



Zulu, Swati traditions
unite in grand Umembeso

Page 3

▲ His Royal Highness Prince Bambindlovu kaZwelithini of the Zulu Royal Family prepares to dress Precious Vilakati of Zombodze as they officially celebrated their Umembeso and Lobola ceremony at KaZombodze, Egocweni.

Mopping exercise brings Govt closer to the people

... as over 8 000 births registered in just one quarter



By Ncaba Ntshakala
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THE Ministry of Home Affairs, under the leadership of the Minister of Home Affairs, Her Royal Highness Princess Lindiwe, has scored a remarkable national service delivery milestone through the ongoing Civil Registration Mopping Exercise, a programme that is transforming access to identification services across Eswatini.

■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2

ENPF hailed for biggest payouts, safest vehicle for members' savings

Page 4



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His Majesty calls for more women in top ENFRES roles

... HMK confirms appointment of Luke T. Lushaba as Chief Fire Officer during 25th National Fire Day

By Thokozani Mazibuko

HIS Majesty King Mswati III has called for greater inclusion of women in leadership roles within the Eswatini National Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services (ENFRES), emphasizing that gender balance is key to strengthening the institution and enhancing service delivery.

The King made the remarks on Friday during the commemoration of the 25th National Fire Day, an annual event dedicated to recognizing the bravery and dedication of the Kingdom's firefighters and promoting public safety awareness. The colorful event was held at the ENFRES Training Academy in Matsapha, drawing hundreds of officers, government officials, and members of the public.

In his keynote address, His Majesty commended the progress made by ENFRES in transforming its operations, upgrading technology, and improving response times across the country. However, he noted that the service still needed to open more doors for women to rise to decision-making positions.

"We have seen tremendous progress in the capabilities of our fire and rescue personnel, but there is a need to ensure that more women take up leadership positions," His Majesty said. "Women have proven to be dedicated, disciplined, and highly capable, and their presence in senior ranks will strengthen the service further."

During the same ceremony, His Majesty officially confirmed the appointment of Mr. Luke T. Lushaba as the new Chief Fire



▲ His Majesty King Mswati III shares a light moment with the new Chief Fire Officer Luke T. Lushaba during the National Fire Day 2025 at the ENFRES Training Academy in Matsapha.

Officer. In his acceptance remarks, Lushaba expressed deep gratitude to the King and government for the trust bestowed upon him. He pledged to prioritize training, modernization, and the recruitment of more women into operational and managerial ranks.

"This appointment is both an honor and a responsibility," Lushaba said. "We will continue working tirelessly to ensure that ENFRES remains a world-class institution — one that not only responds to emergencies but also empowers both men and women equally to serve the nation."

His Majesty also took time to praise ENFRES officers for their growing skillset, noting that incidents of fires had dropped by 40 percent compared to 2024, a milestone he attributed to the department's efficiency

and public awareness efforts.

"I am impressed by your capabilities. You have transformed your bodies into human machines men and women who are ready to save lives in the most difficult situations," His Majesty said. "You have also demonstrated excellence in handling a variety of emergencies, from fires to snake rescues."

The King's remarks echoed the growing recognition of women within the service, as more female officers have been breaking barriers in recent years. ENFRES currently counts several women in operational roles, including station officers, rescue specialists, and instructors.

Observers say His Majesty's call could pave the way for a policy shift that ensures equal opportunities for female firefighters to advance into senior management positions

— something long advocated for by gender equality organizations and civil society.

The National Fire Day celebration also featured live demonstrations of firefighting, rescue drills, and displays of advanced firefighting equipment. Attendees were treated to exhibitions showcasing ENFRES' technological upgrades, including new fire engines and protective gear.

The event concluded with His Majesty inspecting a parade of officers and presenting awards to outstanding firefighters who have shown exceptional bravery and service dedication.

As Eswatini marks a quarter century of celebrating its fire and rescue heroes, the day's message was clear — the country's firefighting future must be inclusive, modern, and resilient under the new leadership of Chief Fire Officer Luke T. Lushaba.

By Ncaba Ntshakala
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A TRUE evidence of 'Nkwe'. The Ministry of Home Affairs, under the leadership of the Minister of Home Affairs, Her Royal Highness Princess Lindiwe, has scored a remarkable national service delivery milestone through the ongoing Civil Registration Mopping Exercise, a programme that is transforming access to identification services across Eswatini.

The exercise was launched to correct decades-long gaps in birth, death, and marriage registrations, and it has become one of the most impactful community-centred initiatives in recent years, ensuring that no citizen is left undocumented or excluded from national systems.

The Mopping Exercise, which began in 2021, continues to be rolled out across the country bringing services directly to communities, especially remote and rural areas where access to government offices remains a challenge.

It is currently active in the Manzini and Hhohho regions, and according to the Ministry's 2025/26 Second Quarter Performance Report, the programme recorded outstanding progress in the second quarter of the 2025/26 financial year.

The statistics tell a compelling story of success. In the Manzini region, the Ministry registered 4,795 births, 106 deaths, and processed 2,862 conversions of manual birth certificates during the quarter.

Mopping exercise brings Govt closer to the people

... as over 8 000 births registered in just one quarter



▲ Minister of Home Affairs, HRH Princess Lindiwe.

The Hhohho region also showed impressive numbers with 3,385 births, 40 deaths, and 1,752 conversions of manual birth certificates completed.

These figures represent a significant leap from the previous quarter, demonstrating both improved access and heightened public appreciation of the importance of legal documentation.

One of the most major highlights comes from the comparative analysis that is between the first and second quarter of the

mopping exercise where birth registrations increased by 3,248, death registrations doubled, and the conversion of manual certificates surged markedly which has been hailed by emaSwati as clear evidence of improved efficiency, outreach, and uptake.

EmaSwati no longer have to travel long distances to service centres. The Ministry has deployed mobile teams, hired vehicles and worked with local authorities to set up temporary registration points within imiphakatsi, health facilities, churches, and

community halls.

This approach has brought government closer to the people and restored dignity to many citizens who previously lacked official records.

Speaking during the launch of the Hhohho leg of the mopping exercise in 2024, Her Royal Highness Princess Lindiwe emphasised that identity is a gateway to opportunity, as access to education, healthcare, social services, employment, and travel all depend on formal recognition by the State.

The Ministry emphasized that no child should grow up without a birth certificate, and no adult should be denied their rightful documentation due to geographical or financial limitations.

As the programme moves towards completion in November 2025, the Ministry has credited community cooperation, traditional leadership support, and strategic planning for the positive outcomes. The mopping exercise has not only improved the National Population Register, but has also strengthened national planning, security, and service delivery systems.

The Ministry further asserted that it remains committed to ensuring that all citizens are properly documented.

By Delisa Magagula

Zulu, Swati traditions unite in grand Umembeso



▲ Eswatini Royal Family during the ceremony.



CULTURE, colour and kinship have defined the union of two royal households.

This happened as His Royal Highness Prince Bambindlovu kaZwelithini of the Zulu Royal Family and Precious Vilakati of Zombodze officially celebrated their Umembeso and Lobola ceremony at KaZombodze, Egocweni.

The day began under clear skies, with the sounds of traditional drums echoing across the homestead as guests arrived for the event scheduled to begin at 09:30 a.m.

The atmosphere was charged with pride as both the Zulu and Swati sides came adorned in full cultural regalia beaded glinting in the sun, animal hides draped over shoulders, and the rhythmic chants of maidens filling the morning air.

Proceedings opened with a prayer, invoking blessings over the day's programme. Moments later, the emabutho, the Zulu warriors, made their entrance in full formation, spears upright, shields gleaming, their steps measured and powerful.

Their arrival was met with ululation from the crowd, setting a regal tone for the day. Trailing them were the intombi, the Zulu maidens, carrying gifts and chanting traditional Zulu songs.

As they laid the gifts before the Vilakati family, their voices rose in harmony, creating a rich tapestry of sound that seemed to weave together both the solemnity and the joy of the moment.

The first round of gidza, the traditional Zulu dance performed by maidens, brought life to the forecourt. Bare feet stomped in unison, beads rattled in rhythm, and the air pulsed with song. Each movement told a story of honour, love and respect offered to the bride's family as part of the cultural exchange.

At 10:00 a.m., the programme officially shifted hands. A representative of the Vilakati family offered words of welcome, thanking the KwaZulu delegation for honouring the customs of Eswatini and choosing to hold the event at Egocweni.

The programme was then formally handed back to the Zulu family, signalling the start of the Ukwembesa ceremony.

