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By Kwanele Dhladhla

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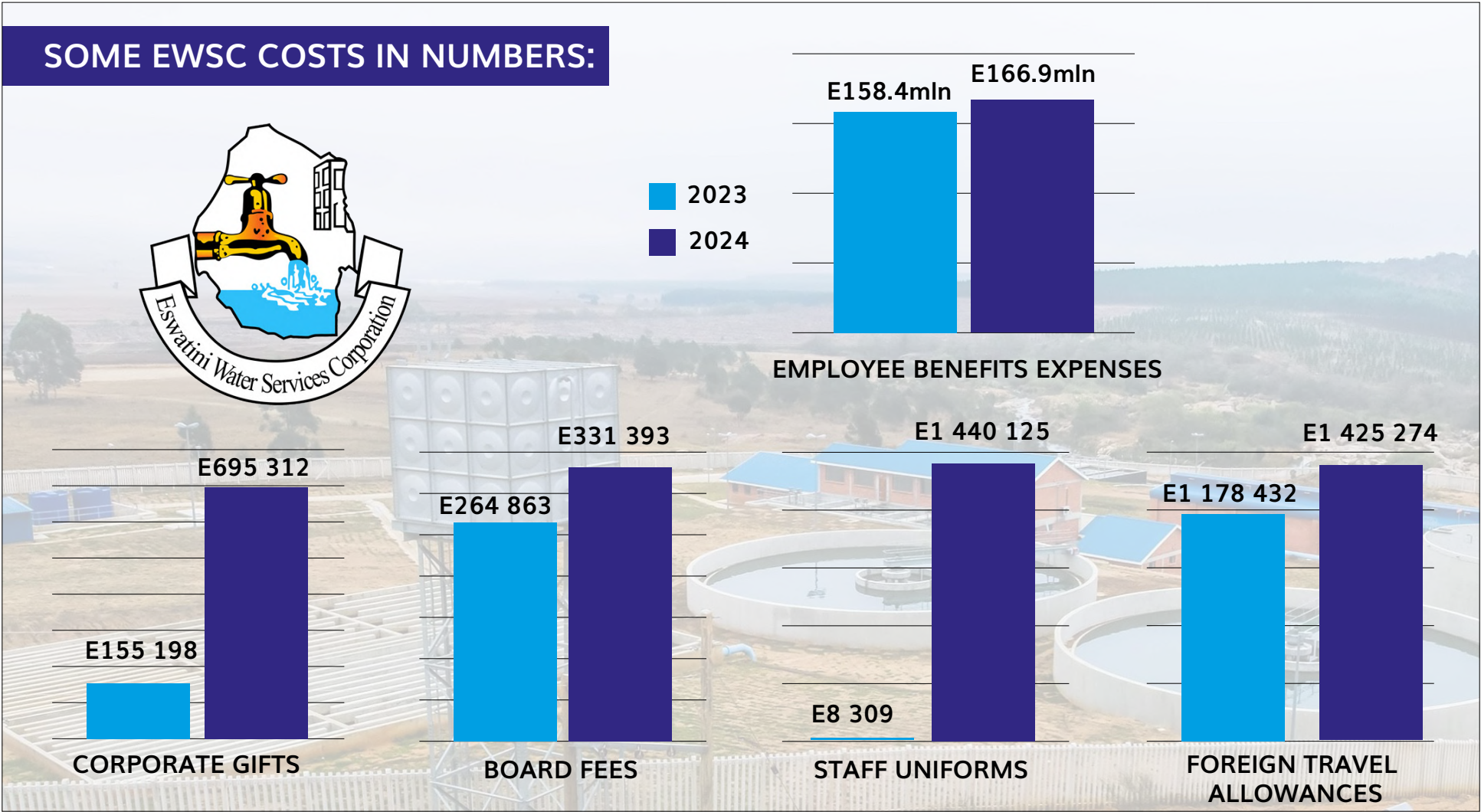
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MPs slam EWSC's E166mln employee benefits

... reject new E137.3mln loan request



By Kwanele Dhladhla

THE Eswatini Water Services Corporation (EWSC) came under fierce attack in the House of Assembly as legislators criticised the parastatal for its high salaries, expensive staff uniforms, and sleek motor vehicles, while Emaswati continue to endure rising water tariffs for access to the essential service.

A heated debate arose during deliberations on a proposed additional loan negotiated by Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, also known as the World Bank) on Wednesday. The loan, not exceeding US\$8 million (E137.3 million), has been earmarked for the financing of the Eswatini Water Supply and Sanitation Access Project, a flagship initiative targeting underserved communities in the Shiselweni Region.

Motivating the loan, Rijkenberg explained that the government, through EWSC, was implementing a project to expand access to clean water and sanitation for rural households, schools, health centers, and informal settlements. However, he said escalating costs, driven by inflation, exchange rate fluctuations, and unforeseen factors, had created financing shortfalls that require additional resources to complete water supply infrastructure works.

"The loan is highly important to ensure

that we drive the agenda of access to clean water. EWSC is better suited to implement the project than any other institution, based on a thorough analysis. The loan will be serviced by the state and will not add to the cost of water for the public," Rijkenberg explained.

Yet, MPs seized the opportunity to vent their frustration at what they described as EWSC's mismanagement and extravagant expenditure.

According to the corporation's 2024 annual report, employee benefits expenses rose to E166.9 million from E158.4 million in 2023, an increase of E8.5 million. The cost of corporate gifts surged from E155,198 to E695,312, staff uniforms skyrocketed from E8,309 to E1.4 million, and management car travel expenses totalled E10.3 million. The report states that there were 550 employees as of 2024.

Nhlambeni MP Manzi Zwane described EWSC as a 'monster' that ordinary people could no longer afford.

"Most of the money we pay goes to salaries and luxurious uniforms, even tracksuits. It seems EWSC is now a cash cow, spending willy-nilly on lucrative contracts, while Emaswati struggle with tariffs," he said.

Lobamba MP Michael Masilela echoed the criticism, saying the corporation appeared to be spending lavishly with little regard for the impoverished.

"Tariffs are crippling households and the business community. EWSC must embrace transparency and consider reducing fees, instead of hiking them continuously,"

Masilela argued.

Some legislators, however, supported the loan but insisted on strict oversight. Zombodze Emuva MP, Ntando Mkhonta, stressed the importance of improving water connections in Shiselweni and urged colleagues to visit the region to witness the dire need.

"Yes, the loan should be approved, but accountability is essential," Mkhonta submitted.

Mafutseni MP Sabelo Mtetwa highlighted governance concerns, urging the minister to ensure competent appointments to parastatal boards.

"Cabinet ministers should not appoint their friends to boards. We must have professional oversight. And pre-paid meters should be rolled out faster, so people pay only for what they use," he stated.

Nkomiyahlaba MP Mduduzi Dlamini pressed for a stronger corporate social responsibility drive, criticising the high salaries of senior managers while junior staff faced retrenchments.

Mayiwane MP Sicelo Dlamini dismissed the loan as offside, claiming it would only benefit a few.

"EWSC keeps raising tariffs but is not taking money back to the people. Rural water should be prioritised instead," he said.

MP Sabelo Ndlangamandla also opposed the loan, citing exorbitant tariffs and poor infrastructure maintenance.

"If pre-paid meters had been fully rolled out, I might support this loan. But as things stand, I cannot," he argued.

Manzini Region MP Thandeka Mavuso questioned how many schools and communities would benefit from the E137.3 million and challenged EWSC to consider public-private partnerships to improve efficiency.

Rijkenberg outlined that the state would repay the loan in 40 semi-annual instalments, beginning after a five-year grace period. The financial terms include interest at a floating base rate plus a variable spread, a front-end fee of 0.25 per cent of the loan amount, and a commitment charge of 0.25 per cent per annum on the undisbursed balance.

He acknowledged public frustration over tariffs but insisted that no entity could operate without covering inflation costs.

He added that pre-paid meters were already being rolled out, though at a gradual pace.

Meanwhile, water tariffs have continued to rise. Effective April 1, 2025, households consuming 10,000 litres (10 cubic metres) of water now pay E189.06, up from E181.79 the previous financial year, a four per cent increase authorised under the Fixation of Water and Sewage Tariffs Regulations, 2024, issued by Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Prince Lonkhokhela.

Finance Portfolio Committee Chairperson and Lobamba Lomdzala MP, Marwick Khumalo, said whether the loan would be approved remained undecided. "Management of EWSC must address the concerns raised by MPs. If approved, it will be tabled in the House on Thursday," he explained.

By Kwanele Dh;adhla

Eswatini seeks over E464 mln loan for youth to bolster job creation

THE government has taken a decisive step to address one of its most pressing socio-economic challenges of youth unemployment by seeking a US\$27 million (E464.3 million) loan from the International Development Association (IDA) for the financing of the Eswatini Youth Employment Opportunities Project (EYEOP).

Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg, when motivating the loan before the House of Assembly Finance Portfolio Committee on Wednesday, chaired by Lobamba Lomdzala MP Marwick Khumalo, said the project would directly confront the structural issues that have left thousands of young people locked out of the economy.

“Each year, about 25,000 young people enter the labour market, yet only around 1,000 formal jobs are created. This leaves the majority in informal, low-productivity work or without economic opportunities altogether,” Rijkenberg said.

Statistics presented highlighted that in 2023, nearly 197,000 youth, 54 per cent of the young population, were not in education, employment, or training (NEET). In rural areas, NEET rates reached a staggering 64 per cent.

Against this backdrop, the minister said EYEOP aims to boost employability and income generation by targeting both skills and opportunities.

Rijkenberg explained that the project would deliver a comprehensive package of economic inclusion interventions. He mentioned that this includes demand-driven skills training, entrepreneurship support, apprenticeships, and improved access to productive inputs and markets.

He stated that the youth would also be linked into agricultural and construction value chains to help transform low-income participation into viable, sustainable livelihoods.

Another key pillar, he said, was the establishment of a digital social registry to ensure accurate targeting of beneficiaries. This dynamic system will track youth profiles, guaranteeing that interventions reach the most vulnerable.

“This is not about creating a fund for loans. It is about making young people productive and self-reliant through structured programmes led by agencies such as EWADE in farming and Microprojects in infrastructure,” Rijkenberg clarified.

He disclosed that the project would also engage the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Thuli Dladla, to identify impoverished homes and youth-led households that need tailored support.

The minister explained that the loan was to be repaid over 40 semi-annual instalments, beginning after a 10-year grace period. He said it carries a service charge of 0.75 per cent per annum and a 0.5 per cent commitment charge on undisbursed balances.

Rijkenberg assured MPs that debt sustainability would not be compromised.

“Total public debt currently stands at E34.54 billion, equivalent to 39.79 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Even with this loan, debt will remain around 40.35 per cent of GDP, which is within acceptable thresholds,” he explained.

He further noted that 15 external loans would be fully repaid within the next five years, easing the repayment burden.

The loan comes at a time when thousands of young people continue to apply in desperation for the limited openings in the ongoing recruitment drive of the Umbutfo



▲ Members of Parliament have called for transparency in utilisation of loan funds.

Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF).

MPs across the political divide voiced strong support for the project, stressing that youth empowerment is a national priority.

Zombodze Emuva MP Mduduzi Dlamini said: “We fully support this initiative, but we must ensure that rural youth are not left behind. Transparency is key.”

Lamgabhi MP Sicelo Jele echoed this sentiment, urging the government to “provide guidelines that guarantee accessibility for all youth.”

Despite calls for regulatory clarity, Rijkenberg emphasised that the design was programme-based, not loan disbursement-based. “We are creating opportunities, not handing out cash,” he said.

The Finance Portfolio Committee is expected to make a final recommendation on whether the loan proceeds to the House of Assembly on Thursday.

MPs demand regulations, transparency While the Ministry of Finance House of Assembly Portfolio Committee expressed broad support for the proposed Eswatini Youth Employment Opportunities Project (EYEOP), Members of Parliament have raised strong calls for clear regulations to guide its implementation.

The government has sought US\$27 million (E464.3 million) loan from the International Development Association (IDA) to finance the project, which aims to tackle the country’s spiralling youth unemployment.

However, MPs cautioned that without strict oversight and defined frameworks, the programme risks falling into the same pitfalls as past government initiatives.

Lobamba MP Micheal Masilela said: “We must be clear on how this programme will be made accessible to ordinary Emaswati. What will the terms be like, and will there



▲ Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg and Director Budget Kate Mamba.

be hidden costs? We cannot afford to price young people out of opportunity.”

Zombodze Emuva MP Mduduzi Dlamini supported the loan but insisted on inclusivity. “Rural youth are often sidelined. There must be a policy that ensures equal access, regardless of geography.”

Lamgabhi MP Sicelo Jele called for firm regulations that address accessibility and accountability, while highlighting the vulnerability of youth, as shown by the overwhelming response to military recruitment.

Committee Chairman Marwick Khumalo

issued a sobering reminder. “This project reminds me of the Poverty Alleviation Fund, which died a natural death. If it is to be manned without proper regulations, it is bound to fail. Sustainability depends on strong governance.”

Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg clarified that EYEOP was not a loan fund.

“We are not giving out money to young people. We will be implementing programmes in farming through EWADE, in infrastructure through Microprojects, and through the DPM’s office for vulnerable households,” he said.

Fresh Parly storm over recycling of faces in parastatal boards

By Kwanele Dhladhla

A FRESH storm has erupted in Parliament over the governance of state-owned enterprises, with MPs demanding sweeping reforms to the appointment of boards of directors. Mafutseni MP Sabelo Mtetwa, speaking during debate on loan bills by the House of Assembly Portfolio Committee on Wednesday, urged the Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg to ensure the appointment of credible, competent individuals through an open process that requires submission of applications and curriculum vitae.

“Board members must be selected on merit, not connections. The Cabinet does not seem to be applying itself to managing parastatals. Ministers should not be allowed to appoint their own friends to boards. This has contributed to questionable expenditure patterns and inefficiency,” he said.

This was not the first time Parliament raised the alarm over the board of directors’ appointments. In September, Lobamba Lomdzala MP Marwick Khumalo, seconded by Nhlambeni MP Manzi Zwane, intended to table a motion which was recorded in the notice paper, highlighting what he described as a glaring conflict of interest and lack of corporate governance in parastatals.



▲ Members of Parliament have called for board members to be appointed on merit, not connections.

Khumalo argued that too many government-appointed directors sit on multiple boards while holding full-time jobs elsewhere, undermining accountability and performance.

“It is unacceptable that the same faces dominate parastatal boards while their performance leaves much to be desired,” Khumalo submitted.

