

# Government spends over E450mln on school infrastructure development

By Thokozani Mazibuko

DIRECTOR of the Microprojects Programme, Sibusiso Mbingo, has revealed that the government has already invested over E450 million towards the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms across the kingdom. He explained that the massive investment was channeled through the Micro-projects Programme, a government initiative tasked with upgrading educational facilities to ensure conducive learning environments for pupils.

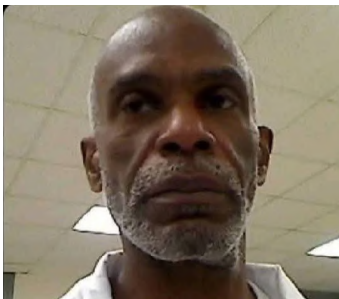
SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2



▲ Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo engaging with Ngwane Park High School students.

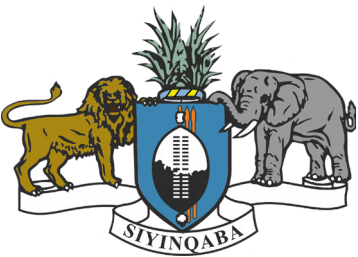
Jamaican  
‘deportee’  
back home!

Page 2



Social grants  
disbursement to be  
automated for accuracy

Page 3



A Rubicon Media Group publication



MBABANE  
RETAIL SHOP

Born to win!

NOW OPEN!



40+ BETTING TERMINALS  
FAST FREE INTERNET  
LIVE DSTV STREAMS  
CASHIER POINTS  
SMOKING & NON-SMOKING LOUNGES  
Catch All the Action - Right Here in Mbabane!

Shop 1 A, Swazi plaza, Corporate Place Dr, Sishayi Rd, Mbabane



Born to win!



PREDICT  
MOBILE

WITH YOUR  
PHONE!

SIGN UP NOW!  
WWW.BET.CO.SZ





CASHIER

18+ NO UNDER 18'S ALLOWED! WE PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GAMING 18+



# Govt spends over E450mln on school infrastructure development

By Thokozani Mazibuko

DIRECTOR of the Microprojects Programme, Sibusiso Mbingo, has revealed that the government has already invested over E450 million towards the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms across the kingdom.

He explained that the massive investment was channelled through the Microprojects Programme, a government initiative tasked with upgrading educational facilities to ensure conducive learning environments for pupils.

“Already, 350 school structures have been completed out of the 427 schools that are earmarked to benefit from the E450 million allocation,” Mbingo disclosed.

He further noted that the programme has not only constructed new classrooms but also reconstructed several that were destroyed by violent storms in previous years.

According to Mbingo, the initiative demonstrates the government’s commitment to addressing infrastructure challenges in the education sector and ensuring that no child is left behind due to a lack of proper facilities.

Minister of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, who addressed pupils during his Ngwane Park High School, encouraged them to take full advantage of the improved learning conditions and remain focused on their studies.

He urged learners to pursue excellence, reminding them that education remains the most powerful tool for shaping their future



▲ Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo pictured with ministry stakeholders during his visit to Ngwane Park High School.

and contributing positively to national development.

Teachers who attended the event applauded the government’s investment, noting that improved classrooms significantly enhance both teaching and learning.

It is worth mentioning that the Micropro-

jects Programme has long been at the forefront of development projects in Eswatini, ranging from school infrastructure to community-based initiatives.

The current rollout is one of the largest in recent years, reflecting the government’s recognition that quality education begins

with safe and well-equipped learning spaces.

It should be noted that as the programme continues to complete the remaining schools, communities across the country are expected to benefit, particularly in rural areas where the need for decent infrastructure has been most urgent.

## Jamaican ‘deportee’ back home!

By Siphesihle Dlamini  
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

THE Government of Eswatini has issued an important update concerning the five immigrants who arrived in the country in July 2025 under the United States’ Third Country Prisoners (TCP) Programme.

Acting Government Spokesperson Thabile Mdluli conveyed the latest developments, revealing that one of the immigrants, Orville Isaac Etoria from Jamaica, has voluntarily repatriated himself to his home country.

“On Sunday, September 21, 2025, Etoria, at his own volition and without any compulsion whatsoever, was safely returned to Jamaica,” Mdluli stated.

▲ Acting Government Spokesperson Thabile Mdluli.



She emphasised that Etoria’s return was met with a warm welcome from his family, marking a successful and dignified conclusion to his stay in Eswatini.

The Government expressed deep appreciation for the crucial role played by the International Organisation on Migration (IOM) in facilitating this repatriation.

Mdluli acknowledged, “His Majesty’s Government would like to extend profound appreciation for all the support received from the IOM, which was instrumental in ensuring the seamless and humane repatriation process.”

In addition to thanking the IOM, the Government also recognised the ongoing cooperation of the Government of Jamaica.

Through constant communication facilitated by their High Commission in Pretoria, South Africa, Jamaica played a vital role in coordinating Etoria’s return.

Mdluli further extended gratitude to the



▲ Orville Isaac Etoria from Jamaica.

countries of transit that provided essential assistance during the repatriation journey, ensuring smooth passage and logistical support. While celebrating this milestone, the Government remains actively engaged with the remaining four immigrants from Cuba, Laos, Vietnam, and Yemen.

According to Mdluli, “Engagements with

the other four immigrants are currently ongoing, with a view to repatriating them to their respective countries.”

She assured the public that further updates will be provided as new developments occur, reflecting the Government’s commitment to transparency and responsible management of the TCP Programme.



By Kwanele Dhladhla

Ex-DPM urges calm as...

Malawi Electoral Commission declares partial presidential results



▲ Eswatini’s former Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku who led a delegation of observers under the SADC Election Observation Mission (SEOM) for the Malawi presidential elections urged calm as Malawi Electoral Commission declared partial presidential results at the National Tally Centre.

THE Southern African Development Community (SADC) Election Observation Mission (SEOM), led by Eswatini’s former Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku, has commended progress made in tallying and result transmission following Malawi’s September 16 General Elections.

Masuku, the current Shiselweni Regional Administrator, was speaking on Sunday at the National Tally Centre in Lilongwe, where the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) issued its latest update on the electoral process.

“As at 8:00 pm on 21st September 2025, all 229 constituencies had captured and transmitted their results through the Results Management System. All councils have processed their results and compiled district summaries, which have been posted at their respective district tally centres for the public to see,” Masuku said.

He explained that as of 7:00 pm, 35 out of 36 councils had delivered their results to the National Tally Centre, with Mangochi District still en route.

“This demonstrates commendable progress in the retrieval and consolidation of results,” he noted.

On complaints received, Masuku said the Commission was aware of concerns raised by political parties, monitors, and the public.

“The commission continues to receive complaints relating to the electoral process. This is expected in an exercise of this magnitude, and it is precisely why the law provides for complaint-handling mechanisms,” he stated.

He cautioned that grievances must be submitted formally and in writing to the Chief Elections Officer, either by email or hand delivery.

“Informal submissions through WhatsApp, social media, or direct messages will not be entertained. Such approaches compromise accountability. Only properly lodged complaints will be logged, acknowledged, and fairly reviewed,” Masuku emphasised.

Turning to results, Masuku confirmed that

the MEC had partially declared presidential tallies for several districts. In Chitipa, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika led with 35,827 votes, followed by Malawi Congress Party (MCP) candidate Dr. Lazarus Chakwera with 13,936. In Rumph, Mutharika again took the lead with 29,957 votes, with Chakwera garnering 24,486.

The trend continued in Mulanje, where Mutharika secured a commanding 207,596 votes compared to Chakwera’s 3,195. In Mzuzu City, however, the contest was tighter, with Mutharika registering 25,077 votes while Chakwera polled 15,013.

So far, results from 13 councils have been determined, including Neno, Salima, Ntchisi, Zomba City, Karonga Town, Likoma, Kasungu Municipality, Luchenza Municipality, Mwanza, Chitipa, Rumph, Mulanje, and Mzuzu City.

Responsibly

Masuku used the occasion to urge political leaders and stakeholders to act responsibly in their public pronouncements. “The Commission has observed with deep concern the trend where some leaders are making premature declarations of victory or issuing statements that contradict official results,” he said. “Such misinformation

misleads the public, undermines confidence in the electoral process, and threatens peace and unity.”

He called for restraint, maturity, and respect for the process. “Allow the Commission to complete its work in accordance with the Constitution and electoral laws. In the end, the true will of the people will be declared openly and lawfully,” Masuku concluded.

With more councils expected to submit verified tallies in the coming days, attention now shifts to the Commission’s ability to finalise results swiftly while maintaining transparency, credibility, and public trust.

Social grants disbursement to be automated for accuracy

By Kwanele Dhladhla



▲ Deputy Prime Minister Thuli Dladla.

THE Royal Science and Technology (RSTP) has embarked on the process of automating the management of social grants in the Kingdom of Eswatini through the introduction of the National Dynamic Social Registry Information Management System.

RSTP has explained that the system being developed strives to automate the business processes for the Deputy Prime Ministers’ (DPM) Office.

It has been mentioned that the project will help the DPM’s office to improve service delivery and disbursement of social grants.

In an expression of interest which has been issued by RSTP through Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (ESPPRA), it has been mentioned that activities to be undertaken by the desired service provider will be used for the management of all social grants.

The system seeks to improve birth certificate issuance of children born with disabilities and, through integration with health systems, identify patients who qualify to be considered for disability grant.

The system will also improve efficiency and accuracy in the targeting of beneficiaries.

RSTP also wants to achieve enhanced accountability and transparency in the administration of programmes and improve coverage and efficiency by streamlining data collection and management.

“The system will serve as a tool to monitor and evaluate the social protection sector and integrate various information systems related to social protection through improved coordination and collaboration among the government and stakeholders,” RSTP explained.

It was added that the system will allow the expansion and linkage with other systems such as social security, registration, health insurance, and the taxation system, among others.

The DPM Thuli Dladla has recently received rave reviews for ensuring the distribution of social grants to 87,000 elderly and 17,000 people living with disabilities, as well as food parcels to 263,090 individuals across the country in only three months.

Members of the DPM’s Portfolio Committee in the House of Assembly sang like a canary as they appreciated efforts by the State in ensuring that the impoverished and destitute populace get well taken care of in order not to feel marginalised and

neglected due to their social status.

The positive feedback was received from MPs after the DPM reported that significant progress had been made in social grants, as 19,436 new Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) were enrolled in the Education Grant Programme, with a substantial E47.8 million paid in school fees as one-third deposits.

She mentioned that Elderly and Disability Grants saw a commendable increase to E600 and E450 per month, respectively, benefiting over 87,000 elderly people and 17,000 Persons with Disabilities. The office also continued to provide crucial funeral assistance to extremely vulnerable elderly people.

Some features of the proposed new system:

- Constituency Registration
- Pay Point Registration
- Client Registration for the National register
- Client Registration for Social Grant payment
- Payment processing
- Reconciliation of payments
- Generation of Reports
- Payment status
- Graduation by improvement of Socio-Economic status



By Delisa Magagula

# Over 50 emaSwati arrested in SA for immigration violations



▲ Over 50 EmaSwati have been arrested in South Africa for immigration law contravention.

THE South African Police Service (SAPS) has arrested 53 Eswatini nationals over the past two months for violating immigration laws by working or residing in South Africa without proper documentation.

The arrests were made during a series of operations conducted as part of SAPS' clamp-down on irregular migration.

According to information from South African authorities, the arrests were carried out during sweep-up exercises targeting individuals without work permits, passports, or other legal documentation required to stay or work in the country.

In May, the Citizen reported that the South African borders had their security intensified by the Border Management Authority (BMA), which arrested individuals, including those from Eswatini and Lesotho, after they were found having crossed the border undocumented.

The BMA, during the 2024/2025 festive season, intercepted and apprehended more than 38,000 individuals from Lesotho, topping the list of undocumented persons, while there are at least 870 Emaswati arrested, The Citizen reported.

Following Lesotho nationals in the interception statistics, Mozambique is attributed to around 6,549, Zimbabweans, 3,067, Malawians, 987, and emaSwati at around 870, BMA Commissioner Dr Michael Masiapato said. The operations form part of ongoing efforts by South Africa to enforce immigration laws and address the presence of undocumented foreign nationals. Meanwhile, the 53 emaSwati were detained for contravening the Immigration Act and related labour regulations. Responding to the matter, Eswatini's Ministry of Home Affairs urged citizens to ensure they comply with immigration requirements when crossing into neighbouring countries for work or other purposes.

Communications Officer Mlandvo Dlamini said the Ministry consistently encourages the public to secure proper documentation, such

as passports, visas, and work permits, before leaving Eswatini.

"We usually encourage locals to get proper and legitimate paperwork. Travelling or working without the required documents places individuals at risk of arrest and prosecution," Dlamini said.

He added that the Ministry was committed to raising awareness about the importance of adhering to immigration laws and said steps were being taken to minimise the number of citizens who expose themselves to such risks.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation also acknowledged the arrests. Communication Officer Sikhumbuzo Bhembe said the Ministry was aware of the situation and maintained a clear stance against citizens engaging in irregular border crossings or working without permits.

"The Ministry is totally against this behaviour. It undermines the rule of law and ex-

poses our people to unnecessary hardships," Bhembe said.

He explained that the Ministry has established a diaspora unit that monitors the movement of Eswatini citizens across borders for both work and visits.

The unit seeks to provide guidance and maintain links with citizens living abroad. However, Bhembe noted that monitoring remains a challenge because many individuals bypass formal border posts and use informal crossings that are difficult to regulate.

"Tracking those who cross informally is not easy, which complicates our efforts to assist or account for them when problems arise," he said. Bhembe further explained that SAPS communicates with the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) regarding arrests involving Eswatini nationals.

This cooperation helps to coordinate mitigation processes, including verification of cit-

izenship and facilitation of consular services.

He mentioned that, when arrests occur, REPS and Eswatini's diplomatic missions engage with South African authorities to establish the facts, confirm the identities of those detained, and determine the appropriate course of action in line with immigration procedures.

The arrests highlight the persistent challenges of managing cross-border migration between Eswatini and South Africa.

Thousands of emaSwati cross into South Africa daily for employment, trade, and other activities.

While many use formal channels, a significant number rely on informal entry points, often due to a lack of documentation or in search of quicker access to employment opportunities. Authorities in both countries have acknowledged the risks associated with irregular migration, including exposure to arrest, exploitation, and lack of access to formal protections.

The situation has prompted repeated calls for citizens to comply with immigration requirements to safeguard themselves.

Eswatini's Ministry of Home Affairs has reiterated its intention to intensify awareness campaigns on legal migration processes. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasised the need for ongoing collaboration with South African counterparts to manage such cases and reduce the recurrence of similar incidents.

"The diaspora unit is one of the tools we are using to stay in contact with our people abroad. But the cooperation of citizens in following the law is crucial," Bhembe said.