Here, the KwaZulu family presented their gifts to the Vilakati family blankets, fabric, cattle, goats and symbolic offerings representing appreciation and unity between the families.

Every gift carried meaning, warmth, prosperity, and the foundation of a shared future.

As the day went by, the Zulu side continued with kugidza, their dance and song reinforcing the cultural exchange that lay at the heart of the day.

The ululations, drums and praise poetry that followed filled the homestead, creating an atmosphere that felt both royal and deeply rooted in African identity.

By midday, it was the Vilakati family's turn to reciprocate. Gifts were presented to the abakhongi (the Zulu delegates), a gesture of gratitude and acknowledgement of the day's success.

The bride, Precious Vilakati now referred to as uNdlunkulu, the royal bride was then taken to change into her first outfit.

Moments later, she returned dressed in full Zulu regalia, her attire symbolising her embrace of her husband's culture. The crowd cheered as she stepped forward beads cascading down her shoulders, her head adorned with the traditional Zulu isicholo (married woman's hat).

Shortly after noon, the Vilakati family performed the simbimbi, a Swati traditional dance reserved for significant occasions. Their rhythmic movements and graceful footwork drew admiration from both families.

The Zulu delegation watched respectfully as the hosts showcased their heritage. U Ndlunkulu was then escorted again to prepare for her second outfit change this time blending both Swati and Zulu elements in her attire.

The symbolism was unmistakable: the coming together of two nations, two traditions, two homes. At 1:00 p.m., the bride returned to the main arena wearing her second outfit, marking the start of the lunch session. Guests were served traditional Swati and Zulu dishes from roasted meat and sishwala to spicy chakalaka and fresh salads.

Following the meal came the prayer session. Two gospel songs lifted the spirits of the gathering, followed by a brief sermon by Make Msibi, who shared a message about love, unity, and the sanctity of marriage. The couple received a formal blessing as family members gathered around them in prayer.

Speeches followed shortly after. A representative from the KwaZulu Royal Family expressed gratitude to the Vilakati family for their warm hospitality and adherence to cultural protocol.

The Vilakati family spokesperson responded in kind, noting that the



▲ HRH Bambindlovu kaZwelithini dancing up a storm.

event marked not only the union of two individuals but also the strengthening of relations between Swati and Zulu traditions.

In a gesture of appreciation, the Zulu Royal Family presented gifts to the drivers and support teams, acknowledging the logistical efforts that made the day a success.

As the sun dipped behind the Zombodze hills, the mood transitioned from ceremony to celebration. By 8:00 p.m., the atmosphere at Egocweni had shifted to a relaxed braai night. Smoke from sizzling meat filled the evening air as music and laughter replaced the formal rhythms of the morning.

Guests mingled freely Swati and Zulu songs alternating from the speakers while elders shared stories around the fire. The dance floor remained full well into the night, a vibrant mix of traditional and modern sounds blending generations.

Worth noting Prince Bambindlovu first captured public attention in 2022 when



▲ The bride being dressed up by her now husband.

he declared his love for Precious Vilakati during the annual Reed Dance ceremony at Ludzidzini Royal Residence.

His open admiration for her became one of the most memorable moments of that year's event, symbolising a modern yet deeply respectful royal courtship.

Their Umembeso and Lobola celebration at Zombodze now stands as a full circle of that journey an affirmation of tradition in a time where many customs face the threat of erosion.

The day concluded just after midnight, with final prayers and farewells exchanged. The homestead of KaZombodze fell quiet once again but for those who attended, the echoes of drumbeats, song and laughter lingered long after.

The Umembeso and Lobola celebration of Prince Bambindlovu kaZwelithini and Precious Vilakati will be remembered not only for its grandeur but for the way it brought two royal households and two proud cultures together in a single moment of joy, reverence, and love.

By Sibusiso Dlamini

WHEN Ambrose Mefika Nkambule left the bank where he had worked for 17 years, he carried with him a single question; where can my money truly be safe?

He had seen too many people lose their life savings to investment schemes that dazzled with promises but disappeared with their dreams. Then he walked into Lidlelantfongeni, the Eswatini National Provident Fund (ENPF), and as he puts it “found peace of mind and a home for my money.”

“The staff did not just tell me to invest, they counselled me, showed me how my savings would be protected, and introduced me to the supplementary option,” Nkambule recalls.

The supplementary contributions option allows members (and optionally their employers) to make voluntary top-up payments in addition to the required statutory contributions, giving the member flexibility over how much and when they contribute, thereby increasing the total retirement benefit available and providing an extra financial cushion at retirement.

“I started saving again, this time with purpose. I even registered my employees in the taxi business I had started, and each of them now enjoys the same security I do. Later, I added my wife, and we both save and reinvest at every two-and-a-half-year interval. The growth has been remarkable. No one gives interest like Lidlelantfongeni.”

That sense of safety with reward has become ENPF’s hallmark. With a steadfast commitment to transparency, sound governance, and member-first stewardship, the Fund has positioned itself not merely as a statutory provident fund but as Eswatini’s most trusted investment fortress.

In a financial landscape where financial institutions and other investment vehicles often offer modest single-digit returns, and where risk can easily hide behind the glitter of high-yield promises, Lidlelantfongeni stands out. Lidlelantfongeni once again proved its strength as a beacon of financial sustainability and ethical stewardship, announcing an impressive 10 per cent mem-

ENPF hailed for biggest payouts, safest vehicle for members’ savings

... At the second edition of the Lidlelantfongeni Stakeholder Recognition Awards, members hailed ENPF for being the one of the safest home for savings, and delivering market-leading interest declarations; setting it apart from other financial institutions and investment vehicles.



▲ The ENPF team with the Fund’s members at the second edition of the Lidlelantfongeni Stakeholder Recognition Awards hosted by the CEO Futhi Tembe

bers’ interest for the financial year ended June 30, 2025. This latest declaration underscores the institution’s commitment to delivering superior returns to its members. Previously an 11 per cent members’ interest was declared by the organisation.

The double-digit member interest declarations have set a new benchmark for institutional savings performance, reaffirming that disciplined management and public trust can coexist with exceptional returns.

Members at the second edition of the Lidlelantfongeni Stakeholder Recognition Awards hosted by CEO Futhi Tembe, echoed Nkambule’s experience, celebrating ENPF not just as a fund but as a financial movement redefining how emaSwati think about saving.

This groundbreaking weekly series running through December 2025, celebrates a rare kind of commitment; financial discipline that transcends mere duty. It recognises members, employers and tenants who

demonstrate courage, ethical stewardship, and quiet leadership; choosing to save and plan effectively even when faced with temptation or the path of least resistance.

Those who were honoured in the second edition were Sibusiso Lawrence Dladlu, Skhumbuzo Musa Zondo, Doctor Denty Ndzinisa, Ambrose Mefika Nkambule and Phinley Vusani Vilakati. The awards categories were the following:

Longest Continuous Supplementary Contributions: This is recognition for three members who have consistently contributed supplementary amounts for the longest period. This unwavering discipline is a testament to resilience and trust in ENPF’s vision.

Highest Supplementary Contributions: This recognises a member who has made the highest supplementary contributions according to the most recent employer submissions. Such commitment demonstrates confidence in ENPF and a strong belief in

planning for tomorrow. The member is a champion of financial security.

Highest supplementary balance to date: Celebrates a member who has the highest supplementary balance to date. The member’s patience and long-term perspective exemplify the essence of prudent planning.

“This ceremony is not just about awards; it’s about honouring members who have gone above and beyond to secure their retirement and inspire others. Your dedication and consistency towards the culture of saving strengthens ENPF’s mission and sets a benchmark for excellence in social security,” said CEO Tembe, during the successful event which was held at the Lidlelantfongeni Headquarters, in Manzini.

“To all awardees, congratulations! Your actions inspire others to take charge of their financial future. ENPF remains committed to providing innovative solutions and secure retirement benefits for every member. Together, we build a stronger, more prosperous

‘Member voices: why we trust Lidlelantfongeni’

Sibusiso Dladlu

HE has been supplementing from 2013 to 2025 [12 years] and is the 3rd longest supplementary contributor

“In 2017 I made a grave mistake. I invested a substantial amount of my hard-earned savings into a company that appeared perfectly legitimate, endorsed, even, by several respected financial structures in Eswatini.

Then it vanished. I lost everything. That loss shook me.

After that, I was determined that my next move had to be safe. I found Eswatini National Provident Fund, Lidlelantfongeni, and, in 2013, I began supplementing my statutory contributions.

Now, twelve years on, I see how right that decision was. It has been the third-longest run of supplementary contributions among members.

