



By Kwanele Dhladhla

UNITED STATES President Donald Trump's administration has endorsed a one-year extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), offering a critical reprieve for sub-Saharan African economies, including Eswatini, where the trade pact supports over 20,000 jobs in the textiles and apparel sector.

■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2

A young woman with short, braided hair is crouching on a dirt path. She is wearing a blue long-sleeved soccer jersey with a logo on the chest and black sneakers with orange soles. She is looking up and to the right with a concerned expression. To her right, the legs of several people are visible, including one person wearing purple socks and black sneakers. The background is a dirt path with some dry grass and a concrete curb.



▲18 year-old Sanelisiwe Mphaphu who ran and won the army recruitment race and sat for her Form V English Paper 1 exam at Manzini Central High.

Page 4

A Rubicon Media Group publication



Bet

Born to win!

MBABANE RETAIL SHOP



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

NOW OPEN!








CASHIER








NO UNDER 18'S ALLOWED! WE PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GAMING


Lifeline for over 20 000 jobs

... as Trump endorses 1-year AGOA extension

By Kwanele Dhladhla

UNITED States President Donald Trump's administration has endorsed a one-year extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), offering a critical reprieve for sub-Saharan African economies, including Eswatini, where the trade pact supports over 20,000 jobs in the textiles and apparel sector.

Reuters on Wednesday reported that a White House official confirmed that the law, which was due to expire on Tuesday, would now remain in effect for an additional year.

First passed in 2000, AGOA provides duty-free access to the U.S. market for thousands of products from eligible African countries.



U.S. President Donald Trump.



Textile workers on the production line.

Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo strongly emphasised that Eswatini would continue positioning itself to take advantage of new trade arrangements.

"As we approach the conclusion of AGOA, it is important to reflect on both the potential impacts and the unique opportunities for Eswatini. AGOA has played a significant role in supporting thousands of jobs and livelihoods, particularly within textiles, which accounted for the majority of our US\$70 million (E1.2 billion) AGOA exports in 2024," Khumalo said.

The minister acknowledged that a per-

manent non-renewal of AGOA would mean the loss of duty-free and quota-free access. However, he stressed that Eswatini has negotiated a highly favorable reciprocal external tariff of just 10 per cent on exports to the United States, the lowest in the region.

"This makes Eswatini the most attractive location for U.S.-bound exports compared to our neighbors," he explained. "We anticipate not a net loss, but a net gain in investments and jobs as businesses seeking competitive access to the U.S. market consider relocating or expanding here."

According to the ministry, contingency measures were already in place to ensure

factory shells and industrial infrastructure remain operational in the event of a shift away from AGOA.

He pointed out that the government was also pushing for diversification in agro-processing, ICT, and renewable energy to cushion the economy from overreliance on textiles. An economist noted that the endorsement from Washington, as reported by Reuters, brought a sigh of relief to thousands of factory workers, particularly women, whose livelihoods depend on the textiles sector. He said it also reassures investors in the apparel value chain who had expressed concern over market uncertainties.



Eswatini sugar exports remain guaranteed under World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements.

Eswatini sugar cushioned by WTO deal, secures new markets in U.S

By Kwanele Dhladhla

ESWATINI'S sugar industry is set to remain resilient despite looming changes in U.S. trade arrangements, with its exports guaranteed under World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements.

Eswatini Sugar Chief Executive Officer Banele Nyamane welcomed President Trump's endorsement of the one-year AGOA extension as good news but noted that the country's sugar exports fall under WTO quotas rather than AGOA.

"The most affected products from Eswatini would have been the value-added products from sugar. Our raw sugar exports remain guaranteed, and we are further strengthening our position through new international markets," Nyamane explained.

Nyamane recently disclosed that from September 2025, Eswatini would export 16,500 tonnes of sugar annually to the U.S. under a recently concluded deal. Nyamane confirmed that despite the imposition of 10 per cent tariffs, the U.S. market remains at-

tractive. "We will still get better value from the United States compared to other markets," he said.

Eswatini Sugar has also scored a breakthrough in Angola, a market long dominated by Brazilian suppliers. Under SADC agreements, Angola has agreed to tariff-free imports from member states.

"Angola was a tough market, but safeguards now allow us entry. We already supply Namibia, so trucks can move seamlessly from Namibia into Angola," Nyamane said when delivering financial results for the 2024/2025 financial year.

Financially, the company reported revenues rising slightly from E7.4 billion to E7.7 billion, despite falling global sugar prices. After deducting costs, net proceeds of E7.3 billion will be distributed across the industry, with 68.1% going to cane growers and 31.9% to millers.

Nyamane described the results as a big achievement, adding that the rebrand from the Eswatini Sugar Association to Eswatini Sugar signals ambition to assert a stronger identity in regional and global markets.

"This position us to grow our footprint across Africa while securing high-value markets abroad," he said.

By Kwanele Dhladhla

THE Eswatini Cannabis Association (ECA) has written a formal letter to the government and Parliament of the Kingdom of Eswatini, demanding an immediate halt to the spraying of cannabis (dagga) fields with toxic herbicides until clear legal, environmental, and health-related justifications are provided.

In a strongly worded memorandum, which has been seen by Eswatini Daily News (EDN), the ECA states that recent reports of aerial and drone-based chemical spraying of cannabis fields, part of the state’s drug eradication efforts, represent a serious violation of Eswatini law, the national Constitution, and international environmental obligations.

The association contends that unless the government provides full transparency and legal compliance documents, the ongoing spraying campaigns remain unlawful, unsafe, and disproportionate, with potentially devastating consequences for rural communities, human health, biodiversity, and the environment.

The ECA raises alarm over the suspected use of highly toxic herbicides such as paraquat, glyphosate, and dicamba, which are known to cause acute poisoning, neurological disorders, and cancer.

According to the association, such chemicals, when sprayed from drones or aircraft, can result in spray drift, water contamination, biodiversity loss, and soil degradation, consequences that breach several pieces of domestic legislation, including the Pesticides Management Act of 2017, which prohibits the use of unregistered pesticides and requires licensed applicators, safety measures and strict oversight.

They also cited the Environment Management Act, which mandates that any harmful activity be subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approved by the Eswatini Environment Authority.

The association also cited the Constitution

Calls for govt to halt dagga fields spraying



▲ A dagga field. There has been a call by Eswatini Cannabis Association to stop spraying dagga fields using potentially harmful chemicals to the environment.

of Eswatini, which guarantees every citizen the right to a safe and healthy environment and access to clean water.

The ECA also condemned what it describes as a regressive and contradictory approach by the government in its handling of cannabis policy.

After the 2022 rejection of the Opium and Habit-Forming Drugs (Amendment) Bill No. 6 of 2020 due to a lack of consultation, the Ministry of Health was instructed to engage stakeholders to develop an inclusive, evidence-based Cannabis Bill.

Yet, in 2025, the government re-gazetted the same outdated 1922 law, again without meaningful consultation, particularly with rural cannabis growers who have the most

to lose.

Despite previous statements by Commerce, Industry, and Trade Minister Manqoba Khumalo that the cannabis bill would be restructured and divided among three ministries, Health, Commerce, and Agriculture, the ECA noted that none of these processes had materialised, while chemical eradication has been aggressively pursued.

ECA's call to government

The ECA’s letter to Parliament and relevant Ministries lays out a detailed list of demands that must be met before any further spraying can proceed:

1. Legal Authority

Government must cite the statutory provision permitting chemical spraying of cannabis. Provide evidence that the herbicides are registered and approved for this specific use.

2. Environmental Safeguards

Submit a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approved by the Eswatini Environment Authority. Disclose mitigation plans for protecting soil, water, biodiversity, and nearby communities.

3. Health and Safety Measures

List of all chemicals to be used, with Safety Data Sheets (SDS). Proof that all applicators are trained, licensed, and equipped with protective gear. Emergency response plans for cases of community exposure or contamination.

4. Transparency and Accountability

Public maps showing targeted areas and spray schedules. Reports on post-spray residue monitoring and mechanisms for public complaints and testing.

5. Inclusive Cannabis Legislation

Immediate re-engagement with all cannabis stakeholders, particularly small-scale and indigenous growers. Development of a comprehensive Cannabis Bill that reflects Eswatini’s social, economic, and environmental realities — not outdated colonial laws.

UEDF to deal with ‘Stamp Fraud’ cheaters

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE cheating scandal that rocked the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF) recruitment race at Nkomiyahlaba Inkhundla has now escalated into a military police matter, with stern warnings issued against those involved.

Addressing participants and community members on Tuesday, the Recruiting Team leader, General Thabo Luhlanga, made it clear that the Defence Force would not allow dishonesty to compromise the credibility of its recruitment process.

“In the army, we have the Military Police, popularly known as MPs. They are going to get statements from the three ladies who were disqualified for cheating. These MPs will be able to get to the bottom of this stamp fraud and get everyone who is implicated,” said General Luhlanga.

The scandal emerged after investigations revealed that some female contestants in the ladies’ category had received verification stamps from male participants who had already reached the turning point of the 3.2km course. The stamps were then fraudulently presented at the finish line by the women, creating the false impression



▲ Three ladies from Nkomiyahlaba Inkhundla allegedly forged their stamps during the UEDF recruitment process.

that they had completed the full distance.

Disqualified

Three women, including the initially celebrated first-place finisher Nontobeko Sihlongonyane, have since been disqualified and face disciplinary action before the

Military Police.

General Luhlanga stressed that the incident not only violated the spirit of fair competition but also clashed with the values that define the Defence Force.

“The army is founded on discipline,

honesty, and integrity. Those who think they can cheat their way into the UEDF are mistaken. We will act firmly and fairly,” he said.

The men’s category, however, was given a clean bill of health after no irregularities were detected. Their results remain valid, and successful runners will proceed to the next stage of recruitment.

The General further announced that the ladies’ category will be rerun on 8 October 2025 at 14:00, under tighter supervision to prevent further misconduct. Additional monitoring measures will be put in place at the turning point and finish line to ensure the credibility of the rerun.

The scandal has drawn widespread attention, with community members condemning the act as a betrayal of trust.

“We are disappointed that such behaviour happened in front of the whole nation. Army recruitment is about proving strength, courage, and honesty. Those who cheated have embarrassed themselves,” said a community elder.

As the UEDF prepares for the ladies’ rematch, all eyes will now be on the Military Police investigation, which is expected to uncover whether more people were involved in the “stamp fraud” and bring them to book.

The unfolding drama has reminded army hopefuls across the country that recruitment is not only a test of physical fitness but also of character.

34 army hopefuls disqualified at Ekukhanyeni recruitment race

Stories By Thokozani Mazibuko

WHILE many celebrated their victories at the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF) recruitment race in Ekukhanyeni Inkhundla, disappointment was written on the faces of at least 34 hopefuls who were disqualified for failing to meet the required standards.

According to recruitment officials on the ground, the disqualified participants were found to have serious irregularities, ranging from lack of proper identification to falsified documents.

Some did not have national identity cards, while others presented bought passports and certificates. Shockingly, a few participants were discovered to be underage, while others did not belong to the Ekukhanyeni Inkhundla constituency, making them ineligible for the day's race.

One official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the army's recruitment process remains strictly merit-based and aims to ensure that only eligible and qualified candidates proceed. "We cannot compromise the integrity of this recruitment drive. The disqualified individuals either failed to provide proper documentation or attempted to cheat their way into the



▲ Lewis Hamilton celebrates with his dog after winning the race and the world championship

process. This is unacceptable," the official stressed.

The disqualification comes at a time when thousands of emaSwati youth are flocking to various tinkhundla across the country to seize the rare opportunity of joining the defence force. At each constituency, young men and women endure the gruelling 3.2-kilometre race, which is the first test before further stages of the recruitment.

Spectators at Ekukhanyeni expressed

mixed reactions. While some sympathised with the disqualified candidates many of whom had travelled long distances others welcomed the army's firm stance, saying it would deter dishonesty in the future.

"The rules are clear. If you don't meet the requirements, then you cannot proceed. It's unfortunate, but the army must be strict," said one resident, who had come to cheer for the participants.

Meanwhile, Siph Mamba (32) and

Ndumiso Sibandze (28), both from Nyakeni, shone in the men's category of the race, taking first and second place respectively, while several others secured their progression to the next phase of recruitment.

The UEDF recruitment exercise continues across different constituencies in the coming days, with officials emphasising that only genuine, eligible emaSwati youth will be considered.

'Hunger, poverty almost killed me' – winner

AGAINST all odds, 32-year-old Siph Mamba from Nyakeni emerged victorious in the 3.2-kilometre army recruitment race held at Ekukhanyeni Inkhundla on Tuesday, securing his place in the next phase of the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF) recruitment drive.

Mamba, who works at Montigny Investments in Bhunya, revealed that the journey to this triumph has been marked by hardship and perseverance. "Hunger and poverty almost killed me. I am the breadwinner at home and life has been very tough," he shared after the race. "I thank His Majesty King Mswati III for granting us young people this opportunity. It gives us hope to work for our country and support our families."

The seasoned athlete, who also runs with the His Majesty's Correctional Services (HMCS) team, stumbled three times at the starting point but refused to give up. With determination, he powered through the challenge to finish first in front of a cheering crowd.

His victory highlighted not just his athletic endurance but also the resilience of many young emaSwati who view the recruitment as a doorway out of unemployment and poverty.

Runner-up secures his spot

Close behind was Ndumiso Sibandze (28), also from Nyakeni, who claimed second place in the hotly contested race. Sibandze's strong performance ensured that he too advanced to the next stage of the army selection process.

The Ekukhanyeni recruitment race drew hundreds of hopefuls and spectators, with the atmosphere charged with anticipation and ex-



▲ 32-year-old Siph Mamba from Nyakeni.

citement. The 3.2km race, a crucial part of the army's recruitment procedure, continues to be one of the most competitive events in the national drive, testing both physical fitness and mental toughness.

For Mamba, this victory represents more than just athletic achievement. It symbolizes a chance at a brighter future. "Running today was not just about fitness, but survival. I ran with everything I had, because I knew this could change my life," he said.

As the army recruitment process continues across constituencies, stories like Mamba's are a reminder of the resilience, determination, and hope carried by many young emaSwati who see this opportunity as a lifeline.

Swazi Slojos athlete wins

MONTHS of discipline and commitment finally paid off for 24-year-old Bonginkhosi Steward, who emerged victorious in the army recruitment race held at Nkomiyahlaba Inkhundla.

The long-distance enthusiast, who is also a proud member of the Swazi Slojos Athletics Club, powered through the 3.2-kilometre challenge to secure first place and a ticket to the next stage of the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF) recruitment process.

