction of Sambulelo underscores the Group's enduring strength and creativity. FINCORP presently maintains a 73% market share in the national credit sector and is strategically positioning its divisions, FINSURE Assurance and First Finance Company to promote enhanced financial inclusion across the nation.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Southern African Nazarene University (SANU) is considering increasing tuition fees in a bid to boost its revenue.

This was revealed by the SANU Acting Bursar Mbali Shabangu on Thursday during a tour of the institution by the Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo.

According to Shabangu, the university was incurring losses due to operation, and they were therefore, considering forwarding a proposal to Cabinet to increase the tuition fee as one way of raising funds to stay afloat.

However, she did not disclose the proposed hike of the fees.

The minister urged the administration to reduce all their requests, including that of increasing fees into writing.

SANU Vice Chancellor Dr Faith Mlotso-Mngomezulu stated that they have rising costs as an institution. She said in 2023, they had annual operating deficit of up to E13 million.

She added that they also have high liabilities and a very low cash flow.

She mentioned that they were therefore in urgent need of financial sustainability measures as an institution.

She highlighted that the university requires over E90 million to fund all its capital projects.

She stated that some of the challenges that they were faced with as a university included weak industrial relations and governance structure delays.

“The university is incurring losses from operations. A slight improvement was noted in 2025 due to improved cost controls and the introduction of new programmes in the

SANU considering increasing tuition fees



year 2024/2025,” she said. SANU Pro-Vice Chancellor Pastor Thandokuhle Mdziniso informed the minister that they needed urgent assistance in renovating the debilitated girl’s hotels, which was in a very bad state.

He pointed out that the situation was so serious that they were forced to remove students from a certain wing of the building which was no longer habitable.

He mentioned that what was needed the most in so far as the face-lifting of the facility was concerned was the renovation of the roofing and fixing of electricity cables.

The minister advised SANU management to forward a proposal to the Regional Development Fund (RDF) for the renovation of

girl’s dormitories. During the tour, the minister was not only informed about the various challenges faced by the institution which include amongst others, dilapidated infrastructure and insufficient funding for operations and capital projects, but he was also informed that the institution intends to introduce a sporting course.

Meanwhile, the minister noted that the country is overproducing teachers, who unfortunately can no longer be absorbed by the labour market he therefore, encouraged the administration of the university to consider diversify their programmes and introducing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) related programmes,

something which the management disclosed was in the pipeline.

The minister further urged the SANU administration to work in unity and avoid working in silos if they wanted to achieve formidable results.

Dr Bongani Sibandze, the Dean of the Faculty of Health mentioned that there was an exodus of health care workers in the country, who migrate to European countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom to seek greener pastures.

On that note the minister pointed out that it was for that reason that medical-related courses should be introduced at the institution in order to bridge this gap.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

IMISEBE Publishing commemorated the International Literacy Day with Inkhanyeti School pupils in a bid to promote literacy in the digital era.

To celebrate the young learners’ participation and to motivate them, Imisebe Publishing awarded the pupils with a selection of prizes, which included amongst others string bags, T-shirts, Imisebe bookmarks, and books.

When making his remarks, Tony Mabaso, the Marketing Officer for Imisebe Publishers began by expressing their heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable support and collaboration they have shared with Inkhanyeti School over many years.

He said yesterday, they were joining the global community in marking International Literacy Day, a celebration dating back to

Imisebe Publishers commemorates International Literacy Day with Inkhanyeti School

1967, observed every year on September 8 to emphasise the vital role literacy plays in shaping a more just, peaceful, and sustainable society. He mentioned that this year, Imisebe Publishing was honoured to promote the theme, ‘Promoting Literacy in the Digital Era.’

“Our mission has always championed literacy, particularly within schools across the country. The theme reflects the profound changes digital technology brings to how we learn and work. It urges us to recognise both the new opportunities of digitisation and digital transformation,” he said.

Mabaso mentioned that digital technol-

ogies were reshaping every facet of life and education, introducing new ways of acquiring and sharing knowledge. He mentioned that digital tools can empower traditionally excluded communities, but this required a

foundation of literacy to be truly effective. “We encourage our learners not only to embrace the digital world but also to actively participate and contribute positively to this evolving digital era,” he said.



▲ Imisebe Publishing commemorated the International Literacy Day with Inkhanyeti School pupils in a bid to promote literacy in the digital era.

By Thokozani Magagula

ESWATINI has reaffirmed its commitment to global climate and environmental protection efforts with the passing of amended regulations targeting ozone-depleting substances and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

Speaking during the commemoration of World Ozone Day at the Tums George Hotel in Manzini on Thursday, the Minister of Tourism and Environmental Authority, Mary Jane Mkhonta-Simelane, applauded Parliament for endorsing the Ozone Depleting Substances and Hydrofluorocarbon Regulations, 2025, which replace and expand on the 2003 framework.

“These amendments mark a remarkable milestone and a true testament to the country’s commitment to the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol and our own Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) as required by the Paris Agreement in the climate change regime,” said the Minister.

The amended regulations are designed to:

- ▶ Guide the gradual phase-down of HFC production and consumption;
- ▶ Restrict their use in specific applications; and
- ▶ Enforce management practices such as leak repairs and refrigerant recovery to reduce their high Global Warming Potential (GWP).

Minister Mkhonta-Simelane emphasized that science has been central to this progress: identifying the dangers of ozone-depleting substances, developing solutions, and providing data that continues to shape national and global climate action.

“Science has provided the essential foundation for global action to protect the ozone layer... and in this era, such data remains a tool to guide us towards meaningful climate action,” she said.

Inspectors trained to enforce compliance in line with government’s Nkwe approach to integrated workstreams,

Eswatini commits to ozone protection with new regulations



▲ Legislators, Minister of Tourism and Environmental Authority Jane Mkhonta-Simelane with inspectors who were awarded with completion certificates.

the Ministry, through the Eswatini Environment Authority, has already begun strengthening enforcement capacity. Fourteen Environmental Inspectors drawn from municipalities, company towns, and the Ministry of Health have been trained in ozone science, leak detection, refrigerant classification, and the basics of refrigeration and air conditioning.

Efforts

“These trained inspectors will form the first cadre of designated officers in terms of Section 20 of the ODS and HFC Regulations, 2025, once the Regulations have been gazetted,” the Minister confirmed.

She also acknowledged development partners who are supporting Eswatini

with equipment such as leak detectors, which will enhance compliance monitoring and enforcement efforts. The Minister reminded the audience that the Montreal Protocol and the Vienna Convention remain shining examples of how science-driven cooperation can yield tangible results. She noted that Eswatini, through its early adoption of legislative measures in the early 2000s, has consistently aligned itself with international best practice.

“As a Ministry, we are, once again, pleased to commemorate this year’s World Ozone Day together with you, our valued partners. Together, we are evaluating the journey of our past year and celebrating the achievements of the Montreal Protocol and



▲ Minister of Tourism and Environmental Authority Jane Mkhonta-Simelane making her remarks.



▲ The Deputy Senate President Ndumiso Mdluli sharing a light moment with guests during the celebration of the Commemoration of World Ozone Day.

the legacy of the Vienna Convention, both of which remind us of the power of global cooperation and action,” she said.

The commemoration brought together stakeholders from government, municipalities, the private sector, and development partners, all united by the goal of safeguarding the ozone layer and advancing climate resilience.

... Parliament must enact tougher green laws – Deputy Senate President

By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI joined the rest of the globe in commemorating World Ozone Day, with national leaders calling for deeper commitments to environmental protection and sustainable development.

Speaking during the observance, Deputy Senate President Ndumiso Mdluli emphasized the role of Parliament in driving environmental reforms and highlighted on-going legislative efforts aimed at safeguarding the ozone layer and broader ecosystems.

World Ozone Day is marked annually on September 16 to commemorate the signing of the Montreal Protocol in 1987, a landmark global agreement that successfully curbed the production and use of ozone-depleting substances.

The theme for this year underscores the need to ‘restore the ozone layer while combating climate change,’ a dual responsibility that resonates strongly in Eswatini’s developmental agenda.

Deputy Senate President Mdluli reminded citizens that Parliament is more than just a law-making body it is a guardian of public welfare and a platform for shaping long-term national priorities.

“The environment is not an afterthought in our legislative programme. We are

working to ensure that bills and policies passed in Parliament address today’s environmental challenges while securing resources for future generations,” he said.

He noted that several bills are currently under review, with the goal of strengthening Eswatini’s regulatory framework.

Among them are laws addressing climate change mitigation, pollution control, and sustainable natural resource management.

These efforts, Mdluli said, are aligned with international conventions and regional protocols to which Eswatini is a signatory.

The Deputy Senate President stressed that Parliament has a duty to ensure that environmental issues are mainstreamed into all areas of policy, from industrial development to agriculture and urban planning.

Action

“Without deliberate legislative action, our commitments under global agreements would remain words on paper. Parliament must transform them into binding obligations that guide how we manage land, water, forests, and the air we breathe,” he said.

Eswatini, like many other developing nations, is facing the combined pressures of ozone depletion and climate change.

Scientists have long warned that while the Montreal Protocol has been successful in reducing ozone-depleting chemicals, global warming poses new threats that could undermine progress.

Mdluli pointed out that ozone protection

and climate resilience are interconnected. Many substances phased out under the Montreal Protocol were also potent greenhouse gases.

Their elimination not only repaired the ozone layer but also helped reduce emissions that drive climate change.

“By commemorating World Ozone Day, we are reminded that global cooperation works. The Montreal Protocol is proof that multilateral action delivers results. It should inspire us in Parliament to champion stronger national laws that uphold our part in protecting the planet,” he said.

Remarks

During his remarks, the Deputy Senate President cited several bills under consideration, which seeks to harmonize Eswatini’s fragmented environmental laws under a single comprehensive framework.

Worth noting is that, another key piece of legislation is the Climate Change Bill, which will establish guidelines for reducing emissions, promoting renewable energy, and strengthening adaptation measures.

“These bills are designed not only to meet our international obligations but also to address our domestic realities,” Mdluli explained.

“Communities in Eswatini are already experiencing the effects of climate variability droughts, floods, and unpredictable weather patterns. The law must provide solutions that are practical and responsive to these challenges,” he added.

Mdluli also stressed that the responsibility

for protecting the environment does not rest solely with government or Parliament.

He called upon the private sector, civil society, and citizens to embrace sustainable practices. From reducing plastic waste to conserving forests, he said, individual actions collectively shape national outcomes.

“Our greatest achievement will be when protecting the ozone layer and our environment becomes second nature to every Liswati,” he said.

As Eswatini commemorates World Ozone Day, the country stands at an important juncture. With Parliament shaping a new generation of environmental legislation, the opportunity exists to embed sustainability into the very fabric of national development.

Deputy Senate President Mdluli closed his remarks by urging all stakeholders to work together to ensure that Eswatini not only meets its international commitments but also secures a safe and healthy environment for generations to come.

“The ozone layer is healing because nations acted together. Let that be our lesson: unity and action bring results,” he said.

World Ozone Day thus served not only as a reminder of past successes but also as a call to action for present and future challenges. For Eswatini, it was a moment to reaffirm its commitment to environmental stewardship, with Parliament playing a central role in shaping the laws that will protect the nation’s natural heritage.

BRIEFS

Nvidia bets big on Intel

NVIDIA said on Thursday it would invest \$5 billion in Intel throwing its heft behind the struggling U.S. chip-maker just weeks after the White House engineered an extraordinary deal for the U.S. government to take a massive stake in the company.

The stake instantly will make Nvidia one of Intel's largest shareholders, giving it roughly 4% or more of the company after new shares are issued to complete the deal.

Natura shares surge after Avon deal

BRAZILIAN cosmetics maker Natura said on Thursday it has agreed to sell its Avon International unit to holding firm Regent, ending a long period of uncertainty after announcing last year it was weighing alternatives for the business arm.

The sale of the unit, which aggregates Avon's businesses outside Natura's key Latin American market, sent Sao Paulo-traded shares in the company up more than 13%.

Rand slips before rate decision

THE South African rand slipped on Thursday ahead of an interest rate decision by the central bank.

At 0622 GMT, the rand traded at 17.45 against the dollar, about 0.3% weaker than Wednesday's close.

The South African Reserve Bank is scheduled to announce later in the day whether it will adjust its main lending rate. Economists polled by Reuters widely expect the central bank to keep the rate unchanged at 7.00%. (Reuters)

SEL posts strong dividend

Stories By Delisa Magagula

SWAZI Empowerment Limited (SEL) has reported resilient financial results for the year ended 31 March 2025, with dividend income emerging as the strongest contributor to earnings.