I say this with pride; Lidlelantfongeni is a safe place to save and to supplement your savings. It is insulated from turbulence because it is managed by people with integrity, backed by real assets, and

guided by a proven track record.

The interest declared to members has sometimes reached remarkable levels, at one time nearly 11%, which you simply won’t find at some of the banks or many other investment vehicles. The service is professional, seamless and accessible; you feel valued as a member, not just an account number.

I thank the CEO and her team for the inaugural CEO Awards, recognising members like me gives hope and reminds us we belong. Looking ahead, I wholeheartedly support the proposed conversion of the Fund into a national two-tier pension scheme. It is a very good concept that secures our future and that of the generations to come. Though I’m now beyond the age threshold of 45 to be included, it is still my earnest wish that younger members embrace it with open arms.

Let us continue to save, let us encourage others to save, and let us build together a culture of prudent financial stewardship.”

... ‘Safety is Paramount’

SIKHUMBUZO Zondi
- **Longest Continuous Supplementary Contributions Category**
Zondi has been supplementing from 2009 to 2025 which is 16 years and is the second longest supplementary contributor.

“I was genuinely happy and surprised when I got the call to visit the Lidlelantfongeni offices today. I am grateful for this award which came as a surprise. I was just focused on saving, and I never expected Lidlelantfongeni had such a wonderful surprise for us. For me, the reason for my commitment is simple. Safety is paramount. I have personally seen friends lose their life savings to scams and unreliable investment schemes that went under, causing immense spiritual and emotional distress. I realised my last cent had to



be somewhere completely secure. Having worked at ENPF before, I know firsthand that this is the safest place to build a financial future. That confidence encouraged me to invest a lump sum and then consistently supplement my contributions over the longest period. Why here? Because the interest rate, exemplified by the recent record declarations, is not just high; it’s consistently superior to what banks or other financial institutions offer. I must

also congratulate our CEO, Futhi Tembe. She is truly a go-getter and an inspiration to women and young girls, showing them that anything is possible in leadership. Under her leadership, the Fund has embraced so much innovation and change, transforming into a modern company that provides seamless, accessible service. This award is more than just recognition; it is proof that Lidlelantfongeni is thinking about us and actively taking care of our future.”

Doctor Denty Ndzinisa

‘We’ve come a long way with Lidlelantfongeni’

NDZINISA has been supplementing from 1993 up until 2021 [28 years] he is the longest supplementary contributor of all time

“When I look back at my working life, here at Lidlelantfongeni before retirement, I can say the organisation shaped the person I became, both professionally and financially. I worked here for many years, and those years taught me the importance of discipline, saving and thinking long-term. I started my supplementary contributions in 1993, and I continued for 28 years in total. I did not realise it then, but that decision would become one of the best I ever made. Working at Lidlelantfongeni was special. We were like a family. I still remember the smell of those chicken-filled sandwiches we used to enjoy during workshops and staff events; small moments that made the place feel like home. Back then, many people misunderstood what we did. Some would joke or even scold us in the streets, saying, ‘Lidlelantfongeni just takes our money.’ But time has proved that what we were doing was for their own good. Today, people see that saving here means securing a future that is safe and dignified. I have watched the organisation grow from a simple office into a

modern, world-class institution. The systems, the technology, the service, everything has improved under the leadership of our CEO, Ms Futhi Tembe, and her dedicated team. I am proud to see how far they have taken this institution. If I could turn back time and start life afresh, with all the lessons and experiences I have gathered, I would save even more and start much earlier. Life without a salary teaches you quickly how valuable every lilangeni you saved becomes. Lidlelantfongeni has not only kept our money safe but has given us interest rates higher than most investment vehicles in the country, sometimes even reaching double digits. That is something worth celebrating. I want to thank the team for continuously improving the image of the organisation and for remembering us, the retirees, through these awards. I urge the staff to keep spreading the message, talk about saving wherever you go: in churches, community meetings, on radio and TV. Let everyone know about the supplementary option and the peace it brings. To the CEO and her team, thank you for your leadership and vision. To my fellow members, keep saving, keep supplementing, and keep believing because Lidlelantfongeni has proved itself to be a secure, modern and truly caring institution.”



Ambrose Mefika Nkambule

He has been supplementing from 2009 to date [16 years] and this makes him the highest supplementary contribution to date

“Seventeen years ago, when I resigned from the financial institution where I had worked for most of my adult life, I was 43 years old; relatively young to retire but old enough to worry about what would happen to my savings. The day I walked out of that job, my former pension company called almost immediately, urging me to withdraw my money. But something in me hesitated. I wanted my next move to be safe and meaningful. I went to Lidlelantfongeni, simply to ask how much I had contributed and what I would receive at 50. Instead, I found something far greater; people who cared enough to guide me. The staff did not just process my paperwork; they counselled me. They talked to me about financial responsibility, investing wisely, and planning for independence. They introduced me to the supplementary option, which allows you to make voluntary top-ups to your regular savings. That conversation opened my eyes. I decided to invest my funds with Lidlelantfongeni, and I have never looked back. Their customer care is exceptional, the service seamless, and the peace of



mind priceless. They even helped me register my employees from the small taxi business I had started, so they too could begin saving for their futures. It made a big difference; while other transport companies struggled with high staff turnover, mine stayed. My team felt valued, and I knew I was helping them secure their tomorrow. Over time, I also opened accounts for my family members, including my wife. Every two and a half years, when our supplementary investments mature, we see real growth. Each payout brings a smile to her face because it’s tangible proof that our money is working for us. I’ve even managed to buy property through these savings, ensuring that when I grow old, I won’t need to burden my children. That’s what true financial independence means to me. What stands out most

is how safe our money feels at Lidlelantfongeni. It’s well managed, backed by assets, and handled with integrity. A dedicated relationship manager is always there when I or my staff need help, whether it’s updating records or sorting out minor issues. I know my savings are not just sitting idle; they’re growing in trusted hands. And the declared returns? No one gives interest like Lidlelantfongeni. I’m deeply grateful to the CEO, Ms Futhi Tembe, and her team for transforming this Fund into a modern, member-driven institution. The supplementary product should be marketed even more widely; every liSwati deserves to know about it. My journey with Lidlelantfongeni gave me confidence, stability, and dignity. When I say I found peace of mind and a home for my money, I mean it from the heart.”

No amount is too small, keep saving and supplementing

VILAKATI has been supplementing from 2022 to date, and holds the highest supplementary balance to date.

“When I was a young man working in the hospitality industry, at a company that has since closed its doors, I made a decision that changed my life. I started supplementing my statutory contributions at Lidlelantfongeni. Back then, I didn’t have much, but I understood one simple truth: if I wanted a secure future, I had to build it myself. I used to tell my colleagues, ‘Don’t just rely on the statutory contribution. Top it up, even if it’s a small amount. One day, you’ll thank yourself.’ Some listened, some laughed, but I kept preaching that message because I had seen what happens when people reach old age with nothing to fall back on. My relationship with Lidlelantfongeni grew over the years. I interacted with their staff often, even serving as a board member at one point. That gave me even more confidence; seeing first-hand how professional, transparent, and dedicated they are. It made me believe even more in the culture of saving, and I’ve tried to pass that



knowledge to others. I always tell people: save so that you don’t become a burden to your children when you grow old. Too many of us grew up with the idea that our children are our pension — that when we can no longer work, they will take care of us. But that’s not fair to them. Our children should be free to raise their own families, to help us not because they must, but because they choose to. The best gift we can give them is our independence. That’s why I thank Lidlelantfongeni for introducing the supplementary savings option. It gives ordinary workers the chance to build something solid — a nest for the future. I’ve encouraged my staff and everyone around me to take advantage of it. In the

corporate world, we often feel comfortable today and forget that one day we won’t be here. But the truth is, tomorrow comes faster than we think. I haven’t always been lucky. Along my saving journey, I also lost money to an investment vehicle that collapsed. It was painful, but it taught me a valuable lesson; only trust institutions that have stood the test of time. That’s what Lidlelantfongeni represents to me: stability, safety, and integrity. So I keep preaching the gospel of saving wherever I go; in my workplace, my community, even at church. No amount is too small. What matters is starting early and staying consistent. Because when you save, you don’t just build wealth; you build peace of mind.”

PM applauds Basotho generosity, King's humility

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini has returned to Eswatini with a deep sense of admiration for the Basotho people's renowned hospitality and a profound respect for His Majesty King Mswati III's humility and affable nature. His recent official visit to the Kingdom of Lesotho was marked by significant diplomatic engagements, notably representing His Majesty King Mswati III and the Eswatini nation at a landmark national celebration honouring King Letsie III's receipt of the prestigious Presidential Global Water-maker Award.