Steward, speaking moments after crossing the finish line, attributed his success to his consistent training throughout the year.

"I have been preparing since January, running almost daily. Joining the Swazi Slojos gave me the discipline and motivation I needed. Today's win shows that hard work truly pays off," he said with a wide smile, still catching his breath.

The race drew hundreds of spectators from surrounding communities who cheered on the hopefuls, many of whom had been eagerly waiting for this rare opportunity to secure employment within the army. Competition was fierce, but Steward's endurance and pace gave him a decisive edge over the pack.

Finishing in second place was 26-year-old Thabiso Mavuso, also from Vusweni, who expressed pride in his effort despite narrowly missing the top spot. "I gave it my all and I'm proud of my performance. It's not just about winning, but also about proving that we are ready to serve the country," he said.

The Nkomiyahlaba Inkhundla race is part of the nationwide army recruitment exercise currently sweeping across Eswatini's constituencies. Hopefuls are required to outpace one another in a grueling 3.2 km



▲ Nkomiyahlaba Inkhundla winner Bonginkhosi Steward (24).

run, which serves as the first step in a series of physical and medical assessments that determine who qualifies for enlistment.

Local leaders hailed the event as a beacon of hope for young people, many of whom see the recruitment process as a chance to escape unemployment and poverty.

"Our youth need opportunities like this," said one community elder. "It gives them direction, discipline, and hope for a better future."

For Steward, the journey is far from over. He now prepares for the next demanding stages of the recruitment process. But for now, his victory stands as a testament to the rewards of preparation and perseverance.

Govt takes major step in cancer care advancement in Eswatini

By Thokozani Mazibuko

IN a groundbreaking move aimed at strengthening the country’s healthcare system, the Ministry of Health officially initiated the process of constructing a state-of-the-art Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine Structure at the Manzini Government Hospital in Moneni.

As the Breast Cancer Awareness Month begins on Wednesday, it has been stated that this development represents a critical investment in the fight against cancer and other non-communicable diseases in Eswatini.

The project was recently disclosed through a Microprojects tender document issued by the Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (ESPPRA).

The tender invites qualified consultants to submit proposals for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which has been described as a vital step to ensure the facility gets developed in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.

It was disclosed by Microprojects that the site earmarked for this facility was government-owned land in Moneni, Manzini region. It has been mentioned that the new structure will be a modern two-storey building, with an estimated footprint of 1,500 square metres, designed to house advanced oncology equipment and support facilities.

Facility

It was stated that the planned facility could include a comprehensive suite of specialised departments and support services, further expanding the scope and quality of care offered at the hospital.

The basement floor will accommodate a biomedical office, generator room, transformer room, medical waste room, and refuse area.

It was explained that on the ground floor, the facility will feature administrative offices, consultation rooms, three radiation bunkers, two brachytherapy rooms, and a radiation oncology unit, among other key features.

Once operational, it was explained that the facility was expected to significantly reduce the burden on patients who currently must travel long distances to South Africa, or even abroad, to access essential cancer treatment.

This new infrastructure stands to improve access to early diagnosis, treatment planning, and radiotherapy services, ultimately increasing survival rates and improving the quality of life for patients.

Cancer cases are on the rise in Eswatini, mirroring a global trend, and this project is a timely and strategic intervention. It supports the government’s ongoing efforts to strengthen non-communicable disease management, as outlined in the National Health Strategic Plan.

Moreover, it has been noted that the project will also contribute to capacity building through the employment and training of local health professionals, engineers, and technicians in radiotherapy and nuclear medicine, paving the way for



▲ Ministry of Health Principal Secretary Khanya Mabuza.

sustainable healthcare service delivery.

Microprojects emphasised that the Ministry of Health remains committed to ensuring that this project adheres to national environmental standards, hence the call for consultants to lead the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

Well-being

It was pointed out that this signals a strong commitment not only to medical excellence but also to environmental and community well-being.

“This development is more than just a new building; it is a symbol of hope, progress, and resilience. It marks a new chapter for healthcare in Eswatini and reflects the government’s dedication to delivering world-class medical services to all citizens. As this project moves forward, it brings with it the promise of better health outcomes, enhanced local medical expertise, and a stronger, more resilient health system for the people of Eswatini,” it was stressed.

“This development is more than just a new building; it is a symbol of hope, progress, and resilience. It marks a new chapter for healthcare in Eswatini and reflects the government’s dedication to delivering world-class medical services to all citizens”

BRAND VALUE POINT
We Create Complete BRANDING Solutions.

We create branding solutions

our services

LOGO DESIGN | CORPORATE IDENTITY | COMPANY PROFILE
FOLDERS | BUSINESS CARDS | NEWSLETTER | POSTER | ANNUAL
REPORTS | CALENDERS | BROCHURES | INVITATIONS
PROMOTIONAL GIFTS | SAFETY WEAR | LANYARDS | TICKETS
GAZEBOS | BANNERS
UV PRINTING | LARGE FORMAT | SCREEN PRINTING |
EMBROIDERY
ENGRAVING | SABLIMATION PRINT | DIGITAL PRINTING

brandvaluepoint@gmail.com
Contact Us +268 3402 0400- 79277887
Sidwashini Industrial site, Lilanga Complex Unit 7

By Delisa Magagula

Chrysha Fashions workers strike over unpaid wages

... Turned back at the gate

A labour dispute has erupted at Chrysha Fashions in Buhleni, where employees downed tools after accusing management of failing to pay them their full salaries.

The workers say they have since been dismissed from their jobs for embarking on the strike.

The dispute began last Friday, which was scheduled to be payday. Employees say the day passed without wages being deposited.

On Monday, only half the money was paid into their accounts and the balance never followed. For many, the delay was not new they allege that late or incomplete salaries have become a recurring problem at the factory.

“We worked the full month, but when payday came, they told us stories,” said one machinist who asked not to be named.

“On Monday they gave us half the money and promised the balance the next day. We are still waiting even now. How are we supposed to feed our children with half a salary?” said another worker.

“Rent is due, transport must be paid, and children need food. When the company fails to pay on time, everything collapses at home. We are treated like we don’t matter,” said one worker. The striking employees also expressed frustration at what they described as poor treatment by management.

Some accused the Human Resources department of ignoring their grievances and siding with foreign supervisors.

They allege that workplace conditions have worsened, with little communication when problems arise. “We tried to speak to HR, but they don’t listen. They are protecting the supervisors instead of helping us,” another worker claimed.

With no resolution in sight, the employees decided to stage a work stoppage.

Meanwhile Amalgamated Trade Union of Swaziland (ATUSWA) Secretary General, Wander Mkhonza, confirmed that the union had received reports from workers at the factory. However, he said the union is not formally organised at Chrysha Fashions.



▲ Workers in the country have protested for textile companies’ refusal to increase wages. (File picture)

“Only members report to the union. Non-members don’t. In my recollection we are not yet organised in this factory,” Mkhonza explained.

Strategy

He further expressed concern about the state of the textile and apparel industry in Eswatini, saying the government’s strategy of opening new factory shells without addressing persistent labour issues was unsustainable.

“We are concerned as a union about government’s failure to provide sustainable jobs and jobs that are decent and provide respectability, rather than just creating new

jobs while other factories are closing at the same time,” he said.

Mkhonza added that ATUSWA is calling for dialogue involving all stakeholders in the garment industry, including government, employers, and workers.

Conversation

“A conversation should be held where solutions to the litany of problems in the sector are addressed and resolved,” he said.

The strike at Chrysha Fashions comes amid broader concerns in the textile sector, one of Eswatini’s largest employers. While the industry has created thousands of jobs over the years, unions have repeatedly

raised issues of poor working conditions, low wages, and limited job security.

Workers at Chrysha Fashions argue that their situation reflects these challenges. “We came here because we were told this factory would give us opportunities. But instead, we suffer every month waiting for our money,” one worker said.

When reached for comment, Chrysha Fashions Manager Shyala confirmed the strike but disputed workers’ claims that wage delays were a recurring issue. The manager repeatedly refused to give her surname during an interview with this publication.

She said employees were turned back because they had refused to work. According to her, the non-payment was the result of a technical delay following a switch between the different banks the company uses.

“The money was not cleared at the Central Bank, which caused the delay. This is not something we are used to as a firm,” she said.

Shyala further stressed that the company usually pays on time and rejected suggestions that this was a repeat offence.

She firmly denied unfair treatment and rampant dismissal of employees. The manager said workers saying otherwise were trying to damage the firm’s reputation and lying on their name.

Worth noting is that, this is not the first-time textile firms in Eswatini have been accused of failing to meet wage obligations.

At Davinscot Clothing in Matsanjeni, workers reported being paid only a portion of their wages in some months due to cash-flow problems, with complaints later lodged at the Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration Commission (CMAC).

In another case at Wise and Presidents Garments in Matsapha, employees alleged that they were locked inside the factory and forced to work overtime that was never paid, claims the management disputed.

START YOUR DAY IN THE KNOW WITH CURRENT NEWS!

Keep yourself updated with recent going-ons by subscribing to **Eswatini Financial Times** and **Eswatini Sunday**. They are conveniently delivered to your doorstep.

REQUIRE OUR PRODUCT DELIVERED AT YOUR OFFICE? NO WORRIES, WE CAN ARRANGE THAT!

Reach out to our Subscriptions Team today and begin your subscription journey!

Contact us @ (+268) 7912 8965

You have read the rest, now read the best

Eswatini Daily News

Now Available on Press Reader

An International Newspaper Platform

www.eswatinidailynews.com

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Suppliers to be paid in full for the rest of the year

THE government has announced that all suppliers owed money for goods and services will be fully paid before the end of the current financial year. Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg confirmed that the new loan facilities have already been secured and those awaiting parliamentary approval are designed to ensure cash flow stability and restore confidence among local businesses.

Oil falls as OPEC+ plan adds to expectations of supply surplus

LONDON — Oil prices fell on Tuesday ahead of another anticipated production increase by OPEC+ and as the resumption of oil exports from Iraq's Kurdistan region via Turkey reinforced market expectations of a supply surplus. Brent crude futures for November delivery, expiring on Tuesday, fell \$1.03, or 1.5 per cent, to \$66.94 a barrel by 1211 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was trading at \$62.21 a barrel, down \$1.24, or 2 per cent.

Dollar dented by twitchy investors

LONDON — The U.S. dollar held firm on Tuesday ahead of a likely U.S. government shutdown that could disrupt the release of the monthly jobs report this week, while the Australian dollar was the top-performing major currency of the day after the central bank sounded a cautious note on inflation. Investor focus is on the impending U.S. shutdown. Government funding expires at midnight on Tuesday (0400 GMT) unless Republicans and Democrats agree to a last-minute temporary spending deal.



Notes/Cash

	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.8918	17.3571
G.B. Pound	22.6842	23.3581
EURO	19.8593	20.4742
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	

Nedbank Eswatini assets grow to E8.3 billion

By Delisa Magagula

NEDBANK Eswatini's balance sheet strengthened as total assets increased 9 percent to E8.3 billion in June 2025.

The rise in assets was supported by higher customer deposits, which grew 11 percent to E6.2 billion and loan growth of 13 percent to E4.1 billion. Cash and balances with the central bank reached E1.3 billion compared to E1.1 billion in December 2024.

This is according to Nedbank Eswatini Limited's published results for the six months ended June 30, 2025, as released to stakeholders on August 29, 2025.

The report mentions that, shareholders' equity climbed to E1.05 billion from E1.0 billion, reflecting retained earnings and headline earnings of E63.2 million for the reporting period. Net asset value advanced by 16.8 percent compared to June 2024.

On the liabilities side, borrowings rose to E365.5 million, up from E347.1 million in December 2024, while other liabilities moved to E348.9 million compared to E295.6 million.

Earnings per share increased to 247 cents from 239 cents, with return on equity improving to 18.1 percent. The cost-to-income ratio remained stable at 67.4 percent.

The liquidity coverage ratio stood at 155 percent, maintaining a strong buffer above regulatory thresholds. The bank's capital and reserves reached E1.05 billion, up from E1.0 billion at the end of December 2024.

Net interest income rises by 7.7 %

Nedbank Eswatini posted a 7.7 per cent increase in net interest income, reaching E247.0 million from E229.4 million.

Net interest income rose by E17.6 million compared to the prior period, driven by loan book growth of 13 percent.

Customer loans and advances increased to E4.1 billion in June 2025 from E3.6 billion in December 2024. Deposits rose by 11 per cent, moving from E5.6 billion in December 2024 to E6.2 billion.

Headline earnings improved by 3.5 per cent, closing at E63.2 million, compared to E61.0 million in June 2024. Operating income grew 2.9 per cent, while operating expenses were contained, moving marginally from E217.9 million to E218.2 million.

The bank's return on equity stood at 18.1 per cent compared to 17.6 per cent in June 2024. Earnings per share rose slightly from 239 cents to 247 cents.

The cost-to-income ratio remained steady at 67.4 per cent compared to 67.3 percent in June 2024. Credit loss ratio declined by 70 basis points, closing at 0.41 per cent from 1.11 per cent previously.

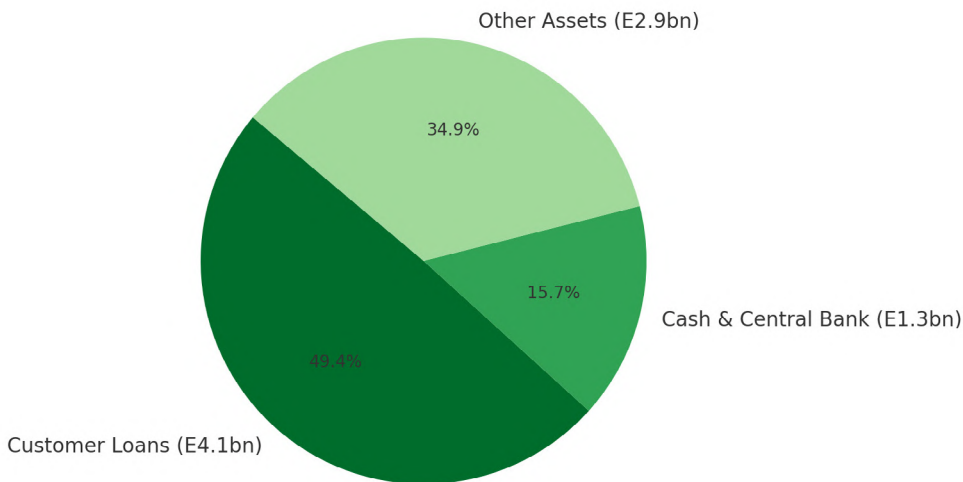
The report further stated that, customer deposits at Nedbank Eswatini grew strongly, rising 11 per cent to E6.2 billion in June 2025 from E5.6 billion.