The 53 citizens arrested remain subject to South Africa's immigration procedures, which may include fines, deportation, or legal proceedings, depending on individual cases. Eswatini's authorities continue to monitor the situation through diplomatic and law enforcement channels.

## I drank alcohol to avoid altercation with my wife – DD suspect

Stories By Thokozani Mazibuko

A 53-year-old man who drove his motor vehicle whilst under the influence of alcohol in a bid to avoid having an argument with his wife was arrested for drink-driving.

This resulted in Lobhalaza Nxumalo (53) of Nkambeni area appearing before Principal Magistrate Florence Msibi at the Manzini Magistrates Court yesterday, charged with contravening the Road Traffic Act 6/2007.

He committed the offence on September 21, 2025, at around 4am at the Madlangempisi area along the Madlangempisi/Nkambeni MR 5 public road while driving a Honda Fit Sedan.

According to the charge sheet, Nxumalo drove the said motor vehicle on the aforesaid public road while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drug and thus contravening the said Act. The



▲ Mandla Elliot Mthembu, the ex-husband of South African media personality Khanyi Mbau

particulars of his drink-driving were that his breath specimen had an alcohol content of 0.61 milligrams per litre (mg/l), which was above the legal limit of 0.37 mg/l.

He pleaded guilty to the offence and was found guilty as per his own plea. He mitigated a lenient sentence

on the grounds that he committed the offence by mistake. Nxumalo pointed out that on the day the offence was committed, he had an argument with his wife, and to avoid her, he decided to drive away, yet he was already intoxicated, resulting in him being nabbed for drink-driving.

## Motorist arrested for driving against traffic in Manzini

A motorist was arrested and charged with drink-driving after he drove against oncoming traffic.

This saw Elvis Mhlanga of the Matsapha area, appearing before Principal Magistrate Florence Msibi at the Manzini Magistrates Court yesterday, where he was charged with contravening the Road Traffic Act 6/2007.

He committed the offence on September 20, 2025, near Sigodweni area in the Manzini District along the MR 31 public road, while driving a Mazda sedan.

The charge sheet states that Mhlanga drove the motor vehicle on the said public road while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or narcotic drugs with

a reading of 1.30 milligrams per litre (mg/l), which was above the legal limit of 0.37 mg/l.

The particulars of his drink-driving were that he was driving, facing oncoming traffic, that he had a strong smell of alcohol emanating from his breath, and that he could not stand firm on the ground.

He pleaded guilty to the offence and was found guilty as per his own plea. He mitigated for a lenient sentence on the grounds that he had school-going children who were dependent on him. He also stated that he was bankrupt.

Mhlanga was sentenced to four years in prison with an option of a fine of E5 000.



▲ A motorist was arrested and charged with drink-driving after he drove against oncoming traffic.



Stories By Thokozani Mazibuko

**MINISTER of Health, Mduduzi Matsebula, handed over offices and medical equipment maintenance workshops at the old Matsapha Central Medical Stores (CMS) worth over E39 million.**

Speaking during the handover ceremony held on Monday, the Minister of Health, who spoke through the voice of the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Apollo Maphalala, stated that the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, through the Ministry of Health, has been implementing the Health System Strengthening for Human Capital Development Project (HSSHCDP) since December 2020.

He said this initiative is made possible through a World Bank loan amounting to \$20 million (approximately E298 million), which aims to enhance the resilience and responsiveness of the country's health sector.

"As part of this project, we are proud to officially hand over the newly constructed offices and medical equipment maintenance workshops, managed by the Biomed unit, and the data warehouse for information technology (IT) support, overseen by the Health Management Information System (HMIS) unit," he said.

The minister stated that these two entities serve the same network of health facilities, and their co-location will enable more coordinated, timely, and efficient responses to equipment downtime alerts and IT support requests from health facilities nationwide.

He pointed out that the buildings have been designed with sustainability in mind, incorporating climate-friendly features such

# Minister hands over equipment, structures worth over E39mln



▲ Minister Apollo Maphalala who stood in for the Minister of Health during the handover.

as solar panels, thermal insulation, and energy-efficient LED lighting, demonstrating the ministry's commitment to environmental stewardship alongside health system improvement.

The minister stated that the total contract value for the construction of the facilities was E30,690,037.96.

Additionally, he said the project has procured other assets to support operational

readiness, which included Biomed workshop equipment valued at E956,645.64, office furniture and projection equipment for Biomed and HMIS worth E1,940,310.00, a server room infrastructure at a cost of E4,213,183.87 and a solar power plant installation valued at E2,084,720.78.

The minister highlighted that the cumulative investment of E39,884,898.20 in the building, furniture, and equipment reflects

the ministry's dedication to strengthening the technical backbone of the country's health system.

"On behalf of the Ministry of Health, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the World Bank for its invaluable financial and technical support throughout the construction and procurement process. We also extend our appreciation to the Micro Projects team for their expert guidance and oversight," the minister said.

The minister told the Biomed and HMIS teams, who will occupy these facilities, that they were entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring optimal use of the infrastructure and equipment provided.

"Let these resources empower you to deliver timely, high-quality support to our health facilities and contribute meaningfully to the broader goals of health system strengthening," the minister said.

The minister also warned against corruption, even in small things, and failure to manage projects. He urged all to serve as if they were serving God.

"Be as accountable, honest, and diligent as possible. We owe it to ourselves to salvage our sector and take it to what, or where it used to be. We are happy that everyone is working tirelessly to ensure that this happens," the minister said.

## Minister pledges modern teacher accommodation at Ngwane Park School

**TEACHERS at Ngwane Park High School are set to benefit from a major government initiative aimed at improving their welfare and working conditions.**

This comes after the Minister of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, announced that state-of-the-art accommodation facilities will be constructed for educators at the school, with works already underway. Speaking during his motivational visit to Ngwane Park High School on Monday, Minister Nxumalo emphasized that teachers are the backbone of education and deserve improved remuneration and living conditions.

"Teachers deserve to be well remunerated and well accommodated so that they are always motivated to produce great results," he told the gathering of pupils, staff, and community members.

He revealed that the project will be funded through the Rural Development Fund (RDF) and supervised by the Microprojects Programme in partnership with the local Constituency Council. According to the minister, the accommodation project is valued at over E1.3 million and is expected to be completed by January next year.

"I have brought the Microprojects Programme Director and the Constituency Council to see to it that all teachers have state-of-the-art accommodation, and it is monies from the Rural Development Fund that will be utilized," Nxumalo explained.

As part of the visit, the minister also took members of the media on a tour of the site where the structures are being erected. He proudly showcased one of the already completed units, giving assurance that the rest will be delivered on time.

The initiative has been warmly welcomed by teachers and education stakeholders, who



▲ Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo motivating pupils at Ngwane Park High School on Monday.

noted that decent housing will help boost morale and productivity among educators. Community members also expressed gratitude, saying the move would strengthen the relationship between the school and the community while attracting and retaining qualified teachers.

Ngwane Park High School falls within Manzini South Constituency, where Nxumalo serves as Member of Parliament. His latest commitment to the school underscores his promise to improve both teaching and learning conditions within his constituency and beyond.

The teacher housing project aligns with the government's broader agenda of enhancing the education sector through investment in both infrastructure and human resources.

It should be noted that with improved classrooms already being rolled out nationwide, the provision of modern accommodation for teachers is expected to complement those efforts by ensuring that educators remain motivated to deliver quality results.



▲ Teachers dancing in jubilation before the minister.

## Learn to resolve your issues amicably – Minister advises pupils

**PUPILS and teachers of Ngwane Park High School, under the Manzini Region, on Monday gave a jubilant welcome to the Minister of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, as he visited the institution on a motivational drive.**

The visit was marked by cheering, singing, and warm celebrations, as both learners and educators expressed appreciation for the minister's gesture of inspiration.

Minister Nxumalo, who is also the elected Member of Parliament for Manzini South Constituency, where Ngwane Park High School is located, delivered a heartfelt address, urging learners to remain disciplined and to make choices that secure their future success.

He cautioned pupils against engaging in violence or disruptive behavior. "Learn to resolve your issues amicably, not by partaking in protests," he said, emphasizing that dialogue and peaceful solutions should always be the preferred route for young people.

The minister also spoke strongly against drug abuse, describing it as one of the greatest threats to the future of the youth. "Drugs are

future destroyers, and I advise you to abstain from them," Nxumalo warned, adding that discipline and self-control are essential to success in education and life.

In a candid moment, the minister spoke on the importance of discipline and the role of "tough love" in guiding young people away from destructive habits. "Yes, to positive punishments, but sometimes you need to be thoroughly punished by strokes so that we help you stay away from drugs. We want you to be better people than us, and most of the time we will have to exercise tough love," he told the attentive learners.

His words were met with applause and nods of agreement from teachers and parents present, who acknowledged that the school faces the same social challenges that affect many young people across Eswatini.

The visit was part of Minister Nxumalo's broader campaign to motivate learners in his constituency and to remind them of the vital role education plays in shaping responsible citizens and future leaders.

Teachers at Ngwane Park High School expressed gratitude for the minister's visit, noting that it would go a long way in boosting morale among the pupils.



By Delisa Magagula

# Web-based system to support cross-border ART patients

... The system will help track patients across borders, and ensure they can access ARVs without interruption

THE Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), is working on a new web-based system aimed at helping patients on antiretroviral therapy (ART) who cross borders informally and risk defaulting on their medication.

This was revealed during a session held last week at the Mbabane UN building. According Zanele Simelane, Acting Chief Strategic Information Analyst at the Ministry of Health, the initiative is designed to address one of the key challenges facing the HIV response in Eswatini and the wider region.

This is for treatment continuity for mobile and migrant populations. Many patients living with HIV in border communities move between countries for work, trade, or family reasons, and the absence of coordinated systems has often led to treatment interruptions.

Eswatini, which has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates globally, has made significant progress in expanding access to ART. However, treatment default remains a challenge, particularly among populations who move between Eswatini



▲ Zanele Simelane Acting Chief Strategic Information Analyst at the Ministry of Health making her remarks.

and neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Mozambique.

“Patients sometimes travel across borders without notifying health facilities, and when they miss scheduled appointments or drug refills, the risk of default increases.

The web-based system will help us track patients across borders, and ensure they can access ARVs without interruption,” Simelane said.

The system is being developed

within the framework of SADC’s efforts to harmonise HIV/AIDS policies among member states. It will enable health facilities in participating countries to access patient treatment histories securely, verify ART regimens, and provide refills even if the patient is away from their home clinic.

The initiative draws from earlier SADC strategies aimed at addressing HIV among mobile populations. Over the past decade, SADC has worked to improve regional responses to HIV through cross-border wellness clinics, harmonisation of guidelines, and efforts to strengthen health services for truck drivers, migrants, and border communities.

## Access

The SADC HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework emphasises universal access to treatment and care, including the harmonisation of policies and legislation across member states. The new digital platform represents a further step in aligning treatment protocols, ensuring patients can remain adherent regardless of location.

The project also builds on lessons from the SADC HIV and AIDS Cross Border Initiative, launched in 2012, which deployed mobile clinics and behaviour change programmes at border posts.

While that initiative improved access to testing and primary care, it did not include digital tracking of patients’ ART status. The new system seeks to close this gap.

Eswatini’s Ministry of Health has issued several key strategies in recent years to strengthen HIV treatment, including the Integrated HIV Management Guidelines (2022) and the National Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework (2018–2023).

These frameworks outline national targets for treatment coverage, viral suppression, and elimination of barriers to access. Despite this progress, mobility has remained a persistent obstacle.

International studies, including research by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have highlighted how migrant workers and mobile populations are more likely to interrupt treatment because of movement between countries and limited access to services in host communities.

Eswatini has also introduced multi-month dispensing of ARVs to reduce the number of clinic visits required by stable patients. While this measure helps many, it does not fully address the problem of patients who relocate or spend extended periods outside the country.

The web-based system under development will serve as a regional database accessible by authorised health workers in participating SADC countries.

When a patient crosses the border and presents at a clinic, health staff will be able to retrieve their ART history, confirm current prescriptions, and provide medication without requiring the patient to start the registration process from scratch.

This continuity will help avoid treatment lapses that can lead to drug resistance and poor health outcomes. The platform is also expected to include features for monitoring patient movements and treatment adherence trends, giving health authorities better data for planning.

According to officials, privacy and data protection are central to the design. Patient information will be handled securely, with safeguards to ensure that sensitive health records are only accessible to authorised personnel.

The initiative reflects broader SADC efforts to address the regional nature of the HIV epidemic. With high levels of labour migration across southern Africa, especially to South Africa’s mining and industrial hubs, coordination among countries is essential.

SADC’s HIV and AIDS Pillar commits member states to collective action on prevention, treatment, and care, recognising that isolated national strategies are insufficient. By creating systems that transcend borders, the region aims to reduce default rates and strengthen overall health outcomes.

The Ministry of Health has not provided a timeline for full implementation of the web-based system but confirmed that pilot work is underway in collaboration with SADC. Once operational, the platform is expected to significantly reduce treatment interruptions for thousands of patients who travel regularly across borders.

## Challenges

Simelane noted that sustaining adherence to ART is critical for both individual health and public health outcomes. Defaulting on treatment not only puts patients at risk but also increases the potential for drug resistance, which poses challenges for entire health systems.

Eswatini’s participation in the regional system underscores the country’s on-going commitment to maintaining progress against HIV.

While challenges remain including rising treatment costs, health worker shortages, and the persistent risks posed by population mobility, the initiative represents a major step in protecting gains made in HIV care and ensuring no patient is left behind because of border movements.

Worth noting is that a delegation from the United Nations Migration Agency and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has visited Eswatini to benchmark with the country’s Client Management Information System (CMIS).

The delegates, who represented various southern African nations, expressed that they learnt a great deal from Eswatini’s innovative approach to healthcare.



## BOCHAEL INVESTMENTS

- FOR A HIGH END VEHICLE SERVICE, WE ARE YOU ONE STOP VEHICLE REPAIR SHOP -

**WE ARE SPECIALIST IN:**

DIAGNOSTICS

ENGINE START

ENGINE SERVICE

SALE REPAIRS

AUTOMATIC GEARBOX REBUILD

**TRUST US TO MAKE YOUR VEHICLE ROAD-WORTHY**

**- FOR MORE INFORMATION -**

**CONTACT US AT: 7638 9003 | 7638 7252 | 2518 4039**

Find us at KaGcina below Sigodweni Police Station, Matsapha



BUSINESS NEWS



BUSINESS BRIEFS

**EU helps Eswatini modernise customs**  
THE European Union (EU) has stepped up its support to Eswatini in modernising customs operations and improving trade facilitation, in a bid to help local businesses take greater advantage of regional and international markets. Over the past two years, a series of EU-backed initiatives have been rolled out in partnership with the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and other technical agencies.