The veteran legislator went further, pointing out that senior managers of private companies also chair parastatal boards - a practice he called both untenable and unfair to qualified but overlooked citizens.

Khumalo lamented what he described as a steady decline in the calibre of individuals appointed to run state-owned enterprises. He argued that this deterioration has contributed to widespread mismanagement and a lack of direction in institutions that play a critical role in Eswatini’s economy.

“The calibre of appointments has worsened over the years, and this is visible in the mismanagement that has crippled many parastatals,” he submitted.

Khumalo reminded legislators that the African Development Bank (AfDB) had extended financial support for transforming

the Public Enterprises Unit (PEU), the government body tasked with overseeing parastatals. He said these resources should not go to waste but should be used to enforce reforms that strengthen corporate governance.

Khumalo concluded that the reforms were not simply about reshuffling board seats, but about restoring integrity and efficiency.

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

The notice of motion set out key resolutions for Minister Rijkenberg, who also chairs the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises (SCOPE). Among them:

- No Double Appointments: No individual employed by a parastatal shall serve on more than one board of directors. Government officials may be appointed to no more than two statutory boards.
- Legislative Review: The finance minister must urgently review and present legislation to strengthen the PEU’s role in managing state-owned enterprises.
- Implementation Timeline: The Minister has 60 working days to align parastatals with these resolutions to improve efficiency, governance, and accountability.
- Repercussions: Failure to comply could have serious consequences during the PEU’s annual budget deliberations.

Nhlangano Town Council seeks court order to protect E10 million investment

By Delisa Magagula

THE Nhlangano Town Council has approached the High Court to freeze funds held by Status Capital Building Society (SCBS), following concerns over the building society’s financial stability and on-going delays in payments.

The council, represented by Mxolisi Dlamini of Dynasty Inc. Attorneys, obtained an ex parte order from Judge Nkosinathi Maseko to preserve E10 702 285, reflecting the initial



▲ Babsy Mavuso, Town Clerk and Chief Executive Officer of Nhlangano Town Council.

E10 million investment plus accrued interest.

The order instructs the building society and the curator, Bimal De Silva, appointed by the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA), to withhold any withdrawals, transfers, or disposal of funds pending finalisation of legal action.

According to Babsy Mavuso, Town Clerk and Chief Executive Officer of the council, the investment with Status Capital began in 2019 after the council reviewed the building society’s advertised offerings.

The council passed a resolution on October 27, 2021, to invest E10 million, with an interest rate of 9.25% per annum and a projected return of E14 625 000 over five years. Initial payments were received regularly, with amounts of E71 658.55 and E69 346.05 recorded in November and December 2022, respectively, and continuing until July 2024.

Trouble began in August 2024 when payments became irregular. A delayed payment of E69 297 was made on August 29, 2024, but no subsequent payments were received for September, October, November, or December.

Attempts to resolve the matter directly with Status Capital reportedly yielded only assurances of “system glitches” and advice to be patient.

Mavuso said the council was further alarmed after reading a newspaper report that Status Capital had been placed un-



der curatorship by the FSRA, contradicting earlier assurances from the building society.

At a meeting at Sibane Sami Hotel, curator Bimal De Silva reportedly informed the council that E35 million had been recovered and would soon be disbursed, yet no payments had been received by the council to date.

The urgency of the application is heightened by information suggesting that the FSRA intends to place Status Capital under liquidation. The council told the court it intends to obtain the letter from FSRA regarding liquidation and submit it as evidence to strengthen its claim and prevent the depletion of funds.

Mavuso emphasised that without immediate intervention, the council risks losing its investment if Status Capital’s remaining

funds are dissipated during normal court proceedings. The ex parte application allows the court to act quickly to prevent such an outcome.

The council’s legal action comes amid broader concerns over mismanagement at Status Capital. Reports indicate that over E100 million invested by various investors may have been misappropriated. Status Capital reportedly shared leadership with Espo- nent Eswatini, where approximately E340 million of investors’ funds allegedly disappeared. The High Court order directs Status Capital and the curator to show cause why the sum of E10 702 285 should not remain frozen pending legal proceedings.

The injunction is temporary but seeks to protect the council’s investment until the matter is resolved in court.



▲ The team was welcomed by other fellow students.



▲ The students were in jovial mood

UNESWA Luyengo Enactus team returns from World Cup

By Delisa Magagula

THE University of Eswatini’s Luyengo Campus Enactus team returned to the country on Tuesday after their Bangkok trip.

The team was participating in the 2025 Enactus World Cup held in Bangkok, Thailand, on their return they were met by an enthusiastic group of more than 30 students and supporters who gathered to welcome them back.

The students represented Eswatini on the global stage after winning the national Enactus competition earlier this year.

Their flagship project, Nutri Plume Eco-Solutions, focuses on converting chicken feather waste into organic fertilizer, providing an environmentally friendly alternative for farmers and reducing waste from poultry production.

The homecoming was marked by a celebratory reception at the airport, with the pupils’ waving flags and singing songs as they awaited the arrival of the students. Teachers accompanying the group said the reception was meant to inspire the younger generation to pursue innovative and socially impactful ideas.

One of the coordinators from the Ministry of Education explained that involving school pupils in welcoming the team was deliberate.

“These young innovators have shown what can be achieved with creativity and determination. Having school children welcome them sends a strong message that innovation is for everyone, not just university students,” he said.

UNESWA Luyengo earned the right to compete at the global contest after winning the 2025 Enactus Eswatini National Competition.

The event, held in July, featured teams from several tertiary institutions in the country. The Nutri Plume project stood out for its potential to address environmental concerns while improving agricultural output through affordable organic fertilizers.

The team’s participation in Bangkok marked Eswatini’s continued presence on the international stage, following earlier representations by UNESWA Mbabane Campus in 2023 and UNESWA Luyengo in 2024.

The Enactus World Cup brings together student teams from across the globe to present innovative projects that address social, economic, and environmental challenges. The 2025 edition took place from September



▲ The ENACTUS team on arrival at the Ngwenya Border Gate on Tuesday.

16 to 19 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Over 30 countries participated, with projects ranging from renewable energy initiatives to waste recycling and food security solutions.

The competition provides a platform for young people to demonstrate how entrepreneurial action can tackle pressing global issues.

This year’s championship highlighted sustainability, with many teams focusing on projects aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Presentations were made before a panel of judges comprising business leaders, academics, and development experts.

The Enactus team from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, emerged as the 2025 Enactus World Cup champions. Their project centered on sustainable packaging made from agricultural waste, which has potential for large-scale impact in addressing plastic pollution.

Other top performers included teams from Canada, Germany, and India, who reached the semi-finals with projects focusing on affordable clean energy, circular economy models, and healthcare access.

For Eswatini, participation in the global competition was an opportunity to show-

case local innovation on an international platform and to network with potential partners who could support the expansion of the Nutri Plume initiative.

In recent years, Eswatini has steadily grown its presence in the Enactus World Cup. In 2023, the UNESWA Mbabane Campus represented the country in the Netherlands with a project addressing youth mental health and recycling. In 2024, the Luyengo Campus once again took the national title with their agricultural waste conversion initiative and competed in Kazakhstan.

The 2025 outing in Thailand reinforced Eswatini’s reputation for presenting environmentally focused solutions.

While the team did not advance to the semi-finals, their project attracted interest from other teams and business leaders attending the event.

The participation of Eswatini teams in the Enactus World Cup has been made possible through partnerships with both the private and public sectors. This year, the Central Bank of Eswatini and other corporate sponsors contributed resources that enabled the students to travel and compete abroad.

Sponsors have also provided seed funding for some projects to be implemented locally. Nutri Plume Eco-Solutions, for instance,

has received grants to expand its production capacity and distribute its fertilizer to small-holder farmers.

Following their return, the Luyengo Campus team is expected to continue developing their project and to roll out more pilot sites across the country. Agricultural extension officers have expressed interest in testing the product with maize and vegetable farmers.

Worth mentioning is that, Enactus is a global network of students, academic institutions, and business leaders committed to using entrepreneurial action to create a better, more sustainable world.

With presence in over 30 countries, it engages more than 70,000 students annually.

The annual Enactus World Cup is the culminating event where national champion teams showcase their projects and compete for recognition as the world’s most impactful student initiative.

Meanwhile with the conclusion of the 2025 Enactus World Cup, attention now turns to preparations for the 2026 edition, which will be hosted in São Paulo, Brazil. Eswatini’s institutions are expected to begin their national competitions early next year, with teams already conceptualizing projects aimed at addressing local and global challenges.

Stories by Delisa Magagula

THE High Court full bench on Wednesday heard claims that the custom of 'kujumisa' has no age limit.

Alpheous Nxumalo, the government spokesperson arrested on April 13, 2025, is challenging the constitutionality of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act.

Nxumalo, who has been charged under the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act No.15 of 2018 for allegedly having sexual intercourse with two women of 17 and 18 years respectively, however, denied committing the offences. He made this claim in his replying affidavit in the matter where he is challenging the constitutionality of the SODV Act.

His lawyer, Khumbulani Msibi, submitted that before the SODV Act was passed in 2018, relations with 17-year-olds were not criminalised under law or custom.

Msibi argued that under Eswatini custom, practices such as kujumisa and kwendzisa

'Kujumisa' has no age limit – Govt Spokesperson

(arranged marriage) had no fixed minimum age restrictions.

He said it was the 2018 Act that for the first time set 18 years as the age of consent.

The submission drew immediate concern from the bench. Judge Mummy Dlamini asked whether the defence was suggesting that relations with girls below 18 could ever be permissible under custom.

After objections from the court and the prosecution, Msibi retracted the statement, admitting the wording was wrong and clarifying that Nxumalo was not relying on custom as a defence.

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), represented by Attorney Mndeni Vilakati, said the arguments 'collapse on their own submissions' and cautioned against broad cultural defences in a statutory matter.



▲ Alpheous Nxumalo, the government spokesperson arrested on April 13, 2025, is challenging the constitutionality of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act.

Judge Mummy calls Alpheous defence submissions 'Nasty'

TEMPERS flared in court when Judge Mummy Dlamini labelled Nxumalo's defence submissions nasty and reckless.

The rebuke came during the full bench hearing of Nxumalo's constitutional challenge to the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act. His lawyer had suggested that customs such as kujumisa carried no age restrictions, a claim later withdrawn.

Judge Dlamini warned that the case was not an 'academic exercise' and said Nxumalo should not act as a 'busybody' but instead focus only on aspects of the law that directly affected his rights.

The prosecution also criticised the defence strategy, saying Nxumalo was adopting a shotgun approach by raising broad constitutional arguments without linking them to his charges.

The court cautioned the defence against



▲ Judge Mummy Dlamini labelled Nxumalo's defence submissions nasty and reckless.

wasting judicial time and pressed them to demonstrate how Nxumalo's rights under the constitution were infringed. The matter, which was argued before a full bench, has been postponed for judgment.

Nxumalo seeks technicality to escape SODV charges

ALPHEOUS Nxumalo's defence told the High Court that the SODV Act was not lawfully enacted.

The government spokesperson that is currently on special leave, arrested in April, faces two counts of rape under the Act. He now argues that the legislation is invalid because Parliament did not properly consult chiefs as custodians of custom before passing it.

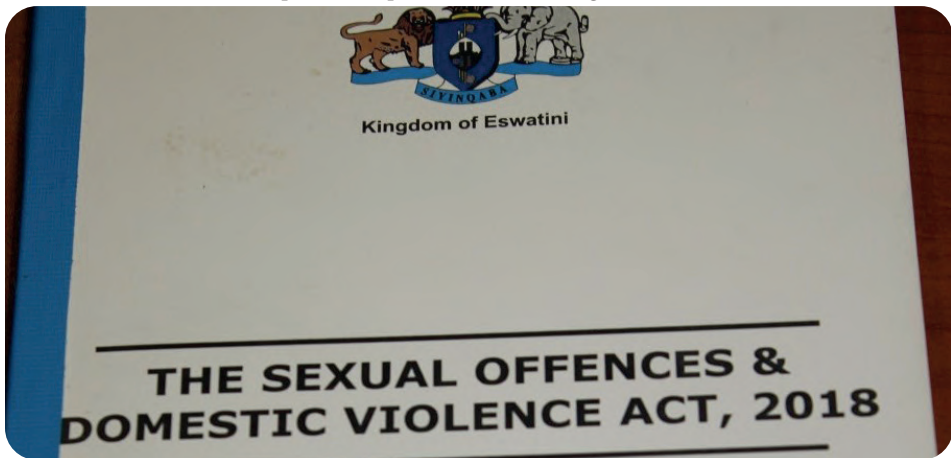
The defence said this failure makes the law unconstitutional and the charges should not stand.

Judge Mummy Dlamini pressed whether this amounted to an attempt to 'escape on a

technicality' despite Nxumalo's plea of not guilty during arraignment.

The DPP maintained that Nxumalo cannot avoid trial through a procedural challenge, arguing there is no universe where the charges disappear on that basis. The State insisted he must face trial under the current law.

The judges reserved judgment after hearing arguments from both sides. The case has become a key test of the 2018 SODV Act, which raised the age of consent to 18 and broadened protections for children and women against sexual offences.



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BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Stocks mixed, gold hits record

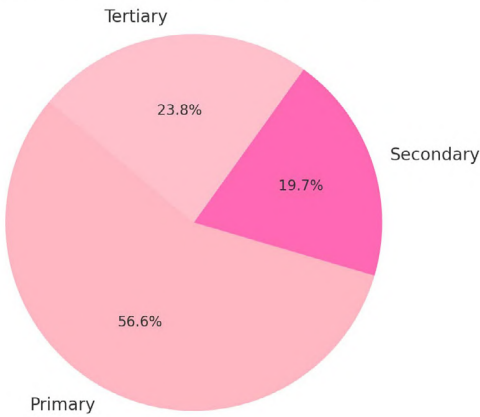
LONDON — Wall Street futures and the dollar stumbled on Wednesday, while gold struck a record high as the U.S. government shut down much of its operations, possibly delaying the release of crucial jobs data that could muddy the interest rate outlook. With no clear path out of the impasse over a funding deal, agencies warned the government shutdown would halt the release of a closely watched September employment report and lead to the furlough of 750,000 federal workers at a daily cost of \$400 million. S&P 500 futures and Nasdaq futures dropped about 0.5 per cent each on Wednesday. Gold prices climbed to \$3,895 an ounce, hitting a record high for a third straight session.