The increase in deposits strengthened liquidity, with cash and balances at the central bank rising to E1.3 billion compared to E1.1 billion in December 2024.



▲Nedbank Eswatini Managing Director Fikile Nkosi.

Nedbank Eswatini - Asset Composition (June 2025)



Balances with other banks and financial institutions stood at E1.3 billion, down from E1.5 billion.

"Total assets increased by 9 percent, moving to E8.3 billion in June 2025 from E7.6 billion at the end of 2024. Loans and advances to customers rose 13 percent, closing at E4.1 billion compared to E3.6 billion in December 2024," read the report in part.

Capital adequacy remained robust at 15.1 percent, above regulatory requirements, though slightly down from 17.1 percent in December 2024. Shareholders' equity rose modestly to E1.05 billion compared to E1.0 billion.

Non-interest revenue advanced 16.8 percent to E149.5 million from E127.9 million, supported by growth in fee and commission income.

Operating income climbed to E465.5 million compared to E452.2 million in June 2024.

Nedbank Eswatini credit losses declines by 70 basis points

Nedbank Eswatini recorded a sharp decline in credit loss ratio, down 70 basis points to 0.41

percent from 1.11 percent.

Impairment charges on loans reduced to E8.4 million from E19.5 million in June 2024, reflecting improved asset quality. Loans and advances to customers grew 13 per cent to E4.1 billion, while non-performing loans stood at E221.0 million.

Headline earnings increased 3.5 per cent, reaching E63.2 million compared to E61.0 million last year. Net asset value grew 16.8 percent to E1.05 billion, supported by retained earnings and profit growth.

Return on assets was steady at 1.5 per cent compared to 1.6 percent in June 2024, while return on equity improved by 50 basis points to 18.1 per cent.

Non-interest revenue contributed E149.5 million, up 16.8 per cent from E127.9 million, largely driven by fee income. Total operating expenses rose marginally to E218.2 million from E217.9 million.

The bank's liquidity coverage ratio strengthened to 155 percent, comfortably above minimum requirements. Cash generated from operating activities amounted to E155.6 million.

Suppliers to be paid in full for the rest of the year

By Delisa Magagula

THE government has announced that all suppliers owed money for goods and services will be fully paid before the end of the current financial year.

Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg confirmed that the new loan facilities have already been secured and those awaiting parliamentary approval are designed to ensure cash flow stability and restore confidence among local businesses.

For many companies, particularly small enterprises, arrears have constrained operations and limited their ability to expand.

Speaking during an interview, Rijkenberg said the repayment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan was completed, freeing the government to focus resources on clearing obligations to local suppliers.

“Our commitment is that these two loans will settle arrears once and for all. If that happens, we will be able to settle arrears in the country and we believe that will be the last of arrears,” he stated.

The government has tabled two additional loan Bills for approval, E865 million (US\$50 million) facility from OPEC and an E821.7 million (US\$47.5 million) facility from the African Development Bank (AfDB).

These loans will complement the E1.73 billion (US\$100 million) World Bank facility secured earlier this year. Together, the financing is expected to provide enough liquidity to pay outstanding suppliers.

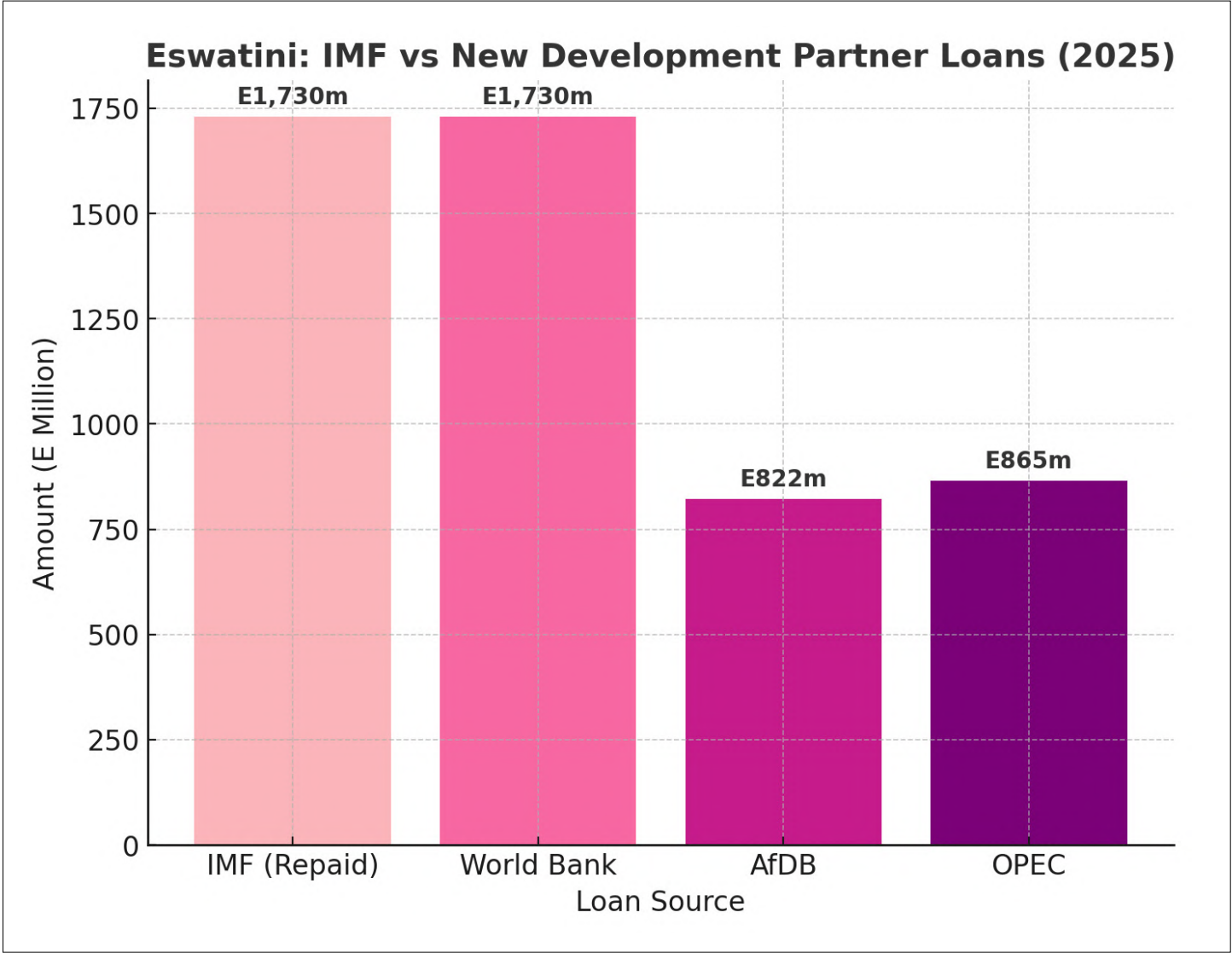
For local businesses, the announcement is a welcome development. Many firms have endured long delays in government payments, forcing them to rely on overdrafts and costly short-term borrowing.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), often most vulnerable to cash flow shocks, have been particularly affected.

One supplier of medical equipment, who asked not to be named, said arrears had been a heavy strain on operations:

“We’ve had to stretch our credit lines just to keep stock moving. If these payments come through this year, it will take real pressure off us,” said one of Government’s suppliers.

▶ *Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg.*



Another contractor in the construction sector noted, that they have been waiting for government to be paid.

“We’ve been waiting close to a year for some invoices to be cleared. The commitment to pay all suppliers before year-end gives us hopes we can plan projects without so much uncertainty,” said the contractor.

Eswatini’s fiscal strategy has shifted away from IMF reliance toward concessional loans from multilateral development institutions.

The IMF loan, taken during a period of fiscal stress, has now been fully repaid. This repayment, while not immediately visible to businesses, signals restored stability in external debt obligations.

Rijkenberg explained that the IMF repayment was pragmatic in the crisis context, but the current focus is on boosting liquidity for domestic commitments.

“History has now also shown over the last period that we have stopped the accumulation of arrears,” he noted, adding that fiscal discipline has improved over the past seven years.

Economists view the decision as both necessary and risky. Dr. Sibusiso Dlamini, a Mbabane-based economic analyst, said the shift to development bank loans buys government space to stabilize cash flow.

“Clearing arrears will be a confidence booster for the private sector. But Eswatini must ensure that the new borrowing is matched with fiscal reforms, otherwise the risk of arrears returning remains,” he cautioned.

Another economist, Nombulelo Mabuza, pointed out that arrears repayment has a multiplier effect.

“When suppliers are paid, they can pay their workers and creditors, which stimulate domestic demand. It’s not just a financial transaction; it’s a catalyst for economic activity,” said Mabuza.

Government data shows that arrears, once a recurring problem, have been steadily reduced since 2018.

The finance minister credited this to strict control of expenditure and measures to curb overspending.

“We also believe arrears will be a thing of the past once these loans are approved and paid out,” Rijkenberg said.

The repayment of the IMF loan also frees

fiscal space for government to engage with development partners under more favorable terms.

Unlike IMF lending, loans from the World Bank, AfDB, and OPEC typically carry lower interest rates and longer repayment periods, easing the burden on state finances.

The government views the clearance of arrears as more than a financial measure it is also a step toward restoring credibility with the private sector.

By paying suppliers in full for the rest of the year, authorities hope to demonstrate reliability and rebuild trust in government contracts.

Business leaders say consistency will be key. “Payment this year is welcome, but what we want to see is a system where arrears never build up again,” said a supplier of agricultural inputs. The finance minister emphasized that fiscal reforms will continue to underpin stability.

“We have avoided overspending in recent years, which should prevent arrears from recurring,” he said.

This assurance is expected to reassure both domestic businesses and international lenders of Eswatini’s fiscal direction.

Eswatini’s repayment of the IMF loan, combined with new financing from the World Bank, AfDB, and OPEC, marks a turning point in the country’s fiscal management. With E3.4 billion in new loans lined up, government has pledged that all suppliers will be paid in full before the year ends.

For businesses, this pledge offers the prospect of improved cash flow and renewed confidence in the state as a reliable partner.

Oil falls as OPEC+ plan adds to expectations of supply surplus

By Enes Tunagur

LONDON — Oil prices fell on Tuesday ahead of another anticipated production increase by OPEC+ and as the resumption of oil exports from Iraq's Kurdistan region via Turkey reinforced market expectations of a supply surplus.

Brent crude futures for November delivery, expiring on Tuesday, fell \$1.03, or 1.5 per cent, to \$66.94 a barrel by 1211 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was trading at \$62.21 a barrel, down \$1.24, or 2 per cent.

The drops extend Monday's falls when both Brent and WTI settled more than 3 per cent lower, their sharpest daily declines since August 1.

Selling pressure intensified as OPEC+ sources hinted at another output hike, after prices declined following the resumption of Iraq's Kurdistan region's crude oil exports via Turkey, PVM analyst Tamas Varga said.



▲ Pump jacks operate in an oil field in Midland, Texas U.S.

In a meeting scheduled for Sunday, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, together known as OPEC+, will likely approve

another oil production increase of at least 137,000 barrels per day, three sources familiar with the talks said.

Goldman Sachs on Tuesday said that

it expects OPEC+ to raise oil production quotas by 140,000 barrels per day for November.

Meanwhile, crude oil flowed on Saturday through a pipeline from the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq to Turkey for the first time in 2-1/2 years, after an interim deal broke a deadlock, Iraq's oil ministry said.

The market has remained cautious in recent weeks, balancing supply risks, mainly arising from Ukraine's drone attacks on Russian refineries, with expectations of oversupply and weak demand.

Elsewhere, U.S. President Donald Trump won Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's support for a U.S.-backed Gaza peace proposal, but the stance of Hamas was uncertain.

In an ideal scenario, shipping traffic through the Suez Canal would return to normal following a Gaza peace deal, which would remove a significant portion of the geopolitical risk premium, PVM's Varga said.

Adding to the bearish sentiment, the potential risk of a U.S. government shutdown has raised demand concerns, said ANZ analysts in a note on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Dollar dented by twitchy investors over threat of US shutdown

By Amanda Cooper

LONDON — The U.S. dollar held firm on Tuesday ahead of a likely U.S. government shutdown that could disrupt the release of the monthly jobs report this week, while the Australian dollar was the top-performing major currency of the day after the central bank sounded a cautious note on inflation.

Investor focus is on the impending U.S. shutdown. Government funding expires at midnight on Tuesday (0400 GMT) unless Republicans and Democrats agree to a last-minute temporary spending deal.

The U.S. Labor and Commerce departments said their statistics agencies would halt economic data releases in the event of a partial government shutdown, including closely watched employment data for September.

The payrolls report, scheduled for Friday, is crucial for decision-making by policymakers at the Federal Reserve, and a delay could leave the central bank flying blind on the labour market. A delay could generate extra market volatility, as uncertainty among investors increases.

"For markets, this means trading in the near term without one of the most important indicators of U.S. economic health," said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

Markets show traders are pricing in at least one more U.S. rate cut this year, most likely in October, with a strong chance of a second by year-end. Data later on Tuesday includes a monthly report on job vacancies



▲ Traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City, U.S.

for September that is expected to show 7.185 million openings.

MUFG strategist Lee Hardman said the dollar was coming under pressure from growing U.S. political uncertainty. The dollar index, which has already fallen nearly 10 per cent this year, was last down 0.1 per cent on the day at 97.82.

The Japanese yen shook off a bout of overnight weakness to leave the dollar down 0.4 per cent at 148.02 yen. Investors considered the Bank of Japan's summary of opinions for its September meeting at which the central bank debated the possibility of a near-term rate hike. Markets show traders currently place a 60 per cent chance on a December rise.

Strategists at ING say selling the dollar against yen could prove a popular play should the U.S. government shutdown materialise. The pair has risen 0.7 per cent this month, as the dollar has muscled higher, but has fallen nearly 6 per cent so far in 2025, as investors have bought into the idea that Japanese rates are likely to slowly rise, while those in the United States fall. (Reuters)



▲ The Anglo American logo.

Namibia cautious about taking up a stake in De Beers, local media report

WINDHOEK — Namibia will carefully consider whether or not to acquire a stake in De Beers as the diamond price slump persists, local media reported on Monday, citing the country's deputy prime minister.

The diamond giant has been put up for sale by Anglo American as the parent company restructures its portfolio to focus on copper and iron ore. Anglo said on September 9 that it was pursuing a merger with Canada's Teck Resources to create a copper heavyweight.

De Beers had by June attracted interest from at least six prospective investors, while Angola's state diamond company Endiama announced on September 24 it had bid for a minority stake in the company.