**Gold's record-breaking rally: who's keeping it going?**  
LONDON — Gold prices hit a record \$3,728 per troy ounce on Monday, extending a rally that has boosted them twofold since late 2022. Demand is expected to remain robust for some time due to a mix of factors. Central bank purchases and strong investment demand, visible in inflows into physically backed gold exchange-traded funds, are the main drivers, fuelled by U.S. President Donald Trump's upending of Western security policy, his trade wars with other countries and concerns about the independence of the U.S. Federal Reserve.

**Canal+ names new board of SA's MultiChoice after taking control**  
JOHANNESBURG —French media group Canal+on Monday announced a new board to steer South African broadcaster MultiChoice after taking control of the company through a 35 billion rand (\$2.02 billion) acquisition. The takeover gives Canal+ a dominant foothold in Africa's fast-growing pay-TV market, where MultiChoice operates across 50 countries.

**FX RATES**

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.9531	17.4188
G.B. Pound	23.1154	23.7859
EURO	20.0566	20.6632
Bank Rate	(July 2023)	7.50%
Prime Rate	(July 2023)	11%
Inflation	(July 2023)	4.5%
Petrol	E21.60/Litre	
Diesel	E22.90/Litre	
Paraffin	E17.25/Litre	

Eswatini Cotton Board slips into E2.6 million deficit



The Eswatini Cotton Board has reported a steep financial downturn for the financial year.

By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Cotton Board has reported a steep financial downturn for the 2023/24 financial year, closing with a deficit of E2.6 million.

This marks a sharp reversal from the E1.1 million surpluses posted in 2022/23, as cotton production collapsed under the impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon.

According to the Board's latest annual report, revenue fell by 46.6 per cent to E11.2 million, down from E21.1 million the previous year.

The decline was driven by lower cotton deliveries, reduced seed sales, and a contraction in the area under cotton cultivation.

Cotton deliveries to the Board plunged from 902 tonnes in 2023 to just 506 tonnes in 2024, reflecting the worst impact of erratic weather conditions during the planting season. Seed sales also fell significantly, dropping to 6.47 tonnes compared to 11.025 tonnes in the previous period.

The cotton planted area contracted by 12 per cent to 482 hectares, down from 547 hectares in 2022/23. Rising input costs covering seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, transport, and labour discouraged many farmers from planting cotton when profit margins were already under pressure.

The combined effect of reduced planting and lower yields per hectare left overall production at its weakest level in years.

The Board said El Niño conditions caused reduced rainfall, erratic weather, and heat stress, severely undermining productivity.

The reduced throughput and sales led to deterioration in the Cotton Board's financial position.

Revenue shortfalls exposed the organisation

to rising operational costs, resulting in the E2.6 million deficits.

However, the report noted that the Board continued to maintain its governance standards, receiving an unqualified audit opinion for the year under review.

This outcome confirmed that the financial statements fairly presented the organisation's financial position without material misstatements.

The Board also managed to expand its fixed assets portfolio by 14.6 per cent, growing from E3.1 million to about E3.6 million.

The assets are aimed at supporting large-scale farmers and are expected to play a role in developing new revenue opportunities.

In response to the production crisis, the Cotton Board has intensified its focus on genetically modified (GM) cotton varieties, particularly cotton.

The JKCH 1947 hybrid, sourced from India, increased its share of certified seed sales to 18 per cent in 2023/24, up from 14.02 per cent the year before.

Field trials and comparative studies conducted in Eswatini have demonstrated the superior performance of cotton under local conditions.

JKCH 1947 achieved yields of about 3,070 kg/ha in one season, significantly higher than conventional varieties such as Alba plus QM 301 and JKC 724.

The cotton's advantages include resistance to bollworm, one of the most destructive cotton pests, and earlier maturity in some cases, which helps plants withstand periods of drought or heat stress.

The Board said the adoption of varieties is a strategic step to strengthen productivity and mitigate weather-related risks.

Despite the potential of cotton, broader challenges remain for the sector. Input costs continue to rise, cutting into farmer profitability.

The smaller planted area signals a cautious approach by growers facing uncertain returns.

The volatility of rainfall patterns adds further risk, as cotton is primarily grown in drought-prone areas.

The reduction in production has implications not only for farmers but also for ginneries and textile manufacturers that rely on stable cotton supplies. The Board emphasised the need to strengthen resilience in the cotton sector through a mix of strategies.

These include supporting smallholder farmers with extension services, promoting wider adoption of drought-tolerant and high-yielding varieties, and ensuring access to affordable seed.

It also highlighted the importance of diversifying revenue streams by utilising fixed assets for commercial ventures such as equipment hire or value-added services.

In addition, measures to improve cost control, procurement efficiency, and logistics are expected to help stabilise operations.

Efforts in climate adaptation, such as water conservation, irrigation, improved soil management, and agroforestry, are also under consideration as long-term solutions to recurring climatic shocks.

Cotton remains an important crop for Eswatini's agricultural economy, particularly among smallholders.

However, the latest deficit signals that without effective interventions, the sector could face mounting strain.

The Board's report underscores the urgency of stabilising production and revenue to maintain the cotton value chain.

While the E2.6 million deficits reflect the scale of the challenge, the push into GM cotton and the reinforcement of governance and assets suggest the organisation is positioning itself to recover from the downturn.



By Delisa Magagula

THE European Union (EU) has stepped up its support to Eswatini in modernising customs operations and improving trade facilitation, in a bid to help local businesses take greater advantage of regional and international markets.

Over the past two years, a series of EU-backed initiatives have been rolled out in partnership with the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and other technical agencies.

These efforts are part of a broader programme to enhance Eswatini's ability to participate in trade agreements such as the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

One of the flagship developments is the launch of the electronic Advance Ruling Tool (e-ART), a digital platform that allows traders to obtain binding decisions from customs officials in advance on tariff classification and the origin of goods.

The project, funded under the EU-supported HS-Africa Programme and the UK's Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme, is designed to make customs processes more predictable and efficient.

By reducing uncertainty and delays at the border, the system is expected to encourage more businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to enter export markets.

The EU has also worked with Eswatini's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade to introduce a Trade Map database, a tool developed with the International Trade Centre.

The online platform provides businesses with detailed trade statistics covering more than 200 countries and thousands of products. For Eswatini's exporters, it offers market intelligence that can help identify opportunities in Europe and beyond, while also highlighting the competitiveness of domestic industries.

Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade Principal Secretary Melusi Masuku said Customs modernisation efforts extend beyond digital platforms.

He made mention of the ERS, together with the South African Revenue Service, conducting a Time Release Study at key border posts.

"The study, supported by EU partners, is aimed at measuring and addressing delays in the clearance of goods, particularly between Eswatini and South Africa, the country's largest trading partner," he said.

He said, findings from the study are expected to inform reforms that will speed up cross-border trade and reduce transaction costs for businesses.

Another reform in progress is the development of a Single Government Authorised Economic Operator programme.

Once fully operational, the programme will certify trusted traders and grant them simplified customs procedures, faster clearance, and reduced inspections.

The approach, already in place in other parts of the world, is being expanded in Eswatini to involve multiple government agencies beyond customs, ensuring that certified businesses benefit from streamlined interactions across the regulatory system.

Despite these gains, challenges remain. Eswatini has yet to fully capitalise on its duty-free, quota-free access to European markets under the EU-SADC EPA. Exporters, particularly in agriculture, continue to face hurdles meeting Sanitary and Phytosanitary

# EU helps Eswatini modernise customs

## ... also boosts trade facilitation



▲ Stakeholders at a World Customs Organisation seminar held at ERS earlier this month where EU and Eswatini trade was discussed.

tary (SPS) standards, which are required for entry into EU markets. Capacity building in regulatory compliance and investment in quality infrastructure is still needed to bridge this gap.

Officials and trade experts acknowledge that while the tools are in place, the private sector must also be equipped with the skills and resources to use them effectively.

The EU's support has not been confined to customs alone. Through various programmes, including the Promoting Growth through Competitive Alliances initiative, the bloc has backed export growth and value-chain development for SMEs, women, and youth entrepreneurs.

Masuku said these interventions aim to ensure that the benefits of enhanced trade facilitation extend across society, creating jobs and diversifying the economy.

For Eswatini, the modernisation of customs is more than an administrative upgrade. It is seen as a foundation for greater participation in regional and global value chains, particularly under AfCFTA, which seeks to establish a single African market.

With projections showing that the agreement could lift millions out of poverty and generate hundreds of billions of dollars in new income across the continent, aligning domestic systems with international standards is considered critical.

The EU's role in supporting these reforms underscores the importance of partnerships in addressing the structural barriers to trade.

By combining digital tools, institutional strengthening, and targeted support for exporters, the initiatives are laying the groundwork for Eswatini to reduce trade barriers, expand exports, and increase competitiveness in the global marketplace.



▲ EU Ambassador Karsten Mecklenburg.



# Gold's record-breaking rally: who's keeping it going?

By Polina Devitt

LONDON — Gold prices hit a record \$3,728 per troy ounce on Monday, extending a rally that has boosted them twofold since late 2022. Demand is expected to remain robust for some time due to a mix of factors.

Central bank purchases and strong investment demand, visible in inflows into physically backed gold exchange-traded funds, are the main drivers, fuelled by U.S. President Donald Trump's upending of Western security policy, his trade wars with other countries and concerns about the independence of the U.S. Federal Reserve.

## Will central banks keep on buying more?

Annual net purchases of gold by central banks have exceeded 1,000 metric tons each year since 2022, according to consultancy Metals Focus, which expects them to buy 900 tons this year - twice the annual average of 457 tons in 2016-2021.

Developing countries are seeking to diversify from the dollar after Western sanctions froze roughly half of Russia's official foreign currency reserves in 2022.

Official numbers reported to the International Monetary Fund reflect only 34



▲Krugerrand coins and Gold bars kept in the safe deposit boxes room of the Pro Aurum gold house in Munich, Germany.

per cent of the 2024 total central bank gold demand estimate, according to the World Gold Council, an industry body.

They have contributed 23 per cent to total annual gold demand in 2022-2025, double the average share recorded during the 2010s.

## Will the drop in the jewellery sector continue?

Demand for gold for jewellery, the main

source of physical demand, fell 14 per cent to 341 tons in the second quarter of 2025, the lowest since the pandemic-swept third quarter of 2020, as high prices deterred buyers, according to the WGC.

High prices spurred the decline, the bulk of which came from the largest markets - China and India - whose combined market share fell below 50 per cent for only the third time in the last five years, the WGC estimated.

Metals Focus estimated that gold jewellery fabrication fell 9 per cent to 2,011 tons in 2024 and will deliver a 16 per cent slump this year.

## Are people still buying small gold bars and coins?

There has been a major shift in appetite for different products in the retail investment market but total purchases in this sector remain robust.

Investment demand for gold bars rose 10 per cent in 2024, while coin buying fell 31 per cent, according to the WGC, which said the trend has extended to this year.

Metals Focus expects net physical investment to rise 2 per cent this year to 1,218 tons as demand in Asia remains high amid positive price expectations.

## Can gold ETFs attract more inflows?

Gold ETFs have become a more important source of demand for gold this year, recording inflows of 397 tons in the period from January to June, their largest first half inflow since 2020, according to the WGC.

Gold ETFs total holdings stood at 3,615.9 tons at the end of June, the largest since August 2022. Their record was 3,915 tons five years ago.

Metals Focus expects net investment in ETPs in 2025 at 500 tons after seven tons of outflows in 2024. (Reuters)

# Oil prices dip as Iraq increases exports amid demand concerns

By Anna Hirtenstein

LONDON — Oil prices were little changed on Monday as concerns over Russia and the Middle East were countered by oversupply jitters.

Brent crude oil futures dipped 55 cents, or 0.8%, to \$66.13 a barrel by 1241 GMT. Brent has traded between \$65.50 and \$69 a barrel since early August.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude contract for October, expiring on Monday, was at \$62.23 a barrel, down 45 cents, or 0.7%. The more active November contract fell 53 cents, or 0.9%, to \$61.87 a barrel.

U.S. shares, which often move in tandem with oil, were set to dip on Monday amid a visa crackdown and guesswork about the Fed's next interest rate moves.

Tensions rose in the Middle East over several Western nations recognising a Palestinian state as well as in Eastern Europe over Estonia saying Russian fighter jets had entered its airspace without permission on Friday. But none of these developments resulted in an immediate oil supply disruption.

Brent and WTI settled down more than 1% on Friday to mark a slight decline last week as worries about large supplies and declining



▲Oil pump jacks outside Almet'yevsk, in the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia.

demand weighed on sentiment.

"The setup for the oil market is that global oil demand is set to taper off from Q3 to Q4 and again to Q1-26. At the same time production by OPEC+ is on a rising path," said SEB analysts.

"The big question is of course if China will stockpile the increasing surplus or whether the oil price will be pushed lower into the 50ies. We believe the latter."

Iraq, OPEC's second-largest producer, has increased oil exports under an OPEC+ agreement, state oil marketer SOMO said. It also expects September's exports to range from 3.4 million to 3.45 million bpd.

Iraq has also given preliminary approval to a plan to resume pipeline oil exports from its semi-autonomous Kurdistan region through Turkey, sources told Reuters. (Reuters)

# Canal+ names new board of SA's MultiChoice after taking control

By Nqobile Dlodla

JOHANNESBURG — French media group Canal+ on Monday announced a new board to steer South African broadcaster MultiChoice after taking control of the company through a 35 billion rand (\$2.02 billion) acquisition.

The takeover gives Canal+ a dominant foothold in Africa's fast-growing pay-TV market, where MultiChoice operates across 50 countries. It also marks a major step in Canal+'s strategy to become a top five global entertainment player, its CEO Maxime Saada said on a media call.

The combined group will serve more than 40 million subscribers across nearly 70 countries in Africa, Europe and Asia.

Canal+ owned 46 per cent of MultiChoice as of September 19, with another 2.2 per cent of shares tendered in its favour since, giving the London-listed company effective control of the TV broadcaster, the companies said on Monday.

The shares still to be tendered into the offer, which is now unconditional, will further increase Canal+'s stake.

MultiChoice implemented a reorganisation of its South African operations this month in line with conditions laid out by South Africa's Competition Tribunal in July to approve the takeover.

The MultiChoice group board now includes four new directors, including David



▲Logos of French TV channel Canal+ are reflected in a puddle in front of the Canal One headquarters of the Canal+ Group in Issy-Les-Moulineaux near Paris, France.

Mignot as CEO and Nicolas Dandoy as Chief Financial Officer. Saada will become the chair, the companies said.

Outgoing MultiChoice Group CEO Calvo Mawela has been appointed as the chair of Canal+'s African operations, which includes MultiChoice. Mignot and Dandoy will respectively be CEO and CFO of Canal+ Africa.

The outgoing MultiChoice CFO, Timothy Jacobs, will continue to hold a senior position in the combined group's finance department, the companies said.