The Prime Minister's arrival in Maseru was dignified by the courtesy of Lesotho's Prime Minister, H.E. Sam Matekane, who provided a private jet for the journey, underscoring the warm bilateral relations between the two nations. This gesture symbolised the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that defines Eswatini and Lesotho's diplomatic ties.



▲ The PM with His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho.

At the heart of Prime Minister Dlamini's visit was the celebration of King Letsie III's recognition at the African Union-AIP Africa Water Investment Summit held in August. The award acknowledges King Letsie III's visionary leadership and the pivotal role of the

Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) in addressing water scarcity challenges across Sub-Saharan Africa. The LHWP is widely regarded as a transformative regional initiative that has significantly enhanced water resource management and distribution,

benefiting millions across the continent. During the national celebration in Maseru, Prime Minister Dlamini delivered a compelling address that highlighted the critical importance of the LHWP. He described the project as a beacon of excellence in regional cooperation, emphasising how it exemplifies effective cross-border collaboration for equitable and sustainable water management. The Prime Minister underscored that the award not only honours King Letsie III's leadership but also symbolises a broader commitment to water security and sustainable development in Africa. Water scarcity remains one of the most pressing challenges facing the continent. Prime Minister Dlamini drew attention to the stark reality that over half of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa still lacks access to safe drinking water. Within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), only 63 per cent of people have access to potable water, highlighting the urgent need for innovative solutions and cooperative efforts. In this context, the LHWP stands out as a model for how regional partnerships can overcome resource limitations and deliver vital services to communities.

National events attendance increases immensely

By Delisa Magagula

THE Ministry of Home Affairs has reported a sharp increase in the number of people attending national events. This was revealed by Minister of Home Affairs Princess Lindiwe in her second quarter performance report, tabled and debated in the House of Assembly.

According to the report, the Ministry's mandate is to ensure that all national celebrations are coordinated efficiently and effectively, with activities designed to promote culture, national unity, and both domestic and international tourism.

The Ministry noted that most of these events take place on public holidays and weekends.

"During the reporting period, the Ministry successfully coordinated several major national events, including the Umhlanga Reed Dance and cultural activities in the Republic of South Africa," reads the report in part.

The annual Umhlanga Ceremony was held at Ludzidzini Royal Residence, attracting thousands of Imbali (young maidens) from across Eswatini and the Republic of South Africa.

The week-long event was characterised by vibrant displays of traditional regalia, singing, and dancing before Their Majesties and the nation at large.

The Ministry reported that 85 buses were deployed to ferry maidens to and from the event, including trips to reed-cutting sites at Bhamusakhe and Mpisi. Additionally, 84 government trucks were used to transport luggage and 37 water tankers supplied both drinking and bathing water.

A separate regional Umhlanga was held in Shiselweni, attended by maidens from the region and neighbouring South Africa.

The four-day event required 40 buses to transport participants between their camp

sites, along with 68 government trucks for luggage and 22 water tankers to ensure access to clean water. The Ministry also provided mobile showers for the maidens throughout the duration of the ceremony.

Officials, as well as bus and truck drivers supporting the event, were accommodated and provided with meals by the Ministry for the full period of the celebration.

The report also detailed the Ministry's participation in Ummemo ceremonies hosted by South African chiefdoms.

Ummemo is a cultural exchange event where Eswatini is invited to join celebrations held in South Africa to promote traditional values and strengthen cultural ties.

The Ministry supports these engagements by providing transport for the Royal delegation, which includes Sagila Semnikati, Lutsango, Libutfo, Imbali, and government officials.

On average, the Ministry receives about 15 invitations per year from South African chiefdoms and has managed to honour all of them.

During the reporting period, Eswatini delegations attended Umhlanga in KwaZulu-Natal and several Ummemo ceremonies in Mpumalanga Province.

All delegations were commissioned by His Majesty King Mswati III, as part of Eswatini's ongoing participation in cross-border cultural cooperation.

Meanwhile, the Ministry highlighted transport and hospitality costs as the most pressing challenges resulting from the growing attendance at national events.

"Due to the increasing number of people attending national events, the Ministry is facing increased transport and hospitality costs," the report stated.

It further cited a shortage of government transport, which has forced the department to hire private vehicles, leading to higher rental expenses.

The report added that staff overtime, meal provisions, and accommodation for drivers and officials continue to strain the Ministry's limited budget allocation.

However, despite these challenges, the Ministry reaffirmed its commitment to coordinating and supporting all national and cultural celebrations, saying such events remain vital in strengthening Eswatini's identity and promoting unity.

The Ministry emphasised that cultural activities such as Umhlanga and Ummemo continue to serve as key platforms for showcasing the nation's heritage while also drawing regional and international attention to Eswatini's traditions.



▲ Minister of Home Affairs Princess Lindiwe.

E58,000 stolen from elderly woman's trunk

By Delisa Magagula

THE Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) has launched an investigation into a theft case involving a 58-year-old woman from Nyonyane who lost E58,000 in cash that she had kept in a trunk at her home.

According to a police report issued by the Deputy Police Information and Communications Officer, Assistant Superintendent Nosipho Mnguni, the theft occurred on October 12, 2025, at around 7:00 a.m. The woman reportedly discovered that her hard-earned savings had vanished from the trunk where she had been keeping the money.

"The complainant, aged 58, discovered that her savings amounting to E58,000.00 had been stolen from a trunk in her house at Nyonyane area," reads the statement. "An investigation has been launched, and police are appealing to the public for any information that may lead to the arrest of the suspect or suspects."

"Let's embrace safe digital banking" The police reiterated that embracing technology is not only convenient but also crucial in preventing financial losses caused by thefts, housebreakings, or fraud.

"Let's embrace technology by switching to digital platforms that offer secured transactions and peace of mind," Mnguni said. "Together, we can keep our communities safe and protected."

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Wage bill rises to 36% of govt expenditure after salary review

ESWATINI'S wage bill has risen to 36 per cent of total government expenditure following the implementation of the national salary review, according to the Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg. Speaking during the Finance in Focus segment, Rijkenberg said the increase follows the government's decision to adjust civil servants' pay after years of stagnant wages and systemic anomalies in the salary structure.

TotalEnergies lifts force majeure on Moz LNG project

FRENCH oil major TotalEnergies said it, along with its project partners, had lifted force majeure on their \$20 billion Mozambique LNG project, four years after an Islamist militant attack brought construction to a halt. Notice was sent to the Mozambican government via letter on Friday, a TotalEnergies press officer said.

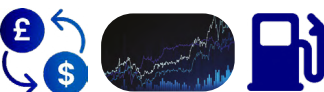
Trump strikes deals on trade in Southeast Asia

THE United States signed a flurry of deals on trade and critical minerals with four Southeast Asian partners on Sunday, looking to address trade imbalances and diversify supply chains amid tighter export curbs on rare earths by China.U.S. President Donald Trump, who is in Kuala Lumpur to attend a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, signed reciprocal trade deals with his Malaysian and Cambodian counterparts, as well as a framework trade pact with Thailand.



FX RATES

Notes/Cash		
	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.8452	17.3119
G.B. Pound	22.6328	23.3083
EURO	19.7921	20.3994
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	



Non-Financial Cooperatives record E259 million growth

By Delisa Magagula

NON-FINANCIAL cooperatives in Eswatini grew from E58.9 million in 2014 to E317.9 million in 2021.

Deputy Commissioner for Cooperative Development, Bongani Maziya, has revealed that non-financial cooperatives recorded a remarkable E259 million growth in turnover between 2014 and 2021.

The data was presented during a workshop convened to discuss the establishment of a Cooperatives Bank, highlighting the sector's strong financial turnaround and renewed stability.

According to Maziya, cooperatives began the period with a combined turnover of E58.9 million between 2014 and 2016, before declining to E45 million.

The sector reached its lowest performance in 2017, recording only E17.9 million in turnover the most challenging year in the reviewed period.

From 2018 to 2020, the movement showed signs of recovery, climbing from E57 million to E96.4 million. In 2021, cooperatives experienced an exceptional boom, with turnover rising to E317.9 million, the highest figure ever recorded for non-financial cooperatives.

Maziya said this surge demonstrates improved management capacity, better financial discipline, and strengthened business operations across multiple cooperative sectors.

The data also showed changes in cooperatives' reserve holdings. Between 2014 and 2015, reserves stood at E3.1 million and E3.6 million, before falling sharply to E879,000 in 2016 as cooperatives drew from savings to sustain operations during the downturn.