Angola has said it wants a broad ownership structure for De Beers, which would include Botswana, South Africa and Namibia - countries where the company operates.

The Namibian government and De Beers each own 50 per cent of Namdeb Holdings, which produced 2.2 million carats of rough

diamonds in 2024, about 9 per cent of De Beers' group output last year.

Namibia's Deputy Prime Minister Nantangwe Ithete, who is also responsible for mines, told online financial news outlet The Brief that the country needed to assess the diamond industry, whose prospects have been dimmed by synthetic diamonds and weak demand.

"To be honest, the diamond industry is going down. It is not a secret that the industry is under pressure and affected by the so-called lab diamonds, the synthetic diamonds," Ithete said.

"So this is something we need to study very carefully, to determine whether it is worth pursuing or not," he added.

Neighbouring Botswana, which holds a 15 per cent stake in De Beers, is also pursuing a controlling interest in the company.

Anglo American values De Beers at about \$4.9 billion, after recording \$3.5 billion in impairments over the past two years, but current market pressures may lead to lower offers. (Reuters)

Morocco squashes youth-led protesters over health, education

A heavy security presence on Monday evening thwarted for a straight third day youth-led protests across several Moroccan cities, where demonstrators have sought to rally for improvements to the public health and education systems.

The protests were organized online by a loosely formed anonymous youth group calling itself “GenZ 212,” using platforms including TikTok, Instagram and gaming application Discord.

The government and judicial authorities have not yet communicated on the incidents and arrests and the interior ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

On Monday evening, dozens were arrested as authorities prevented the group from holding protests in cities including Rabat, Casablanca, Agadir, Tangier and Oujda.

In Rabat, a Reuters witness saw plainclothes officers arresting young protesters as they tried to chant slogans or speak to the press.

The president of a child protection association, Najat Anouar, was arrested as she was speaking to media and released two hours later.

“I came here to investigate allegations

that the under-age have been arrested and got arrested myself,” she told Reuters.

One group of protesters in downtown Rabat briefly managed to shout “freedom, dignity, and social justice”, a slogan echoing the 2011 demonstrations that prompted a constitutional reform devolving more powers from the Moroccan monarchy to the elected government.

“We want a better health system and accountability,” said Brahim, 25, moments before fleeing as police sought to prevent people joining the protest.

On Sunday night in Casablanca, protesters briefly blocked a major highway, while in Agadir, videos circulating on social media showed police dispersing students near the university campus.

The recent wave of youth anger was sparked by earlier protests in Agadir over poor hospital conditions, which quickly spread to other cities.

Demonstrators have denounced inadequate care, understaffed facilities, and a lack of medical resources.

Morocco’s unemployment rate stands at 12.8%, with youth unemployment reaching 35.8% and 19% among graduates, according to the national statistics agency.

(Reuters)



▲ Police officers detain a young man who wanted to protest for better healthcare and education services, in Rabat, Morocco.

Madagascar president dissolves government following deadly protests

MADAGASCAR President Andry Rajoelina said on Monday he was dissolving the government following youth-led protests over water and power cuts in which the United Nations says at least 22 people have been killed and more than 100 injured. Inspired by the so-called “Gen Z” protests in Kenya and Nepal, the three days of demonstrations are the largest the Indian Ocean island has seen in years, and the most serious challenge Rajoelina has faced since his re-election in 2023.

“We acknowledge and apologise if members of the government have not carried out the tasks assigned to them,” Rajoelina said in speech on state broadcaster Televiziona Malagasy (TVM).

The president said he wanted to create space for dialogue with young people, and promised measures to support businesses affected by looting.

“I understand the anger, the sadness, and the difficulties caused by power cuts and water supply problems. I heard the call, I felt the suffering, I understood the impact on daily life,” he said.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said the casualties include protesters and bystanders killed by members of the security forces, but also others killed in subsequent widespread violence and looting by individuals and gangs not associated with the protesters. Madagascar’s ministry of foreign affairs rejected the casualty figures reported by the UN, saying the data did not come from competent national authorities “and are based on rumors or misinformation.”

On Monday protesters gathered at a university where they waved placards and sang the national anthem before attempting to



▲ A protester throws back a tear gas canister lobbed by Malagasy riot police during a demonstration denouncing frequent power outages and water shortages, near the University of Antananarivo, Madagascar march towards the city centre, footage from 2424.MG news channel showed.

Police fired teargas to disperse the crowd, after authorities declared a dusk-to-dawn curfew last week.

The protesters have adapted a flag used in Nepal where protesters forced the prime minister to resign this month and have also used similar online organisation tactics as protests in Kenya last year that culminated in the government scrapping proposed tax legislation.

Rajoelina first came to power in a 2009 coup. He stepped down in 2014 but became president again after winning the 2018 election, and secured a third term in a December 2023 poll that his challengers said was marred by irregularities.(Reuters)

ESWATINI MEAT INDUSTRIES



Quality You Can Trust in Every Pot

From Stews to Grills, Beef That Delivers Every Time

CALL US AT 79839783

FILLET SUPER



STEWING BEEF SUPER



CHUCK SUPER



BRISKET SLICED



Hurry in Store! Available in all Embiveni Meat Markets

Making Meal Times Special



SPOTIFY founder-CEO Daniel Ek will step down to become executive chairman in January, the Swedish streaming company said on Tuesday as it named longtime executives Gustav Soderstrom and Alex Norstrom as co-CEOs.

The leadership change comes as Spotify expands into podcasts and audiobooks amid questions over how it will balance growth and profitability. Its U.S. shares were down about 3% after gaining 63% this year.

“Ek leaves the CEO role on a high note, with big boots to fill for the incoming CEOs,” said PP Foresight analyst Paolo Pescatore.

As executive chairman, Ek will focus on capital allocation and long-term strategy in what the company called a European-style chairman role.

He is one of Europe’s most prominent tech entrepreneurs, having built Spotify into a rare global consumer technology leader from the region.

The billionaire said he will continue to steer the company’s strategy. “I will be more involved than a typical US chairman. So think of it a little bit like moving from a player to a coach,” said Ek, who has been on the company’s board since 2008.

Spotify remains the clear market leader with nearly 700 million monthly users and more than 100 million tracks, far ahead of Apple Music’s roughly 90 million subscribers.

But it faces competition from YouTube Music’s vast video-integrated catalog and Amazon Music’s Prime-linked offerings, which give rivals distinct advantages in certain markets.

Despite Spotify’s dominance, pressure on profit margins have persisted as artists push for higher payouts and the ad-supported tier

Spotify founder Ek to step down as CEO to focus on long-term strategy

expands. Global revenue from recorded music rose 4.8% to \$29.6 billion in 2024. Streaming exceeded \$20 billion for the first time and subscription streaming accounted for more than half of it, according to IFPI’s Global Music Report.

FROM STARTUP TO GIANT

Founded in 2006, Stockholm-based Spotify helped transform a music industry that had been shrinking for years due to piracy and falling CD sales. Its U.S. debut in 2011 came as industry revenue had slumped.

Still, the company reported its first annual profit only in 2024, after a slew of price increases and cost-cutting efforts.

Billionaire Ek is often cited as a champion of Europe’s ability to produce companies that can compete with U.S. and Asian tech giants.

Soderstrom, currently chief product and technology officer, oversees global tech strategy and product development, while Norstrom, as chief business officer, manages subscriber and advertising businesses along with music, podcast and audiobook operations.

They will report to Ek who also serves on the board. The three executives have worked together for a decade and a half.

“Norstrom is deeply interested in knowledge about product, and I’m very interested in business,” Soderstrom said. “So we run this as a single team.

Several high-profile firms such as Oracle, opens new tab and Netflix, opens new tab have adopted a co-CEO model to better



▲ Spotify’s Co-founder and CEO Daniel Ek attends a live recording panel at Acquired, a technology podcast, at the Chase Center in San Francisco, California, U.S.

manage their operations as they become more complex and globally diversified.

“The big unknown is why Spotify needs an executive chairman and two chief executives

as that conjures up the idea that too many cooks spoil the broth,” said Dan Coatsworth, investment analyst at AJ Bell.

(Reuters)

Singtel says Optus CEO needs time to fix issues after emergency call outages

OPTUS’S CEO will need more time to get its house in order, the boss of parent Singapore Telecommunications said on Tuesday, after back-to-back emergency call outages in Australia intensified scrutiny of the Australian telecom carrier’s governance.

The two outages that occurred less than a fortnight apart affected thousands of Australian customers and the first outage has been linked to four deaths because customers were unable to get timely aid.

The incidents deepen Optus’s reputational crisis following a nationwide outage in 2023, a 2022 cyberattack that compromised data of millions of customers, and an A\$100 million (\$65.8 million) penalty imposed this year for sales misconduct.

Singtel boss Yuen Kuan Moon met with Australian authorities on Tuesday, amid calls from some analysts and lawmakers for Optus CEO Stephen Rue to resign and Optus to be stripped of its operating licence.

Asked by journalists whether Rue still had his support, Yuen said it would take time to fix the problems at the No. 2 Australian telecoms firm. The CMA said the proposed changes would give businesses greater clarity and flexibility, while ensuring that licensing deals do not harm competition.

The watchdog wants to remove outdated references to “utility models” and include newer rights such as database copyrights.

Under the proposed framework, agreements could qualify for exemption either by meeting existing market share thresholds or by demonstrating the presence of at least three competing technologies.

“We brought in Stephen 11 months ago to transform Optus, to really address the issues that we had since 2022-23,” Yuen told reporters in Sydney after talks with Communications Minister Anika Wells.

“It is very early days. It takes time to trans-



▲ People walk past an Optus store in Sydney, Australia.

form a company.”

Shares in Singtel, majority owned by Temasek Holdings, fell as much as 2% in early trade before recovering and were up 0.2% on Tuesday afternoon.

The latest disruption to Optus’ services interrupted emergency triple zero calls and affected around 4,500 people over a few hours early on Sunday.

Optus said in a statement late on Tuesday that equipment made by Sweden’s Ericsson (ERICB.ST), opens new tab used in a cell tower south of Sydney “did not appear to

operate as it should” on Sunday by failing to detect that 4G services were offline.

The statement added that both firms were working to understand the outage’s root cause, and a review of all Ericsson equipment used by Optus found “what has occurred on this cell site is an anomaly”.

Sunday’s outage came just 10 days after a botched firewall upgrade triggered an outage lasting 13 hours that disrupted emergency calls in two states and the Northern Territory and was linked to four deaths.

Optus Chairman John Arthur said the fail-

ure was not caused by a lack of investment from owner Singtel. Yuen said the deadly outage was due to a “people issue”.

“The 18 September incident is due to a people issue and it takes time to transform and change the people,” Yuen said.

‘VERY SERIOUS’

Wells, the communications minister, said there was a “very serious lack of confidence” in Optus to deliver triple zero calls.

“The CEO of Optus now needs to work with their parent company Singtel on the systems and holistic change required within their own company to give that confidence back to Australians,” she said.

She called for an external party to review its systems “so Australians can take advice not just from Optus themselves”.

In a statement, Optus said consulting firm Kearney had been appointed to immediately begin providing external oversight, quality assurance and verification of its mobile network. The TTBER allows companies to share and license technology, such as patents or software, under certain conditions without breaching competition law.

“Technology transfer agreements can often be pro-competitive and can benefit innovation, investment and growth... but certain clauses within such agreements can also have negative effects on competition,” the CMA said in its final recommendation to business and trade minister Peter Kyle.

Britain retained the TTBER after leaving the European Union, but it was under review as part of the government’s efforts to tailor its regulatory regime to boost economic growth.

Former Optus CEO Kelly Bayer Rosmarin was ousted over the nationwide outage of Optus services in 2023. Rue took the reins in November 2024 and was tasked with improving service standards for customers.

(Reuters)

Hegseth slams ‘fat generals,’ says U.S. officers should resign if they don’t support

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth slammed “fat generals” and diversity initiatives that he said led to decades of decay in the military and told a rare gathering of commanders on Tuesday they should resign if they don’t support his agenda.

“Foolish and reckless political leaders set the wrong compass heading and we lost our way. We became the ‘Woke Department,’” Hegseth said as he kicked off the event in Quantico, Virginia. “But not anymore,” he said.

Addressing a room full of America’s top generals and admirals, summoned from around the world without explanation last week, Hegseth defended his firings of flag officers, which include the top U.S. general, who was Black, and the Navy’s top admiral, who was a woman. He said the officers he relieved were part of a broken culture.

He promised sweeping changes to how discrimination complaints are handled and how accusations of wrongdoing are investigated at the Pentagon, saying the current system has top brass walking on “egg shells.”

“If the words I’m speaking today are making your hearts sink, then you should do the honorable thing and resign,” Hegseth said.

“I know the overwhelming majority of you feel the opposite. These words make your hearts full.”

Hegseth criticized the look of overweight troops, saying: “It’s completely unacceptable to see fat generals and admirals in the halls of the Pentagon.”

He said all fitness tests would be set to



▲ U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth speaks to senior military leaders at Marine Corps Base Quantico.

male benchmarks only and emphasized the importance of grooming standards.

“The era of unprofessional appearance is over. No more beardos,” Hegseth told the audience, which sat in silence.

TRUMP TELLS COMMANDERS: I HAVE YOUR BACKS

President Donald Trump, as he departed for the event, told reporters on Tuesday that he would fire military leaders on the spot if he did not like them.

Trump then opened with a joke as he took the stage, saying: “If you don’t like what I’m

saying, you can leave the room, of course, there goes your rank, there goes your future.”

But he then spoke warmly of the military, in sometimes wandering remarks praising the prowess of U.S. nuclear submarines, his creation of the U.S. military’s Space Force and recent success in U.S. military recruiting.

“I am with you. I support you, and as president, I have your backs 100%,” Trump said.

The auditorium was filled with senior uniformed officials, seated in front of a stage

with a large American flag, a lectern and boards that read: “Strength. Service. America.”

REVAMP OF DEFENSE PRIORITIES?

The Pentagon has undergone eight months of blistering changes since Trump took office, including firings, banning books from academy libraries and ordering lethal strikes on suspected drug boats off Venezuela.

Earlier this month, Trump signed an executive order to rename the Department of Defense the “Department of War,” reverting to a title it held until after World War Two when officials sought to emphasize the Pentagon’s role in preventing conflict.

Military leaders attending the gathering will be under public scrutiny for any reaction to overtly political comments made by Trump, who has often dragged the military into political issues.

The U.S. military is meant to be apolitical, loyal to the U.S. Constitution and independent of any party or political movement.

The administration has announced a plan to send National Guard deployments to Chicago, the latest U.S. city where Trump aims to deploy U.S. troops despite objections from local authorities.