A more detailed update on the combined group's strategy will be provided in the first quarter of next year, Saada added. MultiChoice's partnership with U.S. media conglomerate Comcast will continue. (Reuters)



# Alaa Abd el-Fattah, the jailed Egyptian-British dissident pardoned by Sisi

EGYPTIAN-BRITISH blogger and activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah rose to prominence as an impassioned voice in the Arab Spring uprising that toppled Egypt's veteran autocrat and has since become a symbol of the struggle for human rights in his country.

On Monday, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi pardoned Abd el-Fattah, Egyptian TV channels close to the government reported, less than two weeks after Sisi ordered authorities to study his release.

Repeated family campaigns and pressure from the British government, including a plea from Prime Minister Keir Starmer to Sisi in February, had previously failed to secure his release.

Abd el-Fattah, 43, has spent almost all of the past decade in prison, most recently serving a five-year sentence that was imposed in December 2021 after he shared a social media post about a prisoner's death.

His mother, Laila Soueif, said in a social media post earlier this month that he had started the latest in a series of hunger strikes on September 1 in protest against his detention.

Abd el-Fattah is a veteran democracy campaigner who first served spells in detention before the 2011 revolution that toppled President Hosni Mubarak and gave hope to a generation of activists in Egypt and beyond.

However, his fortunes darkened when former army chief Sisi ousted Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013 and a clampdown took hold after security forces killed hundreds of protesters. Islamists, leftists and liberals alike were swept up, with



▲ Egyptian-British hunger striker Alaa Abd el-Fattah poses for a photo in unknown location.

Sisi becoming president in 2014.

In a book of his writings, some smuggled out of his cell, Abd el-Fattah said he would never have guessed that "after a revolution that overthrew a tyrant, I'd return to his prisons."

## POLITICAL FAMILY

Abd el-Fattah grew up in a highly politicised, intellectual family. His mother, a former mathematics professor, is herself a seasoned campaigner and his father Ahmed Seif, who died in 2014, was a lawyer and left-wing activist jailed under both Mubarak and his predecessor as president, Anwar Sadat.

Abd el-Fattah became known for his blogs and social media accounts that gave voice to the Arab Spring protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square. He also worked as a software developer, helping adapt open-source programmes so that they were more accessible to Arabic speakers.

He was sentenced to five years in prison in 2015 for protesting without permission. Released on probation in 2019, he was reunited with his young son, but was required to sleep each night at a police station.

Detained again in September 2019, Abd el-Fattah was sentenced again to five years in

December 2021 on charges of spreading fake news - a charge commonly levelled against critics of the government and activists who post on social media.

In Cairo's notorious Tora prison he was kept in a cell without sunlight, deprived of books, news and exercise, and suffered abuse from prison guards, his family said, after conviction in a trial they said was unfair.

"My conditions are but a drop in a dark sea of injustice," he said in November 2019 in a statement to the prosecutor, published in selected works in 2021 under the title, You Have Not Yet Been Defeated.

## HUNGER STRIKE

Abd el-Fattah began a seven-month hunger strike on April 2, 2022, escalating his protest in November that year to coincide with the opening of COP27, a climate summit that put the global spotlight on Egypt. He only ended his protest after collapsing and coming close to death, his family said.

His lawyer, Khalid Ali, argued that his two years in pre-trial detention should be credited towards his sentence, making him eligible for release in 2024. But prosecutors resisted this, saying he should not be released till January 2027, Ali said.

This delay prompted his mother to go on hunger strike in September 2024, only ending her protest in July 2025 after many appeals from her family and after losing over 35 kilograms.

Human rights groups say tens of thousands of prisoners of conscience have been detained under Sisi, often without due process, and that they have suffered a range of abuses including torture while in jail.

(Reuters)



## Treason trial of South Sudan's suspended VP Machar begins

THE treason trial of South Sudan's suspended First Vice President Riek Machar, opens new tab opened on Monday under tight security in the capital Juba, with his lawyer arguing the court lacked jurisdiction to hear the case.

Machar's detention under house arrest since March has ignited fears of a renewal of a devastating 2013-2018 civil war between his ethnic Nuer forces and Dinka fighters loyal to his longtime rival President Salva Kiir.

Machar's SPLM-IO party rejects the charges against him and 20 others which include murder, treason and crimes against humanity for their alleged involvement in raids

by the Nuer-dominated White Army militia in the northeast earlier this year.

At the special court, Machar appeared in a dark suit and cobalt blue tie behind a row of black bars, the first time he has been seen in public since his house arrest.

Kiir suspended him by decree earlier this month as the charges were revealed. Media access to the court, which was held in an event space often used as a wedding and concert venue, was restricted to the state broadcaster.

## MACHAR'S LAWYER SAYS CASE UNCONSTITUTIONAL

Geri Raimondo Legge, Machar's lawyer, said that the court was "unconstitutional, unlawful, illegal and

void" because, he argued, Machar retained the immunity of a sitting vice president.

Seven of Machar's allies were charged alongside him earlier this month, including the petroleum minister.

"(We pray the court) order the immediate discharge of His Excellency Dr Riek Machar Teny, the first vice president of the republic of South Sudan, and the seven accused persons for being arrested and detained unconstitutionally," Legge told the court.

Prosecutor Ajo Ony'Ohisa Igele called the defence's arguments "unfounded and weak."

(Reuters)

## Congo to replace cobalt export ban with quotas

THE Democratic Republic of Congo will lift its ban on cobalt exports from October 16 and manage global supply by imposing annual export quotas, the country's strategic minerals regulator said on Sunday. Miners will be allowed to ship up to 18,125 tons of cobalt for the rest of 2025, with annual caps of 96,600 tonnes in 2026 and 2027, the Authority for the Regulation and Control of Strategic Mineral Substances' Markets said.

Congo, which produced about 70% of global cobalt output last year, suspended exports in February after prices fell to a nine-year low. The move was extended in June, prompting force majeure declarations from major producers including Glencore and China's CMOC Group.

Congo's largely unregulated artisanal mining sector accounts for a significant share of cobalt output, complicating traceability and compliance for global buyers.

The move to a quota system comes amid escalating conflict in eastern Congo, where the government says illegal mineral exploitation is fueling violence



▲ A part of the Tilwizembe, a former industrial copper-cobalt mine now occupied by artisanal miners, is seen outside of Kolwezi.

by M23 rebels. The new system, backed by Glencore but opposed by CMOC, aims to reduce inventories and support prices. Quotas will be allocated based on historical exports of the critical electric battery material.

Glencore declined to comment. CMOC was not immediately available for comment.

Congo's regulator said 10% of future volumes will be reserved for strategic national projects and quotas could be revised based on market conditions or progress in local refining.

The regulator can buy back cobalt stocks exceeding the quarterly authorized quotas per company, said the statement signed by its chairman.

(Reuters)



VIRGINIA, Alphabet's Google will seek to avoid a forced sale of part of its online advertising business in its latest face-off with U.S. antitrust enforcers at a trial starting on Monday in Alexandria, Virginia.

The trial is the government's next best shot at curbing what a judge has ruled is Google's monopoly power, after losing a separate bid to make Google sell its Chrome browser earlier this month.

Online publishers and rival ad tech developers, some of whom have separately sued Google for damages, will be watching the case closely.

The U.S. Department of Justice and a coalition of states are seeking to make Google sell its ad exchange, AdX, where online publishers pay Google a 20% fee to sell ads in auctions that happen instantly when users load websites. The government also seeks to require Google to make the mechanism that decides the winner of those auctions open source.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema, who will preside over the trial, ruled in April that Google holds unlawful monopolies in web advertising technology. After this week's trial, she will decide what remedies to impose on the company.

The company has asked Brinkema to take the same cautious approach as a judge in Washington, D.C., who recently rejected most of the DOJ's proposals in a separate case over Google's monopoly in online search.

The cases against Google are part of a larger bipartisan crackdown by the U.S. on big tech firms, which began during President Donald Trump's first term and includes cases still pending against Meta Platforms, , Amazon, and Apple.

Google says the DOJ's proposal is tech-

## Musk's robotaxi plans for San Francisco alarmed, confused regulators, emails show

**TESLA, CEO Elon Musk tantalized investors in July with a robotaxi update: After a small-scale test in Austin, Texas, Tesla would rapidly expand driverless cabs to markets including the San Francisco Bay Area, where it was "getting the regulatory permission to launch."**

Musk posted on X earlier that month that Tesla would deploy robotaxis there "probably in a month or two."

The reality of Tesla's San Francisco plans did not include driverless taxis at all. The automaker had not applied for the needed permits, a process that can take years of testing under state oversight. Instead, it planned pre-arranged trips in human-driven vehicles only for riders who received an invitation. And it would do this under a permit that is typically used for limousines and does not allow on-demand ride-hailing, according to state officials.

News of Tesla's robotaxi plans surprised and alarmed regulators, according to emails among California and federal officials and a Tesla public-policy staffer, which



## Google seeks to avoid ad tech breakup as antitrust trial begins

nically unworkable and would lead to prolonged uncertainty for advertisers and publishers.

Google had previously offered to sell AdX, however, during private negotiations to end an EU antitrust investigation, Reuters reported last year. Google's internal studies on that potential sale may come into evidence at this week's trial.

Instead of selling AdX, Google has now proposed changing its policies to make it

easier for publishers to use and support competing platforms. The DOJ has said such requirements alone are not adequate to restore competition.

A former News Corp executive and executives at DailyMail.com and Advance Local, which operates local news outlets in eight states, are among those expected to testify at the trial.

Some of those witnesses testified last year when the DOJ convinced Brinkema that

and human safety monitors in the front-passenger seat.

On the July earnings call, Musk said Tesla had made "demonstrable progress" on autonomous driving "that a lot of naysayers said we would not achieve."

"We've done what we said we were going to do," he said. "Doesn't mean we're always on time, but we get it done. And our naysayers are sitting there with egg on their face."

Now Musk's promises are getting bigger as the billionaire CEO faces a November shareholder vote on his compensation and increased pressure to deliver robotaxis as Tesla's electric-vehicle business declines. Musk told investors in July that robotaxis would expand at a "hyper-exponential rate," serving "half the population of the U.S." by year-end.

Meanwhile, as with the Bay Area episode, Musk and Tesla are increasingly using "robotaxi" to mean something less than a fully driverless cab. A September 13 post on the Tesla X account conflated the term with the "Full Self-Driving" (FSD) driver-assistance feature offered to customers, which requires an attentive human driver.

"\$99/mo to have your own supervised Robotaxi," the post read, quoting the FSD subscription price.

Matthew Wansley, a professor at New York's Cardozo School of Law who specializes in autonomous vehicles, said Musk's Bay-Area claims show how Tesla wants all the benefits of marketing "robotaxis" and "self-driving" to customers and investors but none of the regulatory burden or legal risk of making the same claims to the government.

"They don't want to tell regulators they have an automated-driving system," he said, "because then they become subject to a lot more regulations in a lot of states."

Tesla started its Austin service in June but has not opened it to the general public. It has

Google locked publishers into using its publisher ad server - a platform used by websites to store and manage their digital ad inventory - by unlawfully tying the platform to Google AdX.

Doing so allowed Google to engage in practices that were not in publishers' interests, such as giving Google's advertisers the first and last opportunity to bid on ads, Brinkema wrote in her April ruling.

(Reuters)

started switching the passenger-seat safety monitors into the driver's seat on rides that include highways, Tesla said on X.

Musk has said Tesla plans near-term expansions in Florida, Nevada and Arizona, which like Texas have few regulatory barriers to self-driving vehicles. Tesla secured a certificate this month to test autonomous cars in Nevada, according to state officials, who did not answer questions about whether Tesla has submitted paperwork to operate robotaxis. Tesla on Friday received permission from Arizona to test autonomous vehicles with a safety driver but is still awaiting approval to test and operate without drivers. Florida does not require specific operating permits.

Dan Crowley, portfolio manager at Nightview Capital, a Tesla investor, said it does not matter if Tesla hits every one of Musk's notoriously optimistic timelines as long as it ultimately delivers a transformational product. Still, he said, investors could eventually lose patience.

"If we're at the same place in two years," he said, "I wouldn't be ecstatic."

### REGULATORS CAUGHT OFF-GUARD

News of Tesla's Bay Area robotaxi plans unsettled regulators at the California State Transportation Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), according to the emails exchanged on July 25, which were seen by Reuters.

"Did your team meet with Tesla and discuss this weekend rollout?" wrote Kareem Habib, a NHTSA investigator, to California officials. A state staffer responded that Tesla did not have the required permits.

(Reuters)



▲ Elon Musk attends the opening ceremony of the new Tesla Gigafactory for electric cars in Gruenheide, Germany.



# At Charlie Kirk memorial, Trump rallies MAGA against political opponents

PRESIDENT Donald Trump hailed slain conservative activist Charlie Kirk as a “martyr for American freedom” on Sunday and vowed at his memorial service to carry on his work, while again accusing what he called the “radical left” for Kirk’s murder.

“The violence comes largely from the left,” Trump said without citing any evidence, in remarks that downplayed political violence from the right and often turned starkly partisan in contrast to the more solemn tone that most other speakers adopted.

Trump has been blaming the left for the deadly shooting before a suspect was even detained. His messaging reflected the dual nature of Kirk’s memorial, which had the feel of a religious revival mixed with a “Make America Great Again” rally.

The memorial, organized by Kirk’s conservative youth advocacy organization Turning Point USA, drew tens of thousands of mourners dressed in red, white and blue who filled State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona.

Kirk’s friends and fellow conservatives praised him as an inspirational Christian who founded a political movement they promised to nurture.

His wife, Erika, who has taken the helm of Turning Point, delivered an emotional tribute to her late husband, looking up at the heavens and mouthing, “I love you,” before speaking about his devotion to Christianity, his family and his activism. The Kirks have two young children.

“I want all of you to know, while Charlie died far too early, he was also ready to die,” she said. “He left this world without regrets. He did 100% of what he could every day.”

She also offered forgiveness to the 22-year-old man who has been charged with Kirk’s murder, citing the Bible’s account that Jesus Christ urged his followers to forgive his tormentors while on the cross.



▲ Erika Kirk, wife of slain conservative commentator Charlie Kirk and the new CEO of Turning Point USA, reacts next to U.S. President Donald Trump during a memorial service at State Farm Stadium, in Glendale, Arizona, U.S.

“My husband Charlie wanted to save young men, just like the one who took his life,” she said, before adding tearfully, as the crowd applauded solemnly.

Some political figures cast Kirk’s death as a pivotal moment in the conservative movement, exhorting followers to finish the work he began in sometimes aggressive language.

“We will carry Charlie and Erika in our heart every single day, and fight that much harder because of what you did to us,” Stephen Miller, the powerful White House adviser, said in a fiery speech. “You have no idea the dragon you have awakened. You have no idea how determined we will be to save this civilization, to save the West, to save the republic.”