Oil slips as markets assess OPEC+ plans, demand concerns

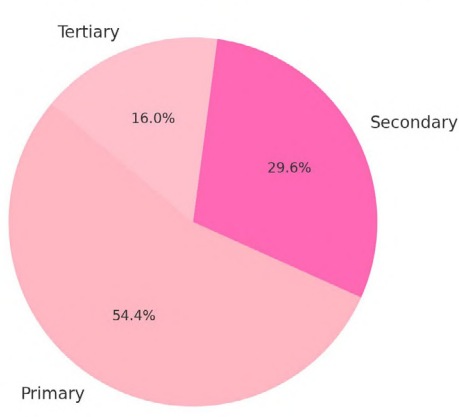
LONDON — Oil prices fell on Wednesday, extending losses from the previous two sessions, as investors weighed OPEC+ plans for a larger output hike next month, while data from the U.S. and Asia showed signs of demand waning. Brent crude futures for December delivery were down 56 cents, or 0.9 per cent, to \$65.47 a barrel at 1316 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude for November delivery was down 53 cents, also 0.9 per cent lower, to \$61.84 a barrel. Both were trading at their lowest since early September, after settling more than 3 per cent lower on Monday and losing another 1.5 per cent on Tuesday.

GDP to rise from E89 billion to E126 billion by 2030

Sector Contribution to GDP Growth (2026)



Sector Contribution to GDP Growth (2028-2030)



By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI's economy is forecast to expand significantly over the medium term, with GDP at current prices projected to grow from E89 billion in 2024 to E126.6 billion by 2030.

The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, led by Minister Dr. Tambo Gina, outlined the projections in the country's medium-term outlook, setting annual real growth at 6.1 per cent for 2025. The wholesale and retail trade (W&R) sector will make the largest contribution to GDP growth in 2025 at 1.9 per cent, followed by construction at 1.4 per cent. Financial and insurance services are expected to add 0.6 per cent, while manufacturing will contribute 0.5 per cent. ICT and professional services will make smaller but notable contributions at 0.4 per cent and 0.2 per cent respectively.

Transport, agriculture, and public administration are projected to provide marginal growth, while real estate is expected to remain flat.

Mining and quarrying will weigh down growth with a projected contraction of 0.3 per cent.

Dr. Gina noted that while some sectors face pressure, especially mining and agriculture, the growth spread across multiple industries highlights the resilience of Eswatini's economy.

He cautioned that risks such as commodity price shifts and climate variability remain.

Primary Sector: Agriculture and forestry will recover with a 7.5 per cent expansion in 2025 after prior contractions, supported by stronger crop yields.

Mining, despite volatility, is forecast to rebound sharply from -18.3 per cent in 2024 to 19.1 per cent growth in 2025 before stabilizing in later years.

"Secondary Sector, manufacturing will expand by 1.5 per cent in 2025, accelerating to 3.7 per cent in 2026 and averaging around 4 per cent by the decade's end. Construction is set for strong growth at 5.7 per cent in 2025 and 7.7 per cent in 2026, then moderating to 4.2 per cent in 2028-2030. Wholesale and retail trade will grow steadily, maintaining 6.6 per cent growth in 2025 and easing to 1.7 per cent by 2030," reads

the statement by Gina in part.

The statement further reveals that services sector being the transport and storage will record 5.6 per cent growth in 2025, improving to 5.8 per cent by 2030. Tourism will benefit from recovery momentum, growing 7.8 per cent in 2025 before averaging 4.8 per cent in the medium term.

"ICT will post the fastest growth at 10.8 per cent in 2025, with sustained expansion above 5 per cent through 2030. Financial and insurance services are projected at 9.4 per cent in 2025, with consistent strength thereafter," reads the statement.

Minister Gina underscored that ICT, construction, and financial services will be central to sustaining growth. He highlighted the need for structural reforms, infrastructure upgrades, and economic diversification to ensure long-term competitiveness.

Despite sectoral volatility, particularly in mining and agriculture, the medium-term forecast positions Eswatini on a positive growth path, with services emerging as the dominant driver of the economy.

Eswatini poised for growth as AGOA expires

By Delisa Magagula

AS the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) conclude for all African countries, Eswatini is preparing to navigate the transition with strategic foresight.

While the expiration of AGOA means the end of duty-free and quota-free access to the United States market, the country has secured a Reciprocal External Tariff of just 10% on US-bound exports the lowest in the region.

Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Trade, Manqoba Khumalo emphasized that this favorable trade arrangement positions Eswatini as an attractive hub for investors seeking access to American markets.

"We anticipate not a net loss, but rather a net gain in both investments and job opportunities, as businesses seeking competitive access to the US market are likely to relocate or expand operations here," he said.

AGOA has historically supported thousands of jobs in Eswatini, particularly within the textiles and apparel sector.

In 2024, these exports accounted for the ma-



▲ Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo.

jority of approximately US\$70 million in AGOA shipments. With the continuation of trade under the new 10% tariff, the government expects to sustain and potentially grow employment in these critical sectors.

The Ministry has taken proactive steps to ensure a smooth transition. Existing factory shells are expected to remain operational, and the competitive tariff is likely to attract additional companies, maintaining industrial activity.

At the same time, the government is promoting diversification into agro-processing, ICT, and renewable energy, leveraging existing infrastructure to create new economic opportunities.

Trade analysts suggest that Eswatini's strate-

gic positioning could make it the preferred base for US-bound exports in Southern Africa.

"Eswatini's low tariff structure is highly attractive for manufacturers, especially in textiles and value-added processing. This could encourage both regional and international investment," said Mkhosi Thwala an Economist.

Beyond sector-specific strategies, the government is working to broaden the base of beneficiaries through reforms and leveraging agreements such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

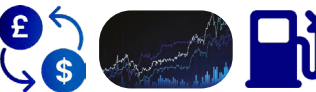
These measures aim to ensure that economic growth and trade benefits reach a wider segment of the population. Minister Khumalo urged companies with questions to engage with the Ministry's International Trade Department, highlighting a commitment to close collaboration with the private sector. Businesses can contact Director Lungile Dlamini at 7606 3001 for guidance.

In summary, while the end of AGOA presents challenges, Eswatini's proactive trade negotiations, favourable tariff regime, and diversification efforts place the country in a position to attract new investments, create jobs, and expand its export economy, turning a potential disruption into a strategic opportunity.



FX RATES

| Notes/Cash | | |
|-------------|---------------|---------|
| | Buy | Sell |
| U.S. Dollar | 16.8274 | 17.2964 |
| G.B. Pound | 22.6987 | 23.3845 |
| EURO | 19.8716 | 20.4835 |
| 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 | |



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Making Meal Times Special



Stocks mixed, gold hits record

By Robert Harvey

LONDON — Wall Street futures and the dollar stumbled on Wednesday, while gold struck a record high as the U.S. government shut down much of its operations, possibly delaying the release of crucial jobs data that could muddy the interest rate outlook.

With no clear path out of the impasse over a funding deal, agencies warned the government shutdown would halt the release of a closely watched September employment report, opens new tab and lead to the furlough of 750,000 federal workers at a daily cost of \$400 million.

S&P 500 futures and Nasdaq futures dropped about 0.5 per cent each on Wednesday. Gold prices climbed to \$3,895 an ounce, hitting a record high for a third straight session.

European shares bucked the global trend, with the pan-continental STOXX 600 up 0.7 per cent. Britain's FTSE 100 and Switzerland's SMI outperformed, boosted by healthcare stocks which jumped on expectations they could avoid excessive U.S. import tariffs after President Donald Trump struck a deal with Pfizer on prescription drug prices.

The healthcare sector has the third largest weighting in the STOXX 600.

"There's a lot of political risk in the healthcare sector but as you see this risk ease, investors will be buying," said Lars Skovgaard, senior investment strategist at



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

Danske Bank.

"I think this could give some support to European shares over the next couple of days."

Shutdown to delay data

With Friday's nonfarm payrolls report expected to be absent, investors may place greater weight on the ADP National Employment Report due later today. Forecasts are centred on a modest gain of 50,000 private-sector jobs.

"The general idea is that these things have a short-term impact, not a long-term one, and markets know it," said George Lagarias,

chief economist at Forvis Mazars.

"The lack of data will mean we assume the trend we have will continue. If there is no evidence of a strong economic rebound then the chances are that the Fed will continue on its present course."

Futures now imply a 95 per cent chance of a rate cut from the Federal Reserve in October, up from 90 per cent from a day earlier, with around a 75 per cent probability of another move in December.

Anthony Saglimbene, chief market strategist at Ameriprise, said that if the shutdown lingers, September inflation reports in mid-October could also be

negatively affected.

"An extended period where the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is not operating at full strength could affect data collection efforts for other reports, which may impact the quality of the data," he said in a note.

Japan's Nikkei dropped 0.9 per cent on Wednesday after an 11 per cent surge the previous quarter. South Korean shares rose 0.9 per cent, adding to the 11.5 per cent gain in the last quarter, after data showed its exports rose at the fastest pace in 14 months in September.

Taiwan's shares (.TWII), opens new tab gained 0.6 per cent. The island's top tariff negotiator said on Wednesday that Taiwan will not agree to a deal with Washington for half of all semiconductor production to take place in the U.S.

Chinese markets, including Hong Kong, were closed for a public holiday.

Dollar falls

In foreign exchange markets, the dollar index slipped for a fourth straight day and was last down 0.1 per cent to 97.71.

The euro rose 0.1 per cent to \$1.1735, while sterling was up 0.3 per cent at \$1.3483.

The dollar was off 0.6 per cent at 147.06 yen, after a Bank of Japan survey showed confidence among big Japanese manufacturers improved for a second quarter, heightening the chance of an interest rate hike as soon as this month.

In the Treasuries market, yields were steady in European morning trade. The benchmark U.S. 10-year Treasury yield was down 1 basis point at 4.137 per cent, having risen 1 basis point the day before. (Reuters)

By Seher Dareen

LONDON — Oil prices fell on Wednesday, extending losses from the previous two sessions, as investors weighed OPEC+ plans for a larger output hike next month, while data from the U.S. and Asia showed signs of demand waning.

Brent crude futures for December delivery were down 56 cents, or 0.9 per cent, to \$65.47 a barrel at 1316 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude for November delivery was down 53 cents, also 0.9 per cent lower, to \$61.84 a barrel. Both were trading at their lowest since early September, after settling more than 3 per cent lower on Monday and losing another 1.5 per cent on Tuesday.

Oil has dropped on market anticipation of a similar sized OPEC+ production increase in November to the 500,000 barrels per day hike in September, and on U.S. and Asian demand starting to fall, Rystad analyst Janiv Shah said.

"U.S. drawdowns have slowed, so some bullish movement could start to flip," he added.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known as OPEC+, could agree to raise oil production by up to 500,000 bpd in November, triple the increase made for October, as Saudi Arabia seeks to reclaim market share, three sources familiar with the talks said.

However, OPEC wrote on X that media reports of plans to raise output by 500,000 bpd were misleading.

Meanwhile, in the United States, an



▲ A 3D printed oil pump jack is seen in front of displayed Opec logo.

industry report showed crude stockpiles fell while gasoline and distillate inventories rose in the week ended September 26, according to market sources citing American Petroleum Institute estimates on Tuesday.

Data on factory activity in Asia, the world's biggest oil-consuming region, also added to concerns about fuel demand, as manufacturing activity contracted across most major economies in September.

In addition, record U.S. oil production, some caution ahead of the OPEC+ meeting this weekend, and a risk-off environment

due to the U.S. government shutdown also played a part, Giovanni Staunovo, an analyst at UBS said.

The U.S. government shut down much of its operations on Wednesday as deep partisan divisions prevented Congress and the White House from reaching a funding deal - which government agencies have warned would halt the release of the closely watched September employment report, among other things.

Weekly petroleum data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration will

run as scheduled on Wednesday despite the federal government shutdown, the agency said.

Focus was also shifting to the supply and export disruption in Russia due to Ukrainian assaults, PVM Oil Associates' analyst Tamas Varga said.

The next round of talks between the U.S. and Russia aimed at improving relations could take place before the end of autumn, the state TASS news agency reported Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov as saying. (Reuters)

Joseph Kabila's death sentence sends shockwaves through Goma

THE military court's decision especially resonates in Goma. The city has been under the control of the AFC/M23 rebel alliance since January.

Kabila had come to Goma just a few months ago to meet with the population. After the news of his death sentence, the concern of Goma residents is palpable. Many fear Kabila's conviction will bring greater violence and divisions.

"His arrest could worsen the situation regarding the war. If he is really working with the M23, they will be angry when he is arrested," motorcycle taxi driver Alewis Sambuka told Africanews.

Some, like Goma resident Amani Safari, also argue that Kabila's conviction "won't bring peace. [The parties] should sit down together to see how they can find a solution."

The former head of state was tried and sentenced to death on serious charges including treason, war crimes and participation in an insurrection movement.

The M23 immediately reacted to this sentence with a clear message. The rebel group strongly opposes the conviction.

"The death sentence handed down to president Joseph Kabila based on his alleged links with the AFC/M23 is not only a theatrical display of justice, but also a serious violation of the declaration of principles [signed by Kinshasa and Kigali in Qatar in July]," said Lumumba Kambere, the spokesperson of the M23 North Kivu governor.

Fuelling divisions
The shockwave caused by this



▲ *Former President Joseph Kabila*

conviction could worsen the already fragile political and security climate in eastern DRC.

In a region ravaged by incessant armed violence, decisions seen as unfair or arbitrary can fuel divisions, according to independent analyst Hubert Masomeko.

"I believe that the conviction of Joseph Kabila will have a negative effect on national unity," he told Africanews.

"All stakeholders, including the in-

ternational community, have called on the DRC to create conditions for internal dialogue in order to promote national unity in relation to what is happening in the DRC," he added.

Kabila's sentence also comes on the eve of a crucial diplomatic meeting between Kinshasa and Kigali which is supposed to relaunch vital operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda.

(Africanews)

Sudan humanitarian aid group among winners of Right Livelihood Award

THE Swedish Right Livelihood Award Foundation also honoured activists from Myanmar, the Pacific Islands and Taiwan. The 2025 laureates distinguished themselves in their fight against climate change, disinformation, as well as military and political violence. They were chosen among 159 nominees from 67 countries this year.

"As authoritarianism and division rise globally, the 2025 Right Livelihood Laureates are charting a different course: one rooted in collective action, resilience and democracy to create a livable future for all," the Stockholm-based foundation said about the winners.

Sudan's Emergency Response Rooms is a community-led initiative that emerged from resistance committees involved in the 2019 Sudanese revolution.

The network has been instrumental in providing aid in areas that many international organisations cannot reach.