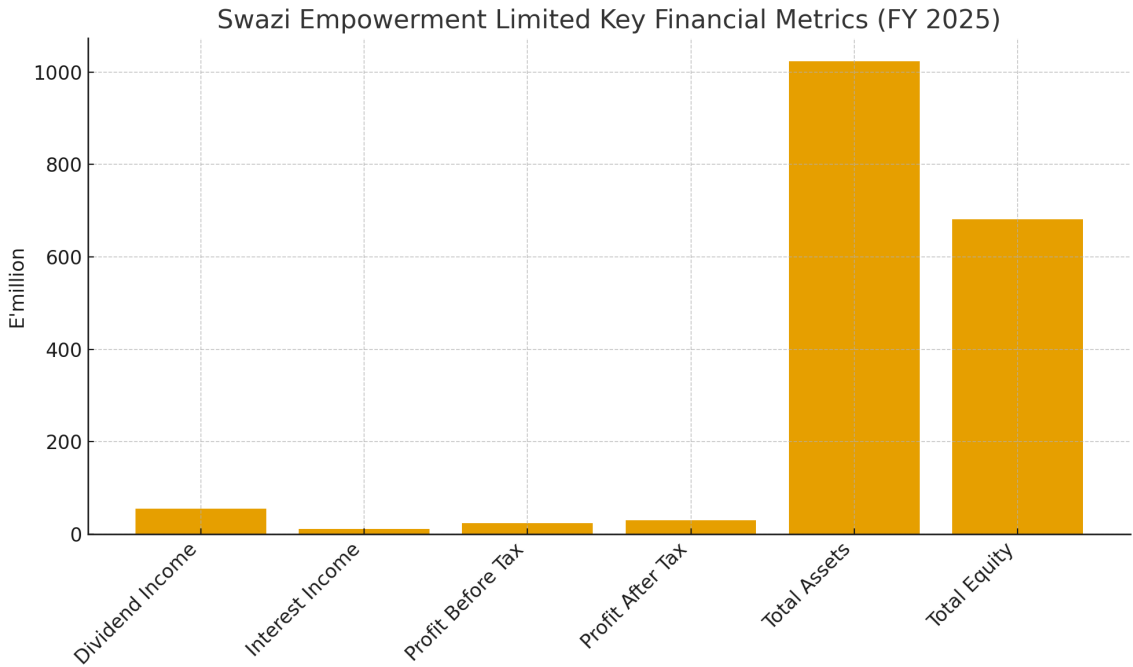
The company generated E54.5 million in dividend income from its investments, underscoring the value of its strategic stake holdings in companies with consistent performance.

According to the financials, SEL's interest income from fixed-income and money market investments amounted to E11 million, bringing its total investment income to over E65 million.

This income mix demonstrates the company's reliance on dividend-paying equities as the cornerstone of its financial stability.

A closer look at SEL's profit and loss statement shows that the group posted a profit before tax of E23.7 million.

After taxation, the company



▲ Swazi Empowerment Limited key financial metrics.

ended the year with a profit of E30.4 million, a commendable performance in the face of regulatory changes and market pressures.

The company's performance reflects the resilience of its key assets. For instance, its stake in MTN Eswatini continues to provide reliable dividends, while FNB

Eswatini, acquired in late 2023, has already proven to be a strong contributor.

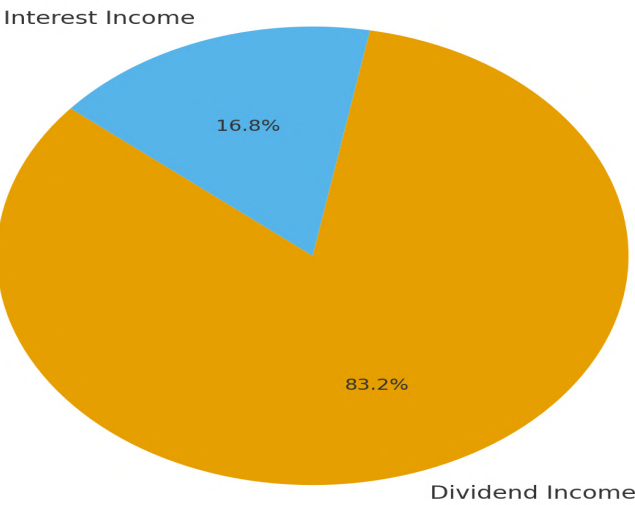
Analysts note that such diversified holdings help cushion SEL from single-sector shocks.

The accompanying pie chart shows that dividend income accounted for 83.2% of total income,

while interest income contributed 16.8%.

This income distribution reflects SEL's heavy dependence on equity investments, particularly in sectors such as telecommunications and banking.

Income Sources Breakdown (FY 2025)



Comprehensive loss of E132 million weighs on SEL

DESPITE its profitable core operations, Swazi Empowerment Limited reported a comprehensive loss of E132 million for the financial year.

This was largely attributed to a fair valuation adjustment of negative E163 million, reflecting the decline in the market value of its portfolio amid global and regional economic headwinds.

The adjustment, which was non-cash in nature, highlights the volatility associated with equity markets and the impact of external market conditions on SEL's financial position.

However, management stressed that such fluctuations are part of long-term investment cycles and that the intrinsic

value of the portfolio remains intact.

At year-end, SEL's total assets stood at E1.02 billion, while total equity amounted to E681.6 million.

These figures underline the company's strong balance sheet and its ability to weather short-term valuation declines.

Management emphasised that while valuation losses created a negative headline, the company's underlying profitability, reflected in dividend and interest income, remains strong.

This dual picture operational profitability versus accounting losses captures the reality of investment holding companies in volatile markets.

SEL Expands Portfolio with investments in banking and telecoms

DURING the year under review, SEL deepened its presence in high-growth sectors, particularly banking and telecommunications.

The company acquired a 49% equity stake in First National Bank (FNB) Eswatini, which has already shown promising returns.

In addition, SEL's 19% stake in MTN Eswatini Limited remains a cornerstone of its portfolio, benefiting from the telecom giant's robust market positioning and expansion of digital services.

MTN's continued investments in 3G, 4G, and new technology infrastructure provide a strong foundation for future growth.

Beyond these core investments, SEL holds bonds such as the Eswatini Development Finance Corporation Bond (FINB507) and other fixed-income securities, which provide diversification and steady returns.

Looking ahead, SEL has also completed the acquisition of a 4.9% stake in UFS International post the financial year-

end.

This addition reflects the company's strategy of building a balanced portfolio with both growth-oriented equities and income-generating assets.

Corporate governance also featured strongly in SEL's review.

At its Annual General Meeting, scheduled for October 2025, the company intends to reaffirm its accountability to shareholders by focusing on transparency, sustainability, and alignment with national development goals.

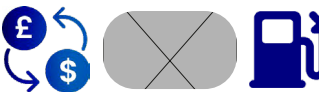
Management reaffirmed its strategic commitment, noting that SEL will continue to pursue opportunities that align with long-term shareholder value creation, while mitigating risks posed by market fluctuations.

By strengthening its footprint in financial services and telecoms while exploring regional opportunities, SEL aims to remain a key player in Eswatini's investment landscape.



FX RATES

Notes/Cash		
	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	18.4475	18.9418
G.B. Pound	22.5807	23.2633
EURO	18.9804	19.5952
Bank Rate (July 2023)	7.50%	
Prime Rate (July 2023)	11%	
Inflation (July 2023)	4.5%	
Petrol	E20.20/Litre	
Diesel	E19.80/Litre	
Paraffin	E14.55/Litre	



Over 400 clients serviced by Hub

Stories By Delisa Magagula

THE ERS Matsapha Service Centre is not only convenient but also busy. On a normal working day, ERS alone services over 40 clients at the hub, dealing with matters ranging from filing tax returns to resolving compliance queries. The demand peaks significantly during festive periods when the Centre can serve more than 450 clients in a single day.

This level of activity underscores the importance of decentralising services and reducing congestion in traditional offices.

According to ERS, Commissioner General Brightwell Nkambule said the shared centre will help ease pressure on the Mbabane and Manzini offices while ensuring businesses and individuals in Matsapha get timely support.

“The numbers speak for themselves. During peak seasons, we attend to hundreds of people daily, and being closer to them means we are improving efficiency and reducing frustration for both clients and staff,” an ERS officer at the hub explained.

The successful launch of the Matsapha Service Centre sets the stage for similar projects in other regions. ERS and ENPF are developing a roadmap to roll out additional joint service centres in towns such as Nhlangano, Siteki, and Pigg’s Peak.

Commissioner General Nkambule explained that the institutions have committed to building on the Matsapha model and applying lessons learned to future expansions. “Our long-term goal is national coverage. By doing so, we are transforming how citizens interact with government-related services. This is public service redefined,” he said.

The initiative also aligns with Eswatini’s broader national development agenda, which emphasises efficiency in public ser-



▲ ERS Commissioner General Brightwell Nkambule delivering his remarks.

vice delivery and cost-effective use of resources. By working together, ERS and ENPF believe they are demonstrating the potential of partnerships in improving service delivery and creating value for citizens.

ENPF’s CEO added that this collaboration is also about responding to the modern expectations of clients.

“People want services that are fast, reliable, and accessible. They do not want to travel long distances or stand in queues at mul-

multiple offices. We listened, and the Matsapha Service Centre is our answer,” she said. With the official launch of the Matsapha Service Centre, both ERS and ENPF are optimistic about the future. The institutions are not only improving access but also setting a new standard for how public organisations can collaborate to meet the needs of citizens.

For clients in Matsapha and surrounding areas, the new hub is expected to bring much-needed relief, saving time and costs

while enhancing the overall service experience. For the institutions, it is a demonstration of innovation and efficiency in public administration.

As the roadmap unfolds and additional centres are rolled out across the Kingdom, the shared service model may well become a cornerstone of Eswatini’s public service landscape one that reflects responsiveness, collaboration, and commitment to the people.

ERS, ENPF launch shared service centre in Matsapha

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS), in partnership with the Eswatini National Provident Fund (ENPF), has launched the Matsapha Service Centre, a shared service space designed to make it easier and more convenient for clients to access services from both institutions under one roof.

The launch marks the beginning of a joint initiative that aims to bring services closer to the people, reduce travel costs and time for clients, and deliver a seamless “one-stop” service experience.

The Centre will house staff from both ERS and ENPF, enabling individuals and businesses to access multiple public services without having to move between different offices.

Speaking at the launch, ERS Commissioner General, Brightwell Nkambule, said the collaboration goes beyond shared office space and represents a new model of delivering coordinated public services.

“This is more than a collaboration; it is an expertise programme that combines the strengths of both ERS and ENPF to ensure that more Emaswati benefit from fast, accessible, and integrated services,” he said.

Nkambule emphasised that the Matsapha Service Centre is the first step in a broader roadmap. Plans are already underway to extend this joint model to other towns across the Kingdom, ensuring that citizens in all regions can experience the same

convenience.

“Our vision is to replicate this shared service model across Eswatini so that our people spend less time traveling and more time focusing on productive activities,” he added.

ENPF Chief Executive Officer Futhi Tembe, who also spoke at the launch, highlighted the financial benefits of the partnership.

“This initiative is not just about convenience for clients. It is also about cost efficiency for institutions. By sharing infrastructure and resources, we save costs while increasing accessibility to our clients. This is a win-win for the organisations and for the people we serve,” she said.

The ENPF CEO noted that Matsapha was chosen as the first location because of its strategic positioning as the country’s industrial hub, where thousands of workers and businesses are based.

“We wanted to begin where the demand is highest, and Matsapha is the heartbeat of Eswatini’s economy,” she said.

The Service Centre will provide a wide range of services, including tax registration, filing, and advisory support from ERS, as well as retirement savings and benefit services from ENPF.

Both institutions assured the public that the Centre is fully equipped with technology and trained staff to ensure a smooth experience.



▲ ENPF CEO Futhi Tembe making her remarks during the official launch of the shared service centre.

Automakers have resisted raising car prices because of tariffs

AUTOMAKERS have been absorbing billions in added expenses since U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs took effect in April, sparing American car shoppers from sticker shock. So far. Car prices were supposed to have bolted higher by now, auto executives and analysts predicted. But that has not happened, mirroring some other industries where companies have decided to eat added expenses rather than passing them on to consumers. The average manufacturer's suggested retail price, or MSRP, on new vehicles in the U.S. rose less than 1% from mid-March to mid-August, according to car-shopping site Edmunds. That restraint from the automakers has carried into this autumn, as

car brands are implementing only modest price increases as they roll out their 2026 model-year lineups. Car brands tacked on 3.3% to their average sticker prices in August, according to Cox Automotive, up from last year's increase, but in line with historical averages. But now that it appears many of Trump's tariffs are likely to stick, carmakers are under growing pressure to raise prices, analysts and dealers said. General Motors said it will face up to \$5 billion in gross tariff-related costs this year, while Ford F.N cited a \$3 billion gross hit. The car companies have a few levers they can pull before burdening customers with that added cost, from absorbing it internally to asking suppliers or dealers to shoulder some.

The reticence among car executives to stick customers with tariff-related expenses reflects the reality that American consumers might not be able to stomach significant price increases, after a multiyear run-up in new- and used-vehicle prices following the pandemic. Average transaction prices have risen about 30% since 2019, to \$49,077, according to Cox Automotive. Randy Parker, CEO of Hyundai North America, said the South Korean automaker is holding firm on pricing to guard against losing customers to rivals, even though tariff costs eroded the company's bottom line in the second quarter by about \$600 million. (Reuters)



▲ The sale of the unit, which aggregates Avon's businesses outside Natura's key Latin American market, sent Sao Paulo-traded shares in the company up more than 13%.

Natura shares surge after deal to sell Avon businesses

BRAZILIAN cosmetics maker Natura said on Thursday it has agreed to sell its Avon International unit to holding firm Regent, ending a long period of uncertainty after announcing last year it was weighing alternatives for the business arm. The sale of the unit, which aggregates Avon's businesses outside Natura's key Latin American market, sent Sao Paulo-traded shares in the company up more than 13%. Natura has been carrying out divestitures as part of a broader strategy to simplify its structure, integrate business units and focus on Latin America, after struggling with profitability in recent years. The company had previously sold the Aesop, opens new tab and The Body Shop brands, and earlier this week announced a deal to sell Avon's businesses in Central American countries to Grupo

PDC. The sale of Avon International to an acquisition vehicle affiliated with Regent includes operations in Europe, Africa and Asia, Natura said in a statement. It does not comprise Avon's Russian business, which remains earmarked as "held for sale," nor its operations in Latin America, which are "at the core of Natura's strategic priorities," the cosmetics maker said. Avon's U.S. business, which was never owned by Natura, is also not a part of the deal. Natura will receive a nominal consideration of 1.00 pound (\$1.36) at closing, according to the company, followed by contingent payments based on future results and certain liquidity events limited to 60 million pounds. Natura first said last year it was "weighing alternatives" for Avon International, which had been posting lower margins than the group's Latin American operations. In August it reclassified the unit as an "asset for sale." (Reuters)



▲ Vehicles of automobile brands belonging to General Motors Company are seen at a car dealership in Queens, New York, U.S.