## VICE PRESIDENT, OTHER CABINET MEMBERS SPEAK

The memorial featured a number of leading Christian rock artists, giving it the air at times of a megachurch Sunday service.

As music filled the arena, some men and women closed their eyes and swayed with their arms in the air, tears rolling down their cheeks.

The arena, which normally has a capacity of 63,000, appeared completely full. Crowds of people, many wearing MAGA attire, arrived before dawn to secure seats inside the stadium, where they encountered metal detectors amid tight security.

Other speakers included Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, more evidence of Kirk’s political influence.

Vice President JD Vance credited Kirk with helping get Trump elected last year by mobilizing young voters.

“Our whole administration is here, but not just because we love Charlie as a friend, even though we did, but because we know we wouldn’t be here without him,” Vance said.

Trump’s speech was the most openly divisive, repeatedly attacking the “radical left” and leaning into campaign-style grievances. While some speakers, including Miller, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, and conservative influencer Jack Posobiec, veered into politics, most kept their remarks focused on honoring Kirk without assigning blame.

At one point, the president contrasted Kirk’s support for public debate - he often challenged students with opposing views to “prove me wrong” at college events - with his own scorched-earth politics. “He did not hate his opponents,” Trump said. That’s where I disagreed with Charlie. I hate my opponents.”

Following his speech, Trump brought Erika Kirk onstage, who embraced him as “America the Beautiful” played over the stadium speakers.

## RISING FEARS OF VIOLENCE

Kirk, 31, was killed with a single bullet as he answered an audience member’s question at a campus event in Utah. A 22-year-old Utah technical college student has been charged with Kirk’s murder. Investigators are still probing for a motive, which remains unclear. They have been scrutinizing his alleged texts to a friend and messages engraved into four bullet casings. Experts have said they could reference left- or right-leaning groups.

Civil rights groups criticized Kirk for rhetoric, pointing to numerous examples they described as racist, anti-immigrant, transphobic and misogynistic. His backers say he was a defender of conservative values and a champion of free speech.

His death has raised fears about the growing frequency of U.S. political violence across the ideological spectrum, while also deepening partisan divides.

Trump’s speech on Sunday is unlikely to quell fears from critics that he intends to use Kirk’s murder to intensify a crackdown on his political opponents. (Reuters)

# Putin offers Trump a one-year extension to nuclear arms pact



▲ Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting of the Military-Industrial Commission in Perm, Russia

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin offered his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump a nuclear arms control deal on Monday that would extend the last treaty limiting both countries’ nuclear weapons by one year while Moscow and

Washington discuss what comes next.

Russia and the United States have by far the biggest nuclear arsenals in the world. The last remaining treaty between them that limits the numbers of these weapons is due to expire on February 5 next year.

The New START treaty covers strategic nuclear weapons - those designed by each side to hit the enemy’s centres of military, economic and political power - and caps the number of deployed warheads at 1,550 on each side. Both are likely to breach that limit if the treaty is not extended or replaced.

## PUTIN UNDER PRESSURE TO END UKRAINE WAR

Putin, who said his proposal was in the interests of global non-proliferation and could help spur dialogue with Washington about arms control, has been under pressure from Trump to agree to end the war in Ukraine, something Moscow says is part of a slew of security issues that have raised East-West tensions to their most dangerous level since the Cold War.

The offer, made at a time when Ukraine is trying to persuade Trump to impose harsher sanctions on Russia, was made public by Putin at a meeting of his Security Council.

“Russia is prepared to continue adhering to the central numerical limits under the New START Treaty for one year after 5 February 2026,” said the Russian president.

“Subsequently, based on an analysis of the situation, we will make a decision on whether to maintain these voluntary self-imposed restrictions.

“We believe that this measure will only be viable if the United States acts in a similar manner and does not take steps that undermine or violate the existing balance of deter-

rence capabilities.”

The proposal appears to be a unilateral change of policy by Moscow which has until now insisted it would only engage with Washington on such matters if overall ties - hampered by stark differences over the war in Ukraine - improved.

There was no immediate response from Washington.

## TALKS ON OVERHAULING TREATY YET TO START

With just over four months to go before the New START runs out, differences over the Ukraine mean Russia and the United States have not started talks on renewing or overhauling the treaty though Trump has spoken of his desire to do a new nuclear arms control deal, albeit with China as well.

Beijing has rejected the idea that it should be included too.

Putin said Russia would be monitoring U.S. nuclear arms and defence activity, paying particular attention to Washington’s plans to beef up its missile defences and ideas to deploy missile interceptors in space.

“We will proceed on the basis that the practical implementation of such destabilising actions could nullify our efforts to maintain the status quo in the field of START,” said Putin. “We will respond accordingly.”

(Reuters)



# Lyrikal Busta works with Intaba Yase Dubai on new single

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini  
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI'S music star Lyrikal Busta is set to release a powerful new collaboration with South African award-winning artist Intaba Yase Dubai.

The single, titled Mtukulu, is scheduled to drop on September 26, 2025, across all major digital platforms and is set to deliver a vibrant and meaningful musical experience that bridges cultures and generations.

Mtukulu, which translates to "grandchild" in SiSwati, delves into themes of nostalgia, hope, and unity. Lyrikal Busta explained that the song narrates a touching scenario where an elderly man encourages his grandson to play the track repeatedly because it evokes fond memories of the past. The song's energetic and uplifting beat is designed to be a dance anthem, especially fitting for the festive season in December. "It's a happy and energetic anthem, and people will most definitely have something to dance to this December," Lyrikal Busta shared.

The collaboration is significant not only for its musicality but also for its cultural message. Lyrikal Busta emphasised that Mtukulu aims to resonate with listeners across different age groups, telling a story that reflects African heritage and identity.

"The aim was to create a song that would resonate with different age groups and tell a story of where we come from as African people. I had to feature Intaba Yase Dubai from South Africa to also convey a message of unity amongst Africans, especially in these times of xenophobic attacks," he stated.

Musically, Mtukulu blends the soulful vibes of Sofiatown with the infectious rhythms of Amapiano, creating a sound that is both contemporary and deeply rooted in African musical traditions. The production was handled by South African producer



▲ Lyrikal Busta.

Skatli Beats, with engineering by Sean Cast HQ, ensuring a polished and high-quality finish.

## Process

Reflecting on the song's creative process, Lyrikal Busta described working with Intaba Yase Dubai as an enriching experience. "Working on the song was amazing as I got to learn more from renowned South African award-winning artist Intaba Yase Dubai, especially after the success of '365 Days,' a song where we both collaborated and has garnered over 1 million views on streaming

platforms," he said.

The upcoming release of Mtukulu is positioned to be a standout moment for Eswatini's music industry, highlighting the country's growing influence in the regional music scene. Lyrikal Busta urged his fellow Swatis to support the single by sharing it widely and streaming it upon release. "I would encourage all emaSwati to share the news and, most importantly, stream 'Mtukulu' as we promote nothing but top-tier quality of Eswatini music," he concluded.



▲ Rina.

## Rina to illuminate Poetry In Comfort with soulful sounds

ESWATINI'S vibrant poetry scene is set to shine brighter than ever as the highly anticipated Poetry In Comfort event announces its first featured musician, the talented female vocalist Rina.

Poetry In Comfort has long been regarded as one of the Kingdom's premier poetry showcases, renowned for its unique blend of literary art and immersive experiences. This year's edition aims to elevate the event to new heights by combining an outdoor luxury setting with a carefully curated lineup of both established and emerging artists. Alongside Rina, the event will feature notable performers such as Anthonimass, Christian Maz, Poet Amandla, M Age, Gcayi, and Siya Imbongi, creating a diverse and dynamic program that reflects the richness of Eswatini's creative talents.

In an exclusive interview, Project Manager Mnqobi Tsabedze shared the inspiration and vision behind this year's Poetry In Comfort. "We are presenting the art space with a poetry in comfort outdoor concept," Tsabedze explained. "We take it this is a self-explanatory concept; we want to provide an exclusive, luxurious experience to poetry lovers and art enthusiasts. Our goal is to create lasting memories for attendees, rather than just having them attend an event and leave."

## Structure

The event's structure is thoughtfully designed to engage participants on multiple levels. A standout feature is the Talent Search/Talent Appreciation segment, which offers a vital platform for young and undiscovered poets to showcase their skills on a significant stage. "This segment allows us to crown the best poets of the day," Tsabedze noted. "We believe that this will change the poetry industry; it is what it needs now. We aim to award all the amazing undiscovered talent a stage to showcase what they have to the world."

To preserve the event's intimate and refined atmosphere, the organisers have chosen to limit the number of entries. This decision ensures meaningful interactions between artists and attendees, fostering a close-knit community that celebrates creativity and artistic growth. Tsabedze emphasised, "We want to ensure that the event remains intimate and allows for meaningful interactions."

## Sancheziey added to Mlawula Campfire Festival

THE Mlawula Campfire Festival is gearing up for its sixth spectacular edition and has now revealed Eswatini musician Sancheziey as an act.

Promising an unforgettable weekend of music, nature, and community spirit from September 26 to 28, 2025. Set within the breathtaking Mlawula Nature Reserve at the Siphiso Campsite, this festival has become a beloved annual event, drawing outdoor enthusiasts and families eager to immerse themselves in the beauty and tranquillity of Eswatini's wilderness. Notably, the event has also confirmed Eswatini's DJ Obsession and South African Supta and Sol Phenduka.

The festival's unique charm lies in its seamless blend of adventure, entertainment, and cultural enrichment, all set against the stunning backdrop of the Mlawula Nature Reserve. This year, organisers have expanded the program to deepen the festival's engagement with nature and community, ensuring there is something for everyone.

Adventure seekers will relish the invigorating hikes led by local experts through the reserve's lush landscapes. These guided treks offer a rare chance to explore the rich biodiversity of the area,

from its vibrant flora to the diverse fauna that call the reserve home. Beyond physical experience, these hikes serve an educational purpose, raising awareness about conservation efforts vital to preserving this natural treasure.

For those who prefer a more relaxed pace, the festival offers yoga and aerobics sessions amidst the serene environment of the reserve.

These wellness activities are designed to help participants unwind, recharge, and foster a deeper connection with the natural world around them. Cultural enthusiasts will find plenty to engage with through a variety of workshops and demonstrations. These sessions spotlight local crafts, traditional cuisine, and cultural practices, providing a platform for attendees to appreciate and participate in Eswatini's rich heritage.

Adding to the festival's vibrant entertainment lineup is a comedy night featuring some of Africa's most beloved comedians. The event will showcase the talents of Siyanda Maphumulo and Monkey Man, alongside Eswatini's stars Christian Dude, Bongiswa & Darren, and the dynamic duo Gogo & S'lwane.



▲ Sancheziey.



# Lauryn Hill delivers at DStv Delicious Festival

US singer-songwriter Lauryn Hill is the quintessential genius, as her virtuoso performances often have to contend with her bad habits, like being late.

“I’m savin’ souls and y’all complainin’ ’bout my lateness,” Hill rapped on the song Nobody where Nas features her, which fittingly describes her as an appreciated artist who is bad with time.

Hill was the headline act for the last day of this year’s DStv Delicious Festival hosted at the Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit in Midrand. By 6pm, the artificial lawn by the mainstage, where she was set to perform, was already packed, with people trying to find the perfect spot to watch Hill’s performance, set for 6.10pm.

By 6.20pm, the crowd had gotten thicker, as were the clouds of smoke from marijuana consumers elevating their mood for what’s about to come. By 6.40pm, the audience started to get agitated with Hill’s paucity.

The DJ’s playlist seemed to be running short of current hits, as she went from playing current Amapiano songs to D’banj’s 2012 hit Oliver Twist.

Somewhere between 6.40pm and 6.50pm, Hill’s whole band, which was seemingly also waiting on her, walked off stage.

Now, even the latecomers in the audience were wondering what was happening, while the football fans in the crowd tried to keep track of the Arsenal versus Manchester City Premier League game.

There were some positive signs as the band returned to their stations, the lights dimmed and the excitement in the audience rose. At precisely 7pm, Hill’s performance began an hour late.

By the time Hill got on stage, looking



▲ US Singer Lauryn Hill during her performance at DStv Delicious Festival.

ravishing in an all-red Thebe Magugu outfit, all annoyance with her lateness had subsided. The soul-saving session had begun.

Performing versions of hits like Lost Ones and Doo Wop (That Thing) had the audience eating from the palm of her hand.

## Performance

Unlike Jill Scott last year, whose performance was packed with sultry love songs that resonated with damsels in the audience, Hill’s performance had the grit and bite of an emcee when she rapped, which had the gents respectfully bumping their heads.

She simultaneously had the gentleness to appeal to the women who sang their hearts out to songs like Ex-Factor.

The sound had issues, with Hill repeatedly asking for the monitors to be adjusted. At one

point, a camera shot of her drummer went on the big screens, where he looked annoyed with the sound from the monitors.

By the time Wyclef Jean took the stage, the audience seemed tired and eager for the show to end, given it was a Sunday night.

But he uplifted the audience when he performed his hits like 911, Sweetest Girl and Two Wrongs.

He and Hill performed classic Fugees songs like How Many Mics, Ready or Not and Killing Me Softly With His Song.

Hill brought on a choir to perform the latter, where they added isiZulu lyrics to the song, but due to the poor sound quality, the audience couldn’t understand what was happening until the song came to an end.

Citizen

## Big Zulu’s daughter set to drop first EP

MUSIC clearly runs in the family for Big Zulu as his eldest daughter, Siphesihle Nene, gears up to release her very first EP at just 15 years old.

The Imali Eningi hitmaker couldn’t hide his excitement while speaking about his daughter’s journey into music. He revealed that Siphesihle has been eager to record for a long time, constantly singing for him at home and asking for a chance to prove herself.

“For the longest time, she has been singing for me and begging me to record her. She’s talented and a good singer. Trust me, every time she surprises me with the way she sings at her age,” Big Zulu said.

## Project

The proud father explained that the project was originally meant to be Siphesihle’s solo EP, but he decided to step in to give her proper guidance as she enters the entertainment industry.

“As I have said, this was supposed to be her own EP; however, I saw an opportunity for me to give her much-needed guidance with the things in the entertainment industry,” he added. According to Big Zulu, Siphesihle’s love for both music and dance inspired the sound of the project, which also embraces the 3 Step genre.

He described her as a natural talent who constantly amazes him. “What I have heard when she sings, I know this is what people need to hear because she is very talented,” he said. **FakazaNews**



▲ Kanye West.

## Red flags in Kanye West’s SA show

FANS have highlighted several red flags about American rapper Kanye West’s upcoming show in South Africa.

The Runaway rapper posted on his official social media platform X page that he will be performing his first show in the country at Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg on 13 December 2025. Some have received the news with excitement, while others have questioned the authenticity of the show.