"From 2017 to 2020, reserves stabilised between E1 million and E2.8 million, indicating a cautious approach to rebuilding. In 2021, however, reserves surged to E97.2 million, signalling a strong financial recovery and improved saving practices," said Maziya.

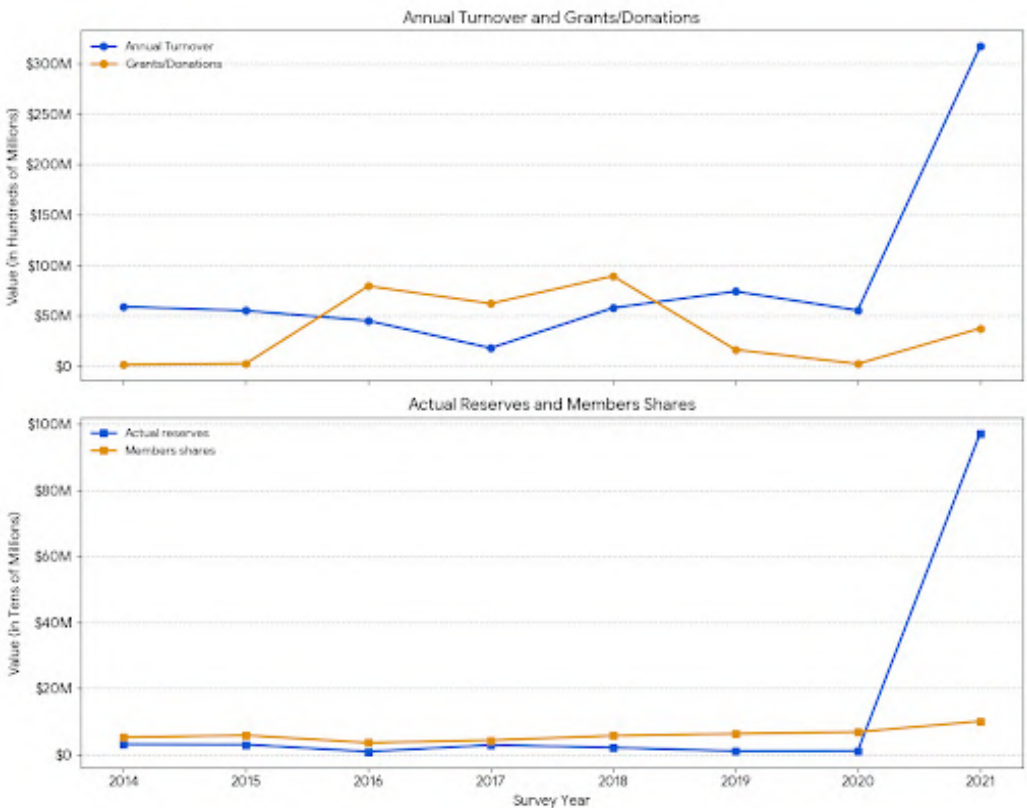
In addition, Maziya said, member shares also showed a strong recovery trend. Between 2014 and 2015, the cooperatives registered steady growth, increasing from E5.2 million to E5.8 million. In 2016, shares dropped to E3.5 million, reflecting a loss of confidence among members.

According to his presentation from 2017 to 2020, membership and contributions rebounded steadily, reaching E8.8 million, before peaking at E10.011 million in 2021. Maziya said the upward movement in member shares signals restored faith in the cooperative movement and increased member participation.

Grants and donations also played a vital role in keeping cooperatives afloat during turbulent years. From 2014 to 2015, external funding was stable at E1.5 million and E2.8 million, but in 2016, it spiked dramatically to E79.4 million, followed by E62.1 million in 2017.

"These injections helped stabilise operations and prevent widespread collapse during the crisis period. Between 2018 and 2020, grants declined to E2.3 million as cooperatives regained independence. However, 2021 saw a record high of E97.4 million, coinciding with the year's exceptional turnover growth," said Maziya.

Maziya said this strong external support



▲ PS for Commerce Melusi Masuku and a DGVR official at the workshop.



▲ Some of the financial heads who attended.

reflected confidence from donors and development partners who recognised the sector's growing potential.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasised that the robust financial performance of non-financial cooperatives positions the sector for the successful establishment of a Cooperatives Bank.

"The figures confirm a sector that has overcome financial turbulence and is now ready to consolidate its resources for sustainable development. A dedicated Cooperatives Bank would provide liquidity, strengthen governance, and increase access to affordable financing for co-

operative members," he said.

He added that such an institution would enhance financial inclusion, particularly for rural cooperatives, and contribute to national economic growth.

The workshop, attended by representatives from cooperative societies, financial experts, and government officials, concluded that consistent data monitoring and strong management systems are essential to sustain growth.

Maziya commended the sector's resilience and encouraged continued collaboration among cooperatives, regulators, and financial stakeholders.

By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI'S wage bill has risen to 36 per cent of total government expenditure following the implementation of the national salary review, according to the Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg.

Speaking during the Finance in Focus segment, Rijkenberg said the increase follows the government's decision to adjust civil servants' pay after years of stagnant wages and systemic anomalies in the salary structure.

He confirmed that Treasury is finalising payments expected to reach civil servants by Monday, October 27, 2025.

"The salary review is fully supported. We believe it was necessary and professionally done. There were cases where promotions resulted in lower salaries. Those issues have now been fixed," said the Minister.

Rijkenberg outlined the country's progress in controlling its public wage bill over the past decade. He said seven years ago, Eswatini's wage bill accounted for 42 per cent of total government spending, one of the highest ratios in the world at the time.

Through a series of fiscal measures and tighter controls, the ratio was brought down to 32 per cent.

"The review now takes us back to around 36 per cent. We are not going all the way back to 42 per cent, but we recognise that this will put pressure on next year's budget," Rijkenberg said.

The minister said the government aims to gradually reduce the ratio to 25 per cent in the coming years through strict budget management and a review of the civil service structure.

The total wage bill is expected to rise from E800 million to approximately E1 billion following the adjustments.

"This year's budget will be affected. We are going to have an over-expenditure on the wage bill front, so we are identifying areas where cuts can be made to accommodate the salary review," he said.

He added that government spending for the current financial year stands at about E32.6 billion, with projections for next year's expenditure ranging between E2.5 and E3 billion.

"The bulk of that will now be utilised for the salary review exercise, meaning there will not be much left for other programmes. However, it was a long-overdue review, and we must now focus on making it affordable going forward," he said.

The minister further said Treasury had experienced several logistical challenges in preparing the payroll for the new salary structure, but payments were still expected to proceed as planned.

"Even though there have been difficulties, we believe we'll get the job done by Monday," he said.

Rijkenberg added that next year would be tougher for fiscal management as the new wage bill becomes permanent.

"Next year's budget will face pressure because of the salary review exercise. It means we cannot expand the capital budget or increase allocations for other projects as we had planned," he said.

► Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg.

Wage bill rises to 36% of govt expenditure after salary review

... Minister urges civil servants to live within their means



Despite these constraints, he maintained that the government would not need to borrow additional funds to meet salary obligations.

"It just means that next year, we will have to work within the existing budget framework," he said.

Rijkenberg also appealed to civil servants to use the salary increase to improve their financial well-being rather than increase personal debt. He noted that many public employees were heavily indebted to lenders and informal creditors, leaving them with limited disposable income.