It "has become the backbone of the country's humanitarian response amid war, displacement and state collapse," the foundation's executive director Ole von Uexküll said.

The youth-led organisation Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change and Julian Aguon were also awarded the prize "for carrying the call for climate justice to the world's highest court, turning survival into a matter of rights and climate action into a legal responsibility."

(Africanews)



Nigeria's president says "worst is over" on independence day amid worsening hardship

NIGERIAN President Bola Tinubu declared on Wednesday that the "worst is over" following a series of painful economic reforms that have left millions struggling with rising costs and deepening poverty.

In a national address marking Nigeria's 65th Independence Day, Tinubu defended his administration's decision to scrap fuel subsidies and unify the foreign exchange rate - moves that triggered inflation and widespread public anger but, he said, were necessary to "reset" the economy.

"Less than three years later, the seeds of those difficult but necessary decisions are bearing fruit," Tinubu said.

He cited second-quarter GDP growth of 4.23% - the fastest in four years - and a decline in inflation to 20.12% in August, the lowest in three years.

Tinubu also pointed to five consecutive quarters of trade surpluses, a rebound in oil production to 1.68 million barrels per day, and a rise in external reserves to \$42.03 billion - the highest since 2019.

The president said the government had disbursed 330 billion naira (\$222.90 million) to eight million vulnerable households under its social investment programme and was expanding infrastructure across rail, roads, airports, and seaports.

However, critics questioned the transparency of the cash transfer scheme. Two weeks ago, the finance minister announced the disbursement, sparking calls for a public register of beneficiaries.

Despite Tinubu's upbeat tone, the IMF's most recent Article IV assessment warned of persistently high inflation and worsening poverty.

Over 129 million Nigerians - more than half the population - live below the poverty line, while funding cuts by international donors have forced the World Food Programme to shut down 150 nutrition centres in the conflict-hit northeast.

"We are racing against time," Tinubu said, even as critics including opposition party leader Peter Obi argue that his spending priorities have not matched the scale of the country's humanitarian and economic challenges.

The speech comes amid growing labour unrest over the recent dismissal of 800 workers at the privately owned Dangote Oil Refinery for unionising.

Why It Matters

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and home to more than 200 million people. Its stability carries weight far beyond its borders, shaping West African trade, energy markets, and regional security. While Tinubu highlights GDP growth of 4.23% and foreign reserves at their highest since 2019, millions of Nigerians remain unconvinced. Over half of the population still lives below the poverty line, and food insecurity is worsening. The gap between official optimism and public despair raises questions about the government's credibility.

Public reception to Tinubu's claims has been divided. Supporters in government emphasize the rebound in oil production



▲ *Nigerian President Bola Tinubu.*

and trade surpluses as signs of recovery. Critics, led by opposition figures such as Peter Obi, argue that the administration is failing to confront the scale of poverty. Civil society groups demand transparency in the government's cash transfer scheme, warning of corruption risks. Meanwhile, labour unions are increasingly vocal, with the recent dismissal of 800 workers at Dangote Oil Refinery sparking unrest and disrupting energy supply. International donors have also begun pulling back, forcing the World Food

Programme to close dozens of nutrition centres in Nigeria's northeast.

Future Scenarios

Nigeria faces two diverging futures. If Tinubu's reforms bear fruit, the country could enter a period of gradual stabilization, attracting investment and reducing dependency on oil subsidies. Yet, if inflation and unemployment persist, public patience may wear thin, fuelling protests and strikes that could undermine political stability.

(Reuters)



How a Silicon Valley ‘warlord’ got the Pentagon’s attention

STEVEN Simoni, wearing a \$4,000 Celine track suit unzipped to reveal a bare chest and a silver chain, was holding court at a recent film premiere in the East Village of Manhattan, joking with a reporter about his latest venture. The tech entrepreneur was in town to see “Match in a Haystack,” a documentary he funded about a dance troupe that defeats the odds to put on a show in war-torn Ukraine.

A little more than a year ago the 39-year-old was a typical Silicon Valley success story having sold a payments company to DoorDash for \$125 million in 2022.

But now he is the co-founder of a different kind of startup, Allen Control Systems, which makes a product far removed from menu QR-codes: an AI-powered autonomous machine gun called the “Bullfrog” designed to shoot drones out of the sky.

“The future is Skynet, basically,” Simoni said, referring to the fictional AI system from the “Terminator” films that becomes self-aware and turns on humanity. “I want to supply those products to the government so they can use them.”

Just a few years ago, the idea that this “Star Wars” nerd and one-time national champion of “A Game of Thrones: The Card Game,” would become a brash defense contractor might have seemed absurd. But Simoni is well on his way, with \$40 million in funding - most recently raised in a round led by Craft Ventures, the firm cofounded by President Donald Trump’s AI czar David Sacks - and prototype contracts with the U.S. Army and Special Operations Forces.

Simoni is part of a new generation of entrepreneurs riding Silicon Valley’s pivot to military technologies, as wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and surging tensions with China, have underscored the U.S. need to prepare for the future of warfare. Using a playbook championed by Anduril founder Palmer Luckey and Palantir CEO Alex Karp, tech entrepreneurs who once sold consumer apps are now developing drone swarms, spy satellites, autonomous boats, and other lethal technologies while raising hype from venture capitalists and the Pentagon alike.

Simoni, a Navy veteran, said his “warlord” character, inspired by Bradley Cooper’s slick arms dealer from the film “War Dogs,” is one ironic way he’s getting attention for his company.

“I hate war, but war is always going to happen anyway,” he said. “So, it’s like, someone’s going to make this product at some point.”

‘THE GENERALS LOVE ME’

During a recent dinner in Washington, D.C., with a Reuters reporter, Simoni received a text from a staffer at Executive Branch, the private club founded by Donald Trump Jr. that charges as much as \$500,000 to join. The club is happy hunting grounds for an aspiring defense contractor looking to meet people connected to the Trump administration, and Simoni was hoping to negotiate a cut-price entry.

“I should have spent more time on the Executive Branch,” he said, referring to the Trump administration. “The major thing in defense tech is selling to the White House and Congress. Even before the DoD.”

generate outsized attention for his company. He’s appeared on Fox News as a drone expert, launched a podcast featuring inter-

views with top military officials, and, most recently, joined venture firm Forum Ventures as a partner to invest in other defense tech companies.

Being backed by Sacks’ venture firm has also opened doors, including an invite to a recent AI summit co-hosted by Sacks’ “All-In” podcast where Trump delivered a speech.

He throws late-night parties at the company’s Austin penthouse, attended by startups and government officials alike. Earlier this year, he hosted a fundraiser for Republican congressman John Carter attended by Mike Rogers, the Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. On another occasion, he said he went out for karaoke with military officials he declined to name after a conference. “The generals love me,” he said.

In June, General James Rainey, the commander at Army Futures, the command responsible for modernizing the Army and acquiring cutting-edge technology, joined

Simoni on his weekly podcast “The Drone Ultimatum” to discuss the Pentagon’s efforts to work with Silicon Valley.

“It’s really about getting the fiscal agility to go out to the great U.S. tech companies that exist and start buying stuff and get it in the hands of our war fighters,” Rainey said.

In a statement, the U.S. Army said it’s “in the process of awarding a contract to Allen Control Systems,” before the end of the fiscal year to “evaluate the potential for The Bullfrog to integrate into existing Army platforms.”

Carter, Rogers and Sacks did not respond to requests for comment. Craft Ventures declined to comment.

SHOOTING DRONES

Allen Control Systems is trying to solve a persistent battlefield danger that has emerged in Ukraine: shooting small, cheap, unjammable drones from the sky before they can attack.

(Reuters)

Qualcomm shifts chips to newer Arm tech as competition with Apple, MediaTek heats up

QUALCOMM has shifted its flagship chips to the latest generation of Arm Holdings’ computing architecture with new features aimed at better AI performance, sources familiar with the matter said, a move that could boost Arm’s revenues and help Qualcomm’s chips compete against offerings from MediaTek and Apple.

The decision at least partially settles a question of whether and how Qualcomm would continue to work with Arm (technology, following an acrimonious legal battle between the two last year, and the move is likely to raise revenue for Arm which charges more for the newer tech.

San Diego, California-based Qualcomm last week introduced a new generation of PC and phone chips. Unlike previous generations, two sources familiar with the matter said Qualcomm’s new chips will use the ninth version of Arm’s computing architecture, called “v9” in the industry, which includes several improvements aimed at helping chips handle tasks from chatbots and image generators better.

Qualcomm rivals such as MediaTek (2454.TW), opens new tab, which has at times eclipsed Qualcomm’s market share for mobile phone chips, has publicly confirmed its use of Arm’s v9, and most analysts believe



▲ A Qualcomm logo appears in this illustration.

Apple (AAPL.O), opens new tab uses it, too. The technology is called an instruction set architecture, a fundamental technology that controls what kind of apps can run on a central processing unit (CPU).

Qualcomm declined to comment on what technology it used for its newest chips but

said in a statement that “we chose the instructions that make sense for our customers. That’s the beauty of having our own CPU design team - we can pick and choose the instructions that add value.”

Arm declined to comment.

While Arm faces competition from newer

rivals such as RISC-V, an open chip standard that is free to use, that technology is decades less mature than Arm’s and has a smaller software developer base. Qualcomm also could have elected to stick with a previous generation of Arm technology, as it did with chips announced last year.

How much Qualcomm’s move could bolster Arm revenue is difficult to calculate because Qualcomm licenses Arm’s computing architecture but designs much of its chip itself rather than buying design elements off the shelf from Arm, said Jay Goldberg, senior analyst for semiconductors and electronics at Seaport Research Partners.

But the move is remarkable because of the legal battle, which has not completely ended, Goldberg said. Less than a year ago, Arm had threatened to cancel a key license to Qualcomm, though it later rescinded that threat.

“That’s very positive for Arm,” Goldberg said of Qualcomm’s reported move. “These are companies that were fighting each other. Qualcomm could have gone a very different path here.”

(Reuters)

US government shutdown begins as partisan division rules Washington

THE U.S. government shut down much of its operations on Wednesday as deep partisan divisions prevented Congress and the White House from reaching a funding deal, setting off what could be a long, grueling standoff that could lead to the loss of thousands of federal jobs. There was no clear path out of the impasse, while agencies warned that the 15th government shutdown since 1981 would halt the release of a closely watched September employment report, opens new tab, slow air travel, opens new tab, suspend scientific research, withhold pay from U.S. troops and lead to the furlough of 750,000 federal workers at a daily cost of \$400 million.

Republican President Donald Trump, whose campaign to radically reshape the federal government is already on track to push out some 300,000 workers by December, warned congressional Democrats that a shutdown could clear the path for more job cuts.

Vice President JD Vance issued an unusual warning about air safety, noting that air traffic controllers and Transportation Security Administration personnel -- essential staff who work through shutdowns -- would be worried about delayed paychecks.

"If you're flying today, I hope, of course, you arrive safely and on time, but you may not arrive on time because the TSA and the air traffic controllers are not getting paid today," Vance said on Fox News.

The U.S.'s longest-government shutdown, which stretched over 35 days in 2018-2019 during Trump's first term, ended in part after flight delays caused by air traffic controllers calling in sick.



Senate Democrats on Tuesday blocked a stopgap measure to fund the government through Nov. 21 over Republicans' refusal to attach an extension of health benefits for millions of Americans that are due to expire at the end of the year. Republicans say the issue must be addressed separately.

Both sides were posturing to blame the other and looking for advantage in the 2026 midterm elections that will determine control of Congress.

Senate Republican Leader John Thune scheduled another series of votes on Wednesday, hoping to pressure Democrats to break ranks.

WALL STREET SLIPS

The shutdown was set to delay the release of some government economic reports, adding unease to Wall Street investors at a time

of economic uncertainty.

Wall Street opened lower, gold struck a record high and Asian stocks wavered as investors worried about delays in the release of key data and the impact of job losses. The dollar hovered near a one-week low versus major peers.

At issue on the government funding front is \$1.7 trillion for agency operations, which amounts to roughly one-quarter of the government's total \$7 trillion budget. Much of the remainder goes to health and retirement programs and interest payments on the growing \$37.5 trillion debt.

Independent analysts warn the shutdown could last longer than the budget-related closures of the past, with Trump and White House officials threatening to punish Democrats with cuts to government programs and

the federal payroll.

"Donald Trump and Republicans have shut the government down because they don't want to provide healthcare to working-class Americans," House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said on ABC's "Good Morning America."

Thune said Democrats had routinely backed similar funding bills in years past.

"What's changed is President Trump is in the White House. That's what this is about. This is politics. And there isn't any substantive reason why there ought to be a government shutdown," the South Dakota Republican told reporters.

Trump's Republicans hold majorities in both chambers of Congress, but legislative rules require 60 of the 100 senators to agree on spending legislation. That means that at least seven Democrats are needed to pass a funding bill. On Tuesday, three of them voted for the Republican bill.

DEMOCRATS FOCUS ON HEALTH-CARE FUNDING

Democrats are under pressure from their frustrated supporters to score a rare victory ahead of the 2026 midterm elections that will determine control of Congress for the final two years of Trump's term. The health-care push has given them a chance to unite behind an issue that resonates with voters.

Along with the extended health subsidies, Democrats have also sought to ensure that Trump will not be able to undo those changes if they are signed into law. Trump has refused to spend billions of dollars approved by Congress, prompting some Democrats to question why they should vote for any spending legislation at all.

(Reuters)

EU leaders discuss 'drone wall' to repel Russia after airspace violations



▲ France's President Emmanuel Macron walks as he is welcomed by Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen (not pictured) on the day of the informal meeting of European Union leaders in Copenhagen, Denmark.

EUROPEAN Union leaders in Copenhagen discussed a "drone wall" to protect the continent from Russian drones, just days after airspace intrusions by unidentified unmanned aircraft closed Danish airports.

Several European countries have committed troops and anti-drone systems to help

Denmark protect Wednesday's EU summit. And all drone flights over the country have been banned until Friday.

Many of the leaders have accused Russia of brazen violations of European airspace with recent incursions by drones over Poland and fighter jets over Estonia.

"Russia will continue and we have to be ready, we have to strengthen our prepared-

ness," Finland's Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said as he arrived, voicing his support for a drone wall -- a network of sensors and weapons to detect, track and neutralise intruding unmanned aircraft.

Denmark has stopped short of saying who it believes is responsible for the incidents in its airspace last week, which disrupted air traffic at multiple airports, but Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has suggested it could be Moscow.

"It is the pattern we need to observe, and in my view that pattern is essentially a hybrid war against Europe, and that is what we need to respond to," Frederiksen told reporters on Wednesday.