Rand slips before South African Reserve Bank's rate decision

THE South African rand slipped on Thursday ahead of an interest rate decision by the central bank. At 0622 GMT, the rand traded at 17.45 against the dollar, about 0.3% weaker than Wednesday's close. The South African Reserve Bank is scheduled to announce later in the day whether it will adjust its main lending rate. Economists polled by Reuters widely expect the central bank to keep the rate unchanged at 7.00%. Headline inflation in Africa's most industrialised economy unexpectedly slowed in August due to softer fuel and food prices. "The actual outcome for August is positive and plays into the SARB narrative that inflation should be targeted at 3%," said independent economist Elize Kruger. "But inflation expectations are still quite a bit higher and the upward trend towards 4.2% in December 25 should keep the SARB from cutting interest rates at this meeting," said Kruger. Still, some analysts believe



Thursday's decision could be a close call, with the surprisingly soft inflation print providing a possible incentive for a rate cut. South Africa's benchmark 2035 government bond was flat in early deals, as the yield rose half a basis point to 9.175%. (Reuters)

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You have read the rest, now read the best

CONGO’S army and Rwandan-backed rebels are reinforcing military positions and blaming each other for flouting peace accords in an escalation that experts say risks reigniting the simmering conflict, which U.S. President Donald Trump claims to have ended.

The M23 rebels seized two major cities in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in January and February, posing the biggest threat to the government in Kinshasa in two decades.

The offensive raised fears of a return to regional war as neighbouring armies took sides.

There has since been a series of U.S. and Qatari-led peace talks but those efforts have been undermined by mediators rushing to close deals and relying on past agreements ground out by African negotiators before building trust between the warring factions, the experts said.

The rebels want prisoners freed before talks can advance, as well as a power-sharing deal in the parts of Congo they now control. Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi’s government, meanwhile, refuses to yield authority in territory it has lost, or hand over any prisoners.

Reuters talked to four Congolese government officials, three rebel officials, six diplomats, two former officials and two Congo experts for this story.

Both sides are now dispatching hundreds of men to multiple frontline towns in Congo’s eastern provinces bordering Rwanda and Burundi, where violence continues unabated while the talks rumble on, according to the Congolese government and rebel officials.

The U.N. and human rights groups have documented hundreds of summary killings, as well as torture and rape committed by both sides since preliminary peace agreements were signed, first in Washington and then in Doha.

In June, U.S. mediators brokered a peace deal between Congo and Rwanda aimed at ending the support that Washington and U.N. experts say Kigali provides the rebels. A parallel Qatari-led peace effort was meant to seal an agreement between Kinshasa and the

In Congo, army and rebels dig in for war Trump says is over

rebels, but it missed an August 18 deadline.

A Qatari spokesperson and the State Department did not respond to requests for comment on this story.

With a deadline to implement part of the U.S. deal due in September, Kristof Titeca, a University of Antwerp professor who has studied Congo for decades, said there was no sign of peace.

“Broken promises, fragile implementation and deep mistrust are holding back any progress,” he said. “All this creates what looks like a never-ending vicious circle.”

CONGO’S MINERAL WEALTH

Trump has said U.S. companies eyeing a slice of Congo’s mineral wealth would invest billions of dollars if the fighting ends.

That would require solving a conflict that has its roots in Rwanda’s 1994 genocide, which triggered a series of wars in Congo that have killed, maimed and displaced millions of people, according to the U.N.

After the genocide, in which about 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed, the remnants of the defeated Hutu militia fled to Congo, forming a group known as the FDLR. Since then, the FDLR has preyed on civilians and taken part in Congo’s various on-off wars, at times allied with the government in the capital Kinshasa.

The M23 rebels are the latest uprising that emerged to protect Congo’s Tutsi. Rwanda denies backing the rebels but says it will do anything needed to defend itself from the FDLR.

Kinshasa accuses Kigali of using M23 as a proxy for pillaging valuable minerals from Congolese territory and says Rwanda’s army has committed “massive and systematic crimes”.

U.N. experts have documented the export via Rwanda of large quantities of looted minerals such as gold and coltan – which is used in mobile phones, computers and other technology. M23 now control the supply chain, from the mines to the border.



▲ A member of the M23 rebel group walks on the outskirts of Matanda in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Jason Stearns, a former U.N. investigator with decades of Congo experience, said Rwanda only caved to enormous pressure from Washington to strike a deal knowing it had a loophole.

“That loophole was M23,” said Stearns, now a professor at Simon Fraser University in Canada. “Rwanda can always say that it doesn’t control the M23.”

A spokesperson for Rwanda’s government did not comment. Kigali has previously said U.N. reporting “misrepresents Rwanda’s longstanding security concerns” about the FDLR threat.

Neither Congo’s presidency nor a government spokesperson responded to requests for comment.

An official in the presidency who declined to be identified said: “The rebellion’s objec-

tive is to overthrow the government; it is therefore important to reinforce the front-line to counter M23 offensives.”

M23 did not reply to questions about its relationship with Rwanda or its strategy on the ground.

PREPARING FOR WAR

Established in 2012, M23 briefly seized Goma – the capital of Congo’s North Kivu province and home to 1 million people – before withdrawing under diplomatic and military pressure. A decade later, fighters in bases near Congo’s mountainous border with Uganda and Rwanda took up arms again.

Thousands were killed in the January rebel advances. The United Nations says some 7.8 million, opens new tab people are now displaced.

(Reuters)

Egypt’s billboard boom strains eyes but raises profits

With whiplash traffic and obstacles ranging from potholes to donkey carts, Cairo’s roads have never been for the faint of heart.

But now drivers must contend with another hazard: A proliferation of flashy, mismatched billboards vying for their already strained attention.

The number of large billboards lining Cairo’s roads – already numerous – has more than doubled over the past six years, from roughly 2,500 in 2019 to around 6,300 today, according to AdMazad, an advertising and media analytics company.

That’s more than 30 per square kilometre of inhabited area, without even counting the new, flashing digital ads, which have grown more than tenfold over the same period to more than 300 today.

“There’s nowhere left on the street that doesn’t have ads,” Cairo resident Ahmed Adel said as he drove through one of the city’s high-end residential and commercial districts.

The surge in advertising can be traced largely to the rapid expansion of Egypt’s transport network. Since taking power in 2014, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has poured billions of dollars into new roads and bridges which now criss-cross the capital.

The ads lining these roads hawk an endless array of detergents, fast food and luxury real estate developments, often with bright



▲ A worker installs a billboard, amid rising concerns about the impact of big billboards installed near roads and residential areas on driver concentration and residents’ quality of life, in Cairo, Egypt.

LED displays that drivers like Adel complain strain their eyes at night.

The industry is also becoming an increasingly important source of state revenue,

according to Ahmed Afify, head of business development at MOT Investment and Development, a Transport Ministry investment company.

Revenues from “out-of-home” advertising, which includes billboards and transit ads, grew by more than 50% in 2024, reaching about 6.3 billion Egyptian pounds (\$130 million), AdMazad data shows.

That money goes largely to the state treasury via the Transport Ministry or its affiliated entities, Afify said. Ad prices vary by location and often increase as competing brands bid for strategic spots, he said.

Some drivers find the billboards an amusing diversion while stuck in traffic, or an effective marketing tool. But others find them a stressful addition to their commutes.

Psychotherapist Khaled Salaheldin pointed to the psychological toll they might take at times of financial strain – an increasing reality in Egypt after years of inflation and subsidy cuts.

“When I am being constantly exposed to advertising and idealized lifestyles, it leads to a comparison that makes me feel inadequate and inferior,” he said.

On Wednesday, Egypt’s Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly held a meeting to discuss standards for billboards and other ads, saying there should be more regulation to ensure ads “preserve the urban fabric,” “uphold aesthetic values” and “respect societal norms.”

(Reuters)

HUAWEI outlined its long-term chip plans for the first time on Thursday and said it would launch some of the world's most powerful computing systems - underscoring China's drive to wean itself off foreign semiconductor suppliers like Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab.

In an announcement that broke years of secrecy about its chips business and which could increase the stakes in the U.S.-Sino war for tech supremacy, Huawei (HWT.UL) detailed timelines for its Ascend artificial intelligence chips and Kunpeng server chips.

Eric Xu, Huawei's current rotating chairman, also said the company now has proprietary high-bandwidth memory - technology currently dominated by South Korea's SK Hynix, opens new tab and Samsung Electronics (005930.KS), opens new tab.

"We will follow a 1-year release cycle and double compute with each release," Xu told the annual Huawei Connect conference in the commercial hub of Shanghai.

China has in recent weeks stepped up efforts that target Nvidia, the world's dominant AI chipmaker, while trumpeting domestic chip manufacturing.

Chinese authorities on Monday accused Nvidia of violating the country's anti-monopoly law. They have also ordered top tech firms to halt purchases of Nvidia's AI chips and cancel existing orders, according to a Financial Times report and a source with knowledge of the matter.

Huawei's announcement is likely to be seen as carefully timed for maximum impact ahead of a meeting by U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday. The meeting follows the conclusion of talks by U.S. and Chinese trade negotiators this week.

"China is trying to say that they're doing very well on many fronts ... Xi Jinping will be more confident when speaking with Donald Trump," said Alfred Wu, associate professor at the National University of Singapore.

Nvidia bets big on Intel with \$5 billion stake, chip partnership

NVIDIA, opens new tab said on Thursday it would invest \$5 billion in Intel, opens new tab, throwing its heft behind the struggling U.S. chipmaker just weeks after the White House engineered an extraordinary deal for the federal government to take a massive stake in the company.

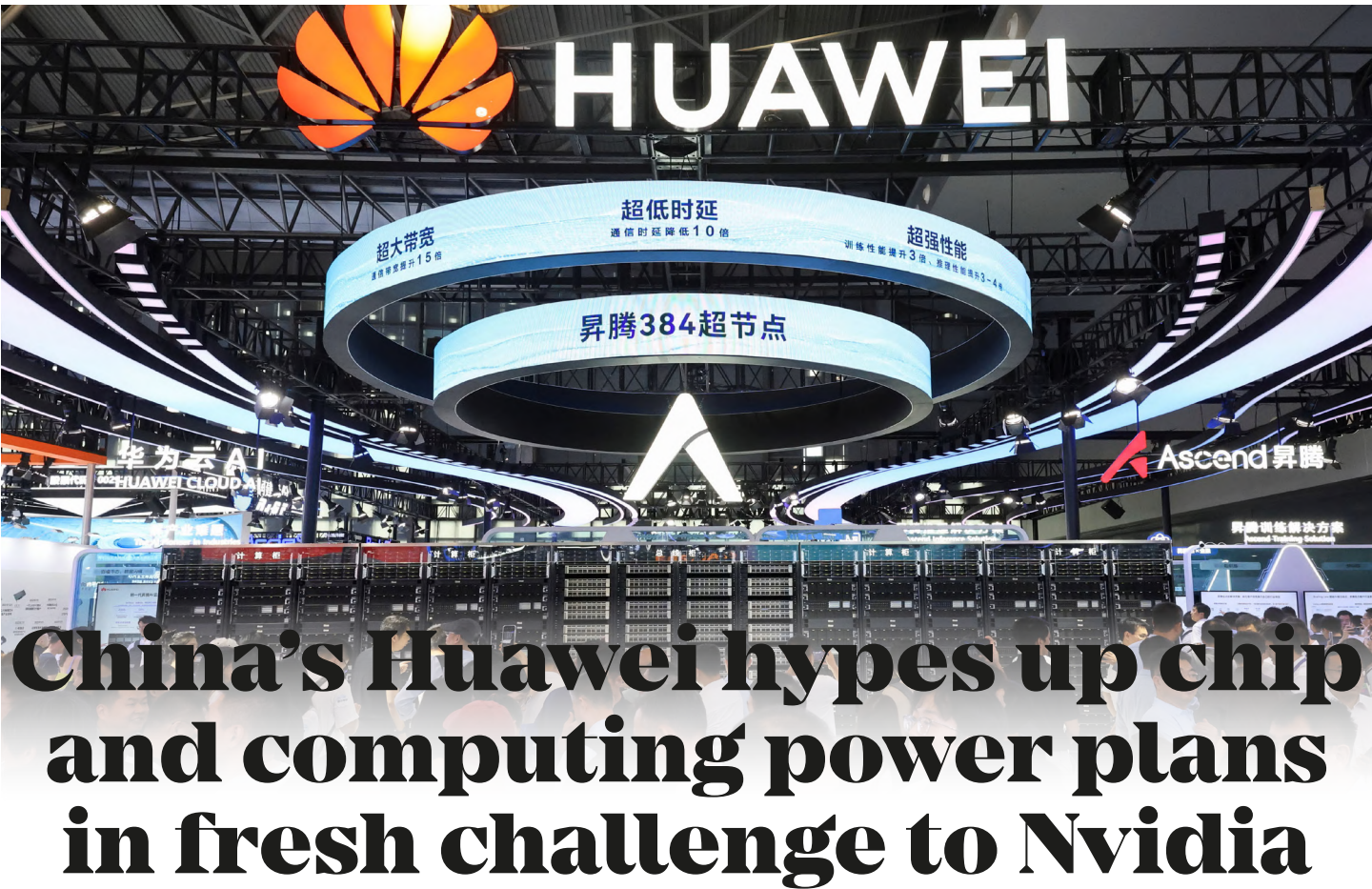
The stake will instantly make Nvidia one of Intel's largest shareholders, giving it roughly 4% of the company after new shares are issued to complete the deal.