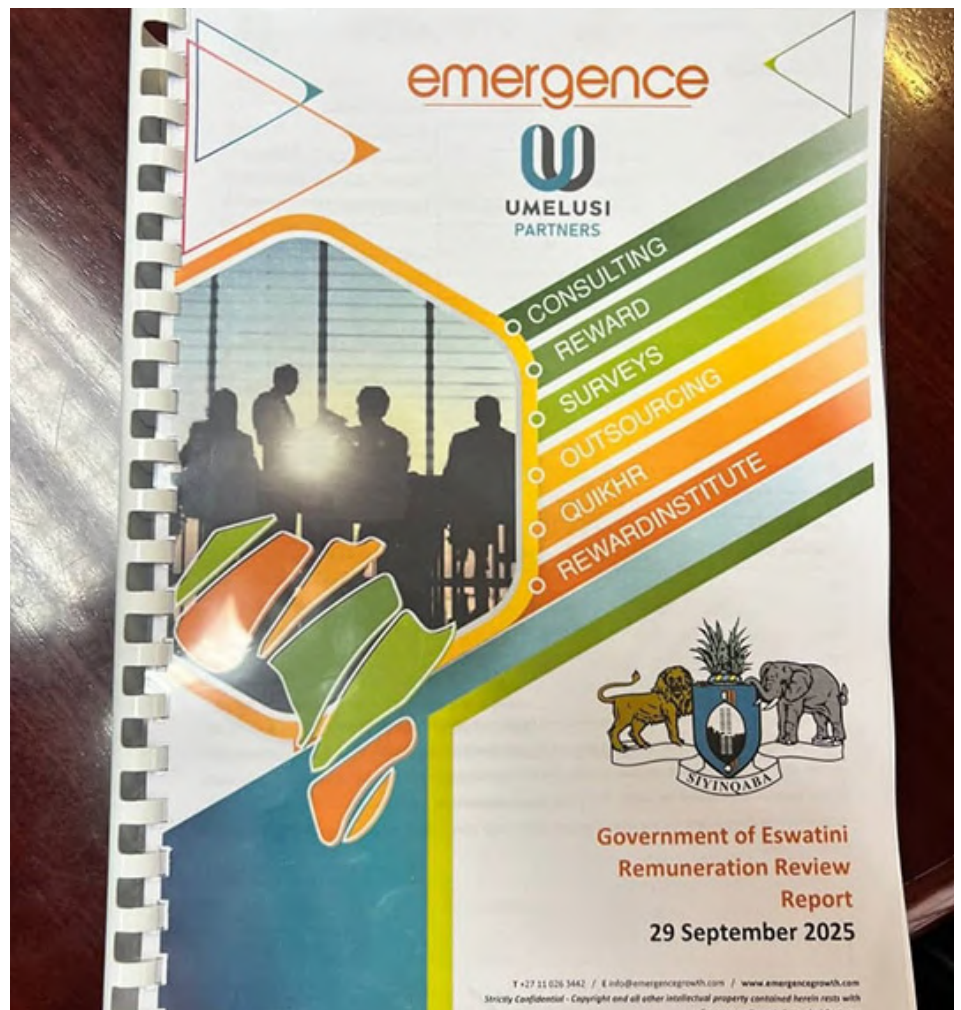
"Some civil servants receive very little at month-end because they are so indebted to different places. Now that salaries have increased by more than 20 per cent for most employees, it is an ideal time to reset spending patterns and debt structures," he said.

He advised that loan repayments should not exceed one-third of a person's total income.

"Try to ensure that the loans you take do not eat up more than 33 per cent of your total income, and leave at least two-thirds for living expenses," he said.

The minister said the salary review was designed not only to raise pay but also to correct longstanding inconsistencies in the remuneration system.

"It was needed to make sure civil servants are properly compensated and motivated to deliver public services," he said.



▲ Government faces E1.6 billion bill for salary review.

He emphasised that the government's next focus will be to sustain the wage bill at manageable levels while maintaining service delivery.

"We must continue reviewing the civil service structure to bring it in line with the norm. We want to ensure we are delivering quality services to the nation, paying people what is due, and maintaining fiscal balance,"

he said.

Rijkenberg concluded by assuring that the government remains committed to fiscal discipline despite the short-term pressure caused by the salary review.

"Things will be tight, but we are confident that we will make it through and be able to afford what we need to afford next year," he said.

FRENCH oil major TotalEnergies said it, along with its project partners, had lifted force majeure on their \$20 billion Mozambique LNG project, four years after an Islamist militant attack brought construction to a halt.

Notice was sent to the Mozambican government via letter on Friday, a TotalEnergies press officer said.

The company said, however, the project would only be relaunched once the government had approved an updated budget and schedule.

“Before fully relaunching the project, Mozambique’s council of ministers needs to approve an addendum to the plan of development,” the company said.

TotalEnergies, the project’s operator and leading shareholder, forecasts the 13 million metric-ton-per-year project will come online in 2029, around five years later than initially expected.

Costs rise by at least \$4 billion?

Costs related to security and the four-year halt had added at least \$4 billion to the project’s stated \$20 billion price tag, Indian shareholder Bharat Petroleum said last year.

Shareholders have been in negotiations with the Mozambique government to decide how the additional costs should be split.

Contracts have been agreed to sell nearly 90% of the project’s future output, TotalEnergies has said, with long-term buyers including China’s CNOOC, France’s

TotalEnergies lifts force majeure on Moz LNG project



▲ A general view of a logo at the TotalEnergies fuelling station in the La Defense business district in Paris, France.

EDF, and British major Shell. A portion of the gas is reserved for Mozambique’s state energy company ENH.

Major discoveries of offshore gas lured investors to Mozambique - where companies including Italy’s ENI and U.S. major ExxonMobil also have stakes - but the

project’s resumption will focus attention on whether Mozambique can provide the political stability and security needed to exploit those reserves.

The project, known as Mozambique LNG, is 40% complete. Remaining works will take place in “containment mode”, with workers

allowed in by air or sea only for security reasons, TotalEnergies told a September 29 Investor Day. Mozambique LNG is owned by TotalEnergies (26.5%), Japan’s Mitsui (20%), ENH (15%), Bharat Petroleum (10%), Oil India (10%), ONGC Videsh (10%), and Thailand’s PTTEP (8.5%). (Reuters)

Trump strikes deals on trade, critical minerals in Southeast Asia



▲ Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Thailand’s Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Cambodia’s Prime Minister Hun Manet look on as U.S. President Donald Trump speaks ahead of the signing of a ceasefire deal between Cambodia and Thailand on the sidelines of the 47th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

THE United States signed a flurry of deals on trade and critical minerals with four Southeast Asian partners on Sunday, looking to address trade imbalances and diversify supply chains amid tighter export curbs on rare earths by China.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who is in Kuala Lumpur to attend a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, signed reciprocal trade deals with his Malaysian and Cambodian counterparts, as well as a framework trade pact with Thailand that will see the countries work to address tariff and non-tariff barriers.

The United States would maintain a tariff rate of 19 per cent on exports from all three countries under the deals, with the levy to be reduced to zero for some goods, according to joint statements released by the White

House. Washington also announced a similar framework deal with Vietnam, which has been levied with a tariff rate of 20 per cent on its exports to the United States.

Vietnam, which recorded a trade surplus of \$123 billion with the United States last year, has pledged to vastly boost its purchases of U.S. products to reduce the trade gap between the two countries.

Malaysia not banning rare earths exports to U.S.

Trump on Sunday inked two separate U.S. deals with Thailand and Malaysia seeking cooperation to diversify critical minerals supply chains, amid competing efforts from Beijing in the rapidly growing sector.

Reuters reported exclusively this month that China was in talks with Kuala Lumpur on rare earths processing, with Malaysian sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional

expected to partner with a Chinese firm to build a refinery in Malaysia.

China, the world’s top miner and processor of rare earths, has imposed increasingly stringent export controls on its refining technology, sending global manufacturers scrambling to secure alternative supplies for critical minerals used widely in semiconductor chips, electric vehicles and military equipment.

Malaysia agreed on Sunday to refrain from banning or imposing quotas on exports to the U.S. of critical minerals or rare earth elements, the countries said in a statement.

The statement however did not specify whether Malaysia’s pledge applied to raw or processed rare earths. Malaysia, which has an estimated 16.1 million tonnes of rare earth deposits, has banned the export of raw rare earths to prevent the loss of resources as it looks to develop its downstream sector.

Eliminating tariff barriers

The agreements were inked after Trump oversaw the signing of an enhanced ceasefire agreement between Thailand and Cambodia, following deadly border clashes between the neighbours earlier this year.

Under the deals, the four Southeast Asian countries pledged to remove trade barriers and provide preferential market access to various U.S. goods.

The deals also include commitments in digital trade, services and investments as well as promises by the Southeast Asian countries to protect labour rights and strengthen environmental protections.

Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam further agreed to accept vehicles built to U.S. motor vehicle safety and emissions standards, according to the statements.

Malaysia, a majority Muslim country recognised as a global leader in halal certification, agreed to streamline requirements for U.S. products such as cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

Its trade minister Tengku Zafrul Aziz told reporters that Malaysia had also secured tariff exemptions for aerospace equipment and pharmaceutical products as well as commodities such as palm oil, cacao and rubber.

Thailand said it would eliminate tariff barriers on approximately 99 per cent of goods, and relax foreign ownership restrictions for U.S. investment in its telecommunications sector, both countries said in a statement.

They also took note of several forthcoming commercial deals between Thai and U.S. companies, including the purchases of agriculture products such as feed corn and soybean meal worth an estimated \$2.6 billion per year.