Trump announced plans to send National Guard troops to Portland, Oregon, over the weekend and sent Guard and active-duty Marines to Los Angeles earlier this year, despite protests from local officials.

Speaking to Reuters on Sunday, Trump described the Quantico meeting as an “esprit de corps,” opens new tab

(Reuters)

Hamas under pressure as Trump issues deadline on Gaza peace plan



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

U.S. President Donald Trump gave Hamas three to four days on Tuesday to accept a U.S.-backed peace plan for Gaza, warning of “a very sad end” if the group rejected the proposal that he said was close to ending the two-year-old conflict.

Mediators Qatar and Egypt shared the 20-point plan with Hamas late on Monday after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had appeared alongside Trump at the White House and endorsed the document, saying it satisfied Israel’s war aims.

Hamas was not involved in the negotiations that led to the proposal, which calls

on the Islamist militant group to disarm, a demand it has previously rejected. However, an official briefed on the talks told Reuters that the group “would review it in good faith and provide a response”.

PLAN SPECIFIES IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE AND HOSTAGE RELEASE

Speaking to reporters in Washington, Trump said Israeli and Arab leaders had already endorsed the plan and that “we’re just waiting for Hamas” to make its decision. He gave the group “three or four days” to respond.

“Hamas is either going to be doing it or not, and if it’s not, it’s going to be a very sad end,” Trump said as he left the White

House. Asked whether there was scope for further talks on the proposal, he replied: “Not much.”

The plan specifies an immediate ceasefire, an exchange of all hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, a staged Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the disarmament of Hamas and the introduction of a transitional government led by an international body.

A source close to Hamas told Reuters the plan was “completely biased to Israel” and imposed “impossible conditions” that aimed to eliminate the group.

Many elements of the 20 points have been included in numerous ceasefire deals proposed over the last two years, including those accepted and then subsequently rejected at various stages by both Israel and Hamas.

One of Hamas’s main conditions since the outset of the war has been a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in return for the release of the remaining hostages. And while the group has indicated its readiness to relinquish administrative authority, it has consistently ruled out disarming.

“What Trump has proposed is the full adoption of all Israeli conditions, which do not grant the Palestinian people or the residents of the Gaza Strip any legitimate rights,” a Palestinian official, who asked not to be named, told Reuters.

CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE ON HAMAS

However, Hamas faces considerable pressure to accept the plan, with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Egypt all welcoming the initiative.

Turkey’s head of intelligence will join Qatari and Egyptian mediators in Doha to dis-

cuss the peace proposal later on Tuesday, a spokesperson for Qatar’s foreign ministry said. Turkey has not previously been involved as a key mediator during efforts over the last two years to bring peace to Gaza.

It was unclear if Hamas officials would join Tuesday’s meeting. The last time Hamas leaders gathered to discuss a U.S. peace plan in Qatar, Israel tried, and failed, to kill them with a missile strike.

Netanyahu apologised on Monday to his Qatari counterpart for the September 9 attack, the White House said.

Although he initially backed the Trump plan, Netanyahu later expressed doubts about elements of the proposal, including the prospects for eventual Palestinian statehood -- something he has repeatedly ruled out.

Netanyahu is under mounting pressure from a war-weary Israeli public to end the conflict. But he also risks the collapse of his governing coalition if far-right ministers believe he has made too many concessions for a peace deal.

ISRAELI FORCES PUSH FURTHER INTO GAZA CITY

In Gaza itself, some Palestinians hailed Trump’s peace plan, saying it could end the bombardment and deaths, but they wondered whether it would end Israel’s control of the enclave.

“We want the war to end, but we want the occupation army that killed tens of thousands of us to get out and leave us alone,” said Salah Abu Amr, 60, a father of six from Gaza City.

“We hope the plan will end the war, but we are not sure it will, neither Trump nor Netanyahu can be trusted,” he told Reuters via a chat app.

(Reuters)



▲ Cool Drop.

Cool Drop unveils tracklist for ‘Emakhaya’ album

ESWATINI’S rising music sensation Cool Drop has officially revealed the tracklist for his forthcoming album *Emakhaya*.

The album features 10 songs and includes collaborations with notable artists such as Pro RBS, Young Zesh, Fanatic SA, N Kay & Smally, Histo, and M Nation. ‘*Emakhaya*’ represents more than just a collection of songs; it is a deeply personal narrative that chronicles Cool Drop’s journey through life’s complexities. The artist describes the album as a cohesive body of work that traverses a spectrum of emotions, from hardship and resilience to hope and celebration.

The title ‘*Emakhaya*,’ meaning “at home,” captures the emotional essence of the

album. Having spent significant time away from his homeland, Cool Drop channels his feelings of nostalgia, love, and belonging to the music. He reflects on the heightened appreciation for everyday moments, sharing laughter with parents, the affection of a partner, and the warmth of family and community, themes that permeate the album’s lyrical content and invite listeners into an intimate space of connection.

Melodies

Musically, ‘*Emakhaya*’ is a vibrant fusion of genres, blending house beats, Afro-soul melodies, hip hop rhythms, and traditional African sounds.

This eclectic mix showcases Cool Drop’s versatility as an artist while firmly rooting the album in African cultural identity. In

an interview, Cool Drop emphasised that while exploring diverse musical styles, maintaining authenticity was a guiding principle. “I aimed to showcase versatility but also remain authentic to who I am as Cool Drop,” he explained.

The creative process behind ‘*Emakhaya*’ was marked by introspection and emotional depth.

Writing the album required Cool Drop to revisit personal memories and confront feelings of separation and longing. This vulnerability is evident throughout the tracks, offering listeners a heartfelt glimpse into the artist’s life and experiences. While the official release date remains under wraps, anticipation is building among fans eager to experience this milestone project.

Lesia Musiq to release debut single ‘Ikhhalenda’

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group



► Lesia Musiq.

▲ Zwile.

LESIA Musiq, the newly signed artist under Mabonwa Abukawe Records, is gearing up to release his highly anticipated debut single titled “*Ikhhalenda*.”

This marks a significant milestone in his career as he steps into the spotlight with a fresh sound and a meaningful message. The single is set to be available on all streaming platforms this Friday, promising to capture the hearts of many listeners.

In an exclusive interview, Lesia Musiq shared insights about the inspiration behind “*Ikhhalenda*.” He explained that the song is deeply rooted in the theme of love, describing it as “a romantic love song which uses the symbolism of a calendar ‘*Ikhhalenda*’ to express everlasting love and commitment.” He elaborated that the track celebrates “a relationship that goes beyond time, the kind of love that is consistent throughout a lifetime.”

Simplicity

Lesia Musiq also opened about the creative process behind the single, emphasising its simplicity and spontaneity. “DJ Citie made the beat, and I recorded what popped up in my mind,” he said. He took charge of the hook and the first verse, while Young Zesh contributed the final verse, adding a dynamic layer to the collaboration. The song was then expertly mixed and mastered by Sean Cast HQ, ensuring a polished and professional sound. This straightforward approach to creation highlights Lesia Musiq’s natural talent and ability to connect with music instinctively.

Collaboration played a key role in the making of “*Ikhhalenda*,” and Lesia Musiq expressed his gratitude for working alongside Young Zesh. “Working with my brother Young Zesh on that song was a blessing to me. I really enjoyed working with him,” he said. Their partnership brought a sense of camaraderie and creative synergy that enriched the final product, making the single not just a debut but a celebration of brotherhood and artistic unity.

Zwile headlines ‘Good Vibes Only’ Jam

THE vibrant sounds of Eswatini’s music scene will come alive on October 5, 2025, as the talented saxophonist Zwile takes centre stage at the much-anticipated “Good Vibes Only” Jam, hosted at IF’s Lounge in Mbabane.

Zwile, known for his soulful saxophone melodies and dynamic stage presence, will be accompanied by a live band featuring notable musicians Taribo, Phile, Tallman, and Joseph. The event will also showcase the energetic Gridlock band, supporting the main act with their signature sound. Attendees are encouraged to dress in smart casual attire, matching the event’s relaxed yet stylish vibe. The “Good Vibes Only” Jam is the product of a creative partnership between IF’s Lounge Mbabane and the Good Vibes Band, aiming to invigorate Eswatini’s live music scene. Mistosoul, IF’s Lounge entertainment manager, shared insights into the inspiration behind the collaboration.

Revitalise

“This event is about bridging gaps in our entertainment industry and bringing live music performances closer to our community,” he explained. “We want to revitalise the local music scene by showcasing homegrown talent and creating memorable experiences that foster cultural pride and inspire further artistic collaborations.” The event is designed not just as a concert but as a cultural gathering where music lovers can immerse themselves in a blend of classic hits, fresh originals, and crowd-pleasing covers. Mistosoul highlighted the atmosphere that attendees can expect. “Set against the cosy and vibrant backdrop of IF’s Lounge Balcony, the night will be filled with soulful melodies and upbeat rhythms delivered by both the Good Vibes Band and our main guest artists. We’ll offer great drinks, light bites, and plenty of space to dance and connect, no stuffy crowds, just pure enjoyment.” This initiative reflects a broader movement within Eswatini’s entertainment industry to foster collaboration, support local artists, and build a thriving live music culture. By bringing together diverse talents and audiences in an intimate setting, “Good Vibes Only” aims to strengthen the bonds within the community and elevate the country’s musical landscape.

Sarnilo hoists Eswatini flag at Spotify Writing Camp

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
sipheshled@rubiconmedia.group

HOISTING the Eswatini flag!
It's a significant boost for Eswatini music as Sarnilo proudly represented the country at the prestigious Spotify Africa Writing Camp held in Cape Town.

This milestone marks a moment of pride for Eswatini, as Sarnilo's participation highlights the nation's growing influence in the African music industry. Sarnilo took to social media to share her excitement and gratitude for the opportunity, stating, "I've been gatekeeping these for too long. I had the pleasure of being a part of the @spotifyafrica writing camp in Cape Town and man, we create an unexplainable vibration. Thank you for the magic."

Sarnilo's feature at the Spotify Africa Writing Camp is more than just a personal achievement; it symbolises the rising prominence of Eswatini's music on the continental stage. It also underscores the importance of platforms like Spotify in nurturing African talent and amplifying voices that might otherwise remain unheard.

The Spotify Africa Writing Camp is an influential music industry gathering where artists, songwriters, and producers come together to collaborate on new music projects. These camps are designed to foster creativity and innovation, often focusing on supporting emerging and marginalised talent across the continent. By participating, artists like Sarnilo gain invaluable exposure, networking opportunities, and the chance to refine their craft alongside some of Africa's most talented musicians.

Sarnilo's musical journey is a testament to her versatility and unique artistic voice. Based in Eswatini, she is not only a singer and songwriter but also a rapper and music producer. Her artistry is characterised by



▲ Sarnilo.

captivating lyrics, a smooth and soulful rap style, and a blend of Afro-centric sounds that resonate both in the studio and on stage.

She describes her music as "soul-capturing, fun, experimental and emotive," reflecting her commitment to pushing

creative boundaries.

What sets Sarnilo apart is her bi-cultural heritage, which deeply influences her musical style. Born to a Malawian mother and a Swati father, she seamlessly incorporates both SiSwati and Chichewa languages into her songs.

Kevin Fraser brings comedy tour to Eswatini

KEVIN Fraser, one of South Africa's most celebrated comedians, is bringing his infectious stage presence to Eswatini.

As part of his highly anticipated 'Heart Of The World' comedy tour, Fraser will perform a one-night-only show at the SibaneSami Hotel on December 3, 2025. Doors will open at 7 pm, with the show kicking off at 8 pm. Tickets are available for purchase exclusively through his official website, promising an evening of laughter and entertainment.

Fraser took to social media to share the exciting news with his fans, urging Eswatini audiences to prepare for a night filled with laughter. "Eswatini. Get ready to laugh your night away with the hilarious Kevin Fraser. This one-night-only show is not to be



missed," he posted. The 'Heart Of The World' tour itself is a celebration of African culture, identity, and humour. It reflects

Fraser's deep connection to his roots and his desire to share the richness of African stories through comedy. The tour spans several African countries, including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Mauritius, and now Eswatini.

Kevin Fraser's journey to comedy stardom is as inspiring as it is entertaining. His career began in Durban, South Africa, where, at the tender age of 16, he first made his mark as a dynamic DJ.

Performances

Known for his energetic performances and a distinctive mix of sassy house beats, Fraser quickly became a crowd favourite in the local music scene. However, his talents extended far beyond music.

By 2015, Fraser had transitioned into comedy, leveraging his sharp wit and storytelling skills to captivate audiences.

Drawing on his experiences as an expatriate and weaving in quintessentially South African characters, his comedy struck a chord with viewers both locally and internationally. His viral videos and relatable humour helped him carve out a unique space in the digital comedy world, earning him widespread acclaim.

◀ Kevin Fraser.



▲ Bulelwa.

Bulelwa confirmed for Poetry In Comfort

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

Poetry In Comfort, set for December 6, 2025, 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 Bulelwa, the event will feature notable performers such as Rina, 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.

Concept

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."

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."

Selaelo Selota unleashes legal team on Ringo over booking deposi

JAZZ maestro Selaelo Selota is demanding Afro-Soul legend Ringo Madlingozi return a R90,000 deposit fee paid to his former management after his new team cancelled all bookings made under the old regime.

In April, Selota announced he would be embarking on a tour from August to celebrate his 25-year milestone in the music business. Madlingozi was announced as one of the acts booked to perform at the One Country Concert held on August 30 at Meropa Casino in Polokwane.

According to Selota, Madlingozi’s then management and booking agent, Thikho Events Management, charged R180 000 for the Sondela singer, of which a R90 000 deposit was transferred to the company’s business account.

According to a bank statement seen by Sunday World, a transfer of R90,000 was sent to a Thikho Events bank account by Soul Truth Music on April 9.

Another R90 000 was to be paid for Madlingozi’s performance before getting on

stage. Selota has since received a letter terminating the agreement between Madlingozi’s new management team, Ristar Records, stating he would no longer be performing at the celebration. The letter subject reads: “Change in Representation and Cancellation of All Current Bookings and Contracts Signed with Thikho Events for all Upcoming Performances by Ringo Madlingozi.”

The termination letter goes on to say that the relationship with Thikho Events has come to an end.

“You are kindly advised to urgently request deposits that you have paid directly to the Thikho Events Management Office.”

Selota’s publicity manager, Sibusiso Ketwa, has in a statement revealed that Thikho Events assured them that Madlingozi would proceed with the booking.