Nvidia's support represents a new opening for Intel after years of turnaround efforts failed to pay off, and it triggered a jump in the U.S. manufacturer's shares.

The company - once the chip industry's flag bearer that claimed to put the "silicon" in Silicon Valley - appointed a new CEO, Lip-Bu Tan, in March. He quickly came under fire from U.S. elected officials, including President Donald Trump, who called for him to resign due to concerns about his connections with China. That led to a swiftly arranged meeting in Washington that ended with Intel's unusual arrangement to give the U.S. a 10% stake in the company.

The new pact includes a plan for Intel and Nvidia to jointly develop PC and data center chips, but crucially will not involve Intel's contract manufacturing business, known as a "foundry" in the chip industry, making chips for Nvidia. Most analysts believe that for Intel's foundry to survive, it would need to win a large customer such as Nvidia, Apple, opens new tab, Qualcomm, opens new tab or Broadcom, opens new tab.

Nvidia, whose must-have chips are powering a global artificial intelligence boom,



China's Huawei hypes up chip and computing power plans in fresh challenge to Nvidia

"People assume that the situation is getting better, that everything is moving in the right direction, that U.S.-China tensions will be eased to some extent but I'm thinking this is not the case, actually it's quietly escalating."

SUPERNODES

Huawei first announced plans to enter chipmaking in 2018. But it went dark about those efforts after it was sanctioned by the U.S. in 2019, accused by Washington of presenting a national security risk. It denies that charge.

Since then, analysts say it has become a leader in Chinese efforts to develop a domestic semiconductor manufacturing indus-

try.

Huawei launched its latest AI chip, the Ascend 910C, in the first quarter of this year. Its successor, the Ascend 950 will be launched next year and will come in two variants, Xu said. That will then be followed by the 960 version in 2027 and the 970 in 2028.

In addition, Huawei plans to roll out new computing power supernodes that allow chips to interconnect at high speeds. Nodes can be described as a rack system that contains numerous chips. Nodes are then grouped into clusters.

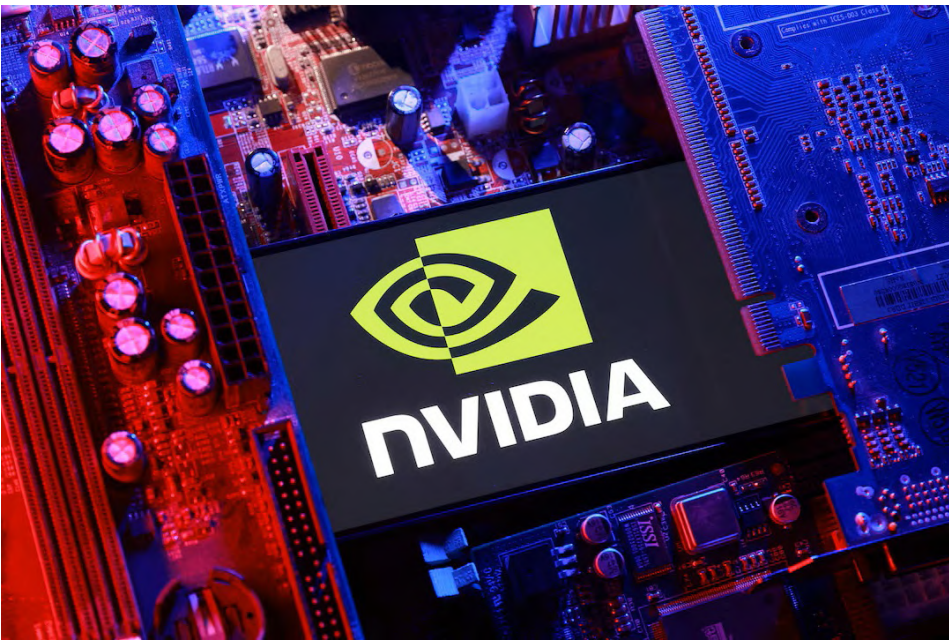
The Atlas 950 will be launched in the fourth quarter of 2026, supporting 8,192 Ascend chips. Xu said Huawei is confident that

the Atlas 950 "will far exceed its counterparts across all major metrics".

The Atlas 960, which will support 15,488 Ascend chips, will be launched in the fourth quarter of 2027.

The supernodes are successors to the Atlas 900, also known as the CloudMatrix 384, which uses 384 of Huawei's latest 910C chips.

"Huawei is leveraging its strengths in networking, along with China's advantages in power supply, to aggressively push supernodes and offset lagging chip manufacturing," said Wang Shen, data center infrastructure practice lead at tech research firm Omdia. (Reuters)



said it would pay \$23.28 per share for Intel common stock, slightly below the \$24.90 Wednesday closing price but higher than the \$20.47 price the U.S. government paid.

The companies did not disclose the financial terms of their collaboration but said they would make "multiple generations" of future products. Nvidia and Intel officials described the collaboration as a commercial arrangement under which they will provide chips to one another to create products, with no licensing component.

Nvidia has struggled to sell its H2o chips in China, with the company trying to navigate demands from Washington and Beijing at the same time. In mid-August, Trump engineered a deal that granted Nvidia licenses

to sell H2o chips to China in exchange for a 15% cut of those sales, but Nvidia has said it has not sent any H2o chips to China.

While the deal does not do much to help Nvidia's issues in China, analysts noted that it carries political upside in the U.S. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang was seen among other business leaders with Trump during the U.S. president's state visit to the United Kingdom on Thursday.

"This move aligns with U.S. policy and could help ease restrictions on selling advanced chips to China," said Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

The deal adds to Intel's growing reserve of capital, following a \$2 billion investment

from Softbank and the \$5.7 billion investment from the U.S. government.

CEO Tan has vowed to make Intel's operations lean and build factory capacity only when there's demand to match it.

The pact represents a potential risk to Taiwan's TSMC, opens new tab. TSMC currently manufactures Nvidia's flagship processors, a business the world's most valuable company could one day extend to Intel.

AMD, opens new tab, which competes with Intel for supplying chips to data centers, also stands to lose thanks to Nvidia's backing.

Intel shares were up about 26% at open and were trading at \$31.33 in early trading. AMD shares were down 4.6%, while Broadcom shares rose 1.3%. Nvidia shares were up 2%.

TSMC and AMD did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"AMD has been seizing market share in desktops and laptops for quite some time and this will help Nvidia out against its closest domestic peers, but I think TSMC may have the bigger risk to its operation over the long term," said David Wagner, portfolio manager at Aptus Capital Advisors.

Under the terms of the deal, Intel will design custom data center central processors Nvidia plans to package with its AI chips, known as GPUs. A proprietary Nvidia technology will let the Intel and Nvidia chips communicate at higher speeds than before.

Speedy links are a key differentiator in the AI market because many chips must be strung together to act as one to chew through massive amounts of data.

(Reuters)

Starmer, Trump hail deepening of ‘special relationship’ with investments

U.S. President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hailed the deepening of their nations’ “special relationship” on Thursday, saying a raft of deals worth 250 billion pounds had made those bonds “unbreakable”.

At the start of a business reception, some of the leading names in U.S. and UK business were welcomed by the two leaders and praised for helping cement ties by investing in deals ranging from technology to energy.

It was the second day of Trump’s unprecedented second state visit to Britain, which the U.S. leader described as an “exquisite honour” after enjoying a day of pomp and ceremony, including a “fantastic” state banquet at Windsor Castle with King Charles.

Sitting next to each other in a marquee in the grounds of Starmer’s Chequers country residence, Starmer and Trump celebrated the unveiling of a record 150 billion pound (\$205 billion) package of U.S. investment into Britain, part of a wider 250 billion pound package officials say will benefit both sides.

TRUMP HAILS ‘UNBREAKABLE BOND’ WITH UK

“This is a great day for the special relationship,” said Starmer, thanking the business leaders, including Nvidia’s CEO Jensen Huang and GSK’s Emma Walmsley.

“A celebration of what has gone before, of course, but more than that, a moment to deliver investments, jobs and deals which will improve people’s lives now and light up the special relationship for years to come.”

Trump was equally effusive. “The ties between our countries are priceless.

“We’ve done some things that financial-



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hold a press conference following their meeting at Chequers, near Aylesbury, Britain.

ly are great for both countries ... I think it’s an unbreakable bond we have, regardless of what we’re doing today. I think it’s unbreakable.”

Starmer has pitched Britain as a destination for U.S. investment, aligned to its financial services, tech and energy sectors so it can draw in U.S. capital and build out its infrastructure and grow the economy.

He might have resigned himself to not getting any further reduction on steel tariffs, but he was keen to champion the wider deals, including a new technology pact with companies from Microsoft to Nvidia and OpenAI

pledging 31 billion pounds (\$42 billion) and 100 billion pounds from Blackstone.

PRESS CONFERENCE NOT WITHOUT PERILS

Earlier Starmer, standing alongside his wife Victoria, greeted Trump warmly at his Chequers country residence to the sound of bagpipes - a nod to the U.S. leader mother’s Scottish heritage - for a meeting which is not without perils.

Later on Thursday, the two leaders will hold a press conference, when journalists could quiz both over the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Starmer was forced to sack Peter Mandelson as ambassador to the U.S. last week after his close ties with Epstein were documented and Trump’s relationship with the late financier has also come under scrutiny.

“For Starmer, he is having a difficult domestic time and he needs a positive international narrative and to bring Trump on board on key issues,” said Evie Aspinall, director of the British Foreign Policy Group think tank.

Trump would want to show there was value in close relations with Starmer, she said. “For both sides, they realise there is a lot to be gained.”

Starmer will also hope that Trump’s pride in attending the state banquet will deter the U.S. leader from straying into more sensitive areas, such as Britain’s online safety laws and position on Israel.

Speaking at Wednesday’s banquet, Trump said Britain had “laid the foundations of law, liberty, free speech and individual rights” under its empire and “must continue to stand for the values and the people of the English speaking world”.

A few hours later, he cheered the suspension of late-night host Jimmy Kimmel over comments made about the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk. Trump has pressured broadcasters to stop airing content he finds objectionable.

THE TWO WILL DISCUSS UKRAINE, GAZA

Starmer will also try to turn the focus to foreign affairs, hoping to persuade the U.S. leader to take stronger action against Russia over its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

(Reuters)

Gaza hit by telecoms blackout as Israeli tanks and infantry advance

ISRAELI tanks were seen in two Gaza City areas that are gateways to the city centre, residents said on Thursday, while internet and phone lines were cut off across the Gaza Strip, a sign that ground operations were likely to escalate imminently.

Israeli forces control Gaza City’s eastern suburbs and in recent days have been pounding the Sheikh Radwan and Tel Al-Hawa areas, from where they would be positioned to advance on central and western areas where most of the population is sheltering.

“The disconnection of internet and phone services is a bad omen. It has always been a bad signal something very brutal is going to happen,” said Ismail, who only gave one name. He was using an e-SIM to connect his phone, a dangerous method as it requires seeking higher ground to receive a signal.

At least 79 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli strikes or gunfire across the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours, most in Gaza City, the territory’s health ministry said early afternoon on Thursday.

INFANTRY, TANKS, ARTILLERY ADVANCING TOWARDS INNER CITY

Israeli army spokesperson Nadav Shoshani said troops had been operating in the city’s periphery for several weeks but since the night of Monday to Tuesday large numbers of troops had begun moving towards the inner city.

He said a combination of infantry, tanks and artillery was advancing, backed up by the air force, and that it was a gradual process that would increase as time went on.

“The strategy right now is to defeat Hamas and apply pressure on Hamas, which

can lead to a deal or can lead to rescue missions (to free hostages),” he said.

The Palestinian Telecommunications Company said in a statement that its services had been cut off “due to the ongoing aggression and the targeting of the main network routes”.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled Gaza City since Israel announced on August 10 it intended to take control, but a greater number are staying put, either in battered homes among the ruins or in makeshift tent encampments.

PEOPLE SCARED OF OFFENSIVE BUT MANY HAVE NO WAY TO LEAVE

Bassam Al-Qanou, a displaced man sheltering with around 30 family members in a ragged improvised tent camp on the beach, said they had no way to get out, and nowhere to go.

“We are scared, but what can we do?” he said, adding that the children couldn’t sleep because of fear and the incessant boom of missile strikes from sea, air and ground. The military has been dropping leaflets urging residents to flee towards a designated “humanitarian zone” in the south of the territory, but aid agencies say conditions there are dire, with insufficient food, medicine and space and inadequate shelter.

Four more Palestinians, including a child, have died of malnutrition and starvation in the past 24 hours, the health ministry said, raising deaths from such causes to at least 435 people, including 147 children, since the war started.

Israel says the extent of hunger in Gaza has been exaggerated and blames Hamas for the continuation of the war, saying it could end it now if it surrendered, freed the hos-



▲ Smoke rises following Israeli strikes during a military operation, in Gaza City.

tages, disarmed and disbanded. Hamas says it won’t disarm until a Palestinian state is established.

ISRAEL, HAMAS TRADE ACCUSATIONS OF HARMING CIVILIANS

Shoshani said the situation on the ground was not easy but Israel was taking measures to limit civilian casualties and allow humanitarian assistance. He accused Hamas of dissuading people from leaving the combat zone for the humanitarian zone because the group was using civilians as human shields.

Ismail Al-Thawabta, the director of the Hamas-run government media office said Shoshani’s allegations were misleading because Israel’s claim that there were safe areas in the south was false.

The media office said earlier that 44% of the 3,542 people killed by Israel across the territory since August 11, when it launched its new military offensive, had perished in central and southern areas.