LEADERS CONSIDER FROZEN RUSSIAN ASSETS PLAN

The meeting is also the first opportunity for leaders of the EU's 27 countries to debate a proposal to use Russian assets frozen in Europe to fund a major loan to Ukraine.

As they arrived at the summit, some leaders voiced strong support for the idea while others were more cautious.

The Kremlin condemned the proposal on Wednesday as "pure theft".

RUSSIA SAYS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR DRONES OVER DENMARK

Russia has denied responsibility for the drones over Denmark, disputed that its fighter jets entered Estonian airspace and said it did not intend to send drones into Poland.

But the incidents prompted European leaders to step up calls to bolster the continent's defences and boost support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion. U.S. President Donald Trump has demand-

ed the EU take more responsibility on both fronts.

The drones that flew over Denmark "show we need pre-alert systems, and we need to cooperate," French President Emmanuel Macron said in Copenhagen.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen raised the idea of a drone wall last month, after some 20 Russian drones entered Polish airspace, although officials say it had been being worked on before then.

"What I see overall ... is a pattern. And this pattern is coming from Russia," von der Leyen said on Wednesday.

"Russia tries to test us. But Russia also tries to sow division and anxiety in our societies. We will not let this happen," she said.

DRONE INCURSION EXPOSED GAPS

The Commission, the EU's executive body, has not yet produced a detailed plan for the drone wall, leaving open questions about the cost and practicalities.

But NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte praised the idea on Tuesday as "timely and necessary".

The incursion into Poland exposed gaps in Europe's ability to defend against drones, officials and analysts said. NATO forces deployed fighter jets, helicopters and a Patriot air defence system in their response, shooting down several drones.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov criticized European plans for a drone wall.

"As history has shown, erecting walls is always a bad thing," Peskov told reporters on Tuesday.

(Reuters)

Conflicting claims over Lady Sphesh’s status with management

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

RENOWNED Eswatini vocalist Lady Sphesh has stirred speculation about her professional future by hinting at the conclusion of her partnership with South African-based Phakama Media Group.

This development, according to Lady Sphesh, comes amid the natural expiration of her contract with the management company. Early Wednesday morning, Lady Sphesh posted a statement on her official Facebook page at 6:45 am local time, which was later deleted, fueling curiosity and uncertainty among her fans.

The statement read in part: “The decision to part ways was mutually agreed upon, allowing Lady Sphesh to pursue new opportunities as an independent artist. Throughout her time with Phakama Media Group, Lady Sphesh has built a strong reputation for her distinctive voice and artistic integrity.” However, the situation took an unexpected turn when Phakama Media Group’s director, Ndumiso Zikhali, responded to inquiries regarding the announcement. Zikhali expressed surprise at Lady Sphesh’s public statement, claiming he was unaware of any official decision to end their partnership. “I have contacted Lady Sphesh, and she says she has been hacked,” he said.

He further confirmed that Lady Sphesh still has a valid contract with the company but declined to disclose details about the contract’s remaining duration. Zikhali also mentioned that Lady Sphesh had previously left the company’s internal communication group without any prior notice, a move that raised concerns within the management. “We have always been transparent with the administration. There has been nothing



▲ Lady Sphesh.

dodgy,” he asserted. Attempts to reach Lady Sphesh for clarification on these conflicting accounts were unsuccessful, as her phone rang unanswered. Many South African artists have parted ways with record

labels for different reasons. Among them, Emtee stands out for making one of the most significant missteps, as evidenced by his legal dispute with Ambitious Entertainment.

Fakazi Samuel to enchant at Poetry In Comfort

ESWATINI’S poetry scene is preparing for a captivating day as gifted saxophonist Fakazi Samuel takes the spotlight at the Poetry In Comfort event.

Scheduled for December 6, 2025, at the Liberty Centre in Manzini, this showcase is set to blend the soulful sounds of live music with the evocative power of poetry, offering attendees a unique cultural experience. Poetry In Comfort has earned a reputation as one of the Kingdom’s premier poetry showcases, celebrated for its innovative fusion of literary art and immersive settings.

This year, the event promises to elevate that tradition by embracing an indoor luxury concept designed to envelop guests in an atmosphere of elegance and artistic inspiration. The carefully curated lineup features a mix of established and emerging talents, including Rina, Anthonimass, Christian Maz, Poet Amandla, M Age, Gcayi, and Siya Imbongi.

In an exclusive interview, Project Manager Mnqobi Tsabedze shared insights into the vision driving this year’s Poetry In Comfort. “We are presenting the art space with a poetry in comfort outdoor concept,” Tsabedze explained. “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.”

A key highlight of the event is the Talent Search/Talent Appreciation segment, which serves as a vital platform for young and undiscovered poets to showcase their skills. This initiative reflects a commitment to nurturing emerging voices within the poetry community.

“This segment allows us to crown the best poets of the day,” Tsabedze said. “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 maintain the event’s intimate and refined atmosphere, the organisers have intentionally limited the number of participants and attendees. This approach fosters meaningful interaction between artists and the audience, creating a close-knit community that values creativity and artistic growth. “We want to ensure that the event remains intimate and allows for meaningful interactions,” Tsabedze emphasised



▲ Fakazi Samuel.



▲ Babalwa M.

Babalwa M leads Spring Bash lineup

SENSATIONAL Amapiano artist Babalwa M takes centre stage as the headliner for the eagerly awaited Spring Bash Phase 2 lineup.

Scheduled for October 25, 2025, at IF’s Lounge, the event will be a day brimming with vibrant rhythms, diverse performances, and an electrifying atmosphere that will captivate music lovers from noon until late. Babalwa M, often hailed as the ‘Queen of Private School Amapiano,’ has carved a significant niche in the South African music industry.

With platinum-certified hits such as ‘Sukakude’ and ‘Izono,’ she has become synonymous with the evolution of the Amapiano genre. Her collaborations with top-tier producers like Kelvin Momo, Mas Musiq, Sam Deep, and Musa Keys have further cemented her status as a leading figure in contemporary African music. Her presence at Spring Bash is expected to draw large crowds eager to experience her dynamic stage performance and signature sound.

Lineup

The Spring Bash Phase 2 lineup is a testament to the rich and diverse soundscape of the region. Alongside Babalwa M, the event will showcase South African talents including Jay Sax, Linda Dlamini, Mayeem, Rekorder, Obsession, Mistosoul, and Thick B. The excitement builds on the foundation laid by the Phase 1 lineup, which featured standout performers such as Daliwonga, !Sooks, Zwile, Rina, Yamkela, Tairo, The Best Duo, and Acoustic Soul.

Ticketing options for the Spring Bash have been carefully designed to accommodate various preferences and budgets. General pre-sale tickets are priced at E200, with a slight increase to E250 at the gate, making the event accessible to a broad audience. For those seeking premium experience, VIP tickets are available at E400, offering exclusive access and enhanced amenities to elevate the celebration. In keeping with the spirit of renewal and vibrancy, attendees are encouraged to embrace the event’s spring theme by dressing in bright, colourful attire.

Thathohatsi confirms Mdzimba View’s show

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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SOUTH African music sensation Thathohatsi has confirmed that she is set to electrify the stage at the upcoming ‘Shorts & Shades Party.’

The event is set to be hosted at Mdzimba View Shisanyama on September 20, 2025, from kick-off at 3 pm and continuing well into the night. Thathohatsi’s confirmation of her performance was delivered through a heartfelt social media video, where she expressed her excitement to perform in Eswatini, highlighting the significance of connecting with fans beyond her home country. “I hope to see you there. Don’t forget to buy tickets,” she said.

Joining Thathohatsi on this star-studded lineup are local favourites Young Zesh, Ayacity, Obsession, Bandora, Gifted Kosie, and Thaifo Son. Ticketing for the event is designed to be accessible, with general admission priced at E100 and VIP tickets available for E200. Notably, there will be no pre-sale tickets; attendees can purchase their entry at the gate.

Thato Raphadi, better known by her stage name Thathohatsi, is rapidly emerging as a formidable force in the Amapiano genre. Hailing from Payneville Springs, South Africa, she has captivated audiences with her distinctive sound and engaging performances. Thathohatsi’s rise to fame has been meteoric, largely fueled by her viral hit single ‘Xolele,’ which took social media platform TikTok by storm.

Produced by Vesta SA and Blaq Note, ‘Xolele’ showcased Thathohatsi’s unique blend of catchy melodies and relatable lyrics, resonating with fans across the globe. The track’s success has not only solidified her place in the music industry but has also opened doors to collaborations with some of the biggest names in Amapiano, including Cowboii, Kelvin Momo, Mellow, and Sleazy.

Despite her rapid ascent to stardom,



▲ South African music sensation Thathohatsi.

Thathohatsi remains grounded and committed to her craft. Her lyrics often reflect her personal experiences and emotions, allowing her to connect deeply with her audience. This authenticity,

combined with her strong musical background, having sung in the church choir and engaged in various community performing arts initiatives, has laid a solid foundation for her burgeoning career.

Musiholiq to rock the Lubombo Shutdown

SOUTH African hip hop sensation Musiholiq is set to entice fun lovers at the highly anticipated ‘Lubombo Shutdown’ event.

Scheduled for October 4, 2025, this major music gathering will take place at Polar Rest & Bar in Mpolonjeni, Siteki. Musiholiq will headline alongside other prominent South African artists including Siya Ntuli, TNS, and Olefied Khetha. The event will also showcase a strong supporting lineup featuring As 4 Jerry P, DJ Charm, Bandora, and Brothers On Cue, ensuring a diverse and dynamic musical experience for attendees.

The Lubombo Shutdown is designed to be a celebration of contemporary South African music, blending genres and styles to captivate a broad audience. Doors open at 6 pm, with the event running late into the night. Entry is priced at E100 before 10 pm and increases to E150 thereafter, making it accessible to a wide range of music lovers.

Musiholiq, whose real name is Ncazelo Fortune Mtolo, hails from uMlazi, South Africa. He is a respected rapper, vocalist, songwriter, and music producer known for his authentic sound and compelling lyrics. Musiholiq’s musical journey began in 2011 when he purchased a computer to produce

beats and record tracks from his bedroom. His dedication to his craft saw him steadily rise through the ranks by featuring on various projects, releasing singles online, and performing at nearly every hip hop event in KwaZulu-Natal.

In 2015, Musiholiq released his debut project titled Something Unknown under his own entertainment company, First Class Entertainment. This milestone marked his transition from an underground artist to a recognised name in the South African music scene. His unique style and relentless work ethic have earned him a loyal fan base and critical acclaim.

The Lubombo Shutdown is set to be a landmark event, bringing together some of the most exciting talents in the region. With Musiholiq and other top artists on the bill, music fans can expect a night filled with energy, creativity, and unforgettable performances. This event not only highlights the growing influence of South African music beyond its borders but also underscores the vibrant cultural exchange happening in the region. Fans are encouraged to arrive early to enjoy the full lineup and experience the electric atmosphere that the Lubombo Shutdown is set to deliver.



▲ South African hip hop artist Musiholic.



▲ Alka Kid.

Alka Kid to release ‘Something Special!’

ALKA Kid is set to release a deeply personal and heartfelt single titled ‘Something Special’ on Friday, October 3, 2025.

This new track marks a significant moment in his artistic journey, reflecting his growth and maturity as a musician while paying tribute to love and gratitude. Hailing from Piggs Peak Nginamadvololo in the Hhohho district, Alka Kid first burst onto the music scene in 2019 with his debut song ‘Izinja,’ featuring Tramp. Since then, he has carved out a niche in the local hip hop and trap music scene, captivating audiences with his authentic storytelling and emotional depth.

‘Something Special’ is produced by the talented BhuThabiso, also known as TeDdy Beast, whose production skills have helped shape the track’s emotional and sonic landscape. The song is a tribute to Alka Kid’s partner, a source of unwavering support and love throughout his life. “With this song, I’m just trying to say thank you to the person I’m in a relationship with,” Alka Kid explained. “She has been a constant support through all the phases we’ve been through, and I want to express my love and honour for her.”

Inspiration

The inspiration behind the song is deeply personal. Alka Kid shared that he has never experienced love quite like this before, and the feelings of being cherished and cared for have profoundly influenced his songwriting. “The challenges we’ve faced have greatly influenced the writing of this song,” he said. Though he keeps his girlfriend’s identity private, her impact on his life and music is unmistakable.

Balancing his passion for music with financial constraints was a significant challenge for Alka Kid. As a student at Piggs Peak Central High School, he was not financially stable and had to make sacrifices to pursue his dreams. “I wasn’t financially stable, so I used my pocket money for this recording session,” he recalled. He also expresses heartfelt gratitude to his grandmother for her support during this time. “I compromised my school funds for something I’m passionate about, and it was worth it.”

Jazzworx, Thukuthela cut off bad friends, relocate after robbery

AMAPIANO music duo Kgotso “Thukuthela” Dube and Kamohelo “Jazzworx” Monese had to part ways with some of their friends and relocate following a recent traumatic house robbery. A few weeks before the release of their 13-track album, their home was invaded by criminals who kidnapped and held Jazzworx and their friend and fellow musician Gobokweone “GL Ceejay” Lekganyane captive.

Lost all valuables, new music

Thukuthela was not around and escaped the kidnapping. The robbers cleaned out their home and music studio. They took all valuable items, including clothes, all their music, and studio equipment. They have since bought new equipment and remade the songs they lost. They quickly had to bounce back and remake the music, as the album release date was drawing closer. It took them about two weeks to redo all the music they lost during the robbery. “We had to re-record all the music. We had a few songs that we had completed and sent to the distribution company. However, we had to re-record a bulk of the music,” Thukuthela said. Two weeks into its release, their latest album, Most Wanted, is already topping the charts.

Beefing up security

They have taken extra security measures to make sure they are safe. “We had to change locations. We stay somewhere safer, and there is extra security. And we can’t take the risk again, especially as the brands grow,” Jazzworx explained how, after the robbery, they had to watch

the people around them and the space they occupied. “We’ve had to cut off bad friends and being around the wrong circles,” he said. “We learnt to be disciplined and how to be humble and respectful. Whatever feels wrong for us needs to stay far away.”

Growing from the experience

Still fairly new in the business, they have learned some valuable lessons. “We are learning about the business side of the music industry. We had a dream but didn’t see ourselves reaching international standards so soon,” Thukuthela said. “Our music is being recognised globally.” Moving in their own lane and at their own pace, they don’t believe themselves to be a threat to anyone. “Thinking you’re a threat because one bad incident happened makes you take on the role of a victim. We are not victims.” They have known each other for over two years but have developed a brotherhood. Working in a group comes with many challenges. Unlike duos and brands that have fizzled out due to conflicts involving money, egos, and differences in opinions, they want to talk through their issues. “We are men; everyone makes mistakes. We don’t like conflict, but we try to talk things through and move on,” Jazzworx said. (Sunday World)



robbery.