Thailand has also committed to purchases of 80 U.S. aircraft totalling \$18.8 billion and energy goods including liquefied natural gas and crude oil of around \$5.4 billion annually, the statement said. (Reuters)

Sudan's RSF says it captured al-Fashir army headquarters

SUDAN'S paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said on Sunday they had captured the army headquarters in the city of al-Fashir, the Sudanese army's last stronghold in the Darfur region in the west of the country.

Two videos shared by the RSF showed its soldiers cheering in front of signs for the army's Sixth Infantry base. Reuters was able to verify the location but not the date. The army did not immediately give a statement on its current position.

Capture of al-Fashir would be a significant victory for the RSF that could hasten a physical split of the country, by enabling the paramilitary group to consolidate its control over the vast Darfur region, which it has claimed as the base for a parallel government established this summer.

It comes after the RSF on Saturday captured the city of Bara in North Kordofan, the state that forms a barrier between Darfur and the Sudanese capital and the army-controlled eastern half of the country.

RSF BESIEGED CITY FOR 18 MONTHS

The RSF had besieged the city, capital of North Darfur state, for the past 18 months as it fights the army and allied former rebels and local fighters.

It has targeted civilians in frequent drone and artillery strikes, while the siege has led to starvation among the 250,000 people who remain in the west of the city.

Some activists have long warned that an RSF takeover of the city would lead to ethnic revenge attacks, as seen after the capture of

the Zamzam camp for displaced people to the south.

Reuters was unable to reach residents of al-Fashir, who rely on Starlink terminals to access the internet given a long-term telecom blackout.

UN-MANDATED MISSION SAYS RSF COMMITS CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Last week, the RSF said it was facilitating the exit of civilians and surrendered fighters from al-Fashir, but those who have left have reported robberies, kidnappings, sexual assaults and killings by RSF soldiers on the road.

In a video posted by a senior official in the RSF-led Tasis government, RSF soldiers say they are protecting a long convoy of mostly men leaving al-Fashir, who they say are mainly soldiers. Reuters was not immediately able to verify the date or location of the footage.

A U.N.-mandated mission said last month the RSF had committed multiple crimes against humanity in the al-Fashir siege. The army has also been accused of war crimes.

The al-Fashir Resistance Committees, a local activist group, said in a statement the fight for the city was ongoing, blaming the army leadership for leaving the fighters in the city to fight on their own.

Drone footage shared by the RSF, from which Reuters verified the location as being over the western side of al-Fashir, showed cars and individuals on foot leaving the city. It was unclear whether these were civilians or soldiers. Footage seen on social media that Reuters was unable to verify showed



▲ The Sudanese Army General Command building bears traces of artillery shelling in Khartoum, Sudan.

scores of alleged fighters in RSF custody.

WAR DISPLACES MILLIONS AND LEADS TO HUNGER

The war between the Sudanese army and the RSF began in April 2023, when the two forces, previously sharing power, fell out over plans to integrate their forces during a transition towards democracy.

The fighting has displaced millions, plunged half of Sudan into hunger, and

spread disease throughout the country.

Over the weekend, the United States convened Emirati, Egyptian and Saudi Arabian officials to discuss a possible peace plan.

Sudan's foreign ministry said officials were in Washington for bilateral talks. However, the army-led Sovereign Council denied reports that representatives of both forces were engaging in indirect talks.

(Reuters)

Ivory Coast votes with 83-year-old Ouattara's legacy in focus

IVORY Coast voted in a presidential election that unfolded on Saturday without major disruption, with incumbent and strong favourite Alassane Ouattara, 83, claiming credit for nearly 15 years of economic growth and relative stability while hinting it will be his final campaign.

Turnout appeared weak at many polling stations in Abidjan, the commercial capital. In more than a dozen opposition strongholds outside Abidjan, voting was impeded by protesters blocking roads and burning or stealing election materials, according to a team of observers from the national human rights council.

The army said 30 polling stations in the centre-west region of Haut Sassandra were vandalised, but 97% were secure.

More than 8 million people were registered to vote. Polling stations were due to close at 6 p.m. local time (1800 GMT), and counting began right away in the Abidjan districts of Abidjame, Cocody and Yopougon, according to Reuters witnesses.

Provisional results are expected within five days. A runoff will be held if no candidate wins more than 50% of the vote.

A former international banker and deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Ouattara took power in 2011 after a four-month civil war that killed around 3,000 people. The war was triggered by the refusal of his predecessor, Laurent Gbagbo, to acknowledge defeat in the 2010 election.

SUCCESSION IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Gbagbo and Tidjane Thiam, former CEO of Credit Suisse, were deemed ineligible to



▲ Simone Ehivet Gbagbo of the Movement of Skilled Generations (MGC) votes during the presidential election at a polling station inside a school in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

run this year, and the remaining opposition candidates lack the backing of a major political party, making Ouattara the clear favourite.

Announcing his candidacy in July, Ouattara said a fourth term would be one of "generational transmission". This week he acknowledged that "it's not easy to work at the same pace" now that he is in his 80s.

Ivory Coast's median age is 18.

As polling stations opened at 0800 GMT in the Adjame district of Abidjan, even Ouattara's supporters said he should be nearing the end of his career.

"He has really changed the image of Ivory Coast, but this should be his last mandate.

We need to pass the torch to the new generation," said Souamane Cisse, a 44-year-old driver.

Schoolteacher Fatou Fofana, 48, also said it was time for younger leadership, provided the transition is peaceful. There is no clear choice for a successor in the ruling party.

"It needs to come at the right time," Fofana said.

na said. "We need security."

Ouattara voted at a high school in Cocody, arriving with his wife and supporters who shouted that he would deliver a "knockout blow" in the first round.

In brief remarks, Ouattara told journalists that "peace has returned" and that the election was proceeding smoothly.

Ouattara's highest-profile challenger, former first lady Simone Gbagbo, also cast her ballot in Cocody.

"I cannot speak of numbers but I can give you the trends, and the trends point to my victory," she said, adding that she hoped the country would remain at peace.

YOUNG IVORIANS VOICE SCEPTICISM

Ivory Coast, the world's biggest cocoa producer, is among the fastest-growing economies in the region. Its international bonds are some of the best performing in Africa.

Ouattara has tried to diversify economic output, with mining a focus, as well as investment in schools and road infrastructure to attract more private investment.

Not everyone is impressed.

Alfred N'zi, 36, voting in the Abidjan suburb of Bingerville, told Reuters he has been unemployed since he lost his job at the port three years ago.

"I didn't want to vote at first, but I came to vote for change. I want things to change," he said, declining to specify which opposition candidate he would back.

Landry Ka, a 22-year-old student, said young Ivorians were "tired of seeing old people making decisions for us, the younger generation."

(Reuters)

A DEAL to forge Europe’s answer to Elon Musk’s Starlink was reached on Thursday as the continent’s top space firms agreed to combine their satellite manufacturing and services businesses. Marking the most ambitious tie-up of European aerospace assets since the creation of missiles maker MBDA in 2001, Airbus (and Thales of France and Italy’s Leonardo will create a Toulouse-based venture to begin operations in 2027.

French Finance Minister Roland Lescure said the preliminary deal would “strengthen European sovereignty in a context of intense global competition”.

Italy’s Industry Minister Adolfo Urso said it supported the growth of European champions to compete globally.

VENTURE FACES GLOBAL COMPETITION

Code-named “Project Bromo”, talks between the three groups started last year.

Europe’s top satellite makers have long competed to build complex spacecraft in geostationary orbit but have been hit by the arrival of cheap, tiny satellites in low Earth orbit, notably the Starlink network built by Musk’s SpaceX.

Thales CFO Pascal Bouchiat, announcing quarterly sales that

included an initial contract for IRIS², Europe’s planned secure satellite network, hailed the new venture but warned on the competition ahead.

“This first development contract for IRIS² doesn’t take away the challenges that the European industry, in particular, is facing,” he told reporters.

The new combination will employ 25,000 people with revenue of 6.5 billion euros (\$7.58 billion), based on 2024 figures.

It is expected to generate “mid-triple digit” millions of euros of synergies starting after five years, the companies said.

Shares in Leonardo rose almost 2% while

Europe takes aim at Musk’s Starlink with new satellite champion

Airbus and Thales were up less than 1% in afternoon trading.

“The initiative is certainly positive, as it creates a European leader capable of competing globally and improves the profitability of a business ... that has struggled in recent years,” analysts at Italian investment bank Equita said in a note.

Shareholders now face up to two years of talks with governments, unions and the European Commission over the deal, which has implications for activities in Britain and Germany as well as Italy and France.