“This confirms that the targeting has been comprehensive and deliberate against the civilian population and against designated shelter areas,” said Al-Thawabta.

FAMILIES WITH BELONGINGS EVACUATE TOWARDS THE SOUTH

Along the coastal road, an unbroken column of every type of vehicle from carts and beaten-up cars to vans designed to carry goods was moving south, heavily laden with mattresses, gas cylinders and entire families perching on their belongings.(Reuters)



By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

THE weekend is here; it's time to leave behind the week's routine and dive into relaxation and adventure.

To ensure you enjoy your free time to the fullest, Eswatini Daily News has carefully compiled a selection of the best weekend events. So, pour yourself a drink, invite your friends or family, and prepare to elevate your mood.

►► **ECOFEST TALENT SEARCH**
When: Friday
Where: UNESWA, Kwaluseni
Fee: Free

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. ECOFEST will feature a stellar lineup of comedians including Bongiswa, Darren, Baldwin Bals, and Ndosh. 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 will take place at the Sibane Sami Hotel in Ezulwini, further amplifying the excitement around ECOFEST 2025. 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.

►► **FRIDAY GROOVE**
Where: IF's Lounge, Manzini
When: Friday
Fee: Free

Music lovers gear up for the highly anticipated event, 'Friday Groove,' set to take place at IF's Lounge this Friday. Promising a night filled with electrifying performances and unforgettable moments, this event is shaping up to be the talk of the town. Headlining the event is the sensational Reke, known for his high-energy performances and ability to get the crowd on their feet. Joining him on stage will be a lineup of stellar supporting acts, including Mistosoul, Yamkela, and Acoustic Soul, each bringing their distinct style and sound to the mix. Attendees are encouraged to dress to impress, following the smart casual theme for the evening. This promises to be a night of music, fun, and camaraderie that is accessible to all. Friday Groove offers an opportunity to immerse yourself in a vibrant atmosphere and enjoy top-notch performances.

►► **MADOLOBHA TOUR**
When: Saturday
Where: Zhumiao Lounge & Lifestyle
Fee: Free

The countdown has officially begun for what promises to be one of the most electrifying weekends on Eswatini's entertainment calendar. On Saturday, September 20, 2025, Zhumiao Lounge & Lifestyle will open its doors to music lovers for the much-anticipated Madolobha Tour.



Plan your perfect weekend

The event, which has been making waves across social media platforms, is curated under the banner of Ayacity and features an impressive line-up of talent. Leading the charge is Zulu D, joined by Sgitha, Sbu de Drum DJ, Young Zesh, Profound, and Chomzin, a cocktail of rising stars and seasoned entertainers. To ensure no dull moment, the decks will be commanded by DJ Mshayl, DJ Phara, DJ Smallz, and DJ Biggie, who are ready to keep the crowd moving from the early evening until the late hours. With an entry fee of only E50, the show is designed to be accessible without compromising on quality. The Madolobha Tour has gained a reputation for being more than just a music event, it is a lifestyle showcase. The dress code, smart casual, adds an extra flair of sophistication, reminding patrons that the night is as much about the vibes as it is about the beats.

►► **SUNDAY CHILLAS**
When: Sunday
Where: Dé Lounge
Fee: Free

If Saturday is for the nightlife warriors,

Sunday belongs to the groove enthusiasts who prefer their fun with sunshine. On September 21, 2025, Dé Lounge will play host to Sunday Chillas, an event designed to blend music, food, and conversations into a wholesome day-long experience. Billed as a "daytime vibes" celebration, Sunday Chillas kicks off at 12 noon and runs until late, making it a perfect option for those looking to transition smoothly from the weekend into the workweek without missing out on fun. The line-up includes Young Love, MBO, and Sgitha, all of whom have made their names synonymous with good energy and feel-good sets. In addition to the music, the event leans heavily into culinary and lifestyle experiences. Dé Lounge is offering up to 50% discount on beverages (excluding spirits) from 11 am to 5 pm, ensuring patrons get value for money while enjoying their Sunday leisure. Even better, those who buy a six-pack will receive a free ihloko meal, creating the perfect blend of taste and groove. For lovers of hookah, hubbly will be readily available at E150, adding to the relaxed setting of an event where the dress code is simplicity, and the focus is

camaraderie.

►► **ZHUMIAO WEEKEND**
When: Weekend
Where: Zhumiao Lounge & Lifestyle
Fee: Free

The weekend is shaping up to be nothing short of a cultural marathon for fun-seekers in Eswatini. With back-to-back events lined up, patrons can brace themselves for a 48-hour rollercoaster of music, food, and lifestyle experiences. The party begins on Saturday, September 20, at Zhumiao Lounge & Lifestyle, where the Madolobha Tour will electrify the night with a star-studded line-up. The likes of Zulu D, Young Zesh, Sbu de Drum DJ, and others will ensure that attendees dance until their feet ache. Smart casual fashion will dominate the venue, adding a chic flavour to a night powered by affordable drink specials and unforgettable music. For Eswatini's entertainment lovers, this back-to-back lineup is the ultimate definition of "work hard, play harder." Saturday offers nightlife experience, while Sunday ensures that fun is not limited to moonlight.

Mr Kangaroo back with culturally charged single

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI'S iconic rapper Mr Kangaroo is making a powerful comeback with a fresh single titled "We've Come A Long Way," set to release this Friday.

This track serves as a compelling preview of his much-anticipated album Swatistar, scheduled for release in November. Known for his unique blend of cultural pride and contemporary sound, Mr Kangaroo is poised to captivate both local and international audiences once again.

The inspiration behind "We've Come A Long Way" is deeply rooted in Eswatini's rich cultural heritage. Mr Kangaroo revealed that the idea struck him after watching a traditional umtsimba ceremony clip on YouTube, a family event that celebrates Swazi customs and unity. He creatively sampled the vocals from this clip, fusing them with drill music, a genre known for its raw energy and urban edge. The result is a fresh and distinctive sound that marries African culture with global musical trends.

"This song was inspired by an umtsimba clip I saw on YouTube in one of the family Swazi ceremonies. I decided to sample that song and make some drills with it. It's a different fresh sound, unique and it brings that cultural flair in it but also international," Mr Kangaroo explained.

Beyond the sonic elements, the single carries a profound message. Mr Kangaroo emphasised that everyone has a story and a journey filled with obstacles and triumphs. "We've Come A Long Way" reflects on the



▲ Mr Kangaroo.

trials and tribulations encountered on the path to success, resonating with listeners who have faced their challenges.

He elaborated, "I figured everyone has a story to tell, everyone has been on a journey since they were born. So, this song is about the trials and tribulations along the journey to success." Fans eagerly awaiting

new material from Mr Kangaroo can look forward to not only this single but also the full Swatistar album, which promises to deliver more innovative sounds and cultural storytelling. "I am back with a new single and an album on the way titled Swatistar. Please go and stream it, you will love it," Mr Kangaroo urged his supporters.



▲ DJ Naive.

DJ Naive expresses regret over loss of vocal recordings

DJ Naive has revealed the heartbreaking loss of nearly 90 gigabytes of vocal recordings, accumulated over a span of five years from 2020 to September 13, 2025.

These recordings, which encapsulated years of creative energy, passion, and collaboration, represented irreplaceable moments in his musical journey, moments that, as he put it, "can never be perfectly replicated."

"It is with deep sorrow that I share the devastating loss of about 90 GB worth of vocal recordings," DJ Naive directly stated, underscoring the gravity of the setback. The loss not only affects the tangible data but also the intangible creative spirit and countless hours invested by artists, producers, and collaborators. He conveyed a profound sense of responsibility, noting that he feels the weight of this loss "more deeply than anyone," acknowledging the burden he carries as the steward of these projects.

Despite the scale of the disaster, DJ Naive sought to reassure fans and collaborators by highlighting that most of the instrumental beats, approximately 95 per cent remain intact. Recovery efforts have managed to salvage less than 20 GB of vocal data, a fraction of what was lost but a crucial foothold in the path forward. This partial recovery offers a glimmer of hope amid the devastation.

Statement

In his statement, DJ Naive emphasised that this loss, while significant, does not mark the end of the creative process. Instead, it serves as a call to action. He revealed that his team is already mobilising to "redo, rerecord, and remake these projects with renewed energy and commitment." The spirit of collaboration that originally brought these works to life remains a guiding force, inspiring a collective effort to rebuild and potentially surpass the original creations. His apology extended to every artist, producer, and contributor affected by the setback, reflecting a deep empathy and accountability that resonates throughout the music community.

Eswatini Farmers Market 2025 unveils "Let's Go Tropical" theme

THE Eswatini Farmers Market has unveiled its exciting new theme for the 2025 edition: "Let's go tropical."

This announcement was made by the festival's director, Mbekezeli 'Culolam' Dlamini, who encouraged attendees to embrace the vibrant dress code that complements the tropical theme. Scheduled to take place on October 11, 2025, at Malkerns Country Club, the event promises to be a colourful celebration of culture, community, and creativity that continues to grow in popularity each year. Since its inception, the Eswatini Farmers Market has evolved into much more than a simple marketplace. It has become a cultural phenomenon that brings together music, food, and local crafts, creating a unique platform where the nation's rich heritage is celebrated with pride. This year's theme, "Let's go tropical," aims to infuse the festival with fresh energy and a vibrant atmosphere that reflects the warmth and diversity of Eswatini's people. In an exclusive interview, Dlamini expressed his excitement about the upcoming event, describing it as one that will "surpass all expectations" and deliver "endless excitement and unforgettable moments." His enthusiasm is matched by the impressive lineup of performers confirmed for the festival, including renowned South African artists DJ Mörda, Sun-El Musician, and MaWhoo.

The festival's appeal lies in its ability to



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

foster a spirit of unity and pride among attendees. It offers a rich tapestry of experiences, from live music showcasing local talent to a variety of food stalls featuring traditional and contemporary cuisine. Families are particularly well catered for, with a range of games and activities designed to engage children, ensuring that the event is inclusive and enjoyable for all age groups.

General admission tickets are priced at E250, and Dlamini urged the community

to purchase their tickets early to avoid missing out on what promises to be a landmark event. "This is for us Eswatini," he emphasised. Looking ahead, Dlamini shared the festival's vision for continuous growth and innovation. Each year, the organisers strive to introduce new elements that enhance the experience and create legacy. "We aim to make the festival bigger and better, bringing in new ideas that will leave a lasting legacy and uniqueness for each year," he stated.

ABC cancels Jimmy Kimmel's show over remarks about Charlie Kirk's death

ABC has indefinitely removed Jimmy Kimmel's talk show from its programming slate following the comedian's recent controversial remarks surrounding the tragic shooting incident involving conservative commentator Charlie Kirk.

The show, which has long been a staple of late-night television, will now be replaced by alternative programming as his comments have ignited a firestorm of criticism.

During a monologue, Kimmel suggested that Tyler Robinson, the individual accused of fatally shooting Kirk at a university in Utah, was associated with the controversial Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement.

He remarked, "The MAGA gang desperately trying to characterise this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them and doing everything they can to score political points from it."

This assertion has been met with swift backlash, prompting Nexstar Media, the largest local broadcast and digital media company in the United States, to intervene.

Nexstar expressed its firm disapproval of Kimmel's comments, labelling them "offensive and insensitive," especially at what they deemed a "critical time in our national political discourse."

In a statement, Andrew Alford, the president of Nexstar's broadcasting division, articulated the company's stance, indicating that the decision to pull Kimmel's show aims to restore "respectful, constructive

dialogue" across communities. Several critics have voiced concerns over Kimmel's remarks, labelling them as politically charged and further fuelling divisive rhetoric. Alford stated, "Continuing to give Mr. Kimmel a broadcast platform in the communities we serve is simply not in the public interest at the current time," emphasising the necessity for a more empathetic approach to sensitive issues, particularly those involving loss and violence. The fallout from Kimmel's comments extends beyond his immediate audience. Brendan Carr, chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), has hinted that regulatory action could intervene if the situation does not improve.

In a stark warning relayed to podcaster Benny Johnson, he stated, "We can do this the easy way or the hard way," suggesting that broadcasters could face scrutiny from the FCC should they not take action against remarks deemed inappropriate.

The sudden suspension of Kimmel's show reflects the growing polarisation in media and public discourse in the United States. As Nexstar seeks to navigate through these turbulent waters, they remain hopeful that this decision will facilitate a cooling of tempers and encourage a return to a more civilised discussion. (IOL)



▲ ABC has indefinitely removed Jimmy Kimmel's talk show from its programming slate following the comedian's recent controversial remarks surrounding the tragic shooting incident involving conservative commentator Charlie Kirk.



Vuyo Biyela joins cast of 'Genesis'

VUYO Biyela, an actor and musician, will be showcasing a new aspect of his craft when he joins the cast of Genesis.

Known for his memorable roles as Mlilo in The River and Kwenzo in Sibongile and The Dlamini's, Biyela is once again proving his versatility by stepping into a role far removed from his past characters; this time, as a church leader.

For Biyela, saying yes to Genesis was about growth and challenge. "I always prayed for a role that would stretch me. From Mlilo, who was hardcore and had a gangster edge, to Kwenzo, who was soft and a 'yes man', and now a church leader? That's a stretch! But I love stretching myself as an actor," he told Sunday World.

Interestingly, this role takes him back to his roots. Growing up in church, singing in the choir, and immersed in faith-based spaces, Biyela admits the character feels both challenging and familiar. Faith and patience

"It's not too far from home. Playing this character feels like tapping into the younger version of me," he says.

While he is cautious not to reveal too much about the storyline, Biyela hints that audiences can expect themes of faith and patience.