Shock exit rocks Miss SA 2025

THE Miss South Africa Organisation has entered what it calls a “new era”, but the road to the glittering finale has already been shaken by the shock withdrawal of one of this year’s contestants. In a statement, the organisation revealed that the contestant, who is the KwaZulu-Natal-born Lebogang Msimanga, made the difficult decision to step away from the competition after deep personal reflection. Contestant will not be replaced “She concluded that stepping back at this time would best serve her individual path and wellbeing,” the organisation confirmed, adding that her position would not be replaced. Far from viewing the departure as a setback, Miss SA says it reflects the very values at the heart of its bold new direction: authenticity, empowerment, and freedom of choice. “True empowerment includes the freedom to make choices aligned with one’s authentic self,” the organisation said. The withdrawal comes as Miss South Africa officially unveiled its new leadership, with former beauty queens and business powerhouses Basetsana Kumalo and Peggy Sue Khumalo stepping in as co-chairs.

Together, the two women, who are said to be both symbols of grace and grit, will mentor finalists and steer the platform through a transformative chapter. “The 90s were a critical time in our history. Young women became the face of hope. Today, Miss South Africa must continue to empower women to use their voice, rise, and become leaders who will be entrepreneurs, create jobs, and hold high office,” said Kumalo. Her counterpart, Peggy-Sue Khumalo, echoed the sentiment, stressing that the new Miss SA era is rooted in global conversations around social sustainability. “What we need now is more activists in our country that will champion social change,” she said. Central to this new era is the launch of Empower Youth Africa (EYA), a continent-wide movement aimed at tackling youth unemployment, fostering positive lifestyles, and inspiring civic engagement. Contestants have already begun mapping out the industries where they intend to make an impact, shifting the competition from a beauty pageant into a platform for purpose. Despite Lebogang’s exit, the remaining finalists remain united around this shared vision, having spent the past ten days in workshops that challenged them to



▲ Lebogang Msimanga has withdrawn from the Miss SA 2025 pageant. collaborate rather than compete. The journey will culminate at the Miss South Africa 2025 Grand Finale on Saturday, 25 October, at SunBet Arena, where the country’s next queen and ambassador for South Africa’s youth will be crowned. (Sunday World)

Court denies Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs’ appeal for new trial

SEAN “Diddy” Combs was denied an acquittal and new trial on Tuesday, September 30. The rapper, 55, is scheduled to be sentenced on Friday, October 03 in Manhattan, New York, after his conviction on two counts of arranging interstate travel for people engaged in prostitution, but he was acquitted of more serious offences of sex trafficking and racketeering conspiracy, which could have resulted in a life sentence. As a result, Combs’ team asked the judge for a new trial based only on the prostitution charges. They claimed he had been unjustly charged under the Mann Act for consensual sexual activity between adults. “The government proved its case many times over. That by itself might be enough to dispose of Combs’s challenge.” Combs’ ex-girlfriend Cassie Ventura and a woman who used the pseudonym Jane both testified against the rapper during his eight-week trial. The “I’ll Be Missing You” hitmaker - who has been held in Brooklyn’s Metropolitan Detention Center for more than a year, following his September 2024 arrest - faces up to 10 years in prison for each of the two counts he was convicted, but defense attorneys have asked the judge to sentence him to no more than 14 months in prison. With good behavior, that would mean Combs’ immediate release. However, on Tuesday, the prosecution asked the judge to sentence Combs to at least 11 years and three months in prison. When testifying against Combs, Ventura claimed she had been forced to participate in so-called “freak offs”, and alleged she had endured sexual and physical abuse during their relationship. She has written a three-page victim impact statement ahead of her former lover’s sentencing later this week, and she urged the judge to consider a punishment that reflects “the reality of the evidence and my lived experience as a victim”. She wrote in a letter submitted to the court on Monday (09.29.25) and obtained by Rolling Stone: “For four days in May, while nine months pregnant with my son, I testified in front of a packed courtroom about the most traumatic and horrifying chapter in my life. “I testified that from age nineteen, Sean Combs used violence, threats, substances, and control over my career to trap me in over a decade of abuse. He groomed me into performing repeated sex acts with hired male sex workers during multi-day ‘freak offs,’ which occurred nearly weekly. “I was forced into lingerie and heels, told exactly how to look, and plied with drugs and alcohol so he could control me like a puppet. These events were degrading and disgusting, leaving me with infections, illnesses, and days of physical and emotional exhaustion before he demanded it all again. Sex acts became my full-time job, used as the only way to stay in his good graces.” (Bang Shobiz)

MEAL prepping is the concept of preparing whole meals or dishes ahead of time.

Since it requires determining what to eat ahead of time, meal prepping may lead to more nutritious meal choices over the long term. Having pre-prepared meals on hand can reduce portion size and help you reach your nutrition goals. This way, you're less likely to reach for TV dinners or takeout, especially when you're overwhelmed or exhausted. Planning ahead may also lead to more nutritious meal choices.

Below, we explore the most important principles of meal prepping and break down the process into a few simple steps.

Methods

There are various ways to meal prep that don't always involve standing in the kitchen for an entire Sunday afternoon.

The most popular ways to meal-prep include:

► **Make-ahead meals:** Full meals cooked in advance, which can be refrigerated and reheated at mealtimes. This is particularly handy for dinnertime meals.

► **Batch cooking:** Making large batches of a specific recipe, then splitting it into individual portions to be frozen and eaten over the next few months. This makes for easy lunch or dinner options.

► **Individually portioned meals:** Preparing fresh meals and portioning them into individual grab-and-go portions to be refrigerated and eaten over the next few days. This is helpful for quick breakfasts or lunches.

► **Ready-to-cook ingredients:** Prepping the ingredients required for specific meals ahead of time as a way to cut down on cooking time in the kitchen.

The different meal-prepping methods can also be mixed and matched depending on your own circumstances. Start by choosing the most appealing method, then slowly experiment with the others to determine what suits you best.

Choosing meals

The best way to plan is to first decide on which meals you'd like to make ahead and which meal-prepping method fits your lifestyle.

Then, check your calendar to decide the number of breakfasts, lunches, and dinners you'll need for the upcoming week. Remember to account for times you're likely to eat out — for instance, on dates, at brunch with friends, or at work dinners.

When selecting which meals to make, it's best to start with a limited number of recipes that you already know. This will ease your transition into meal planning.

That said, it's also important to avoid picking only one recipe for the whole week. A lack of variety can lead to boredom and prevent your body from receiving the nutrients it needs.

Try picking meals that contain different vegetables, fruits, and protein-rich foods, as well as varied complex carbs such as brown rice, quinoa, or sweet potatoes.

Recipes to meal prep

- Quick Curry Coconut Shrimp Stir-Fry



- Steak Salad & Cherry-Balsamic Salsa
- Thai Chicken Wraps with Quick Pickles
- Greek-style Pita "Tacos" with Tzatziki and Cucumber Salsa
- Quick Roasted Chicken Tacos with Avocado

Time management tips

The following methods will help streamline prep and cook times.

Stick to a schedule

Meal prepping works best when you stick to a regular schedule. Knowing exactly when you'll shop for groceries and prep your meals will help you form a good routine.

For instance, you might reserve Sunday mornings for grocery shopping and meal prepping. Or you could select Monday evenings for making lunches for the rest of the week.

The schedule is up to you and should fit your weekly routine. Having a routine will simplify the decision-making process, freeing up mental space for other things.

Keep your kitchen layout in mind

To save time, select recipes that require different cooking methods. Too many recipes require the same appliance — the oven, for instance — will limit the number

of dishes you can prepare at once.

This is especially important when selecting make-ahead meals or for batch cooking.

A good rule of thumb is to stick to one oven meal and a maximum of two stovetop meals at once — for example, loaded baked potatoes, a stir-fry, and a soup. Then add meals that don't require cooking to the mix, such as sandwiches or salads.

Organize your prep and cook times

A well-thought-out workflow will save you a lot of time in the kitchen.

To best organize your prep and cook times, start with the recipe requiring the longest cook time. This is often the soup or oven meal. Once that meal is underway, focus on the rest. Reserve the cold meals for last, since they can easily be made while the other meals are cooking.

Double-check the ingredients for all recipes before starting. This way, if two recipes require diced onions or julienned peppers, you'll be able to chop the total quantity at once.

Using automated gadgets such as a rice cooker or slow cooker can further streamline your workflow.

Make a shopping list

To reduce your time in the grocery store, keep a detailed grocery list organized by areas. This will prevent doubling back to a previously visited section and accelerate your shopping.

Limiting grocery shopping to once per week and making use of a grocery delivery service are two additional ways to spend less time shopping.

Storage

Your food storage containers can affect the quality of the meal. Here are some container recommendations:

► **Airtight containers for ready-to-cook ingredients:** Washable, reusable silicone baggies and stainless steel containers are great for keeping foods crisp and fresh.

► **BPA-free microwavable containers:** Pyrex glassware or collapsible silicone containers are some good options.

► **Freezer-safe containers:** These will limit freezer burn and nutrient losses. Wide-mouth mason jars are ideal, as long as you leave at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace so food can expand as it freezes.

► **Leak-proof, compartmentalized containers:** These are great for lunches



or meals which require ingredients to be mixed at the last minute. One good example is bento lunch boxes. Stackable or similarly shaped containers will help optimize the space in your refrigerator, freezer or workbag.

Meal prep containers

Check out this article for our favorite meal prep containers.

Food safety

Cooking, storing and reheating foods at the right temperature can prevent food poisoning.

Here are some government-approved food safety guidelines:

► Be mindful of proper temperatures:

Make sure your refrigerator is kept at 40°F (5°C) or below and your freezer at 0°F (-18°C) or below.

► Cool foods quickly:

Always refrigerate fresh foods and meals within two hours of purchase or cooking. For quick cooling, spread out cooked foods in shallow containers and immediately place in your refrigerator.

► Keep storage times in mind:

Cook fresh meat, poultry and fish within two days of purchase and red meat within 3–5 days. In the meantime, keep them on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator.

► Cook at the right temperatures:

Meats should be cooked until they reach an internal temperature of at least 165°F (75°C).

► Thaw foods safely:

Thaw frozen foods or meals in your refrigerator instead of on your countertop. For faster thawing, submerge foods in cold tap water, changing the water every 30 minutes.

Reheat foods only once:

The more times you cool and reheat a food, the higher the risk of food poisoning. That's why defrosted foods should only be reheated once.

► Reheat foods at the right temperature:

All meals should be reheated to 165°F (75°C) before being eaten. Frozen meals should be reheated and eaten within 24 hours of defrosting.

► Use labels:

Remember to label and date your containers so that you can consume foods within the food-safe period. Eat foods within the right time period: Refrigerated meals should be consumed within 3–4 days and frozen meals within 3–6 months.

The takeaway

Meal prepping is great for people who want to spend less time in the kitchen.

Depending on your goals, schedule and meal preferences, meal prepping may involve making large batches to be frozen, full meals to be refrigerated or prepared ingredients to be combined as needed.

Find a method that works for you and pick one day per week to meal plan, shop and cook.

Healthline



5 pumpkin recipes

FALL means that pumpkin season is here. Here are 5 recipes you can make with the nutritious fruit.

In addition to being a defining seasonal food, pumpkin has a range of health benefits. It is associated with antioxidant, anticancer, and anti-inflammatory properties.

Additionally, a 1-cup serving of cooked pumpkin contains over 200% Trusted Source of the daily recommended amount of vitamin A, which is important for Trusted Source supporting your immune system and eye health.

You may have noticed pumpkin products returning to your local grocery store and thought, "What can I make with that?" Read on for 5 delicious ideas.

Pumpkin spice latte

There's nothing that says "fall" more than a pumpkin spice latte. While most pumpkin spice lattes lack pumpkin as an ingredient, this particular recipe contains pumpkin puree. Simply prepare your coffee as you normally would — while this recipe calls for espresso, instant coffee can also work — and whisk in milk, pumpkin, maple syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla extract. Once everything is combined, blend until the mixture is frothy.

For an iced coffee, you may consider adding ice to the mixture before blending. However, this will change the consistency of the drink.

Hearty pumpkin chili and avocado

Chili is a fall staple, and this one includes pumpkin. It is bursting with warm spices and tender produce, including yellow onions, carrots, red bell peppers, jalapeños, tomatoes, garlic, pumpkin puree, and kidney beans. It is topped with avocado and lime juice.

It is important to note that this recipe is high in sodium, with 1,850 grams (g) per serving. If you are looking to reduce the amount of sodium in this recipe, you may consider substituting the vegetable broth with low sodium vegetable broth. You can also exclude the "salt to taste."

You can also use half of the amount of broth the recipe calls for and replace the other half with water.



Moreover, it is important to rinse the canned kidney beans with water before using them. Canned vegetables often have added sodium, which rinsing can remove. Using low sodium or no-salt-added canned kidney beans also reduces the sodium intake.

Autumn stew with pumpkin and chickpeas

This stew combines pumpkin puree, chickpeas, carrots, yellow onions, orzo, and fresh sage, simmering them together to create a comforting dish for fall. It is low in calories, sodium, and saturated fat while high in fiber. This recipe is vegan, but it still contains 17 g of protein. If you want to add an additional protein source, you may consider topping the stew with shredded rotisserie chicken. Keep in mind that this will change the nutritional values of this dish.

Curried pumpkin soup with crispy tofu

Another vegan recipe, this soup contains seasonings like curry powder, ground coriander, and red pepper flakes, complementing the crispy tofu.

Coconut milk and vegetable broth serve as the base for this soup, but if you aren't a fan of coconut, don't worry. The coconut milk adds creaminess to the soup without adding a coconut flavor. Coconut milk is sometimes found in the dairy section of the grocery

store in cartons or in cans in shelf-stable aisles. When choosing coconut milk, look for a version without added sugars. You may also experiment with other nondairy milks.

Pumpkin spice energy bites

Ideal for a quick snack in a pinch, these pumpkin spice energy bites can be taken with you to the office, school, sports practice, or wherever you need to be.

Simply combine pitted dates, shredded coconut, flax meal, maple syrup, protein powder, vanilla, pumpkin pie spice, almond butter, and coconut oil in a food processor. After chilling the mixture in the refrigerator for 30 minutes, form into 1-inch balls.