According to the poster, the concert will be organised by Monyake Group. Fans said the events company’s website was not working until the concert was announced. When you arrive at the website, you are greeted by a Kanye West concert poster. However, there is only one event listed under the events tab, and it is “Christocentric Worship Events”. Another thing that raised fans’ suspicions is that the Monyake Group’s Instagram page has only three posts, all of which feature Kanye West. The Citizen contacted

the WhatsApp number provided on the company’s website page for a comment.

“The press release will be out on Tuesday. It will cover all the questions you have about the show,” replied a representative on the line.

According to the poster, fans can pre-register on ticketpro.co.za to secure their tickets. However, the link is not working. Another red flag raised by fans.

“We’ve had a technical issue, but worry not. Tickets will go live on 23rd September 2025,” said Monyake Group on Instagram.

The Citizen has reached out to Ticketpro for a comment, as the company has not issued an official statement.

If the concert goes ahead, it will follow in the footsteps of other famous American artists, like Travis Scott, who will perform at FNB Stadium on 11 October 2025, and Chris Brown, who held a concert at the same stadium in December 2025. **Citizen**



▲ Lady Du.

## Lady Du recognised at Africa’s Stars Gala 2025

SOUTH African singer-songwriter Lady Du, born Duduzile Ngwenya, has been recognised as a leading female innovator in Africa.

She has been named the winner in the Icon of Female Innovation in Africa category at the upcoming Africa’s Stars Gala 2025.

Du’s recognition extends well beyond her musical achievements. She has established herself as an author, entrepreneur and influencer.

Running her own beauty salon demonstrates her business acumen. Through her writing, she shares both personal stories and insights. With success in these varied roles, Du has become a role model for women throughout Africa.

“Lady Du’s journey of creativity, leadership and empowerment continues to inspire women across the continent and beyond. Her artistry, authorship and entrepreneurial vision exemplify the future of African innovation,” said Glocal Unity Women International, the organisation behind the gala.

The Africa’s Stars Gala will take place from December 12 to 14 at Hôtel Le Ruisseau & Galerie FN in the Republic of Congo. It is an annual gathering that brings together influential figures from across Africa.

## Achievements

The event aims to honour achievements, build cultural connections and inspire the next generation of African talent.

Her music has consistently made an impact on the scene. Recently, she released “Come On”, a collaboration with Khobzn Kiavalla.

This launch marked her first single in three years. In that period, she faced difficulties with her previous management, which had restricted her access to social media and other platforms. “I’m proud of my first single in three years. My profiles were blocked, and I didn’t have access to my things because of my old manager, including my socials. Luckily, I still had Facebook and Instagram.”

“This prevented me from releasing my own music, but I was able to collaborate with others. This is no longer a sad story for me. I want to appreciate you for showing me love. Please continue to stream and share my song. This is my first release as an independent artist,” she said. **IOL**



GOSPEL sensation Xolisa Kwinana’s ex-lover has dragged him to court after accusing him of being a deadbeat dad. The woman, who cannot be named to protect the identity of the children, filed a maintenance suit against the award-winning musician at Khayelitsha Magistrate’s Court in Cape Town last month.

According to the woman, Kwinana failed to pay maintenance for the two children he sired with her.

According to court papers seen by Sunday World filed on August 8, the woman is demanding a total of R7 000 in child maintenance from the popular music megastar for their two children, all below the age of three years. The papers state that the woman wants R4000 for their three-month-old tyke and R3000 for their 18-month-old infant.

News that the popular musician had been dodging maintenance for his children reached the antenna of our sources after Khayelitsha court maintenance officers emailed a police boss in Eastern Cape requesting him to serve Kwinana with a subpoena when he arrived for a performance at a show in Gqeberha last Sunday.

The court officials had been tipped off by anti-gender-based-violence activist Nosipho Daniels of Malihambe Women Outreach Non-Profit Organisation that the artist would be strutting his stuff at the music festival.

The correspondence to the police read

# Gospel star Kwinana dragged to court for dodging papgeld



▲ Gospel sensation Xolisa Kwinana.

“Good day General. Please find the attached subpoena for Xolisa Kwinana, who will be in Port Elizabeth [at the} Boardwalk on Sunday.

“Please serve on behalf of our court, and in return, please furnish the court with the signed copy of the subpoena. We have re-

ceived your details from V Daniels.

“Your co-operation in this regard will be highly appreciated,” reads the email authored by maintenance officer Anele Zwelonke.

However, it appears the police did not co-operate with the court officials because they failed to serve the artist with the paperwork at the show. A source close to both the woman and the musician alleged that Kwinana has not paid child maintenance towards the upbringing of the two children since breaking up with their mother.

The two broke up after she accused him of physically and financially abusing her.

“When they broke up, she was pregnant with his child. She left and went to stay at a shelter. When she gave birth to the child about three months ago, he came to see the child, but has not contributed money to support the children. “She then went to court to report him for failing to maintain the children. The court officials issued a subpoena for him to appear in court on October 1, but they did not know his address; hence, they asked the police to serve him during the show in Port Elizabeth. (Sunday World)

# Billboard ranks Cardi B’s ‘Nice Guy’

IT has been three days since American rapper Cardi B released her highly anticipated sophomore album “Am I The Drama?”, and it has already been hailed as a success.

The album, which boasts a number of impressive features, has been going up the charts, breaking records and reaching milestones that typically take months.

According to reports, “Am I The Drama?” has become the fastest female album in the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) history to reach Platinum status, a milestone achieved in 15 hours.

As per the RIAA, this means the album has been streamed or sold one million units in the United States.

Among a star-studded list of collaborations, South Africa’s very own Tyla is also featured on the album on a song titled “Nice Guy”.

Not only is the queen of “popiano” serving vocals on the chorus, but she also took fans by surprise when she came in guns blazing

with a rap verse, which blended so smoothly with Cardi B’s adlibs.

Fans from across the globe were highly impressed by the Grammy Award-winning singer’s versatility, praising her talent and how she flowed on the beat.

“Ok I’ve listened to ‘Nice Guy’ by Cardi B featuring Tyla. Never ever thought Tyla could flow like that. The girl ate the rap,” said X user @ThembaENGcoboi.

This feature also led to the song to reach number one on the South African iTunes Top Songs Chart.

Additionally, Billboard recently ranked all the songs from Cardi B’s chart-topping album, listing the Tyla feature at number one, calling it an “earworm” and adding that it should have been one of the leading singles from the album.

“If timed out right, it would have absolutely dominated the radio this summer. Tyla’s contribution makes for the perfect complement to Cardi B’s melodic bars. (IOL)



▲ Mandla Elliot Mthembu, the ex-husband of South African media personality Khanyi Mbau

# Mandla Mthembu, Khanyi Mbau’s ex, has died

MANDLA Elliot Mthembu, the ex-husband of South African media personality Khanyi Mbau, has died.

In a statement shared by his family, it was confirmed that the businessman and long-standing member of the African National Congress (ANC) died in New York on the evening of September 21, 2025.

Mthembu was admitted to hospital, where he suffered a second stroke. Despite the tireless efforts of medical professionals, he succumbed to complications related to the stroke.

“Throughout his life, Mr Mthembu was known for his entrepreneurial spirit, his contribution to South Africa’s business landscape and his commitment to the values of the ANC. His legacy will be remembered by many across the country.”

The Mthembu family has requested privacy during the deeply painful time as they mourn the loss of a father, brother and friend. Mthembu in 2006 had a customary marriage to popular actress, reality tv star and presenter Mbau. The two share a daughter Khanukani Khanz Mbau.

Mbau was labelled a gold digger when she married the then millionaire, Mthembu. Her lavish lifestyle grabbed the headlines; were dubbed the “it” couple, with their matching yellow lamborghinis.

However, their union was not just a flashy lifestyle; behind closed doors, their marriage was marred by abuse claims. They split in 2009. After their split, Mthembu lived a life away from the public spotlight, while Mbau’s journey in the spotlight continued. (IOL)



▲ Cardi B and Tyla.



#### What Is a Liver Detox?

A liver detox, cleanse, or flush is a program that claims to take out toxins in your body, help you lose weight, or improve your health.

You want to do everything you can to take an active role in your health. But if you think you need a liver detox, you should know that there isn't much it can do for you.

Your liver is one of the largest organs in your body. It helps remove waste and handles various nutrients and medicines.

Most people think a cleanse will help their liver remove toxins after they drink too much alcohol or eat unhealthy foods. Some hope it will help their liver work better on a daily basis. Many believe it'll help treat liver disease.

Like most detoxes, a liver cleanse has specific steps. It may tell you to fast or to drink only juices or other liquids for several days. You might need to eat a restricted diet or take herbal or dietary supplements. Some detoxes also urge you to buy a variety of products.

#### Are Liver Detoxes Safe?

There are medical treatments for liver diseases. But nothing shows that detox programs or supplements can fix liver damage.

In fact, detoxes may harm your liver. Studies have found that liver injuries from herbal and dietary supplements are on the rise. Green tea extract, for example, can cause damage like that from hepatitis. And the coffee enemas involved in some regimens can lead to infections and electrolyte problems that might be deadly.

Other things to know about these programs and products:

- Some companies use ingredients that could be harmful. Others have made false claims about how well they treat serious diseases.

- Unpasteurized juices can make you sick, especially if you're older or have a weakened immune system.

- If you have kidney disease, a cleanse that includes large amounts of juice can make your illness worse.

- If you have diabetes, be sure to check with your doctor before you start a diet that changes how you usually eat.

- If you fast as part of a detox program, you may feel weak or faint, have headaches, or get dehydrated. If you have hepatitis B that has caused liver damage, fasting can make the damage worse.

#### Do Liver Cleanses Help Your Liver Heal From Alcohol or Unhealthy Food?

There isn't any scientific proof that cleanses remove toxins from your body or make you healthier. You may feel better on a detox diet simply because you aren't eating highly processed foods with solid fats and processed sugar. These foods are high in calories but low in nutrition. Detox diets can also cut out foods that you might be allergic or sensitive to, like dairy, gluten, eggs, or peanuts. Doctors say liver detoxes aren't important for your health or how well your liver works. There's no proof that they help get rid of toxins after you've had too much unhealthy food or alcohol.

#### Ways to help your liver after drinking too much alcohol

# Can a detox or cleanse help your liver?



There's a limit on how much alcohol your liver can handle at one time. It has to work harder when you drink too much. Over time, this can lead to inflammation, scarring, or cancer.

If you're going to drink alcohol, experts recommend no more than one drink a day for women and two for men. A drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or one shot of liquor.

Your liver can heal minor damage from alcohol in days or weeks. More severe damage could take months to heal. And after a long time, it may be permanent. Give your liver a break by avoiding alcohol at least 2 days in a row each week.

#### Do Liver Cleanses Protect You From Liver Disease?

Your overall health and your genes affect your liver. So do your diet, lifestyle, and environment. Liver detox programs don't treat damage or prevent disease.

#### Ways to prevent liver disease

Lifestyle changes can help keep your liver healthy without detox programs. These steps can be especially important if you're at higher risk of liver disease because of something like heavy alcohol use or a family history of liver disease.

- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Eat a well-balanced diet every day. That's five to nine servings of fruits and

vegetables, along with fiber from vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. Be sure to include protein for the enzymes that help your body detox naturally.

- Keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise every day if you can. Check with your doctor first if you haven't been active.

- Cut down on risky behavior that can lead to viral hepatitis:

- Avoid recreational drugs. If you do use them, don't share needles or straws to inject or snort them.

- Don't share razors, toothbrushes, or other household items.

- Get tattoos only from a sterile shop.

- Don't have unprotected sex with people you don't know.

#### Do Liver Cleanses Help You Lose Weight Safely?

A few studies have linked liver cleanses with weight or fat loss, but they've been low-quality or looked at only a small number of people. Other research has found that a detox program's low-calorie diet may lead to early weight loss, but people tend to regain the pounds as soon as they go back to their usual diet.

#### Ways to lose weight and help fatty liver

Some of the lifestyle changes that may protect against liver disease can also help you lose weight and get rid of inflammatory

fat in your liver.

- Eat a healthy diet with plenty of water, fruits, and vegetables.
- Exercise regularly.
- Follow guidelines on alcohol use.
- Do Supplements Help Your Liver?

Milk thistle is an herb that contains a compound called silybin. Some people claim that it helps your liver work better and can help treat liver disease. But just as there isn't enough evidence that liver detoxes work, there isn't enough to show that milk thistle or extracts make your liver healthier.

Some studies say compounds from milk thistle have helped ease the symptoms of certain types of liver disease. But no research shows that it treats the disease itself.

Turmeric, sometimes called "the golden spice," can give your body a boost and may help protect against liver injury. But there's not enough research to support using it regularly for prevention.

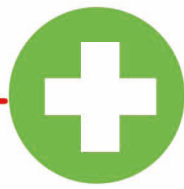
Dandelion has also been considered a natural remedy for various conditions. More study is needed to prove that it works.

Remember that FDA rules about supplements aren't the same as for foods or medicines. There's no guarantee that they work the way they say or that they're safe.

If you think you might have any kind of problem with your liver or complications from a condition, talk to your doctor.

**WebMD**





### Sprained Ankle

IT'S a tear in the tissues (called ligaments) that hold your ankle bones together.

It often happens when your foot rolls sideways. Your ankle may bruise and swell. You might not be able to put weight on it. RICE is the best way to treat it:

- Rest
- Ice for 20 minutes at a time
- Compress with an elastic bandage
- Elevate your ankle -- lift it above your heart

A light sprain will get better in a few days. If yours is worse, the doctor may suggest a short cast or walking boot, followed by physical therapy.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Your immune system normally fights off germs. Sometimes it attacks your joints by mistake. Doctors call this rheumatoid arthritis. It usually affects the same joint on both sides of your body. If you have it, both ankles are likely to hurt. Pain, swelling, and stiffness often start in the toes and front of your foot and move slowly back to the ankle. Exercise, including physical therapy, can help. Your doctor also may prescribe special shoes or inserts to relieve pain or drugs to ease the swelling.

### Lupus

This autoimmune disease causes your body to attack healthy tissue. People with lupus often have joint pain, including ankle pain. This is from lupus-associated arthritis and tendinopathy. Also, lupus can cause kidney problems that lead to fluid buildup in your joints. There's no cure for lupus, but your doctor can give you medications to keep it under control. A healthy diet and regular exercise can also help.

### Osteoarthritis

A joint is where two bones meet. Cartilage covers the end of each bone to provide a cushion. Over time, it wears off. When it's gone, the bones rub directly against each other. This can lead to pain, stiffness, and loss of motion. Your doctor may suggest anti-inflammatory drugs and steroid shots to reduce swelling, braces to help your ankle move less, and physical therapy to teach you strengthening exercises. You might need surgery.