He believes the story will resonate with South Africans because of its relatable exploration of Christian life, not in a superficial way, but in a way that captures both the struggles and triumphs that come with faith.

"Most of us grew up in Christian families. People will see themselves in my character because he reflects both the good and the bad that every believer goes through. It's not just pastors or pastors' kids who will relate, but everyone," he explains.

Beyond the spiritual layer, Genesis marks an important step in his career. Staying grounded

The set of Genesis has already felt like home for him, thanks to familiar faces he has worked with in the past. "It's been great and fun. We get along well, so I felt welcomed right away," he notes.

Despite his rising star power, Biyela keeps his perspective grounded. He refuses to get caught up in the industry's competitive nature. "I don't see it as a competition. I only compete with myself, the man in the mirror." Biyela cautions and encourages young actors who look up to him, stating: "The industry is not as glamorous as it seems. Be patient, and make sure you have a side hustle so you don't depend solely on acting money.

(Sunday World)

Short-lived engagement doesn't deter Lebo M's Joseph Shabalala tribute show

INTERNATIONALLY acclaimed and Grammy-winning music composer Lebohang "Lebo M" Morake has put his personal issues aside to focus on a tribute concert for late Isicathamiya and Mbube music pioneer Joseph Shabalala.

Amid the personal life dramas and short-lived engagement, he is putting his love life aside and focusing on work.

The show goes on

Morake said "the show must go on" as he prepared for the African Icons concert taking place at the Durban Playhouse on Heritage Day, September 24. He plans to pull out all the stops with his production team to celebrate the life of Ladysmith Black Mambazo founder and musical director Joseph Shabalala in song. Hosted by media personality Minenhle "Minnie" Dlamini, the concert will honour Shabalala as the pioneer of Isicathamiya and Mbube music, both traditional Zulu a cappella music styles.

He formed Ladysmith Black Mambazo in 1960. They have released 50 globally-selling albums and toured over 60 countries. Ladysmith Black Mambazo has won five Grammy Awards and received a total of 15 Grammy nominations.

Shabalala died five years ago at 78 years old following a short illness.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo have continued from where he left, remembering his legacy.



▲ Internationally acclaimed and Grammy-winning music composer Lebohang "Lebo M" Morake.

Honouring a legend

Lebo M told Sunday World about the importance of recognising and acknowledging Shabalala's worldly music contribution.

"There is not a single artist who has won more than five Grammys in South Africa. Joseph Shabalala did that!" Lebo M said.

"His music lives above other genres. He needs this honour, and he deserves it. I have always been saddened by how our country has never really understood the impact his work has had around the world," he cemented.

Childhood mentor

Lebo M has known Shabalala since he was seven years old.

His music and that of Ladysmith Black Mambazo are what shaped his compositions. "They played a significant role in my work," Lebo M said.

"Had I not been exposed to his music, I would not have been able to have my own identity as a composer."

When Shabalala died five years ago, he was moved and felt he deserved more honour and a standing ovation.

"I just so happened to be around the country to be able to attend his memorial service. That touched me greatly," he said.

"More needed to be done. I don't think our country and government understand how he put the country's music on an international platform." New venture with Shabalala jnr

Lebo M has also since signed a recording artist deal with Shabalala's son, Nkosinathi Shabalala. And he will make his debut at the African Icons concert.

"The show will have the global, and royal stature of Bab Joseph Shabalala. We will also launch his first-born son in a place he belongs. He is a great artist."

(IOL)

IT'S better to prevent an illness than to have to treat it. That's why regular checkups are essential.

Routinely evaluating your risk factors for various medical conditions, screening for cancer and other diseases, and assessing your lifestyle habits helps you stay healthy while reducing your risk of chronic or life threatening diseases.

Learn more about the benefits of regular checkups with your doctor, how often you should get one, how to prepare for one, and whether they're covered by insurance.

How often should adults get a checkup?

The recommendations regarding the frequency of routine checkups are based on your age, risk factors, and current health status.

While opinions vary, routine checkups with your doctor are generally recommended as follows:

- ▶ every one to three years, if you're under the age of 45 and in good health
- ▶ once a year, once you turn 45

If you have a chronic disease, like diabetes or COPD, for instance, you should see your doctor more frequently, no matter how old you are. Your doctor may suggest more or less time between your checkups based on your risk factors, screening test results, and current health status.

What are the benefits of regular checkups?

Regular checkups with your healthcare professional can benefit your health in many ways. Some of the key benefits include:

- ▶ finding potentially life threatening health issues early before they cause a problem
- ▶ early treatment of health conditions, which increases the odds of a good outcome
- ▶ regular monitoring of existing health issues, which lowers the risk of worsening symptoms or severe complications
- ▶ staying up-to-date on vaccinations and screening tests
- ▶ limiting extra healthcare costs associated with treating complicated or serious conditions that aren't caught early
- ▶ developing and maintaining an open, honest relationship with your primary care physician (PCP)
- ▶ learning new ways to live a healthy, longer life, and improving your health

What should be included in a checkup?

During your annual checkup, your doctor will review your past health history, evaluate your current health, and schedule appropriate screening tests.

For men and women, an adult annual checkup should include a review and update of:

- ▶ your medical history
- ▶ your family history, if necessary
- ▶ your medication list and allergies
- ▶ your vaccination and screening test history

Men and women are typically screened for:

- ▶ high blood pressure
- ▶ obesity, based on your body mass index
- ▶ tobacco use
- ▶ alcohol and drug misuse
- ▶ depression



How often should you see your doctor for a checkup?

- ▶ HIV screening for adults ages 15 to 65 and anyone at high risk
- ▶ hepatitis C for anyone born between 1945 and 1965
- ▶ type 2 diabetes for anyone with risk factors or a family history
- ▶ colorectal cancer starting at age 50
- ▶ lung cancer with a yearly low dose CT s
- ▶ can for adults ages 55 to 80 who currently smoke or have smoked within the last 15 years

Women

Additional screening tests for women include:

- ▶ intimate partner violence screening for women of childbearing age
- ▶ a mammogram for breast cancer screening, between ages 50 and 74
- ▶ a Pap smear for cervical cancer screening, between ages 21 and 65
- ▶ high cholesterol screening, starting at age 45
- ▶ osteoporosis screening, starting at age 65

Men

Additional screening tests for men include:

- ▶ abdominal aortic aneurysm screening, from ages 65 to 75 with a smoking history
- ▶ a prostate exam isn't generally recommended, but you and your doctor may decide you should have it starting at age 50
- ▶ high cholesterol screening, starting at age 35

What to expect when you have a physical exam

When you visit your doctor for a routine checkup, the nurse will take you to the exam room and will typically:

- ▶ check your blood pressure and other vital signs
- ▶ verify your health history, medications, allergies, and lifestyle choices in your electronic medical record
- ▶ ask about changes in your medical or surgical history since your last visit
- ▶ ask if you need any medication refills
- ▶ do screening assessments for depression or alcohol use

When the nurse leaves, you'll undress, slip on a gown, and sit on the exam table. There may be a sheet on the table so you can cover your lower body if you want to. Your doctor will knock on the door to see if you're ready before entering the room.

Your doctor will then review the information in your medical record and ask any questions they have based on the information in your record. They may provide counseling on lifestyle choices and screening assessment findings. This is a good time to ask your doctor any of your questions.

Your doctor will then perform a thorough and complete physical exam. This usually includes:

- ▶ inspecting your body for unusual growths or marks
- ▶ feeling your abdomen and other parts of your body, which allows your doctor to check the location, size, consistency, and tenderness of your internal organs
- ▶ listening to your heart, lungs, and intestines with a stethoscope
- ▶ using a technique known as percussion, which involves tapping your body like a

drum to detect if there's fluid in areas where it shouldn't be

- ▶ if you're a woman between the ages of 21 and 65, your doctor may also do a Pap smear during your physical exam
- ▶ depending on your age, health risks, and current health status, your doctor may perform other types of exams or tests during your physical exam

After the exam, your doctor will usually talk with you about what they've found and will tell you if you need any additional tests, screenings, or treatments. They'll also talk with you about any medications you may need. You'll get dressed when your doctor leaves, and the nurse will give you any necessary prescriptions and instructions before you go.

How to prepare for your checkup

Here are some tips on what you can do to prepare for your physical exam:

- ▶ If you're seeing a new doctor, gather your medical information, including your insurance card, old records, and vaccination history. Take these with you to the appointment. If you don't have your vaccination history, your doctor can order blood work to test for antibodies in your blood. This is called an antibody titer test.
- ▶ If you've seen the doctor before, make a list of what's changed in your medical and surgical histories since your last visit.
- ▶ Make sure your medication list is up-to-date and includes any vitamins, supplements, over-the-counter medications, and herbal remedies you're taking. You may be asked to bring in the actual prescription bottles.

- Make a list of new symptoms, allergies, or medication reactions you've had since your last visit.
- Make sure your living will is up-to-date, and bring a copy if there are changes.
- Let your doctor's office know if you have any special needs, such as an interpreter or a wheelchair, so these services are ready when you get there.

Talking with your doctor

Open and honest communication between you and your doctor is very important when it comes to your health. It allows you to play an active part in your healthcare and helps your doctor provide the best care possible.

Here are some tips on how to communicate well with your doctor:

- Make a list of your questions and any topics you want to discuss with your doctor. Prioritize your questions with the most important ones first.
- If you don't understand something your doctor says, let them know and ask them to use simple terms.
- If your doctor doesn't answer your question completely, ask for more information.
- It helps to repeat what your doctor told you. This helps you both know that you understand what your doctor is telling you.
- Take notes while your doctor is talking.
- Ask your doctor what their preferred method of communication is for any follow-up questions after your visit, such as via email or a patient portal.
- If you have a problem hearing your doctor, let them know.
- If you don't agree with something your doctor has recommended, say so.
- Keep in mind that your doctor cannot share your information without your permission. This may make it easier to discuss uncomfortable or embarrassing topics.
- The most important thing is to be open and honest, even about subjects that embarrass you or make you uncomfortable. This includes topics such as sexual issues, depression, and drug misuse.
- Having accurate and complete information is the only way your doctor can determine the most appropriate treatment plan for you and help you to the best of their ability.

Are checkups covered by insurance and Medicare?

Because of the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and insurance companies are required to cover preventive services without copayments or deductibles.

However, Medicare and some insurance companies don't always consider routine checkups to be preventive services. They won't fully cover the cost of a visit if it includes any tests or services that aren't considered preventable. For example, if your doctor evaluates and treats your knee pain that started last week, in addition to prevention services, the visit will be considered a regular visit. In this case, you'll have a copay and possibly a deductible. Medicare refers to yearly preventive services as wellness visits. These visits create a personalized preventative plan based on basic assessments, medical history, and risk factors. Immunizations, birth control, and most screening tests are considered preventive, so they're fully covered by Medicare and all insurance companies.

Healthline

7 home remedies for managing high blood pressure

REGULAR exercise may benefit blood pressure management, mood, strength, and balance while decreasing the risk of diabetes and certain types of heart disease.

Exercise can be as simple as walking, jogging, swimming, or doing chair exercises.

Following the DASH diet and eating a balanced diet may help manage blood pressure. Consider eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products, lean meats, fish, and nuts while limiting foods high in saturated fats and sodium.

Quitting smoking (if you smoke), practicing relaxation techniques, and limiting how much alcohol you drink (if you drink) can also help manage high blood pressure. Blood pressure is the force at which blood pumps from the heart into the arteries. When blood pressure is high, the blood moves through the arteries more forcefully. This increases pressure on the delicate tissues in the arteries and damages the blood vessels.

The American Heart Association (AHA) defines a blood pressure reading of less than 120/80 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) as normal. While medications can help lower high blood pressure, various changes you can make at home can also reduce it.

1. Start an exercise routine

Staying active is an important part of living well.

Along with helping lower blood pressure, regular physical activity benefits your mood, strength, and balance. It also decreases your risk of diabetes and certain types of heart disease. If you've been inactive for a while, talk with a doctor about a safe exercise routine. Start out slowly, then gradually pick up the pace and frequency of your workouts.

Not a fan of the gym? Exercise at home or outside. Go for a walk, jog, or swim and reap the benefits. The most important thing is to get moving! There are also plenty of exercise routines on YouTube that are great for beginners. Chair exercises or low impact exercises are also great ways to move your body. The AHA also recommends incorporating muscle-strengthening activity at least 2 days per week. This could be everyday activities, such as carrying groceries in from the car.

2. Follow the DASH diet

Following the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet can lower your systolic blood pressure by as much as 11 mm Hg. The DASH diet consists of:

- eating fruits, vegetables, and whole grains as often as possible
- eating low fat dairy products, lean meats, fish, and nuts when possible (and affordable)
- limiting foods that are high in saturated fats, such as processed foods, high fat dairy products, and fatty meats

It also helps to cut back on desserts and sweetened beverages, such as soda and juice. Making even slight adjustments to your diet can be beneficial.

Depending on where you live or the access you have to certain foods, it may not always be easy to access fresh fruits and vegetables



or fish. The DASH diet does not need to be followed exactly. Even minor changes, like skipping dessert or replacing sweetened beverages with water or other unsweetened drinks, can help lower your systolic blood pressure.

3. Limit salt

Reducing your sodium intake can be vital for lowering blood pressure.

In some people, eating too much sodium causes the body to retain fluid. This results in a sharp rise in blood pressure.

The AHA recommends limiting your sodium intake to between 1,500 milligrams (mg) and 2,300 mg per day, which is between a half and 1 teaspoon of salt per day.

To decrease sodium in your diet, try using herbs and spices instead of salt to add flavor to foods.

Processed foods also tend to be loaded with sodium. Be sure to always check food labels and choose low sodium alternatives when possible.