This is despite the change in management, and they were in discussions with Ristar Records and their legal team to finalise the matter. “Despite several follow-ups from Mr Selota, Thikho Events provided no substantive resolution. Mr Selota even submitted banking details to facilitate a refund should



▲ Jazz maestro Selaelo Selota is demanding Afro-Soul legend Ringo Madlingozi. the performance not proceed. Subsequently, Mr Selota contacted Mr Madlingozi directly for clarification.“ Madlingozi stated that funds were with Thikho Events.

Until now, no resolution has been reached.

“Having exhausted all attempts at amicable resolution with Thikho Events, Ristar Records, and Ringo Madlingozi, Mr Selota referred the matter to his legal team,” Ketwa said. (Sunday World)

Limpopo artist in hot water over underage drinking scandal

A storm has erupted in Limpopo after shocking footage surfaced online showing teenage girls consuming alcohol in the company of popular artist Tsaka RSA.

Tsaka RSA, whose real name is Paul Madubanyana, is well known for his controversial comments and throwing insults to fellow artists.

The viral video has drawn widespread condemnation, with Deputy Minister for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Nokuzola Letsike, demanding immediate accountability. “Underage drinking is illegal and dangerous. It is unacceptable for adult male artists to exploit vulnerable young girls in this way,” said Letsike, adding that her office has roped in the South African Police Service (SAPS) to probe the scandal.

The incident has left many questioning why respected public figures continue to nor-

malise and even enable reckless behaviour among impressionable youth.

While Limpopo’s cultural use of alcohol is well documented, Letsike warned that the early exposure of adolescents to drinking has devastating consequences.

“Alcohol during adolescence impairs brain development, fuels risky sexual behaviour, and leaves our youth vulnerable to violence and exploitation,” she said. Startling statistics back her concerns. South Africans consume about 10 litres of pure alcohol annually, far above the global average. Even more worrying is the rise of binge drinking among high school learners, particularly in rural provinces like Limpopo. Letsike did not mince her words: artists, parents, schools, and the alcohol industry must all share responsibility. But she reserved her sharpest criticism for Tsaka RSA.

“Artists cannot hide behind their celebrity status while destroying the futures of our young girls. Accountability is non-negotiable,” she said. (Sunday World)



▲ Popular artist Tsaka RSA.



Cardi B’s ‘cocaine Barbie’ remark sparks new tension with Nicki Minaj

THE two iconic rappers who refuse to share the throne and just co-exist are at it once again. These are grown women who are both mothers, yet here we are. Cardi B and Nicki Minaj recently went head-to-head on X on Monday, September 29, over Cardi B’s new album, “Am I the Drama?” This all began when Cardi B publicly announced that her latest body of work went double platinum.

The album earned double platinum certification by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on Monday, just 10 days after the album’s release.

“Am I The Drama?” hit number 1 on Billboard 200 this week, shifting 200,000 units in its debut week with 146 million streams.

Cardi B posted a series of scathing tweets after Minaj claimed that the sales of her album “AM I THE DRAMA” were inflated.

“Why you keep bringing up my album?? It’s not the gag that you think it is..You been in the game like 16 years.. you need to compare yourself to YOUR peers that started around YOUR time. Rihanna, Taylor Swift, Drake...those are the numbers you need to be competing with and you can’t because you are

doing lower than all of them,” she wrote.

In a now-deleted tweet, the rapper called the pregnant Cardi B “Barney Dangerous” and mocked her album sales. Minaj has since deleted her posts.

The “Nice Guy” hit maker responded to Minaj’s tweet about her pregnancy.

“Like you weren’t going to different fertility doctors cuz you couldn’t reproduce from all them percs (Percocet drug), scrambling your eggs. NOT ALLEGEDLY ...Lord protect my babies,” Cardi B said.

Minaj further wrote a series of tweets mocking Cardi B’s track “Magnet” and the verse: “A-B-C-D-E-F-G / these b***** can’t f*** with me.” She posted another tweet on X: “Falling off the charts with a big bellyyyy / RUNNING TRAINS.” “Barefoot, still smellyyyy / Still. You. Could. Not. outsell. meeeeee,” she wrote in another.

Cardi B joined the argument by calling Minaj “Cocaine Barbie” and adding her own “Magnet” verses.

The two have had a longstanding beef since 2018, when they attended the Harper’s Bazaar Icons party during New York Fashion Week. (IOL)

CHOCOLATE is one of the most confusing foods in nutrition science – hailed as a superfood for its potential heart, brain, and anti-inflammatory benefits, yet criticized as sugary, fatty junk food that’s easy to overeat.

Nutrition research is notoriously tricky, said dietitian Julie Stefanski, MEd, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and chocolate studies can be particularly challenging. Differences in people’s lifestyles, diets, and personal factors – like genetics or medical conditions – mean results “might not be able to be applied to all people,” she said. In studies, “dark chocolate” could mean cocoa powder, supplements, or candy bars – crucial differences that make it hard to compare results.

3 Reasons to Eat Dark Chocolate

Is chocolate really bad for you? Rejoice, sweet tooth! There are health benefits to your favorite treat. Scientists do agree on one thing. If chocolate has health benefits, they likely come from flavonols— plant compounds thought to support heart health, improve blood vessel function, and reduce inflammation. This insight has shifted chocolate research toward exploring how flavonols might slow “inflammaging” – the low-grade, chronic inflammation that naturally rises with age and increases health risks, including risks to your heart and blood vessels.

“The ‘how’ part is really the critical question,” said Howard Sesso, ScD, an epidemiologist at Harvard Medical School and author of two new studies exploring just that. Now Sesso and other scientists are getting closer to that “how” – and that clearer picture could help people make sense of how to enjoy chocolate in a healthier way.

How Flavonols Improve Inflammation

In Sesso’s latest study, published in September, people who took a daily cocoa flavonol supplement for two years had significantly lower levels of c-reactive protein (CRP) – a marker of inflammation linked to heart disease – compared with those on a placebo. That may help explain why people in the landmark COSMOS trial (COcoa Supplement and Multivitamin Outcomes Study) who took the same supplement had a 27% lower risk of dying from heart disease.

The History of Chocolate

“What we see here is not just [how] cocoa flavonols specifically, but how flavonols – even in other foods – might improve inflammation,” Sesso said.

Flavonols’ effect on heart and blood vessel function may be the key – improved blood flow helps the body keep inflammation in check and maintain healthier blood vessels as we age. If cocoa flavonols help lower or slow the rise of CRP levels over time – or, as scientists say, improve the CRP “trajectory” – that could explain how cocoa reduces risks to the heart and blood vessels. The idea that flavonols act on the vascular system aligns with other research, such as Sesso’s other recent study, published in August, linking them to resistance against age-related blood pressure increases.

Still, the findings come with limits: Four other inflammation biomarkers didn’t

budge. “So, it was not a slam dunk,” Sesso said, calling it a “flag of caution,” though those markers may simply be less responsive to diet.

One Takeaway Is Clear

Diet can have a big impact on health and aging. Inflammation is guided by the immune system, about 70% of which resides in the gut, said Stefanski. “Looking at the quality of the food you’re eating and nourishing the gut is really important in overall health.”

In the more recent study, people took 500 mg of cocoa flavonols daily – but you

don’t need to copy that. Instead, focus on consistent, realistic changes that work for your lifestyle, Stefanski said. If you’ll actually remember to stir cocoa extract into your coffee each morning, go for it. If not, try adding more flavonol-rich foods like berries, tea, and red grapes to your routine. “The big-picture message,” Sesso said, “is to prioritize a diverse, plant-based diet.”

And if you love chocolate, have it – in moderation. “It’s not necessary to always justify every single thing we eat by the potential health benefits,” Stefanski said. Just keep it under an ounce or two per day, or about one square from a chocolate bar.

WebMD

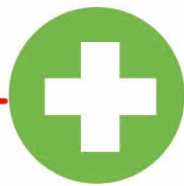


Chocolate and health:

● A new twist on an old debate



Looking at the quality of the food you’re eating and nourishing the gut is really important in overall health



HEAT boosts the flow of blood and nutrients to an area of the body. It often works best for morning stiffness or to warm up muscles before activity.

Cold slows blood flow, reducing swelling and pain. It's often best for short-term pain, like that from a sprain or a strain.

But does it matter which one you use for an injury? This article will help you sort it out.

When Either Heat Or Cold Will Do

Soothe aches and pains caused by conditions like osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, back pain, fibromyalgia, and neck pain with either heat or cold. Each can give you relief from these symptoms:

- Muscle aches, spasms, and pains
- Lower and upper back pain
- Stiff, swollen, or tender joints
- Neck stiffness
- Finger, hand, or wrist pain
- Knee pain

For short-term pain relief of any of these conditions, apply a hot or cold compress using any of these items:

- An electric heating pad
- A gel pack that can be microwaved or frozen
- A bag of ice or frozen vegetables

A washcloth or small towel soaked in hot or cold water (wring it out, fold it, and apply to the sore area)

Whether you use heat or cold, be sure to wrap the pack in a thin towel to help protect your skin.

Apply to the painful area for 15-20 minutes several times each day.

Whether you use heat or cold, you may notice your skin looks a little pinker after applying the compress. That's normal, but let your skin return to its normal color and temperature before applying fresh ice or heat.

Call your doctor if you notice any of the following signs after removing the compress. These symptoms mean the temperature was too extreme and may have caused skin damage:

Skin that's purplish-red, dark red, or a spotty red and white color

- Hives
- Swelling
- Blisters
- Hydrotherapy

Showers and baths aren't just for mornings. When you're hurting, stand under



or settle into warm water for a few minutes to help soothe and relax you. (If you're over 70 or have heart problems, check with your doctor before getting into a hot tub.)

Try a warm shower or bath before you

exercise to help loosen joints and muscles.

Use cool water after exercise to help calm deep, burning pain and reduce inflammation.

Or you can mix it up with a contrast bath

to increase blood flow, reduce pain and swelling, and promote healing. Get two tubs or containers large enough for your painful area ready with warm and cold water. Soak in the warm tub for about 5 minutes and then plunge into the cold tub for about 1 minute. Go back to the warm for a few more minutes and then the cold for a minute. Repeat four or five times.

Warm Clothes

Want an easier -- and less painful -- start to your day? Warm your clothes in the dryer for a few minutes before you put them on. The heated garments may help ease morning pain and stiffness.

Heat Wraps

If heat helps ease your pain, try a continuous low-level heat wrap, available at drugstores. You can wear a heat wrap for up to 8 hours, even while you sleep. Follow the directions carefully.

Studies suggest that low-level, long-term heat applied directly on the skin can significantly reduce stiffness and tension and increase flexibility. The effects can last for 48 hours or longer.

Heated Wax Therapy

Another way to apply heat -- especially to hands, elbows, and feet -- is warm, melted paraffin.

You can buy paraffin wax kits at your local drugstore or beauty supply. A heated container safely melts the wax and mineral oil to make a paraffin bath. Dip your achy body part into the bath several times to build up a warm layer. Take it out of the bath, and cover it with plastic and wrap in a towel for 10-15 minutes until the wax cools. Unwrap and peel the wax away.

To avoid irritation and pain, make sure the skin that you treat has no cuts or sores.

WebMD

What should I eat before working out?

IF you're eating a healthy diet and getting enough calories throughout the day to support your activities, you may not need to nosh before your workout.

But if it helps keep your energy level up, snacking can be a good move.

Choosing the right foods helps. And make sure you're well hydrated before working out. Experts recommend drinking 16-20 ounces of water 1-2 hours before starting your workout.

9 Preworkout Snacks to Try

Experts agree your best bet is a low-fat snack, about 100 to 300 calories, that gives you a mix of protein and complex carbohydrates.

The carbs give you fuel. The protein is for your muscles.

Try these tasty ideas:



- Oatmeal with cinnamon and blueberries or dried cranberries
- Whole wheat toast topped with nut

- butter and sliced bananas
- Fruit smoothie with yogurt
- Greek yogurt with low-fat granola and



berries

- Half of a turkey sandwich
- Raw veggies with hummus for dipping
- Whole-grain crackers with 1 ounce of low-fat cheese
- Cottage cheese and sliced apples or bananas
- Trail mix with nuts and dried fruit

What Not to Eat Before Exercise

Avoid foods that are high in fat or fiber -- both of which can upset your stomach, take longer to deliver energy, and leave you feeling sluggish. Also avoid spicy or unfamiliar foods.

WebMD

News In Pictures



▲ U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth speaks to senior military leaders at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia.



▲ Britain's King Charles looks at produce, during a reception for the King Charles III Charitable Fund (KCCF), at Clarence House, London.



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump welcomes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House in Washington.



▲ A demonstrator holds a banner as protests against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) draw hundreds to the ICE headquarters in south Portland, Oregon.



▲ An aerial view of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints following a shooting and fire in Grand Blanc Township, Michigan.



▲ Members of the military attend a meeting convened by U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, at Marine Corps Base Quantico, in Quantico, Virginia.

‘Yamal must ‘work hard’ to reach top level’



▲ Lamine Yamal.

BARCELONA coach Hansi Flick said Tuesday if teenage star Lamine Yamal is to improve he must focus on improving his work rate, ahead of the Champions League clash against Paris

Saint-Germain.

The holders visit Barcelona on Wednesday and 18-year-old winger Yamal is keen to shine after finishing as runner-up at the Ballon d’Or gala last week, behind PSG’s Ousmane Dembele.

Yamal returned from a groin injury on Sunday against Real Sociedad in LaLiga and provided an assist a minute after coming off the bench during a bright second-half cameo.

“(Calling him) super, super, super... I don’t like this... he’s 18 years old and for me he also has to focus on working hard,” Flick told reporters.

“It’s not always easy, with talent you can get to this point, but to reach the next level, one or two steps more – and I think he’s able to do that – he has to work hard.”

Last season Barcelona won a domestic treble of LaLiga, the Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup, but fell just short in the Champions League, beaten in the semifinals by Inter Milan despite two sensational displays by Yamal.

Against Luis Enrique’s attacking PSG side Flick demanded Yamal and his teammates knuckle down when the French champions are in possession.

“It’s not only about playing with the ball, it’s also defending,” continued Flick.

“This is what we need from every player – even a great player with the ball like him – and this makes the difference.”

Flick said to beat PSG his team had to concentrate from “the first second to the end of the match” and play at their highest level.

RASHFORD HAS ‘ARRIVED’

The coach also praised Marcus Rashford, who has established himself on the left flank for Barca.

With Raphinha out injured, Rashford is set to start against PSG. The forward, on loan from Manchester United, netted twice in Barcelona’s opening Champions League win at Newcastle.

“Everyone can see it in the last games, the Newcastle match gives him a lot of confidence and now he’s here, he’s now arrived in Barcelona,” said Flick.