### Gout

Your big toe is the most common spot for a gout attack, but it can affect your ankle, too. It happens when a waste product called uric acid turns into needle-shaped crystals that collect in your joints. This causes intense pain and swelling. Your doctor can prescribe medications to treat an attack. You'll also need to rest. A special gout diet and good exercise habits can ease future attacks and other problems.

### Flat Feet

Your arch is the space between your heel and the ball of your foot. It's supposed to create a hollow area when you stand. If yours stays flat, it could be the result of injury or wear and tear. You could also inherit it. Flat feet also result from pregnancy secondary to hormonal changes and perhaps weight gain. It's usually painless, but your ankles could



# Why your ankle hurts

hurt or swell if they get out of line with your knees. Arch supports and supportive shoes can help. So can specially designed physical therapy exercises.

### Ankle Fracture

Three bones make up your ankle -- the tibia (shinbone), fibula, and talus. If one (or more) cracks or breaks, you could notice pain, bruising, and swelling. You might be able to walk with a broken ankle, but it won't be easy. If it's severe, you could see exposed bone. Rest your foot and keep it iced, compressed, and elevated (RICE) until you can see a doctor. They'll decide on the best form of treatment. They might give you a splint or cast to keep the bones in place. Some people need surgery.

### Achilles Tendinitis

A heavy or sudden strain can cause tiny tears in the Achilles tendon, which connects your calf muscles to your heel. The back of your ankle may swell or feel tender and warm just above your heel. You might notice it most in the morning or after exercise. Anti-inflammatory drugs can ease the pain, but rest is key to healing. Stretching and heel lifts may help, but talk to your doctor or physical therapist first. If scar tissue causes problems later on, you might need surgery.

### Achilles Tendinosis

This problem results from tissue breakdown due to overuse. It usually starts slowly and gets worse over time. You could have pain or a bump where the tendon at the back of your leg meets your heel. Sometimes

it affects the middle of the tendon -- you might notice a bump there, too. Rest and over-the-counter drugs can ease swelling and pain. Special shoes, inserts, or braces can lessen stress on the tendon. Physical therapy can help, too.

### Chronic Lateral Ankle Pain

There are many possible causes for ongoing pain on the outside of your ankle. It's most likely because a ligament didn't heal properly after a sprain and remains weak. This makes the entire joint less stable and leads to more injury and pain. Treatment depends on the cause. It will likely involve rest and special exercises to strengthen weak tissues.

### Bursitis

Your ankle has two fluid-filled sacs, or bursa, that cushion the space between the tendons and bones. They can get inflamed from arthritis, overuse, high-heeled shoes, recent footwear changes, or starting workouts again after time off. Your ankle may feel stiff, tender, warm, and swollen. The best treatment is RICE: rest, ice, compression and elevation. Take anti-inflammatory drugs to ease the pain and swelling. Stretches and special exercises can prevent future problems.

### Osteochondral Lesions of the Talus (OLT)

A sudden injury like a sprain can damage cartilage on your talus (heel bone) or cause fractures, blisters or sores in the bone underneath. You might notice a catch in your ankle, or it could lock up or still hurt

months after a treated injury, which could be an OLT. Treatment depends on the type, but you may wear a cast to keep your ankle still and use crutches to keep your weight off it. Your physical therapist will add exercises slowly.

### Reactive Arthritis

This type usually follows an infection in your GI or urinary tract. Ankles and knees are among the first places you may feel it. Your doctor will treat the infection with antibiotics. There's no cure for the arthritis, but anti-inflammatory drugs can help with pain and swelling. Exercise will keep your joints flexible. The arthritis should go away in a few months.

### Scleroderma

This group of conditions causes your skin and connective tissues to thicken. When it affects the tissues around a joint, you might feel pain and stiffness. It can also weaken your muscles and cause digestive, heart, and kidney problems. Treatment depends on your symptoms, which can vary. There's no cure, but doctors can help you treat heart, kidney, skin, lung, dental, and gut issues that come with the disease.

### Infection

If you're also sick, irritable, and feverish along with your ankle pain, you might have an infection. The joint may be swollen, red, and warm. Your doctor may use a needle to remove fluid from your ankle to drain it or test for a cause. You'll get antibiotics to kill the bacteria. It's rare, but viruses or fungi can infect your joints, too. **WebMD**



# News In Pictures



▲ Mariah Carey performs on a floating stage shaped like a giant Victoria amazonica water lily at the Guama River in Belem, Para state, Brazil.



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



▲ A woman wears a Statue of Liberty costume as she holds an image of a broken heart, outside the El Capitan Entertainment Centre, where "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" is recorded for broadcast, on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles, California.



▲ 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.



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump speaks at the State Banquet during his state visit, at Windsor Castle, in Windsor, Britain.



▲ Service members of the Ukrainian Armed Forces walk to a position of a 2S3 Akatsiya self-propelled howitzer on the frontline, in Donetsk region, Ukraine.



▲ A drone view shows Thai soldiers and riot police officers confronting Cambodian people in a disputed village along the Thailand-Cambodia border in Sa Kaeo province, Thailand.





# Fritz fires on final day as Team World land third Laver Cup title

Taylor Fritz delivered the decisive blow at the Laver Cup on Sunday by beating Alexander Zverev 6-3 7-6(4) as Team World completed a 15-9 win over Team Europe to reclaim the men's team competition title in San Francisco.

The victory marked Team World's third triumph in the eight editions of the competition following back-to-back wins in 2022 and 2023, and sparked jubilant celebrations from captain Andre Agassi's side at the Chase Centre.

Team World had built a 9-3 lead

after a clean sweep on Saturday, but with wins worth three points on the final day there was still much to play for with four matches scheduled to reach the 13 points needed to prevail.

Carlos Alcaraz teamed up with Norway's Casper Ruud to open proceedings, earning a 7-6(4) 6-1 win over American pair Alex Michelsen and Reilly Opelka to narrow the gap. However, Team Europe found themselves on the back foot again when Australia's Alex De Minaur breezed past 20-year-old Czech

Jakub Mensik 6-3 6-4 it make it 12-6 in favour of Team World.

US Open champion Alcaraz kept Team Europe's hopes alive by dispatching Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo 6-2 6-1, leaving his team just three points adrift of their opponents.

Zverev then had the opportunity to level the scores at 12-12 and force a one-set doubles playoff but he was unable to get past Fritz.

The 2026 edition of the competition will take place at London's O2 Arena. (Supersport)

# Gavi to undergo knee operation on meniscus injury – Barcelona

BARCELONA midfielder Gavi is to undergo surgery on his injured meniscus after other treatment failed to resolve his problem, the Catalan giants said on Monday.

The 21-year-old midfielder has not played since late August due to the problem and the club said he would undergo an arthroscopy on the knee on Tuesday.

It is the same knee in which he suffered a torn cruciate ligament and another meniscus injury in 2023.

Having first received a "conservative course of treatment" in a bid to fix the problem, Gavi was put through "intense sports stress tests" on Sunday, the LaLiga champions said.

"In order to guarantee the best possible recovery and return to competitive action, this Tuesday, Gavi will undergo an arthroscopic examination," Barca said in a statement.

His previous surgery on the knee in November 2023 kept Gavi out of action for a year.

Barca made no mention of how long it would be before Gavi plays again.

But the club also confirmed that Fermin Lopez, who played for half an hour in Sunday's 3-0 victory over Getafe, had suffered a muscular injury in his hip.

"He will be out of action for around three weeks," Barca said.

Gavi and Lopez join the likes of



▲ Barcelona midfielder Gavi.

forward Lamine Yamal, full-back Alejandro Balde and goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen on the treatment table. (Supersport)

forward Lamine Yamal, full-back Alejandro Balde and goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen on the treatment table. (Supersport)

# Verstappen remains a title threat, insists McLaren boss

MAX Verstappen is still a threat for the Formula One drivers' title after successive wins from pole position in Italy and Azerbaijan, according to McLaren team boss Andrea Stella.

The Red Bull driver had looked out of the running for a fifth title in a row after falling 104 points behind McLaren's championship leader Oscar Piastri following his home Dutch race at Zandvoort at the end of August.

Verstappen remains very much a long shot but has cut the gap to 69 points in the space of two races with seven rounds remaining – 25 of them gained on Sunday after Piastri crashed out on the opening lap.

Including three Saturday sprint races, there are 199 points still to be won.

"We're talking about Max Verstappen, we're talking about Red Bull,"

Stella told reporters after Verstappen dominated Sunday's race in Baku with the fastest lap and after leading from pole to chequered flag.

"We have already seen in Monza that they improved, they seem to have made an improvement with their car because the way they won Monza was something more.

than simply a car that adapts well at low drag.

"They were fast in the corners, medium speed and low speed corners, fast in the straights. And we know that Max when he has a competitive car can deliver strong weekends.

"Definitely Max is in contention for the drivers' championship. We knew it and we got confirmation today."

Verstappen has now won four of the 17 grands prix – only one fewer than McLaren's title contender Lando Norris has achieved.

The 27-year-old has started from more pole positions (six) than anyone this season – Piastri has five – and has now led more race laps than Norris.

Verstappen was not about to make any declarations of intent, however.

"I don't rely on hope. But it's seven rounds left – 69 points is a lot. So I personally don't think about it," he said of his chances.

"I just go race by race, what I have been doing basically the whole season – just trying to do the best we can, try to score the most points that we can. And then after (the final race in) Abu Dhabi, we'll know."

(Supersport)



▲ Max Verstappen.



PARIS Saint-Germain forward Ousmane Dembele is tipped to hold off Barcelona sensation Lamine Yamal and win the men's Ballon d'Or on Monday, while Aitana Bonmati could win a third consecutive women's prize.

The world of football will gather for a glitzy ceremony at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris to discover who will be the next winners of an award dominated for so long by Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

That duo won the Ballon d'Or 13 times between them from 2008 to 2023.

The award, the most prestigious individual prize in football, went last year to Manchester City midfielder Rodri after he captained Spain to Euro 2024 glory.

With Rodri not a contender this year after he suffered an injury-hit campaign last season, 28-year-old Dembele has emerged as the favourite from a list of nominees dominated by Champions League winners PSG.

Nine members of the PSG team that won the European crown for the first time in a dazzling 5-0 demolition of Inter Milan feature among the 30 nominees.

Alongside Dembele are Desire Doue, Achraf Hakimi, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Nuno Mendes, Joao Neves, Fabian Ruiz and Vitinha, as well as goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, who has since moved to Manchester City.

But Dembele would appear to have the edge after a magnificent season in which he filled the void left in Paris by the departed Kylian Mbappe, scoring 35 goals.

That contribution helped PSG to also complete a domestic clean sweep and also reach the final of the Club World Cup.

It was a spectacular campaign for the French club and an even more extraordinary one for Dembele, the winger turned centre-forward.

"It is nice after what was a wonderful season with PSG," Dembele told Le Monde when asked what it meant to be a leading

# PSG star Dembele expected to beat Yamal to Ballon d'Or



▲ Paris Saint-Germain forward Ousmane Dembele.

contender for the prize.

"I think it's true that I am one of the favourites, but we will see what happens."

Many of the PSG nominees will have to miss the ceremony after their Ligue 1 match against Marseille was postponed on Sunday by 24 hours due to storms in southern France. Dembele, though, is injured so could attend.

Yamal, still just 18, stands out among the other nominees having emerged as a superstar on the wing at Barcelona, where he is

seen as the successor to Messi.

He won the Kopa Trophy for the best player aged under 21 at last year's Ballon d'Or gala, fresh from having helped Spain to European Championship glory.

He scored 18 goals in 55 games in all competitions last season as Barcelona won LaLiga and the Spanish Copa del Rey, but they lost in the Champions League semifinals to Inter.

"I don't dream of winning one Ballon d'Or, I dream of winning lots," Yamal said recently.

ly.

## BONMATI OR THE LIONESSES?

The Ballon d'Or is now voted for on the basis of achievements during last season, rather than over a calendar year as in the past.

Other notable nominees include Viktor Gyokeres, Erling Haaland, Harry Kane, Cole Palmer, and the key duo from Liverpool's 2024-2025 Premier League triumph, Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk.

Mbappe and Vinicius Junior are on the list too, a year after Real Madrid boycotted the ceremony, outraged that the latter had been overlooked for the prize.

The Ballon d'Or is voted for by a panel of journalists, one from each of the top 100 countries in the Fifa world rankings.

It is the top 50 for the women, in which the field appears wide open as Barcelona and Spain star Bonmati goes for a treble.

Bonmati, 27, is an exceptional talent and was named player of the tournament at the Uefa Women's Euro in July.

Yet Spain lost the final of that tournament on penalties to England, and Bonmati's Barcelona also lost the Champions League final to Arsenal in May.

What may work either in her favour, or that of teammate and two-time former winner Alexia Putellas, is that there is no obvious standout from the England team that triumphed at the Euros.

Lucy Bronze, goalkeeper Hannah Hampton, Alessia Russo and captain Leah Williamson are all nominated from that side, as is Chloe Kelly, who scored the decisive penalty in the final.

(Supersport)

## Doug Barron's wild rally, bunker shot, land him Pure Insurance title

DOUG Barron closed with three straight birdies – the last one coming after he hit into a pair of bunkers – to cap a final charge up the leaderboard and stun the field on Sunday, winning the PGA Tour Champions' Pure Insurance Championship in Monterrey, California.

Barron, who began the day four strokes off the lead and tied for sixth, carded a 6-under-par 66 in the final round and finished at 12-under 204 for the tournament. Fiji's Vijay Singh finished second, one stroke back at 11 under after a final-round 69.

The \$2.4 million event used both the Pebble Beach and Spyglass Hill par-72 courses for Friday and Saturday. Only Pebble Beach was played on Sunday.

Sitting at 11 under heading to par-5 18, Barron hit his tee shot into a bunker to the right of the fairway. From there, he sent his ball down the fairway but to the left edge, where his ball bounced straight left and into another fairway bunker.

His third shot then landed pin-high on the green, bounced to the back of the green and rolled back a bit toward the hole. With the hole placed near the back of the green, Barron tapped his ball and let it run down the hill, finding the left edge of the cup before slowly falling in.



▲ Doug Barron.

Barron pumped his fist repeatedly and gave out a yell after making what turned out to be the tournament-winning putt.

"The nerves got me off the tee, I (hit the ball right)," Barron said after the tournament about 18. "I was just chipping driver (out of the first bunker), I wasn't worried about getting in trouble ... but the second shot bothered me because I hit it in the bunker (again)."

"But I told my caddie, I said I'm just going to play a really thin shot, but the air's heavy and the ball's not going anywhere, and if I got to the back of the green, I'm fine with that.

... Our goal all week, just get a putt somehow, and it was cool."

Barron dedicated the win to his father, who died in January and played in the Monterrey Peninsula for years, he said.

The win is fourth of the 56-year-old Barron's career and his first this season.