Each serving is 2 balls. Store in the fridge until ready to eat.

Protein powders

Looking for a protein powder to use? Check out our picks here.

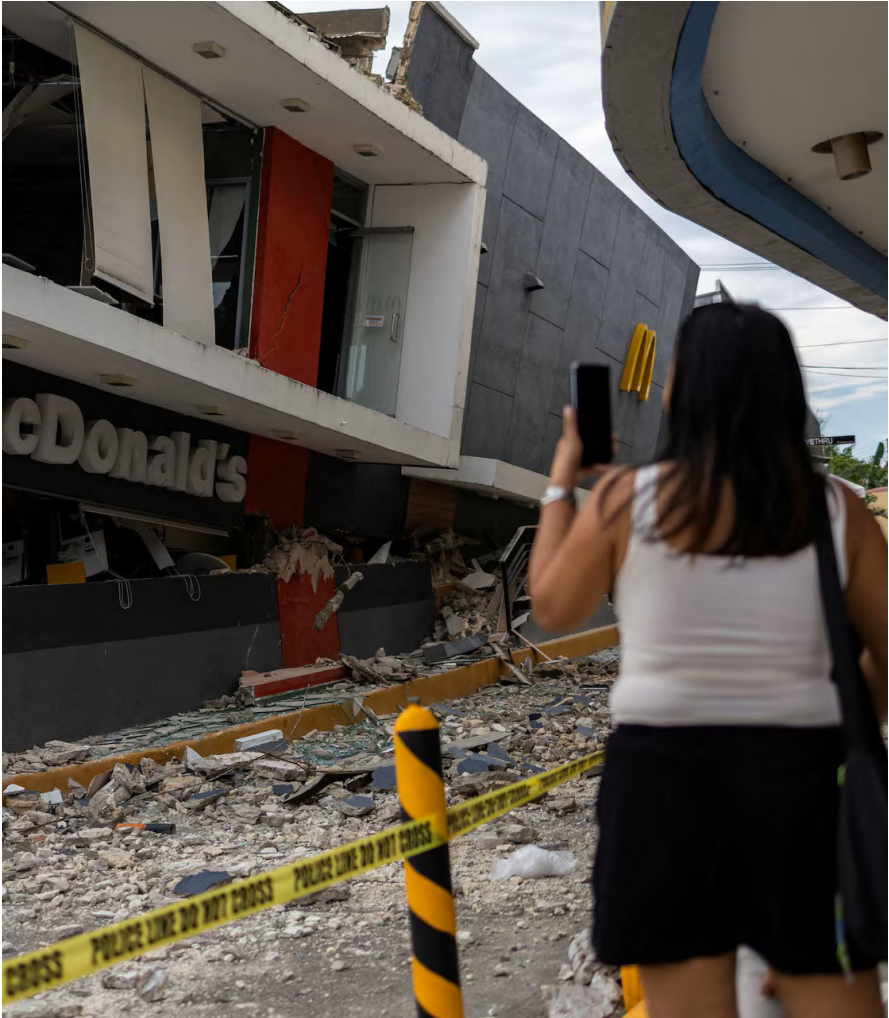
Takeaway

Pumpkin is a delicious, seasonal food that is also functional. It contains important nutrients that can help reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases.

Pumpkin can be used to create both sweet and savory dishes, as well as a wide range of dishes that can include meals and treats.

Healthline

News In Pictures



▲ A woman takes a photo of a damaged Mcdonald's store in the aftermath of a magnitude 6.9 quake in Bogo, Cebu, Philippines.



▲ A journalist who was shoved onto the ground by a federal immigration officer during a detention receives medical attention at U.S. immigration court in Manhattan, in New York City.



▲ A displaced Palestinian boy looks on as smoke rises during an Israeli military operation in Gaza City, as seen from the central Gaza Strip.



▲ Residents walk near a bus and a car stuck in a huge hole that has opened on a road, following unprecedented rainfall in Odesa, Ukraine.



▲ A lightning bolt strikes over the night sky as it rains in Kathmandu, Nepal.



▲ A man wearing an "I am Charlie" cap looks on at a Turning Point USA event at Utah State University campus, in Logan, Utah.

Ouaddou praises Pirates' unity after victory over Galaxy

ORLANDO Pirates coach Abdeslam Ouaddou has hailed his team's spirit following their victory against TS Galaxy.

A penalty in the first half from Evidence Makgopa and a late header from substitute Tshagofatso Mabasa earned the Buccaneers a 2-0 win over a stubborn Galaxy outfit in a Betway Premiership match played at the Orlando Stadium on Tuesday night.

The win saw the Buccaneers move up to third position on the log with 15 points after seven games, while the Rockets remained in seventh spot with 13 points after eight games.

Speaking after the game, Ouaddou emphasized the importance of keeping his squad together and praised his players' unity and camaraderie.

"I'm pleased with the team spirit, the unity, and the solidarity of my players. We knew that the opponents would come to us with a lot of ambitions to bother us at home," said Ouaddou during the post-match interview at the Orlando Stadium.

"We played well, and the players respected our plan, and I'm happy for the victory. It helped us to grab some points and to be close to the teams at the top, that's what we wanted. We keep going and working, and I hope my team will keep this spirit until the end of the season."

"Values are very important"

With Mabasa coming off the bench to score the second goal that made sure that the Buccaneers collected all three points, Ouaddou was happy with the striker's contribution and the team's overall performance against Galaxy.

"You can win the match with eleven players, but if you want to win the league and competitions, you need the group. Every time I start



▲ Orlando Pirates coach Abdeslam Ouaddou.

the job in a club, I never speak about my game model at the beginning of the first session," said the Moroccan coach.

"My priority is regarding the values. So, I speak about the values, and it is very important because that is the foundation of every project. If you don't have strong values in the project, it can be destroyed in the middle of the season."

Following the win over Galaxy,

Pirates will now change their focus to the Carling Knockout, where they face Siwelele FC in the last-16 round at the Orlando Stadium on Saturday (kickoff is at 3pm).

Gallants will also be playing at the same time as Pirates, and they are away to Orbit College at the Olympia Park Stadium in Rustenburg.

(The Citizen)

2026 Joburg Open a chance for SA pros to make history

JOHANNESBURG will once again be the stage for the culmination of the DP World Tour's prestigious International Swing as the Joburg Open returns to Houghton Golf Club from 5-8 March, 2026, and with the chance for a South African professional to make history.

No South African professional has yet claimed an overall Swing victory on any of the five Global Swings that make up the DP World Tour's season, and the Joburg Open's co-sanctioning status with the Sunshine Tour offers the perfect opportunity for a local champion of the International Swing.

An overall Swing victory of one of the five Global Swings earns the winner a US\$200 000 bonus as well as qualification for some of the DP World Tour's most lucrative tournaments later in the season.

In announcing the 2026 Joburg Open, Cllr Dada Morena, the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, said the opportunities this tournament provides and its global status reaffirms the city as a prime destination for major international events.

"The Joburg Open, and our partnerships with the Sunshine Tour and DP World Tour, plays a valuable part in our tourism objectives to deliver the global message that Johannesburg is a city of opportunity and a home of world-class sporting events," said Cllr Morera.

"It's a message we've managed to consistently share since the inaugural Joburg Open in



2007, and through a tournament that showcases not only the operational excellence of the City of Johannesburg, but also serves as a source of pride for the golfers who participate and the opportunities it provides our next generation of South African golf stars to pursue their dreams. We're also delighted to return to one of Johannesburg's most historic and valued golf clubs in Houghton Golf Club for what will surely be another memorable edition of this tournament."

The Joburg Open will also play a key role in determining the top 72 players on the Sunshine Tour's Courier Guy Order of Merit who will qualify for The Courier Guy Playoffs at the end of the current season where they will challenge for a range of incentives.

At the end of The Courier Guy Playoffs, the No 1-ranked player on the final Courier Guy Order of Merit will receive a R500 000 cash bonus, a DP World Tour card for the following season, an exemption into the Nedbank Golf Challenge, (Supersport)

Chelsea memories don't 'feed' Mourinho after return ends in defeat

JOSE Mourinho insisted fond memories of his time at Chelsea were not enough to satisfy him after Benfica were beaten 1-0 on his return to Stamford Bridge on Tuesday.

Former Blues boss Mourinho was given a warm welcome by Chelsea fans who chanted his name on several occasions throughout the Champions League tie.

But the 62-year-old ended an emotional evening frustrated that Benfica couldn't turn their solid display into a tangible reward.

An own goal from Richard Rios in the 18th minute proved decisive as Benfica were beaten for the first time in Mourinho's four matches in charge.

After winning seven major trophies, including three Premier League titles, across two spells with Chelsea, Mourinho is the most successful manager in the history of the west London club.

While he was twice sacked by former owner Roman Abramovich and angered Chelsea fans by managing rivals Tottenham and Manchester United, time has healed those wounds and Mourinho's latest homecoming was a love-in from start to finish.

Ever the contrarian, Mourinho disagreed that he should be comforted by the show of affection because the loss was all that mattered to him.

"I don't feed myself with these memories," he said. "I feed myself with victories.

Of course I take the memories. On the pitch I was focused on the game, but you have always a little bit of the sound.

"I thank the fans. I live around here and when I'm in London I meet them every day on the street. I know that it's going to be a relationship for ever.

"Hopefully I come back here in 20 years with my grandkids. They belong to my history and I belong to their history."

There was more disciplinary woe for Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca when substitute Joao Pedro was sent off in the final minute of stoppage-time for a high challenge.

That brought Chelsea's tally of red cards to three in four games.

"At least we learned how to win with a red card," Maresca said.

It was a more solid Chelsea performance than in Saturday's home defeat against Brighton, when they collapsed following Trevoh Chalobah's second-half dismissal, and also an improvement on recent losses to Manchester United and Bayern Munich.

Maresca had come under fire after Chelsea's slow start to the season and he acknowledged the significance of their first Champions League win this term.

"We needed the win," he said. "First half we controlled the game, scored and created more chances.

"We had some players on the pitch who unfortunately were not 100 per cent. They



▲ Jose Mourinho.

were playing because we have seven, eight players out.

"Sometimes you need to learn to win in an ugly way." (Supersport)

JANNIK Sinner won the 21st title of his career by thrashing American teenager Learner Tien at the China Open on Wednesday as women's top seed Iga Swiatek was dumped out in the last 16 in a shock.

The Italian Sinner lifted the trophy for the second time on Beijing's hard courts, having done so on his tournament debut in 2023, and a return to world No 1 is within view after a ruthless 6-2, 6-2 win.

Sinner's only ever loss on the centre Diamond Court has been to great rival and top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz, who won last year's final in three gripping sets.

"A very, very special place for me," said the victorious Sinner, who got past a couple of three-set scares and a bout of diarrhoea to reach the final.

Alcaraz was not defending his title in the Chinese capital and on Tuesday won the Japan Open in Tokyo.

Sinner is the third man to win multiple China Open titles, matching Rafael Nadal's record at two but so far well short of Novak Djokovic's six.

"I always say comparing me to Novak, he's in a different league with everything he has achieved in his career," Sinner, a four-time Grand Slam champion, said.

"I'm just a normal 24-year-old who tries to play the best tennis possible."

But he added that his silverware collection has outgrown his home, telling reporters his trophies go "in my parents' place always".

"My apartment is quite small, so there's not a lot of space."

FAST START

Sinner broke immediately in the first set on the way to outclassing the 19-year-old Tien, who was in his first ATP final.

The world no. 52 got a rare chance to break in the second game of the second set

‘Normal’ Sinner romps to 21st title but Swiatek stunned in Beijing

but Sinner quickly retook control, ending a one-sided match with 10 aces over the 1h 12min final.

"I just think the pressure he puts on you point to point is really tough," said Tien, who had been bidding to become Beijing's lowest-ranked champion in tournament history.

As it was, he was never really in the final, despite some flashes of his rich potential.

Sinner's emphatic win was his third title this season, after victories at the Australian Open and Wimbledon.

He may now be able to snatch back the top ranking before the season ends after Alcaraz pulled out of the Shanghai Masters injured on Tuesday.

The Spaniard took the world No 1 ranking from Sinner when he defeated the Italian in the US Open final last month.

Sinner will be the top seed in Shanghai, which began this week and where he is defending champion.

SWIAOTEK SLUMPS OUT

In the women's draw in Beijing, Emma Navarro stunned Poland's world No 2 Swiatek 6-4, 4-6, 6-0 to reach the quarterfinals.

The 16-seeded 24-year-old next plays either fellow American Jessica Pegula or Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk.

Swiatek, who won the China Open in 2023, saved four break points in the very first game but struggled for fluency throughout the first set, firing a slew of shots just long.

She sent down six aces and wrestled back control in the second set, but a commanding Navarro raced away with the deciding set as



▲ Jannik Sinner.

Swiatek's game spectacularly deserted her.

"I definitely had some adjusting to do after our last couple times playing," said Navarro, who lost both of their previous matches.

"I wanted to come out and play calm and steady and focused tennis.

"I did that, so I'm happy with the way the match went tonight."

Britain's Sonay Kartal beat world No 5 Mirra Andreeva 7-5, 2-6, 7-5 in another surprise to clinch her first top-10 win.

Kartal, ranked 81st, next plays world no. 27 Linda Noskova of the Czech Republic in what will be her first 1000-level quarterfinal. (Supersport)

No panic but Liverpool have to improve, says Van Dijk

LIVERPOOL captain Virgil van Dijk called for improvement and an end to silly errors after his side went down 1-0 at Galatasaray in the Champions League on Tuesday and suffered the loss of goalkeeper Alisson to injury.

The defeat was Liverpool's second in a row after the Premier League leaders lost their 100 per cent record at Crystal Palace last Saturday.

"I hate losing. There shouldn't be panic, but there should be definitely improvement needed," the Dutch centre back said on Amazon Prime.

"I think it was a big step up in terms of the willingness, the hard work that we put in from the weekend, but that was not really too difficult because the weekend was just bad.

"We have to convert chances, don't give a penalty away today and don't make stupid mistakes at times. It's far too easy to say these things than to actually make it happen but it's a process and we have to keep going.

"Keep working, stick together and onto the next one. That's the only thing we can focus on."

Liverpool lost out to an early penalty, slotted home by Victor Osimhen, in a game played in an intimidating cauldron of a stadium after fireworks had been let off outside the team hotel overnight.

Manager Arne Slot said he was



▲ Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk.

disappointed but the performance was still a lot better than last Saturday and it all came down to fine margins, with the team not so far off last season's level.