4. Maintain a moderate weight

Weight and blood pressure go hand in hand. For people with overweight or obesity, losing even just 10 pounds can help lower blood pressure levels.

In addition to reaching and maintaining a moderate weight, keeping tabs on your waistline is also critical for managing blood pressure. The extra fat around your waist, called visceral fat, may adversely affect heart health and could lead to serious health problems in the long run, including high blood pressure. Generally, males should keep their waist measurement to less than 40 inches (in), while females should aim for less than 35 in. Keep in mind that losing weight safely and maintaining the loss isn't easy. Consider talking with a doctor or another healthcare professional about the best ways for you to maintain a moderate weight.

5. If you smoke, consider quitting

Each cigarette you smoke temporarily raises blood pressure for several minutes after you finish. If you smoke regularly, your

blood pressure can stay elevated for extended periods.

People with high blood pressure who smoke are at greater risk of developing dangerously high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke.

Even secondhand smoke can put you at increased risk of high blood pressure and heart disease.

Aside from providing numerous other health benefits, quitting smoking can help reduce your blood pressure.

Visit our smoking cessation center to take steps to quit today. Quitting isn't easy, but it's worth it for your health in the long run.

6. Limit alcohol

Enjoying a glass of red wine with your dinner is perfectly fine. In fact, red wine might even benefit heart health when consumed in moderation. However, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can lead to lots of health issues, including high blood pressure.

Excessive drinking can also reduce the effectiveness of certain blood pressure medications. What does drinking in moderation mean? The AHA recommends that males limit their consumption to two alcoholic drinks per day. Females should limit their intake to one alcoholic drink per day.

7. Add in relaxation techniques

In today's fast-paced world that's filled with increasing demands, it can be hard to slow down and relax. However, it's important to step away from your daily responsibilities from time to time to help manage stress levels.

Stress can temporarily raise your blood pressure. Too much of it can keep your pressure up for extended periods.

It helps to identify the trigger for your stress. It may be your job, relationship, or finances. Once you know the source of your stress, you can try to find ways to fix the problem.

You can also take steps to relieve your stress. One simple, accessible way is to take a few deep breaths. Deep breathing helps ease stress because it sends a message to your brain to relax.

Healthline

News In Pictures



▲ A U.S. Marine Corps F-35 fighter jet lands as a private airplane holds on the taxiway at the former Roosevelt Roads military base in Ceiba, Puerto Rico.



▲ Employees adjust the painting “Bust of a Woman with a Flowered Hat (Dora Maar), 1943” (Buste de femme au chapeau a fleurs (Dora Maar), 1943) by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) on display before its auction at Drouot auction house in Paris, France.



▲ A protestor adjusts his mask as tear gas spreads amid clashes with French police during a demonstration in Nantes as part of a day of nationwide strikes and protests against the government and cuts in the next budget, with supporters of the “Bloquons Tout” (Let’s Block Everything) movement.



▲ People pray around a Utah State Trooper and a big U.S. flag is displayed on campus as students return to classes at Utah Valley University following the killing of Charlie Kirk, in Orem, Utah.



▲ A model presents a creation by Agatha Ruiz de la Prada during the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in Madrid, Spain.

Cardoso admits Ribeiro void still haunts Downs after Gallants draw

MAMELODI Sundowns coach Miguel Cardoso has once again admitted that the void left by Lucas Ribeiro is proving difficult to fill after a frustrating 1-1 draw with Marumo Gallants in a Betway Premiership clash at Dr Petrus Molemela Stadium on Wednesday night.

Despite being second on the table, the Brazilians have been far from convincing this season.

The stalemate against Gallants came after Keanu Cupido's own goal 10 minutes before half-time cancelled out Iqraam Rayners' opener just minutes earlier.

Ribeiro controversially forced a move to Spanish La Liga 2 outfit Cultural Leonesa despite still being under contract at Sundowns.

He was an unused substitute in their match against Racing de Santander last Sunday. Back in the PSL, Sundowns have been left scrambling to plug the gap left by last season's Footballer of the Season and Players' Player of the Season recipient.

"I expect so (new signings) because it's clear that the team needs extra energy and quality upfront. We lost important resources from last season. It's only one name but his name had a lot of impact on the team," Cardoso said after the draw with Gallants.

"It's clear that we're still trying to find the right connections in order to develop the capacity to arrive there collectively. We believe in our players but some of them are very young and they can't cope with the responsibility to carry a team like Mamelodi Sundowns that needs to win every match. We're dependent



▲ Mamelodi Sundowns coach Miguel Cardoso.

now on the solutions that we have and we're trying to be creative because we trust the players.

"We believe that we have more than enough to continue to win but we also need to know that the teams in the PSL have reinforced a lot. The competition is very hard. If we can find the right players, we'll be stronger as the Caf Champions League is also approaching and to play in the group stages, the level rises and we need to be up to that standard."

Sundowns now turn their focus to Saturday's home fixture against Durban City at Lucas Moripe Stadium, where Cardoso will be eager to restore confidence and silence grow-

ing murmurs of discontent among the club's supporters.

"We created more than enough chances (against Gallants) and we had 72 percent ball possession and four shots on target," Cardoso added.

"Unfortunately, we were not able to have the efficiency that we needed in order to score the second goal and finish the game to get the result that we wanted.

"I think the story of the game is exactly that, it's about the incapacity to score the goal that would have given us more than a deserved victory in a match that we completely controlled."

(The Citizen)

Nabi confirms Chiefs departure

NASREDDINE Nabi has confirmed that he is no longer Kaizer Chiefs head coach.

"My separation from Kaizer Chiefs was a mutual agreement with the club's management, following a successful and challenging experience," Nabi told the website winwin.com.

"Currently, I need some time to rest, focus more on my family, and monitor my wife's health, which has required me to be by her side over the past period."

'A temporary break'

Nabi added that he has received offers from clubs in Africa and the Middle East.

"Indeed, several major African and Arab clubs have contacted me, but I will not enter into any negotiations at this time, as my priority is to take a temporary break and get some rest."

SABC Sport reported on

Wednesday that Nabi's contract had been terminated by Chiefs, after it emerged that he did not have a valid Caf Pro License to coach Amakhosi in the Caf Confederation Cup.

Chiefs will play Angola's Kabuscorp on Saturday in Luan-da in a first preliminary round, first leg clash at the November 11 Stadium.

Assistant coaches Cedric Kaze and Khalil Ben Youssef are set to lead Chiefs for the time being.

Why Chiefs started the season without Nabi

Nabi missed the start of this season with Chiefs as he flew back to his native Tunisia to be with his wife after she was involved in a serious road accident.

He returned in time to be on the touchline for Chiefs' Betway Premiership goalless draw with Mamelodi Sundowns on August 27. (The Citizen)



▲ Nasreddine Nabi.

Piastri says team orders clarified at McLaren



▲ Oscar Piastri.

OSCAR Piastri on Thursday said McLaren had "clarified a lot of things" about team orders following the decision to ask him to give up second place to teammate and title rival Lando Norris at the Italian Grand Prix.

The 24-year-old Australian series leader, who is seeking to become Australia's first world champion since Alan Jones in 1980, had challenged the team's decision during the Monza race.

Speaking to reporters ahead of this weekend's Azerbaijan Grand Prix, he said there had been "good discussions" and the team were now "very aligned" on how to progress in the remaining eight races this year.

"Obviously it's a highly talked-about moment, but we've had a lot of discussions and clarified a lot of things," he said. "We know how we're going to go racing going forwards, which is the most important thing."

He refused to go into details or reveal what the team had discussed in particular.

"A lot that is to stay for us because, ultimately, if we give out that information then we become very easy targets to pick off because everyone knows what we're going to do," he said.

"That's all very aligned with all of us, but it stays in-house."

He added: "The biggest thing for me, from Monza, was it was a weekend where I deserved to finish third. I didn't deserve to finish second because of the pace I had.

"I was quick at certain points, but not quick enough the whole weekend and that's my main takeaway from that, what I'm trying to focus on going forwards."

This weekend the McLaren duo will be fighting for championship points individually, but aware of the need to avoid any scrapes as they are within reach of clinching the team's second consecutive constructors' world title.

Piastri leads Norris, 25, by 31 points with eight races go to while McLaren head Ferrari by 337 points. McLaren have 617 and Ferrari 280.

"There was another factor, outside the slow pit stop, at Monza," added Piastri. "The order we pitted in. It was a contributing factor to why we swapped."

"That one, I am happy to talk about because it has happened. We can't plan for every scenario, but we are very aligned and I respect the team's decisions and I trust they will do their best to make the right one."

McLaren need to outscore Ferrari by at least nine points to wrap up the teams' crown with seven races to spare, while not being outscored heavily by Mercedes or Red Bull.

It they succeed, it will be the earliest the title has been confirmed in a season.

(Supersport)

Messi, Inter Miami agree to extend contract beyond 2026

INTER Miami and Lionel Messi have agreed to extend the Argentine superstar's contract to remain in Major League Soccer (MLS) beyond next year's World Cup, according to a source close to the club.

The contract extension would ensure that the 38-year-old remains in competitive action until and after the 2026 World Cup hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The tournament gets under way on June 11, with the final to be played at the MetLife Stadium on 19 July.

Messi's previous deal was due to run out at the end of this year following the 2025 MLS season.

An official announcement is expected within the next two weeks, said the source contacted by AFP late Wednesday, and could mean Messi ending his career in the MLS.

Messi moved to Inter Miami in 2023 after an unhappy stay at Paris Saint-Germain, but the rump of his stellar career was spent at Barcelona, where he played from 2004 to 2021 after coming through the youth system at the Spanish giants.

At Barcelona he won the LaLiga title 10 times and lifted the Uefa Champions League

trophy on four occasions.

In 2022, he led Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar and has expressed a desire to try to retain the trophy next year.

He has scored 114 international goals and also won the Copa America twice with Argentina, in 2021 and 2024.

Messi could play at a sixth World Cup next year, which would set a new all-time record, although he could be matched by long-time rival Cristiano Ronaldo.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner is also just three goals short of Miroslav Klose's record of 16 career World Cup goals.

Argentina comfortably booked a spot at next year's finals, finishing nine points clear at the top of the South American qualifying table.

Messi finished as the top scorer with eight goals, including a brace in what may have been his last competitive match on home soil against Venezuela two weeks ago.

He was named the MLS Most Valuable Player in the 2024 season even though Inter Miami were eliminated in the playoffs.

In 2025 he became the fastest player to reach 40 goals in MLS history.

Inter Miami sit in sixth place in the Eastern Conference and well-positioned to qualify for the play-offs, with multiple games in



▲ Lionel Messi.

hand on most of their rivals due to their participation in the Club World Cup.

They were thrashed 4-0 in the last 16 of that tournament by Paris Saint-Germain.

Messi's side were also well beaten in the final of the Leagues Cup earlier this month, going down 3-0 to Seattle Sounders.

(Supersport)

US battle past Kazakhstan to set up BJK Cup semifinal with Britain

THE United States stayed on course for a record-extending 19th Billie Jean King Cup crown after Taylor Townsend and Jessica Pegula won the doubles decider to edge out Kazakhstan 2-1 on Thursday and set up a semifinal clash with Britain.

The tie hung in the balance after American Emma Navarro had dramatically saved two match points to outlast Yulia Putintseva 7-5 2-6 7-6(6), only for an aggressive Elena Rybakina to level matters by dismantling world No 7 Pegula 6-4 6-1.

Kazakhstan, eyeing their first final appearance, then rolled the dice by selecting Rybakina and Putintseva for the decisive doubles clash.

But the Americans – spearheaded by doubles world No 1 Townsend – had other plans when skipper Lindsay Davenport teamed her up with Pegula.

The US pair survived an early scare when they stared down three break points at 0-40 in their opening service game, but managed

to hold serve before seizing control.

While Pegula patrolled the baseline, Townsend proved clinical at the net as both Rybakina and Putintseva dropped serve, helping the Americans pocket the first set.

Although Kazakhstan struck first in the second with an early break, the US broke back immediately and forced a tiebreak which they dominated to seal a 6-2 7-6(1) victory.

"I haven't played with Taylor in such a long time, so that was fun to get back playing with her," said Pegula, a former doubles world No 1.

"I always love playing with a lefty. Makes my life a lot easier. I think our games complement each other really well. She's an amazing doubles player. She could probably play with anybody."

BRITAIN BEAT JAPAN

Britain are also seeking their first BJK Cup title and they cruised past Japan when Sonay Kartal and Katie Boulter won their singles matches. (Supersport)



▲ Iga Swiatek.

Swiatek eases into Korea Open quarterfinals

IGA Swiatek blew off the cobwebs from her US Open quarterfinal defeat to Amanda Anisimova to ease into the last eight of the Korea Open on Thursday.

The six-time Grand Slam champion from Poland beat Romania's Sorana Cirstea 6-3, 6-2 and will face Emma Raducanu or Barbora Krejickova next in Seoul.

World No 2 Swiatek, defeated in straight sets by eventual finalist Anisimova in New York two weeks ago, was never seriously troubled by unseeded Cirstea.

"For sure the conditions are much different from our last tournament," Swiatek told the crowd in the South Korean capital, where there has been heavy rain this week.

"Happy that I could adjust quickly. I really love it here, it's beautiful when it's not raining so happy to be here."

Swiatek, whose father Tomasz competed in rowing at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, sealed the first set in 49 minutes on her sixth set point.

The top seed carried that momentum into the second set, breaking the Romanian immediately and despite a few wobbles Swiatek sealed the match with minimum fuss.

The 24-year-old, who is chasing a 25th WTA singles title, will play the winner of Thursday's later match between Britain's Raducanu and Krejickova of the Czech Republic.