New Zealand's Steven Alker, tied for the 36-hole lead entering the day, shot an even-par 72 and finished tied for third at 10 under. South Africa's Retief Goosen also finished at 10-under 206 after shooting the low round of the tournament, a 7-under 65. (Supersport)

## Horner leaves Red Bull after reported 80 million-pound payoff

FORMER Formula One team boss Christian Horner officially left Red Bull on Monday after being ousted in July, with British media reporting an 80 million-pound (\$108 million) settlement.

A Red Bull statement on the team website announced the 51-year-old's formal departure but did not mention any financial terms.

Horner, one of the sport's most successful team principals, was removed from his position at Milton Keynes by the Austrian energy drink company on July 9 after 20 years at the helm.

The Briton, who was replaced

by Laurent Mekies, had remained an employee technically despite being released from his operational duties with the team.

The Daily Mail and Times newspapers both reported he had left with an 80 million-pound package – less than he would have received had he served out his contract to 2030 – and would be in a position to return to Formula One next year.

Media reports have said that Horner, who had been cleared of allegations of misconduct by a female employee at Red Bull, could take a stake in another team if he does make a comeback. (Supersport)



▲ Former Formula One team boss Christian Horner.





▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs players before kick off.

NSINGIZINI HOTSPURS’ CAF PLAYER RATINGS

‘Bharaba’, ‘Yeki’ prove  
Insingizi’s best

By Chris Dlamini

AMID a jittery performance and a 1-0 away defeat to Zimbabwe’s Simba Bhora on Sunday, Nsingizini Hotspurs goalkeeper Sibusiso ‘Bharaba’ Dlamini and midfielder Sizwe ‘Yeki’ Khumalo were king. Among Bharaba’s saves, he pulled one that surely kept their TotalEnergies CAF Champions League 2025/26 hopes alive. He was the shining star among key players who were below par.

Ratings:

- 1. Sibusiso ‘Bharaba’ Dlamini - He was beaten once, and they lost the match, but it could have been worse had he not made one decisive save in the final 10 minutes of the match to keep the scoreline 1-0. Against a strong rival like Zimbabwe’s Bhora, 2-0 would have been a mammoth task even at Somhlolo National Stadium in this tournament.  
Rating: 7.5/10.
- 2. Mavela Dlamini - He started ahead of Wenzile Lushaba and did his part, only beaten on some occasions.  
Rating: 6/10.
- 3. Kwakhe Thwala - He was not at his usual best and did not do much to boost their attack. He was forced to sit back as Simba Bhora was a constant threat.  
Rating: 6/10.
- 4. Nkosingiphile Shongwe - He was one of the busiest defenders and won most aerial balls as his height helped him against the well-grown forwards.  
Rating: 6.4/10.
- 5. Kingsley Kwakyi - He made his presence and experience felt and did well to restrict the Simba Bhora forwards, particularly in the second half.  
Rating: 6.5/10.
- 6. Sizwe ‘Yeki’ Khumalo - What a player! Confident and brave enough. He was one of the best players on the field, controlling the midfield and getting his passes right. He was unlucky not to get a penalty as he was tripped inside the box in the second half, but the referee cautioned him as he felt contact was minimal.
- 7. Ayanda Gadlela - The former Mbabane



▲ Nsingizini Supporters with a Simba Bhora fan. Swallows marksman struggled against a strong defence and found himself pressured to give the ball away cheaply. He was rightly subbed in the second half.

Rating: 5/10.

- 8. Neliswa ‘Tiger’ Dlamini - His midfield was outplayed in most cases and despite winning and losing some duels, his final ball was appalling.  
Rating: 5/10.
  - 9. Madonde Joel - The Nigerian forward did show some flashes of brilliance but struggled to make an impact.  
Rating: 5/10.
  - 10. Vermark Jordyn - Young and with great potential, but this was not his game.  
Rating: 5/10.
  - 11. Thubelihle Mavuso - He hardly put a foot wrong but still played below expectation. He lacked the cutting edge he’s known for as he has the dribbling skills and ability to take on his opposition but kept it simple, moving the ball to his next teammate always and often backwards.  
Rating: 5.6/10.
- Substitutes Quality Dlamini and Sambulo ‘Masoso’ Simelane came on late but the former impressed with positive balls in the opponents’ danger area they pressed Simba but time.



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs supporters displaying Eswatini Financial Times posters in support of the team.



▲ Nsingizini midfielder Yekisizwe Khumalo negotiating past Simba Bhora players.



▲ Kwakhe Thwala controls the ball in front of a Simba Bhora player.



By **Sibusiso Masilela**  
[sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group](mailto:sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group)

**MAJESTIC winners!** The Taekwondo national team has conquered the African Taekwondo Union SADC Championships.

The mixed national team won 18 medals during the inaugural international assignment held over the weekend in Maputo. The national team wrapped the two-day championships with five medals on Sunday, with Busisiwe Shekinah winning the only gold medal on the last day.

She joined the likes of Khaya Dube, Saneliso Masuku, Gcinumuzi Mkhathswa, Sihlelwe Matsebula, Sandziso Mamba, Sandzisile Matsebula, and Nonhle Maduma in the list of gold medalists.

Other podium finishers on the last day were Sinokubonga (silver), Semusa Abande (bronze), Simisile Tfwala (silver), and Lindelwa Marilyn (bronze). Veteran artists such as Sifiso Dlamini, Lindelwa Mkhathswa, Carlotla Munave, Thandukhanya Dlamini, and Nontsikelelo Ntshalinshali, also excelled in the competition, winning bronze and silver medals respectively.

The eight highest podium finishers have qualified for the 2026 African Taekwondo Championships to be held at a venue yet to be confirmed. They will further compete in the finals of the newly introduced zonal competitions in the Ivory Coast in November.

Eswatini Taekwondo Federation (ETF)

# Taekwondo conquers regional championships



▲ The Taekwondo national team displaying their medals after the African Taekwondo Series Championships held in Maputo.

Vice Secretary Mbongeni Sibandze congratulated the artist for their achievement.

“We are happy with the performance of our artist. This shows that we are on the right track in terms of international

performance, and we will continue working hard as a nation. We would like to thank the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council for funding the trip and parents for their support,” he said.

One of the outstanding athletes, Gcinumuzi Mkhathswa, was recently awarded a 2028 Olympic Games scholarship by the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA).

# Thrilling battles ahead of chess nationals



▲ Chess players in action during the local tournament.



▲ Chess players in full focus.

By **Siphesihle Dlamini**  
[siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group](mailto:siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group)

**THE Eswatini Chess Federation concluded an electrifying two-day national championship qualifier event at EIMPA, setting the stage for the upcoming 10-player round robin national championship scheduled for October 24-26.**

This intense competition brought together the country’s finest chess talents, all battling fiercely for coveted spots in the national championship. Candidate Master Smilo Hlophe of Lobamba Lomdzala dominated the early rounds, finishing the first day with a perfect score that underscored his status as the tournament’s top seed.

However, the spotlight was shared with the emerging prodigy Vukani Masuku, nicknamed “The Sheriff” from Hillside Chess Club. Their much-anticipated encounter in Round 4 was a highlight of the event, showcasing strategic depth and resilience. Masuku’s victory in a complex, equal-material endgame secured his qualification for the championship and marked him as a formidable contender.

Round 4 was a turning point filled with unexpected twists. The clash between 17-year-old junior runner-up Mabuza Nkosivile from Trojan Horse Chess Club and Dlamini Bonginkosi of Nhlangano Chess Club was particularly dramatic. Despite holding a significant material advantage, a full rook, Dlamini blundered and resigned immediately, handing the win to Mabuza in a stunning upset. Another notable surprise came from teammates Santiago DeNobrega and U20 national champion Ngwenya Kwanele. Santiago’s tactical rook sacrifice in the middle-game caught Ngwenya off guard, resulting in a painful defeat for the captain.

As the qualifiers approached their climax in Round 6, the top two seeds had essentially secured their championship spots. Yet, Masuku and Mabuza engaged in a tense battle on board one, ultimately agreeing to a draw that reflected their mutual respect and strategic caution.

The tournament’s most crucial game unfolded between Simelane Nhlanhla and Ngwenya Kwanele, both tied on three points and needed a win to advance. Ngwenya’s clever tactical play, gaining two pieces for a rook, tipped the scales in his favour during a gruelling endgame, clinching his place in the national championship.

The Eswatini Chess Federation’s qualifiers not only highlighted the country’s chess talent but also promised an exciting and competitive national championship ahead. Fans can look forward to witnessing these skilled players compete for the national title from October 24 to 26, 2025.

The players who have secured their spots for the national championship are:

- Open Section**
  - Hlophe Smilo (1859)
  - Mabuza Mbongeni (1831)
  - Sihlongonyane Sikhanyiso (1831)
  - Dlamini Simphiwe (1789)
  - Mabuza Nkosivile (1738)
  - Ngwenya Kwanele (1630)
  - Ariyawansa Sanjul (1628)
  - DeNobrega Santiago (1616)
  - Mdluli Mlondi (1541)
  - Masuku Vukani (unrated)
- Ladies Section players**
  - Sibisi Nomoebo (1553)
  - Dlamini Sinoobile (1549)
  - Nkwanyane Nolwazi (1547)
  - Mkhonto Nosimilo (1530)
  - Msibi Nokuthula (1413)
  - Ngozo Tivumile (unrated)
  - Mkhweli Siphosethu (unrated)
  - Hlophe Imelda (unrated)



TOTALENERGIES CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE:

The grand decider!

Stories By Chris Dlamini

IT is not over until the fat lady sings. This idiom is one that both TotalEnergies CAF Champions League 2025/26 rivals Nsingizini Hotspurs from Eswatini and Zimbabwe’s Simba Bhora, Mandla Qhogi and Joel Luphahla appeared to refer to in their post-match comments.

The gaffers anticipate a tougher second leg encounter this Sunday when they meet again at Somhlolo National Stadium in Eswatini.

Luphahla got the last laugh over the weekend, on Sunday to be precise, in the first leg at the Obed Itani Chilume Stadium in Francistown, Botswana. His team won 1-0 in what was an almost evenly contested affair.

“It’s a big result for us. This is the Champions League and every chance you get counts. We created chances and used one. Now we go to Eswatini, and we know it won’t be easy.

Plan

“We played a very good team, and they will definitely be very difficult at home. We must have a plan, and we know what we must do but it’s still going to be a very tough one,” said Luphahla.

He said they could have done better but their finishing was lacking and that was the main area to fix ahead of Sunday’s second leg.

“This is our first Champions League and my first too as a coach and Qhogi has more years in the coaching space than me,” Luphahla noted.

He further praised his players for their



▲ Simba Bhora FC head coach Joel Luphahla with team captain Mauchi.

showing and thanked all their supporters who travelled from Zimbabwe and those staying in Francistown for their cheers on the stands.

His counterpart, Qhogi minced no words: the narrow defeat was not the end, just like

Luphahla also acknowledged it.

“We lost and narrowly so. Yes, we didn’t play to the level we had expected but we created our chances too.

“This one is definitely not over, and we’ll give it everything to win it at home,” he

declared.

Qhogi said they were going to win and advance to the next round by hook or crook, come Sunday.

The second leg clash will kick off at 3pm at the country’s soccer Mecca, Somhlolo National Stadium at Lobamba.

“Coming to the game, we played well and I’m proud of my players. We have a chance to win at home after this result and at least we know our rivals and our own weaknesses to work on ahead of the second leg,” said Qhogi.

Questioned about the late substitutions, he explained that at 0-0, the game was balanced, and they did not want to make rash decisions. Nsingizini conceded almost an hour into the match as Bharaba and his defence could not deal with a cross floating into the box.

Open

The result means both sides still got work to do as the game remains open.

The team to win it on aggregate after the two legs will advance to the second preliminary stage against either Tanzania’s Simba SC or Botswana’s Gaborone United. The former managed a 1-0 away win against Gaborone United at the Obed Itani Chilume Stadium on Friday.

Meanwhile, Nsingizini was watched by its optimistic President Derrick Shiba and combined Eswatini teams’ supporters who travelled to Botswana.

Namibia’s Y. African set for Tuesday arrival

ESWATINI’S Royal Leopard opponents in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup Young African are expected to be in Eswatini on Tuesday.

The Namibia outfit confirmed it would be travelling early on Tuesday from Botswana to Eswatini for the second leg of the preliminary stage.

They play Leopard on Friday, September 26 at the Somhlolo National Stadium, Lobamba. Young African will be aiming to overturn the 2-0 first leg deficit suffered on Saturday at the Obed Itani Chilume Stadium in Francistown, Botswana.

“We will be undertaking the trip to Eswatini on Tuesday morning. We’ve already made our bookings there,” said the team’s Chairman Maleagi Ngarizemo confirmed on Sunday at

the Adansonia Hotel in Botswana.

Maleagi said they were looking forward to Eswatini as they were also about forming partnerships with African teams.

Meanwhile, his coach Woods Jacobs said he was not about to accept defeat, and it was his duty to instill that to his young and inexperienced players. “We are new here against an experienced side but 2-0 isn’t the end for us. We’re coming to Somhlolo to fight for qualification to the second round because I believe we can go through,” he said.

He added that they were going to come and enjoy football but with the purpose of advancing.

“If we fall, then it won’t be easy for Leopard to just go through,” he said.

The match is scheduled for a 3pm start.



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs president Derrick Shiba and sporting director Simon Phiri Ngomane with the new technical bench members.

We will win at home – Insingizi CEO

IMPOSSIBLE is nothing.

At least Nsingizini Hotspurs’ Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Banele Ngobe is optimistic ahead of the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League second leg tie at home to Zimbabwe champions Simba Bhora.

“I’m impressed and confident that with this performance, we will score one more goal at Somhlolo National Stadium and advance to the next round.

“They beat us narrowly in a game that was quite close. We can score two goals and go through,” he said.

Ngobe was speaking soon after the first leg match at Obed Itani Chilume Stadium in

Francistown, Botswana on Sunday. He said Bhora showed that they were already well competitive as their season was underway and they were leaders, while in Eswatini the league was yet to kick off.

Insingizi Yezulu, as the Shiselweni outfit is fondly known, is targeting the group stage as per their President, Derrick Shiba’s assertion.

“We can reach the group stage and that is our goal,” Shiba reiterated this to the Eswatini media at a briefing held at the Adansonia Hotel where the team was booked.



▲ Royal Leopard opponents in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup Young African.



**Dembele**  
*Page 19* **expected to beat Yamal to Ballon d'Or**



**Namibia's Y. African set for Tuesday arrival**  
*Page 23*



**Eswatini Daily News** Tuesday 23 September, 2025  
**Sport**

# The grand decider!

**Zimbabwe's Simba Bhora and Nsingizini Hotspurs coaches Joel Luphahla and Mandla Qhogi promise fireworks in the decisive TotalEnergies CAF Champions League preliminary round second leg at Somhlolo National Stadium on Sunday. *Page 23***