“This is not always easy, to come to LaLiga... with different opponents, a different style of how we play football, he’s adapted (well).”

PSG will be without first-choice attackers Dembele, formerly a Barca player, Desire Doue and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, among other missing stars.

Barca midfielder Pedri said he considered his team favourites to win the game.

“PSG are one of the best teams in the world, and we are the best – or at least that’s how I see it,” he told reporters.

The French side beat Barca 4-1 the last time the teams met, in the 2024 quarterfinals, after Barca defender Ronald Araujo was sent off. PSG progressed 6-4 on aggregate.

“Every Barca fan knows that we were close to going through two seasons ago,” said Pedri.

“There’s always revenge in football and that’s what we want – it’s the kind of game that’s most enjoyable.”

(Supersport)

Sinner powers into Beijing final as Gauff survives Bencic test

JANNIK Sinner reached his third China Open final in a row on Tuesday as defending women’s champion Coco Gauff fought back to beat Belinda Bencic in a spicy contest.

The world No 2 Italian Sinner beat Australia’s Alex de Minaur 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 and is one victory away from a second title in Beijing.

Top seed Sinner will face either American teenager Learner Tien or eighth-seeded Daniil Medvedev in the final.

His only loss on Beijing’s centre Diamond Court has been to great rival Carlos Alcaraz, who won last year’s championship match in three gripping sets.

“It’s a very special place for me. This court has always been amazing,” Sinner, beaten by Alcaraz in the recent US Open final, said.

“Many things were positive finding myself again here, playing the last match of the tournament, it’s great,” he added.

“I’m very happy to be here on court tomorrow.”

Alcaraz is not defending his title in the Chinese capital and is instead playing in Tokyo.

De Minaur, who had never beaten Sinner in 10 previous meetings, forced a deciding set but Sinner re-set and claimed victory when the third-seeded Australian fired long.

“He was playing some great tennis in the second set,” the 24-year-old Sinner said.

“The third set, luckily, I started very well, which gave me the confidence to continue.”

‘REALLY AGGRESSIVE’



▲ Jannik Sinner.

In the women’s draw, Gauff beat Bencic 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 and plays 66th-ranked Eva Lys of Germany in the quarterfinals.

“It was a tough match,” Gauff, the American second seed, said.

“I had chances in the first to close it out but overall I’m happy with how I fought. She was being really aggressive.”

There were frustrations on both sides of the court at a largely empty stadium as the players switched between one half darkened by shade and the other in the blazing sun.

There was a flashpoint between the two players during a changeover in the second set when Switzerland’s

15th seed Bencic said: “Your team is chatting. I’m too old for these mind games, okay?”

“You’re the one playing the mind games,” Gauff shot back.

The 21-year-old Gauff kept it together to win the tiebreak when Tokyo Olympic champion Bencic double-faulted on set point and threw her racquet in anger.

The world No 3 Gauff broke early in the third set and carried that momentum through to win when a flagging Bencic returned weakly into the net.

With her last-16 victory Gauff qualified for the WTA Finals in Saudi Arabia in November. (Supersport)

Saliba signs new long-term deal at Arsenal

WILLIAM Saliba has signed a new long-term contract with Arsenal, the Premier League club announced on Tuesday.

The France defender has reportedly put pen to paper on a five-year deal, which will keep him at the club until 2030. His previous contract had been due to run until 2027.

Saliba, 24, had been expected to extend his stay at the Emirates despite earlier reported interest from Real Madrid.

The centre-back joined the Gunners in 2019 but had a number of loan spells before establishing himself as a regular in Mikel Arteta’s team during the 2022/23 season.

Since then Saliba has been at the heart of an Arsenal side that has finished second in each of the past three seasons in the Premier League.

“I feel at home. We have a

good team, we have a good squad, we have good staff. The coach is perfect for me, so it’s the best place to be,” said Saliba.

“I enjoy every day when I have the chance to wear this shirt. I try to give everything, and now I’ll give even more to this club and to the fans.”

Manager Arteta said: “William is loved by all the players and staff, and that speaks volumes about his character, commitment, and attitude every day.”

“Since joining us, William has grown so much, embraced responsibility, and has created a strong connection with our supporters and everyone at the club.”

Arsenal are second in the Premier League, two points behind leaders Liverpool after six games of the season.

(Supersport)



▲ William Saliba.

Alcaraz beats Fritz in Tokyo for eighth title of season

WORLD No 1 Carlos Alcaraz won his eighth title of a sensational season after beating American Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4 in the Japan Open final on Tuesday.

The Spaniard has struggled with an ankle injury this week in Tokyo but he was still too hot for the rest of the competition to handle, including world No 5 Fritz.

The US Open champion gave another breathtaking display of power and athleticism to lift the trophy in his first appearance in Japan.

He clinched victory with a cleverly disguised drop shot before strolling to the net to give Fritz a warm embrace.

“First time in Tokyo, first title here, hopefully not the last one,” said the 22-year-old.

Alcaraz injured his ankle in his opening match in Tokyo as he ran for a shot, crumpling to the ground and sitting on the court for about five minutes.

He returned to play with heavy strapping on his ankle and admitted that the injury had been on his mind throughout the tournament.

“The start of the week was not really good with the ankle, and the way that I came back from that, playing a great tournament and great matches, I’m just really happy about it,” he said.

It was the Spaniard’s ninth straight final and his 10th of the season overall.

No man since his legendary countryman Rafael Nadal in 2017 had reached 10 finals in a season.

The win gave Alcaraz a measure of revenge after losing to Fritz for the first time at the Laver Cup in San Francisco two

weeks ago.

Alcaraz was not happy with the umpire in the final, telling him “you’ve never played tennis in your life” during a rant between games.

He squandered several chances to break Fritz in the first set but he made the breakthrough in the ninth game.

That left the Spaniard serving for the set, and he sealed the deal when Fritz dumped a return into the net.

Alcaraz kept his foot on the gas and broke his opponent to start the second set.

He broke him again to take a 4-1 lead and continued to punish Fritz with a series of brutal forehands.

Fritz hit back for his first break of the match but it was too little, too late as Alcaraz clinched the championship on his next service game.

“It’s been a pleasure to be able to play here in Tokyo in front of the Japanese fans,” said Alcaraz.

“I enjoyed every single second from when I stepped on the court, less the five minutes that I was on the floor with my ankle.

“The rest of the tournament, I enjoyed every single second.”

Fritz was looking to capture his third title of the season after wins at Stuttgart and Eastbourne.

The American won the Japan Open title in 2022.

Both Alcaraz and Fritz are in the draw for the Shanghai Masters this week.

(Supersport)



▲ Carlos Alcaraz.

Great news for Bafana as Zwane tipped to recover in time for AFCON

MAMELODI Sundowns coach Miguel Cardoso is hopeful that Themba Zwane will be fit and ready for the Africa Cup of Nations later this year.

The veteran midfielder is currently sidelined with an unspecified muscle injury he sustained against Magesi FC earlier this month.

Zwane is in a race against time for Bafana Bafana’s AFCON campaign, which kicks off on 22 December against Angola. South Africa will also face Egypt and Zimbabwe in Group B.

The 36-year-old was an integral part of the side that secured a bronze medal at the previous edition of the competition in Côte d’Ivoire.

Following Sundowns’ 4-1 thrashing of Richards Bay on Saturday, Cardoso gave a positive update when asked if Zwane would recover in time to play at the continental showpiece, which will be staged in Morocco.

“I think, yes, he can, but let’s have some patience with him. We’re seeing much more development than we expected. Even for a boy of his age, he is recovering very well. We have beautiful expectations regarding him,” Cardoso revealed.

“We’re going to be cautious and we need to be cautious, not thinking about the national team but we’re also thinking about us and about him as well. We will do it with precaution in order to not damage him again. If

Marquez vindicated by ‘difficult decision’ to leave Honda to win MotoGP title

MARC Marquez’s gamble to leave Honda in 2023 has paid off spectacularly this year, with the Spaniard claiming a seventh MotoGP championship with Ducati that he concedes vindicated the “most difficult decision” of his career.

The 32-year-old’s emotional title win, sealed with five rounds to spare, came after a remarkable journey from injury hell and the brink of retirement to equalling the title haul of MotoGP great Valentino Rossi.

After winning six titles with Honda, Marquez endured a nightmare period with four arm surgeries that left him contemplating hanging up his racing leathers as he struggled with an uncompetitive bike that punished his battered body.

MARQUEZ’S LEAP OF FAITH

However, his salvation came through an unlikely route few could have predicted – a switch to satellite team Gresini Racing and their year-old Ducati machines, a leap of faith rooted in instinct that convinced him he could fight at the front again.

“In 2023, I decided to follow my instinct. I had a very nice talk with Honda, with all my people. When I moved to Gresini, they had the best bike, the Ducati,” Marquez told reporters on Monday.

“I wanted to be competitive to continue my career and that answer was positive. When you arrive on the best team, with the best bike, with the best technology – it’s in your hands.



▲ Themba Zwane.

we were cautious the last time, now we have to be extra cautious because he deserves it and most of all, we need him.”

While Cardoso is hopeful over Zwane, he confirmed that defender Mothobi Mvala is set for a spell on the sidelines.

The 31-year-old has been struggling with a reported knee problem and despite recently featuring in the 1-0 defeat to Golden Arrows, will now undergo surgery.

“Unfortunately, we lost Mothobi, he will be submitted to the surgery. We knew that going for traditional treatment on his knee would provoke a possibility for setback,” the coach explained.

“It was the decision taken between the player and the medical department to go through with the process and procedure. Things worked out well but unfortunately, there was an incident in the last match and this time.(The Citizen)



▲ Marc Marquez.

“From that winter, I knew it was my best chance to fight for the championship... I told Gresini I’ll ride for free to see if I can fight with the top guys.”

What followed was a historic comeback as Marquez finished third in the 2024 championship and earned a move to the factory Ducati team, where he dominated the 2025 season and won that elusive seventh title after 2 184 days.

‘MOST DIFFICULT DECISION’

As an emotional Marquez sobbed after he crossed the finish line in Motegi on Sunday, the title sewn up, there was nothing but respect from Honda as their crew embraced the Spaniard in the paddock, acknowledging his remarkable comeback journey.

“It was the most difficult decision of my career in 2023, because we were coming from a very dark period of injuries. I had to consider that decision of whether I should finish my career,” Marquez added.

“The biggest help was all people from Honda gave me the chance to decide for myself. They gave me the confidence to decide.”

Marquez’s seventh premier class title placed him alongside Rossi and one behind all-time leader Giacomo Agostini in the annals of MotoGP immortality.

‘HONOUR TO EQUAL ROSSI’

Although Marquez shared a bitter rivalry with Rossi on the track, with the pair now barely on speaking terms in the paddock, the Spaniard said he was honoured to go level with him.(Supersport)

MTN PREMIER LEAGUE PICK OF THE WEEK

League kick-off: Sparks to fly

By Chris Dlamini

THE long wait is finally over. This Friday will mark the kick-off of the country's elite football league and what a way to start it - a security forces derby between last season's runners-up Royal Leopard and army side Young Buffaloes!

On Saturday, it gets more exciting with reigning champions Nsingizini Hotspurs home to Mbabane Highlanders at Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini alongside the hub derby between big rivals Manzini Wanderers and Moneni Pirates. Elsewhere, Green Mamba has a date with trouble-torn Mbabane Swallows. In our first league PICK OF THE WEEK, we briefly highlight these fixtures.

No 'ceasefire' as points, pride at stake

Young Buffaloes vs. Royal Leopard

Date: Friday, October 3, 2025
Venue: Mkhuzweni Technical Centre

Kick-off: 3pm

These two will continue their non-ending story about bragging rights and superiority over the other - interestingly, as the army and police teams, they all have one order, and that is to conquer in the match. Leopard will definitely want to win it more than Buffaloes after missing out on the league title with just a point difference between them and eventual champions Nsingizini Hotspurs. Leopard must feel Buffaloes contributed to their setback after the 1-1 draw in the first round, and then the 1-0 defeat in the second round. On the one hand, Emathole Ezinyathi, as the army team is fondly known, also wants to avenge their Ingwenyama Cup semi-finals' 1-0 defeat to Leopard who went on to win it last season. The latter has the upper hand going into this derby clash. Why? Ingwe Mababala (Leopard) has been nearly without an off-season due to their TotalEnergies CAF Confederation

Cup 2025/26 participation. They just walloped a youthful and debutant Young African from Namibia with a 7-0 aggregate to progress to the second preliminary round. On paper, Ingwe should win the tie, and they have quite a balanced squad that is spoilt for choice for the technical bench.

Key Players:

- 1. Innocent 'Makhehleni' Dlamini (Y. Buffaloes midfielder)
- 2. Leon 'Chuster' Manyisa (Y. Buffaloes Midfielder)
- 3. Junior Magagula (R. Leopard midfielder)
- 4. Simanga Masangane (R. Leopard midfielder)

Last 3 meetings:

MTN League:

21/04/25

R. Leopard 0

Y. Buffaloes 1

Ingwenyama Cup

Y. Buffaloes 0

R. Leopard 1

MTN League

23/11/24

Y. Buffaloes 1

R. Leopard 1.



▲ Junior Magagula and Leon Manyisa.

'Insingizi Yezulu' aim to settle the score

Nsingizini Hotspurs vs. Mbabane Highlanders

Date: Saturday, October 4, 2025

If anything, Nsingizini Hotspurs almost missed out on their first-ever league title because they were stunned by Mbabane Highlanders who defied odds to edge them 2-1 at a very complex time of the title race last season.

However, runners-up Royal Leopard failed to utilise the opportunity and Insingizi Yezulu bounced back in their final game to win the league with a point difference. Surely, Insingizi Yezulu as they Shiselweni outfit fondly goes, wants to settle that score and they look even stronger this time around. It should be their match to lose this time as they have all the quality and have had a good preseason, now capped by their TotalEnergies CAF Champions League first preliminary round success over tough opposition in Zimbabwe's Simba Bhora. Inkunz'emnyama or Mbabane Highlanders, has been quiet and away in Pietermaritzburg for their pre-season. Their 8Bet Trade Fair Cup defeat

to minnows Ezulwini United did not present a good image for them and new President Shauwn 'MaMkhize' Mkhize. They will need to double their efforts to get anything out of this match. Otherwise, the giant side finds itself underdogs, which should not be the case on any given day, particularly against a new and upcoming team.