"We've lost now twice in a row, this is something with the schedule coming as well. Galatasaray away is not an easy game, the same like Palace, and now we play Chelsea away so difficult games," he explained.

"I saw a lot of things. First half, the way we played, the way we controlled the game, the amount of times we got our attackers in promising positions.

"In the second half, that was much less. But I don't think in the second

half there was a lot of playing time. Their striker was four or five times on the floor, substitutions, injuries."

Alisson's loss, with the goalkeeper ruled out of Saturday's game at Chelsea, is a big one and Liverpool also had Hugo Ekitike go off injured.

With record signing Alexander Isak still not up to match fitness, but coming on as a second-half substitute along with Mohamed Salah, and some new players yet to gel Liverpool can ill afford to lose a scoring talent like Ekitike.

Salah's form is also a concern, with the Egyptian last starting a Champions League game on the bench three years ago and making little impact when he came on. (Supersport)

Martin has successful collarbone surgery after Japan crash

LAST year's MotoGP champion Jorge Martin's collarbone surgery has been successfully completed, his Aprilia team said on Tuesday, after the 27-year-old Spaniard crashed during the Japanese Grand Prix sprint at the weekend.

Martin collided with teammate Marco Bezzecchi on the opening lap on Saturday and was ruled out of Sunday's race after X-rays revealed a displaced fracture of his right collarbone.

"On Sunday, Jorge returned to Spain to undergo surgery for the of the fracture, which was carried out on Tuesday morning at the Hospital Universitari Dexeus," a team statement said.

"Surgery on Jorge Martin's right collarbone has been successfully completed. Recovery time will be assessed in the

coming days depending on his progression following the surgery. As permitted by the regulations, Martin will not be replaced for the Indonesian GP."

Martin is 20th in the riders' standings after a nightmare season in which he has already missed 10 races due to injuries having won his first MotoGP title last term with Pramac Racing.

A pre-season crash ruled him out of the first three rounds and a crash in his first race in Qatar led to a collapsed lung and bruised ribs.

Ducati's Marc Marquez clinched his seventh MotoGP championship with second place at the Japanese Grand Prix.

There are five races left on the calendar, beginning with Indonesia this weekend.

(Reuters)



▲ MotoGP champion Jorge Martin.

Bring it on, bring your vuvuzelas'

By Chris Dlamini

... As the MTN Premier League kicks off with an increased E7 million package for the season 2025/26

YOU certainly want to be part of the new elite league football kick-off matches this weekend.

The E7 million-sponsored league gets underway on Friday with a security forces derby fixture between army side Young Buffaloes and police side Royal Leopard, also in the second preliminary stage of the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26. It gets even better on Saturday when defending champions and TotalEnergies CAF Champions League outfit Nsingizini Hotspurs away to Mbabane Highlanders FC at Mavuso Sports Centre.

This match will precede the hub derby between sworn rivals Manzini Wanderers and Moneni Pirates.

At KaLanga, Green Mamba is up against Mbabane Swallows. We caught up with some of the teams' Public Relations Officers (PROs) and they were adamant they were ready to make their supporters as happy as possible.

This is what they had to say;
Mongi Simelane (Manzini Wanderers)
"It's great to know the sponsor has increased the package. As teams, we're excited there's more money to compete for. Otherwise, we're preparing and ready for our big game on Saturday. We want nothing but to win. We spent time out while they played. This is one game we'd like to win. Our supporters will know about new signings before the matchday. We invite them to come and

rally behind the team."
Mlungisi 'Sluga' Simelane (Moneni Pirates)
"We're excited about the increased package as it means good competition. About our game with Wanderers, we're ready. We have signed some new players and we are looking forward to the match. We'll settle any scores inside the field of play. I know they want the full points but we also want to start with a win. Our fans can come in numbers. We'll let them know of the sitting arrangement."

Mnotfo Dlamini (Nsingizini Hotspurs)
"We're more than ready for our league opener. The sponsor has increased the stakes, and we'll be the team with the lion's share in the end. Our players are all committed to growing their winning confidence and this is a match we're looking forward to."

Ntuthuko Dlamini (Green Mamba)
"It's a good one for teams that the prize package has been raised. The league is on this weekend and such news will add excitement. The team is ready to face Swallows. It is a game we will go all out to win. Our new players will also be available as they featured already in the Trade Fair Cup. The likes of Rio Matsenjwa will be available."



▲ Quality Dlamini in action against Peter Dlamini.



▲ Andile Mpisane.



▲ Green Mamba players Njabulo Ndlovu, Siyabonga Zwane and Banele Shongwe celebrating.



▲ Green Mamba CEO Ntuthuko Dlamini and Mbabane Swallows PRO Knowledge Ngwenya.



▲ Manzini Wanderers and Moneni Pirates PRO'S Mongi Simelane and Meluleki 'Sluga' Simelane.

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By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

Eswatini top brass for Lesotho Youth Games

THE country is in full support of local future stars.

Eswatini top sports brass are off to Lesotho to support junior national team in the 2025 Lesotho youth games.

Three officials EOCGA president Adam ‘Bomber’ Mtsetfwa, Chief Executive Officer Maxwell Jele and Eswatini Sport and Recreation CEO Darius Dlomo left the country on Wednesday to attend the three day international assignment.

The games will take place between October 1-4,2025 in Maseru as part of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries.

Jele confirmed the news when reached for comment.

“We have travelled to Lesotho to support our youth team, and we are confident that our team will perform well during the games. The games will help us prepare for the 2025 ANOCA Youth Games which will take place this December in Angola,” he said.

The 17-member delegation left the coun-

try on Tuesday led by Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association board member Sibusiso ‘Swazi Bolt’ Matsenjwa.

Team Eswatini first attended the games in 2024, and it will partake in four disciplines: Athletics, Taekwondo, Boxing and Chess.

The Lesotho Games national team
Athletics Machawe Mahlalela, Bandzile Sime-lane, Mbali Zungu
Coach: Siyabonga Ngwenya
Taekwondo Prince Langwenya, Siphowokuhle Ndllela, Sinenkhosi Buckum
Coach:Fakazile Nxumalo.
Boxing Calvin Gumbi, Nothando Mshayise
Coach: Mpendulo Mbingo
Chess:Kwanele Ngwenya, Santiago Deno-brega, Nolwazi Buthelezi, Simphiwe Dlamini, Wenzokuhle Mnisi, Simphiwe Dlamini



▲Eswatini mixed youth national team with EOCGA president Adam ‘Bomber’ Mtsetfwa during their farewell function to Lesotho.

EOCGA pleased with athletes commissions collaboration

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) has applauded the collaboration of the regional athlete’s commissions.

The local Olympic movement Chief Executive Officer Maxwell Jele following the recent Three Nations Athletes Commission workshop recently held in Johannesburg.

The Workshop was attended by athlete’s commissions members from Eswatini, South Africa and Lesotho.

The local delegation comprised of

Chairman Sibusiso ‘SwaziBolt’ Matsenjwa, Robyn Young, Phumlile Ndzinisa, Saneliso Masuku, Thabiso Dlamini and Muzi Shabangu.

“We are happy with the recent collaboration of the three member associations. This will certainly improve the standard of sports in the region,” he said.

The role of the athletes commission is to improve athletes’ welfare and training programs for the various sporting codes.

The Eswatini Athletes Chairman Sibusiso ‘SwaziBolt’ Matsenjwa is also an EOCGA board member by virtue of being the leader for the local body.

EOCGA also has a memorandum of understandings with the Lesotho Olympic Committee and Namibia.



▲The Eswatini Athletes Commission with EOCGA CEO Maxwell Jele.

Kusekhaya Cycling promises to deliver a cycling spectacle

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE Kusekhaya Cycling Club has promised to deliver a bigger and better edition of the 2025 Lowveld Invitation Challenge.

The club principal Mduduzi Kaudi revealed the news ahead of the fifth edition of the annual domestic race on November 22, 2025 at Mhlume.

“We promise our cyclists to deliver another spectacular event making sure that everyone enjoys the race, from spectator to competitor. It is always exciting to announce that cyclist will once again have their favourite race.

“Entry fees will remain the same as last year: E150 for the 30km family event and E200 for the rest of the distances. The children doing 5km will enter the race for free, they need to just register. Entries are

open and everyone who owns a bicycle is invited to enter,” he said.

Registration can also be done Online through the website ://forms.gle/vqMsb-hmrSSrD6v8NA and WhatsApp line: +268 7605 4338,” he said.

Kaudi further revealed that the race will have five categories in 5km, 30km, 50km, 90km, and 120km.

“The 5km race is reserved for children, while the 120km distance will see elite and under-23 men battling it out to see who walks away with the title in the las race of the season. The ladies elite and under-23 categories will compete over the 90km course,” Kaudi said.

He also revealed that they will have prizes for outstanding riders on the day.

“As has been a norm with the race, all our podium finishers will be walking away with cash prizes with trophies reserved for the top step of the podium. A detailed breakdown will be released in due course as we finalise all our sponsors,” he added.



▲Riders in action during the 2024 Kusekhaya Lowveld Challenge.

E22.5 mln for MTN Premier League

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

GETTING much stronger each year.

The relationship between MTN Eswatini and the Premier League of Eswatini continues to grow stronger by the day.

The two parties have agreed on an improved new three-year sponsorship worth E22.5 million.

The renewed vows took place on Wednesday at Mahlelkhukhwini House, with the sponsorship set to increase in stages.

The 2025/26 edition will be funded with E7 million, and the next two editions will be bankrolled by E7.5million and E8million respectively.

The previous three-year deal was funded by E18 million.

MTN Eswatini Chief Executive Officer Wandile Mtshali said they are happy with their relationship with the top-flight football entity.

“Our support for the PLE is rooted in people. Football is one of the activities that brings Emaswati together across regions, generations, and backgrounds. This league gives us a chance to connect with our customers in meaningful ways, not just through products, but through shared experiences. It also helps us invest in communities, create jobs, and support local businesses that thrive around match days,” he said.

PLE acting chairman Sithembiso Ngudze Mamba thanked the sponsor for continued support. Mamba delivered the message through executive member Sibusiso ‘Scorpion’ Nxumalo.

“We are hugely indebted to MTN Eswatini for being there with us through thick and thin. As we announce a staggering three-year contract renewal worth over E22.5 million in prize monies, we are hopeful that



▲ PLE Vice Chairman Sithembiso ‘Ngudze’ Mamba and executive member Sibusiso ‘Scorpion’ Nxumalo in discussion during the sponsorship launch.

this massive growth will steer our league intogreater heights. This growth was a clear statement of trust demonstrated by our sponsor to the league despite the prevailing economic challenges,” he said.

Minister of Sports, culture and youth affairs Bongani Nzima applauded the healthy and long-standing relationship between the two bodies.

Excitement

Nzima was represented by minister of Tinkhundla and administration, Sikhumbuzo Dlamini.

“This partnership has already transformed the landscape of football in Eswatini, bringing excitement to stadiums, uniting communities, and nurturing talent. With this renewed support, the Premier League of Eswatini is poised to scale even greater heights, to inspire the next generation of

players, and to build bridges of unity across our nation,” he said.

EFA vice president Steve Horton represented President Peter ‘Samora’ Simelane at the event and he thanked the sponsor for its loyalty to the sport.

“We would like to express our reflective gratitude to the MTN Eswatini establishment for the renewed partnership and magnified investment with the Premier League of Eswatini and football universally. We are exceptionally humbled at the persistent and dutiful investment into the game of football, particularly at the summit of our domestic football competitions,” he said.

Shiselweni-based side Nsingizini Hotspurs are the defending champions of the elite national league.

The new campaign will kick off on Saturday.



▲ Ubombo Sugar FC PRO Jada Smith.

Ubombo Sugar, ‘Stingers’ promise fireworks

By Chris Dlamini

IT is all action at Mayaluka Stadium on Saturday when Ubombo Sugar FC and Ezulwini United clash head-on.

Both teams have been showing signs of growth with good corporate sponsors partnering with them, while Ubombo rebranded completely. The action is scheduled for 3pm.

It looks set to be an exciting game in the battle for the maximum points in their opening match of the league season.

“As Ubombo Sugar, we’re grateful to MTN for the increased package. It means a good opportunity for the youth to play and compete at the top stage. The team is ready to start the league. We know Ezulwini United and one can only invite our supporters to fill the stadium. We hope for a good match of football,” said Ubombo Sugar’s Public Relations Officer (PRO) Jada Smith.

She also assured supporters they would watch a good game with new players signed to boost the side. Her counterpart Sonkhe Kuhlase who stood for the Stingers, as Ezulwini fondly go, declared they had a score to settle with Ubombo Sugar.

“We are 100 per cent ready for the league and Ubombo Sugar. It’s going to be a very good game as much as it will be an exciting league. The new package from the sponsor shows commitment to the sport and they talk of increased participation fees which will help us settle into the league games,” said Kuhlase.



▲ Sonkhe Kuhlase Ezulwini United.

... New sponsor for National First Division

IN what can be viewed as a fair business practice.

MTN Eswatini and the Premier League of Eswatini have mutually agreed to cut ties on the National First Division.

The mobile network has been sponsoring the second-tier league for over 20 years.

The new sponsor for the national First Division league will be announced in due course. Acting Premier League of Eswatini Ngudze Mamba confirmed the news on Wednesday during the new season sponsorship launch held at Mahlalekhukhwini House. Mamba delivered his speech through executive member Sibusiso ‘Scorpion’ Nxumalo. “The league will be announcing a new NFD League sponsor, soon, and we are glad to have received the full blessings of our main partner Eswatini MTN, who in the spirit of shared success have endorsed the third-party in this marriage in what will be a first-of-its-kind co-sponsorship arrangement,” he said.

He further appealed for the support of the football fraternity in the new process.

“It is this spirit, therefore, that we



▲ Team representatives following proceedings during the launch.

urge every football stakeholder to be an ambassador of the PLE, MTN, and the new NFD sponsor soon to be unveiled. This move has seen more funds being channelled to,” he said. MTN Chief Executive Officer Wandile Mtshali also welcomed the new move. “We acknowledge and support the

change in sponsorship for the National First Division. In our discussions with the PLE, we agreed that finding a dedicated sponsor for the NFD would bring more value to the players and fans. It’s a strategic move that allows both leagues to grow, and we fully support it,” he said.

 **Ouaddou praises Pirates' unity after victory over Galaxy**
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New sponsor for National First Division
Page 23 

Eswatini Daily News Thursday 2 October, 2025
Sport



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... The Premier League of Eswatini and MTN Eswatini agree on an improved new three-year sponsorship package that will see the 2025/26 edition sponsored to the tune of E7 million. **Page 23**