(Supersport)



▲ Taylor Townsend and Jessica Pegula

CAF GAMES BUILD-UP

The match winners

... Who will be the key stars for Nsingizini, Leopard games?

By Chris Dlamini

IT is only a matter of one night before Eswatini elite soccer outfit Royal Leopard takes on Namibia's Young Africans in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup first leg, while the country league champions face off with Zimbabwe's Simba Bhora in the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League on Sunday.

Both games will be in Botswana, inside the Obed Itani Chilume Stadium in Francistown. Here are some of the players to watch from all four sides.

Simba Bhora vs. Nsingizini Hotspurs
Date: Sunday, September 21, 2025
Tournament: TotalEnergies CAF Champions League 2025/26

This is a debut match for Nsingizini Hotspurs in the Champions League and with their sights set on the group stages, it will be a special one to win.

However, they are facing fellow debutants who also have a few key players who can cause damage to rivals. Let us highlight some of the key players who can be match winners here.

Key players:



▲ Isaskar Gurirab who plays for Simba.

Nsingizini Hotspurs (Eswatini)
1. Kwakhe Tfwala - The Nsingizini Hotspurs versatile midfielder-cum-left back has all the international experience from Mbabane Swallows in the Champions League, and of course, mostly from the national team Sihlangu Semnikati.

He is one with the ability to provide special moments for his side when all looks impossible. He can play just the main role in swinging the results to his team's favour if in good form.

2. Isaskar Gurirab - The Simba Bho-



▲ Young Africans striker Simon Elago.

ra striker, a Namibian import is a prolific goalscorer for his club, boasting eight goals now, and is one significant talent they highlight.

Young Africans vs. Royal Leopard
Date: Saturday, September 20, 2025
Tournament: TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26

The police outfit, Royal Leopard has several stars with experience. They dominate the country's senior national team Sihlangu Semnikati and have played fewer times in the Champions League and Confederation



▲ Royal Leopard's Junior Magagula.

Cup.

Key Players:
1. Junior Magagula- The Leopard midfielder is an exceptional talent. He is the man with the magic wand. He has the talent that compares to none among many a midfielder in Eswatini.

Magagula can control the ball, the game itself, pass (both long and short with ease), and mainly, can score from set pieces and spectacularly from open play.

2. Simon Elago - The Young Africans star has arrived recently after being loaned from FC Ongos for the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup. He is a Namibian striker aged 22 years and already pipped as a star for the youthful Young Africans. He is one to watch.



▲ Royal Leopard players celebrating during a recent match.



▲ Nsingizini players celebrating during a recent match.

RES Siyakha grassroots take centre stage at Mphelandzaba

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisod@rubiconmedia.group

THE RES Siyakha 1800 grassroots festival took centre stage over the weekend, with 23 participants sweating it out in a day-long event hosted at Mphelandzaba Sports Ground.

The event saw the participants, who comprised children between the ages of 6 to 11 years, being imparted with the relevant football basics, which include but are not limited to ball control, passing, shooting, and dribbling. There were also some small-sided games whereby the participants were grouped into teams and competed against each other.

Under the watchful eye of qualified instructors, the children were seen to be responding well to the tactics and were enjoying every moment of the exercise. The instructors who dedicated their time to work with the children include Mfanufikile Mashwama, Ngcebo Lewane, and Mxolisi Nhlabatsi. The day seemed to be too short as the passionate children were left yearning for more football action. Encouraging to note was the support from parents/guardians as well as local community members who came in numbers to motivate the young footballers.

RES Siyakha 1800 Football Programme, Manager Sicelo Nene expressed his delight about the progress on the programme, highlighting the dedication and commitment demonstrated by both the instructors and participants.

"We are very happy about the success of such events. This really shows that everyone is playing his/her role in making this programme a success, and thanks to all those who keep on showing dedication and commitment towards this project. It is really encouraging, and I am made to believe that even the sponsor is happy," he said.

Nene further revealed that more events will be hosted in various venues in the coming weeks.

He also emphasized the significance of attracting a huge number of participants and continues to bring the relevant vibes for the football passionate of the sugar-belt and surrounding areas.



▲ Juniors teams in action in the Siyakha juniors tournament.

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE government has once again displayed commitment towards developing sports at the grassroots level.

This follows the announcement of over E1million 2025 Tinkhundla identification national competitions for football.

Each Inkhundla from the 59 centres will get an allocation of E20 000 for the Soccer tournament, while the allocation for netball will be announced in due course.

The competition started in 2024 with a soccer and athletics tournaments.

Minister of Sports , Culture, and Youth Affairs Bongani Nzima announced the latest news during the ministry event held at Esibayeni Lodge on Thursday.

“It is my great honour to stand in front of you today as we launch the 2025/2026 edition of the Tinkhundla Talent Search Competition. This competition has grown into a powerful platform for developing and discovering young talent across Eswatini, and this year, we are proud to take it a step further. The 2025/2026 edition of

Government pumps in over E1 mln for Tinkundla Tourney

Tinkhundla Talent Search Competition will involve football and netball competitions across all 59 Tinkhundla centres,” he said.

The minister further announced that the tournament will be played in a round robin format.

“This competition will not follow the traditional knockout format but instead will run as a Tinkhundla Football/Netball Leagues format. This change is deliberate. It is designed to give our young players more game time, more exposure, and more learning opportunities, ensuring that they do not face early elimination, but instead grow through consistent participation,” he said.

The event was attended by the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA), members of parliament, and representatives of member associations.



▲ ESRC Chairman Celucolo ‘Dino’Dlamini presenting E10 000 cheque to Taekwondo Association Secretary Sizwe Mabuza on behalf on Siphwayinkhosi Ndlela.



▲ Athletics relay team accepting their prize from portfolio committee Chairman Sifiso Shabalala.



▲ Equestrian national team displaying their E20 000 cheque.

Government splashes E260 000 on athletes

REWARDING excellence.

The government has rewarded outstanding athletes for their splendid performances during international competitions.

This is through the podium incentive program under the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Youth Affairs.

Minister of sports, culture and youth affairs Bongani Nzima said the incentives are to honour athletes for their outstanding performances during a presentation held at Esibayeni Lodge on Thursday.

Some of the honoured Athletes include Mkhuleko Nzima (Special Olympics), Hayley Hoy (Swimming), Siphwayinkhosi Ndlela (Ndlela), and Khetselo Mziyako (Boxing) .

The biggest individual award winners were Hayley and Mkhuleko, who went home E35 000 richer.

The Equestrian, Athletics relay, and Darts youth national team double category players also received cash incentives for their heroics in the international scenes.

The honoured athletes excelled in various assignments such as the Inaugural Africa School Games, Region V Youth, and the Africa Aquatics Zone IV Championships.

Minister Nzima said the incentives are part of the government’s commitment to

developing sports in the country.

“It is with great pride and joy that I stand before you this morning to honour and celebrate our national champions who have flown the Eswatini flag high on international stages. Today, as we gather to present rewards for podium performances in swimming, Special Olympics, athletics, boxing, darts, taekwondo, and equestrian during the second quarter of this year, we are not only acknowledging medals; we are celebrating resilience, dedication, and the relentless pursuit of excellence,” he said.

“These incentives are rooted in the National Rewards Incentive Programme, which is enshrined in the National Sports Policy. This policy reflects the Government’s commitment to recognising and celebrating excellence in sport by ensuring that athletes who represent our country and achieve podium finishes are rewarded in a structured and dignified manner,” he said.

The minister further congratulated all the outstanding athletes for their achievements.

“I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to each of our recipients. Your triumphs are not merely personal



▲ Minister Nzima presenting a cheque to female swimmer Hayley Hoy.

milestones; they are national victories that inspire every young boy and girl in our communities to believe that their dreams are possible. You have lifted our flag high, embodied our nation’s values of hard work and perseverance, and shown the world that Eswatini is home to champions,” he said.

The full list of recipients

- Mkhuleko Nzima -E35 000.
- Hayley Hoy – E35 000
- Chadd Ning – E20 000

- Darts girls’ team - E20 000.
- Darts boys’ team - E20 000
- Equestrian national team - E20 000
- Thokozani Nhlabatsi - E20 000
- Ncamiso Hlatswako - E20 000
- Siphwayinkhosi Ndlela - E10 000
- Banele Mtsetfwa - E20 000
- Jose Potgieter - E10 000
- Athletics relay team - E5 000
- Khetselo Mziyako - E5 000
- Luca Fraser - E5 000



▲ Royal Leopard players celebrate a goal in one of their previous matches.



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs players celebrate after winning the 8Bet Trade Fair Cup.

Govt rallies behind CAF envoys

By Chris Dlamini

THE Government has backed local CAF envoys Nsingizini Hotspurs and Royal Leopards to do well in the 2025 interclub competitions. Minister of sports, culture, and youth affairs, Bongani Nzima said this ahead of the two local sides' clashes against Simba Bhora (Zimbabwe) and Young Africans (Namibia), respectively, this weekend in the away fixtures, both scheduled for the Obed Chilume Stadium.

Nzima said this during the ministry's event held at Esibayeni Lodge on Thursday. Zimbabwe and Namibia do not have a stadium that meets the FIFA requirements.

Nsingizini will feature in the prestigious CAF Champions League while Leopard will compete in the Confederation Cup.

"As we celebrate these individual achievements, allow me also to shine the spotlight on our football ambassadors currently carrying the hopes of the nation in continental club competitions — Royal Leopards in the CAF Confederations Cup and Nsingizini Hotspurs in the CAF Champions League. Gentlemen, your courage to compete on Africa's grand stage is commendable. You are not just representing your clubs; you are carrying the aspirations of a whole nation with you," he said.

The minister further commended the two teams for taking part in the continental assignments.

"I applaud your determination and the

sacrifices you have made to reach this level. As we present podium incentives today, I am hopeful that soon we will gather again, this time to celebrate your podium finishes on the continental stage. I urge you to remain focused, disciplined, and united as you march forward. Know that the entire nation stands behind you, and we believe in your ability to make history," he said.

The return matches will be played at Somhlolo National Stadium before the end of the month.

This comes after the country was granted a provisional license by CAF to host international matches following the 2018 ban.

The government invested over E67 million towards the refurbishment of the country's football mecca.



▲ Minister of sports, culture, and youth affairs, Bongani Nzima.



Nsingizini to back Leopard in CAF game

THIS is what Eswatini's CAF competitions envoys Nsingizini Hotspurs and Royal Leopard will certainly need as they travel to Botswana to resume their TotalEnergies CAF Champions League and TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26 campaigns. They will both be hosted in Botswana by their rivals who do not a qualifying venue for these category A matches.

Nsingizini Hotspurs will be hosted by Zimbabwe's Simba Bhora while Leopard will be visitors to Namibia's Young Africans on Saturday. Both matches are scheduled to take place at the Obed Itani Chilume Stadium in Francistown.

"We are leaving for Botswana on Wednesday to ensure we acclimatise to the climate and weather conditions in Botswana ahead of our match on Sunday night.

"We also intend to go and watch Royal Leopard on Saturday to give them support

as a team from Eswatini," said Nsingizini's award-winning Public Relations Officer (PRO) Mnotfo Dlamini.

Dlamini said it was important to show unity as emaSwati and rally behind the other, especially because they were playing just a day after the police outfit, Leopard.

However, their supporters will only have one match to watch, their team only on Sunday as they will leave Eswatini for Botswana on Saturday. They will not make it in time for the Leopard match which is at 3pm.

"Our supporters will have a night in Botswana after our game which is at 8pm. This means we won't be able to catch the borders which close at 10pm, so we'll spend Sunday night in Botswana," he said.

Dlamini further made it clear that they would only leave for Eswatini on Monday, in the early hours. Each fan pays E1 200 return fee for transport and E300 for accommodation while its E61 (P50) to watch the game.

E6 mln scholarship for the 2028 Olympic Games

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI has kick-started preparations for the 2028 Olympic Games. This follows the awarding of E6 million Olympic scholarship by the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association on Thursday at Esibayeni Lodge.

The beneficiaries include Bongiwe Mahlalela (Athletics), Luca Fraser, Hayley Hoy (Swimming), Mayibongwe Vilakati (Athletics) and Gcinumuzi Mkhathshwa (Taekwondo), and Lamulela Magagula (Judo), among others.

New marathon king Mancoba Nhlabatsi has also been included in the funding as an additional beneficiary.

Nhlabatsi is currently in Lesotho, undergoing a training programme.

The beneficiary from Boxing will be announced once the Eswatini Boxing Association secures its membership with the International Olympic Committee-recognised World Boxing.

The presentation took place at Esibayeni Lodge on Thursday. EOCGA president Adam 'Bomber' Mthethwa said the scholarship is part of their commitment to develop

sport in the country.

He further revealed that the scholarship will cover a training programme for athletics in the next three years.

Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs Bongani Nzima welcomed the program.

"Today marks a significant milestone in our country's sporting journey. I am deeply honoured, on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Ministry of Sport, Culture and Youth Affairs, to officially accept the Los Angeles 2028 Athlete Scholarship Programme, made possible through the support of Olympic Solidarity and the strong leadership of the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association," he said.

The minister further stated that the program will propel the country to greater heights in the international scene.

"This programme, valued at an impressive E6 million, is not just an investment in seven of our most outstanding athletes across five different sporting codes — it is a vote of confidence in the talent, potential, and resilience of the Swazi athlete. It represents a bold step forward in our deliberate national journey of migrating from merely participating in high-performance sport to competing professionally on the global stage," he said.





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... Minister of Spirts, Culture and Youth Affairs Bongani Nzima is confident both Royal Leopard and Ningizini Hotspurs will hoist the country's flag high in the CAF Inter-club competitions this forthcoming weekend. *Page 23*