Key Players:

- 1. Sizwe 'Yeki' Khumalo - Nsingizini Hotspurs midfielder
- 2. Thubelihle Mavuso (Nsingizini Hotspurs winger)
- 3. Andile Mpisane (M. Highlanders midfielder)
- 4. Siyabonga Mkhonto (Mbabane Highlanders winger)

Last 3 meetings:

MTN League

11/05/25

M. Highlanders 2

Ns. Hotspurs 1

14/12/24

Ns. Hotspurs 2

M. Highlanders 1

30/03/24

M. Highlanders 1

Ns. Hotspurs 2



▲ Andile Mpisane and Sizwe 'Yeki' Khumalo.

Can 'Birds' evade G. Mamba's venom?

Green Mamba vs. Mbabane Swallows

Date: Saturday, October 4, 2025

It is all looking gloomy for Mbabane Swallows at the moment with their off-the-field challenges still hovering over their camp.

They come to this clash with unhappy players due to months of owed salaries from last season. Their problems played themselves out in the recent 8Bet Trade Fair Cup as some players had not even wanted to attend the match but did, and they were sent packing out of the tournament. Some players have been linked with exits while 8Bet Trade Fair Cup debutant signing in Ghanaian midfielder Alvin Shabashie left after the tournament. Against Mabona Ahlonishwe (Green Mamba), the Beautiful Reds of Mbabane are complete underdogs, but they have the potential to rise to the occasion. Given their last meeting a few months ago, Swallows went to that match under the same circumstances but were able to earn a point after a 1-all draw.

Key Players

- 1. Sabelo 'Sikhali' Ndzinisa - G. Mamba forward
- 2. Siyabonga Zwane - G. Mamba wing forward
- 3. Bongzi 'Karas' Magagula - M. Swallows wing forward
- 4. Philiso Newman - M. Swallows wing back

'Westlians' gunning for Pirates scalp

Manzini Wanderers vs. Moneni Pirates

Date: Saturday, October 4, 2025

Kick-off: 5:30pm

It's back to the field of play and no longer in the courtroom between



▲ (Main pic) Moneni Pirates striker Senanelo Nkambule. (Left) Manzini Wanderers captain Mlamuli 'Mlaba' Nkambule.

Manzini Wanderers and Moneni Pirates. There is a pending court issue between them emanating from the marathon relegation case Wanderers embarked on for the whole of last season. When Wanderers won their court case, it meant Pirates must have gone down to the National First Division (NFD) but no, the latter played every tournament in the top flight last season, including the Ingwenyama Cup final against champions Royal Leopard. Wanderers is back this season and will want to start on a high note, particularly against Emabhakaniya as the Moneni team's loyalists call their club. It has been a while since their last official meeting and two of such fixtures ended in 2-all margins in the 2023/24 season.

Who will have the last laugh this time? Or will it be a share of the spoils again? Coaches Meck Mwase of Moneni and

Nyanga 'Crooks' Hlophe have the role to lead their sides to glory. May the best team win.

Key Players

- 1. Mlamuli 'Mlaba' Nkambule - M. Wanderers midfielder
- 2. Sikhumbuzo Mazibuko - M. Wanderers forward
- 3. Senanelo Nkambule - M. Pirates forward
- 4. Xolani Ngwenya - M. Pirates midfielder

Last 3 meetings:

MTN League

27/01/24

M. Pirates 2

M. Wanderers 2

01/10/2023

M. Wanderers 2

M. Pirates 2

07/05/23

M. Wanderers 2

M. Pirates 0.

Cycling Association throws challenge to local riders



▲Riders in action during the MTN Khemani race.

By **Sibusiso Masilela**
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE Eswatini Cycling Association (ECA) has challenged local riders to step up the ladder in the MTN Khemani Road Classic.

This follows the local riders’ failure to secure a podium finish during this year’s edition of the prestigious road race held over the weekend at Mankayane.

4eva cycling club star Kwanele Jele was the best local rider after finishing seventh in the 100km category.

“We call upon local cyclists to improve their performance in the race. They can start preparing for next year by practising the route. I believe we do have talent in the country. We only need high-intensity training so that we can cope with the international standards,” said ECA president

William Kelly.

The president further thanked the sponsor, MTN Eswatini for the continued support.

“We are grateful for the continued support of the sponsor, which has contributed to the development of the sport in the country. We appreciate the support of the Government and other various stakeholders towards the race,” he said.

The main category saw South African rider Wijan Nieywoudt win the 100km race.

He was followed by his teammates Keenan Rodt and Kent Main from Team Fly.

The 60km male category was won by RDR Racing Club rider Phinda Dlamini, and he was followed by his teammate and seasoned cyclist, Mduduzi Zwane.

The race was sponsored to the tune of E350 000, and the event was graced by Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Bongani Nzima, and Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Appolo Maphalala.

By **Sibusiso Masilela**
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE RES Siyakha 1800 Tshaneni Under 15 League kicked off on a high note over the weekend, with three entertaining games hosted at Tshaneni Primary School.

Magesini Hotspurs were the biggest winners as they humiliated Tshaneni Young Stars 5-0 to ensure that they began the campaign on a positive note.

A brace from Thabo Mamba and Prosper Matfunjwa, and a Wakhile Nxumalo strike was enough to give Magesini the much-needed maximum points.

In another one-sided encounter, Darwine FC annihilated Blackpool 5-1, with Owami Khumalo and Alywin Dlamini grabbing braces while Mlandvo Nhlengetfwa added one to ensure they put their opponents to the sword.

Meanwhile, Delani Nkambule scored the consolation goal for Blackpool.

The third match saw Rio Academy beating Section One Juniors 2-1 in a thrilling and tightly contested encounter. Goals from Siyanda Thusi and Colani Dlamini gave Rio Academy the full points, with Bongisipho Dlamini’s goal not enough for Section One Juniors, who ended up on the losing side.

After week 1 fixtures, three teams are sitting at three points each, and they comprise Magesini Hotspurs, Darwine FC, and Rio Academy.

A total of 14 goals were scored in the opening three matches as the youngsters proved to be having sharp eyes for goals.

Full results

Section One Juniors 1 – 2 Rio Academy
Tshaneni Young Stars 0 – 5 Magesini Hotspurs
Darwine FC 5-1 Blackpool

Goals galore in Ngomane League

It seems to be raining goals in RES Siyakha 1800 Ngomane Leagues as both the U13 and U15 categories witnessed avalanche of goals in each of the two matches played over the

RES Siyakha Tshaneni U15 League kicks off on a high note

weekend.

In the under-15 league, Dream Achievers showed no mercy to Bournemouth as they went berserk to massacre them 14-0 in one of the biggest scorelines in the history of the league. For their win, Dream Achievers have now leapfrogged Bournemouth to occupy the third position with nine points, and are six points behind leaders, Thiba Academy. The latter is sitting at 15 points, with one game behind.

The under-13 league also saw one of the biggest scoreline as Super Strikers humiliated Hostel 7-1 to maintain their third position in the table with 10 points. The game saw the youngsters showing great goal scoring prowess, leaving the football fans yearning for more.

Dream Achievers’ Cebolenkhosi, Nkhsingiphile on top of scorer’s charts

The duo of Cebolenkhosi Tsabedze and Nkhsingiphile Msibi of Dream Achievers are leading the scorers’ chart in both the RES Siyakha 1800 U15 and U13 categories, respectively.

Tsabedze, who have 13 goals under his name, is leading the chart in the under 15 leagues while Msibi, who sits at 14 goals, is topping the scorers’ chart in the U13 League.

With both players coming from the same team but different categories, it suffices the deduce that the team is producing prolific strikers. Notably, the league is witnessing high-scoring games week in and week out as the youngsters demonstrate sharpness in front of goals.

Programme making great impact — LRFA Chairman

Lubombo Regional Football Association (LRFA) Chairman Lucky Dlamini believes



▲LRFA chairman Lucky Dlamini.



▲Cebolenkhosi Tsabedze.

that the RES Siyakha 1800 Programme is making a meaningful impact in the region.

Dlamini thanked all the relevant stakeholders for their commitment towards the programme, insisting that as an association they are committed into seeing such programmes bearing the intended fruits.

“There is no doubt that the RES Siyakha programme is making an impact insofar as development is concerned, and thanks to all the stakeholders who are making this happen. The programme has been able to produce Premier league players as well as coaches who went on to leave a mark at the national level. One perfect example could be that of Simunye Soccer Academy Coach



▲Siyakha Ngomane league top goalscorer Nkosingiphile Dlamini.

Lucky Nyembe, who was appointed to lead the Eswatini team in COSSASA games, as well as Lusoti Primary School winning the KFC Scara Thindwa U13 tournament last year and becoming runners-up this year. We are happy with the continuous progress of this programme,” Dlamini said.

Dlamini further express his desire to see more junior players from this programme being promoted to senior teams.

“It is our wish to see more players graduating from the juniors to the seniors through this programme, hence it is on those grounds that we encourage teams to have junior teams to provide playing opportunities to the young talent,”he added.

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

CONTRIBUTING towards a healthy life for future citizens.

English woman football legend Eniola Aluko will be in the country to attend the Gavi foundation national vaccination campaign to be held in the country on Thursday at Somhlolo National Stadium.

She is expected to jet in the country on Wednesday (October 1, 2025) through the King Mswati III international airport. Contributing towards a healthy life for future citizens.

She is expected to jet in the country on Wednesday (October 1, 2025) through the King Mswati III international airport.

The campaign will see about 400 local children being vaccinated during a national rollout program facilitated by the Gavi Foundation, UEFA, and the Eswatini Football Association.

This was revealed by the Gavi Foundation Communications Officer, Annete Wangongu, during the launch of the initiative held on Tuesday at Sigwaca House.

"We are pleased to be part of this initiative, which aims to use football as a vehicle to promote vaccination in ESwatini. We will be having English football women's legend Eniola Aluko as the main guest. We would

English women's football legend for Eswatini

... Women's football legend Eniola Aluko jets in the country on Wednesday and will be part of the Gavi Foundation National Vaccination Campaign to be held at Somhlolo National Stadium on Thursday.

like to thank the various stakeholders for being part of this great initiative," she said.

Eswatni Football Association vice president Steve Horton welcomed the initiative.

"We are excited to be part of the exciting international event which uses football as a vehicle to spread vaccination gospel in the four corners of the country. We would like to thank the Gavi Foundation and UEFA for their contribution towards the event," he said. EFA representative Chris Endean also applauded the various stakeholders contribution towards the event.

The event was also attended by COSAFA officials, Technical Development committee member Nhlanhla 'Madida' Mabuza Sihlangu star Philani Mkhonto, and Technical Director Bhekisisa Mkhonta, among others.

The main guest is a Nigerian descent who was born in Lagos, and she moved to Birmingham with her parents when she was



▲ English women's football legend Eniola Aluko.

six months old. She made 102 appearances for the England national team from 2004 to 2016 and competed at the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup in China, 2009 UEFA Women's Euro, 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup

in Germany, 2013 UEFA Women's Euro, and 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada.

She previously played for Birmingham City, Charlton Athletic, and Chelsea in England's FA Women's Premier League.

Coaches Association punch holes in Technical Committee composition

The Eswatini Football Coaches Association (EFCA) have punched holes in the composition of the the Technical Development committee.

The association's former Secretary Musa Mamba said the TDC should have members who are well-versed with football issues

This was during the local coaches' body Annual General Meeting held on September 28, 2025 at Sigwaca House.

"There is a need to scrutinise the selection of the TDC members, as some of them do not have football expertise. This makes it difficult for us to execute our duties, especially at the national level, by dealing with officials who have little knowledge about the game," he said.

EFA Marketing and Communications Manager Muzi Radebe said the subcommittee is controlled by the executive committee.

"All issues of the TDC are controlled by the executive committee, and I am not privy to comment on their matters unless I get a directive from my superiors," he said.

The main responsibility of the TDC is appoint national team coaches.

The coaches' AGM saw the election of a new executive committee, chaired by Ntfonjeni member of parliament Raymond Dlamini.

The ex-Malanti Chiefs mentor beat former Secretary Musa Mamba by 43 votes, while his competitor got 40 votes to replace the longest serving chairman, Anthony Mdluli, who

did not stand for the elections.

The vice Chairmanship was won by Mphumelelo 'Mapho' Ngwenya with 59 votes ahead of Artwell Dladlu, who got 14 votes.

Ezulwini United head coach Musa Manyatsi assumed the vice Secretary position after amassing 53 points, while his competitor Sipho Mamba got 20 votes.

Hhohho Regional Football Association (HRFA) Technical Director James Kunene was elected unopposed in the Secretary position, while former Sihlangu head coach Dominic Kunene retained the Treasurer position in a similar fashion.

The two executive member positions were taken by Sea Birds coach, Friday Myeni, and Christian Thwala.



▲ Coaches following proceedings during their AGM.

'King Clay' funeral on Sunday

THE late Manzini Wanderers legend and assistant coach, Clement 'King Clay' Mdluli, will be laid to rest on Sunday at his parental homestead, Ngwazini, outside Manzini.

The proceedings will begin with a memorial service scheduled for Manzini Cathedral at noon on Saturday.

Mdluli recently lost his life after a battle with an undisclosed illness.

The deceased brother, Mlungisi Mdluli, confirmed the latest news when reached for comment.

"The funeral for our brother will take place on Sunday at Ngwazini after a memorial service on Saturday at Manzini Cathedral," he said.

The former Milling Hotspurs mentor was one of the assistant coaches to the 'Weslians' current head coach, Nyanga 'Crooks' Hlophe.

He spent a better part of his playing career with the 'Weslians' in the 90s and had national team caps as a striker.

He once served as assistant coach for the national under 23 squad.

He was a

brother of two 'Weslians' legends, John 'Shisa mateki' Mdluli and John 'Shisa junior' Mdluli.

The Eswatini Football Coaches recently mourned the passing of Mdluli through a press statement.

"On behalf of the Eswatini Football Coaches Association, we extend our deepest and most heartfelt sympathies for the loss of our beloved Clement Nkosinathi King Clay Mdluli. We were deeply saddened to hear of his passing. King Clay was more than just a coach; he was a true leader and an inspiration to so many in our coaching family and Football community. We will always remember his dedication to his work as a coach and as a member of the Association. King Clay showed great dedication in Coaching Education, such that he was able to acquire the highest required credentials," the association said.

Mdluli's demise comes after the passing of former Eswatini Football Association executive member Johannes 'Ace' Siboza.



▲ The late Manzini Wanderers assistant coach Clement 'King Clay' Mdluli.

Page 20



**Zwane
tipped to
recover in time
for AFCON**

**‘King Clay’
funeral on
Sunday**

Page 23



Eswatini Wednesday 1
October, 2025
Daily News
Sport



English women's football legend for Eswatini

● Women's football legend Eniola Aluko jets in the country on Wednesday and will be part of the Gavi Foundation National Vaccination Campaign to be held at Somhlolo National Stadium on Thursday. **Page 23**