Italian unions requested more information and said the deal should help the country’s sector compete internationally.

Airbus and Thales have cut a combined 3,000 jobs following space losses. The three new partners made no mention of further cuts, but executives said the focus would now turn towards potential growth.

BALANCING PAYMENTS

The deal will combine activities of Thales Alenia Space and Telespazio - two joint ventures between Leonardo and Thales - as well as various Airbus space and digital businesses, the remaining space activities owned by Leonardo and Thales SESO.

Airbus will hold 35%, and Thales and Leonardo 32.5% each, the companies said.

Sources familiar with the deal said there would be balancing payments to reflect the value of the assets being contributed, with Airbus receiving some compensation, depending on how well the various activities are doing when the deal closes in 2027.

Previous attempts to combine have hit anti-trust hurdles.

“We expect, and will be vigilant, that the



▲ A drone view shows tents used by displaced Palestinians amid destroyed buildings, following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the area, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, in Gaza City.

synergies created from efficiencies benefit us as a key customer of the new company,” said French satellite operator Eutelsat (ETL. PA), opens new tab.

The deal could face objections from smaller German satellite maker OHB (OHBG.DE), opens new tab, which a French parliamentary committee has said could end up acquiring some of the newly combined assets.

OHB did not reply to a request for comment.

Agreement between the three companies

- each of which has had periods of prickly relations in the past - was salvaged after sources familiar with the matter said the talks had hit obstacles over governance and valuation during the summer.

The companies gave few details regarding governance but executives pledged to avoid a system of rotating leadership or making appointments based on nationalities, approaches which have roiled the European aerospace industry, especially Airbus, in the past. (Reuters)

Europe’s new space merger explores the FOMO frontier



▲ Engineers perform checks on Europe’s new MTG-I1 satellite designed to improve weather forecasting at the Thales Alenia Space plant in Cannes, France

DRIVEN to the brink by Elon Musk’s SpaceX, Europe’s biggest satellite firms are setting aside longtime rivalries in a do-or-die \$7 billion merger that some insiders are already calling Project FOMO.

A riff on Project Bromo, the code name for talks that led to Thursday’s deal between Airbus, Thales and Leonardo, their fear of missing out reflects a market dominated by SpaceX and its Starlink array as well as new

mega-constellations in China.

“This kind of merger of the three biggest European space companies would have been unthinkable 10 years ago, but competition between Airbus and Thales is much less significant than competition between Europe, U.S. and China,” said Caleb Henry, research director at advisory firm Quilty Space.

AIRBUS, THALES, LEONARDO COMBINE SATELLITE ACTIVITIES TO COMPETE GLOBALLY

The merger unites two joint ventures be-

tween Thales and Leonardo - Thales Alenia Space and Telespazio - with Airbus’ satellite business as well as various smaller activities.

Airbus and Thales had tentatively explored co-operation in the past but received discouraging signals from the European Commission and political and industrial appetite for a deal was less pressing, two people involved in those talks said.

Since the last attempt more than five years ago, they have watched Europe’s traditional market for geostationary satellites cut in half, as cheaper satellites flood low Earth orbit.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and a security rift with the United States accelerated Europe’s drive to support such sensitive assets as satellites, which increasingly overlap with defence.

A tipping point came with mounting losses on cutting-edge, reprogrammable satellites such as the Airbus OneSat programme.

Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury, tasked by the board with reforming defence and space strategy, sounded internal alarms in early 2024, telling staff that the losses were unacceptable.

By mid-2024, Airbus was hit by spiralling charges mainly related to OneSat and Thales was grappling with overcapacity, pushing them into landmark talks first reported by La Tribune.

NEGOTIATIONS ON VALUATIONS STILL PAINFUL

One person with direct knowledge of the decision, asking not to be named, said Airbus and two satellite ventures jointly owned by Thales and Leonardo seized the moment “to say we are suffering and have to compete globally, not against each other”.

Another person involved in the talks said

there had been “an overriding consensus that this is badly needed, for everybody”.

The pragmatic agenda helped to contain political tensions that often go hand in hand with European aerospace, but that did not prevent painful negotiations on valuations, sources said.

“For once logic prevailed; it was get on with it or die,” a separate person close to the talks told Reuters.

By contrast, Europe’s fragmented defence industry is struggling to coordinate a response to growing threats.

And Europe’s space launch sector is growing further apart with Italy peeling off from Arianespace, a partly Airbus-owned operator of Ariane rockets. The integration of Musk’s rockets, satellites and Starlink services is credited with driving down costs but Europe’s new combination does not include launchers.

Some analysts say the collaboration will fail to reverse the impact of years of prevarication that have left Europe ill-placed to compete, just as it embarks on the challenging task of building Europe’s new secure satellite network, IRIS².

“I believe it comes far too late. The company will be tied up with consolidation for at least the next two years: the same period during which it is expected to design IRIS²,” said satellite consultant Christian von der Ropp.

GERMANY’S OHB SIGNALS REGULATORY BATTLE

The head of smaller German satellite maker OHB (OHBG.DE), opens new tab meanwhile fired the first shot in a potential regulatory battle on Friday, telling Boersen-Zeitung: “This is a threat to us”.

(Reuters)

Netanyahu says Israel will decide acceptable foreign Gaza troops

PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday Israel would determine which foreign forces it would allow as part of a planned international force in Gaza to help secure a fragile ceasefire under U.S. President Donald Trump's plan.

It remains unclear whether Arab and other states will be ready to commit troops, in part given the refusal of Palestinian Hamas militants to disarm as called for by the plan, while Israel has voiced concerns about the make-up of the force.

While the Trump administration has ruled out sending U.S. soldiers into the Gaza Strip, it has been speaking to Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Qatar, Turkey and Azerbaijan to contribute to the multinational force.

"We are in control of our security, and we have also made it clear regarding international forces that Israel will determine which forces are unacceptable to us, and this is how we operate and will continue to operate," Netanyahu said.

"This is, of course, acceptable to the United States as well, as its most senior representatives have expressed in recent days," he told a session of his cabinet.

Israel, which besieged Gaza for two years to back up its air and ground war in the enclave against Hamas after the Palestinian militant group's cross-border attack on October 7, 2023, continues to control all access to the territory.

ISRAEL OPPOSED TO TURKISH ROLE IN GAZA FORCE

Last week Netanyahu hinted that he would be opposed to any role for Turkish security forces in Gaza. Once-warm Turkish-Israeli relations soured drastically during the Gaza



▲ A drone view shows tents used by displaced Palestinians amid destroyed buildings, following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the area, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, in Gaza City.

war, with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan lambasting Israel's devastating air and ground campaign in the small Palestinian enclave.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, on a visit to Israel aimed at shoring up the truce, said on Friday the international force would have to be made up of "countries that Israel's comfortable with". He made no comment on Turkish involvement.

Rubio added that Gaza's future governance still needed to be worked out among Israel and partner nations but could not include Hamas.

Rubio later said U.S. officials were receiving input on a possible U.N. resolution or international agreement to authorise the multinational force in Gaza and would discuss the issue in Qatar, a key Gulf mediator on Gaza, on Sunday.

A major challenge to Trump's plan is that Hamas has balked at disarming. Since the ceasefire took hold two weeks ago as the first stage of Trump's 20-point plan, Hamas has waged a violent crackdown on clans that have tested its grip on power.

ISRAEL SAYS HAMAS KNOWS WHERE HOSTAGE REMAINS ARE

At the same time, the remains of 13 deceased hostages remain in Gaza with Hamas citing obstacles to locating them in the pervasive rubble left by the fighting.

An Israeli government spokesperson said on Sunday Hamas, which released the remaining 20 living hostages it took in its October 2023 assault, knew where the bodies were.

"Israel is aware that Hamas knows where our deceased hostages are, in fact, located. If Hamas made more of an effort, they would be able to retrieve the remains of our hostages," the spokesperson said.

Israel had, however, allowed the entry of an Egyptian technical team to work with the Red Cross to locate the bodies. She said the team would use excavator machines and trucks for the search beyond the so-called yellow line in Gaza behind which Israeli troops have initially pulled back under Trump's plan.

Netanyahu began the cabinet session by stressing Israel was an independent country, rejecting the notion that "the American administration controls me and dictates Israel's security policy." Israel and the U.S., he said, are a "partnership."

Diplomats and analysts say Trump managed to push Netanyahu, who had long rejected global pressure for a ceasefire in Gaza, to accept his framework for a broader peace deal and also forced Netanyahu to call Qatar's leader to apologise after a failed bombing raid targeting Hamas negotiators in that country.

Trump also persuaded Arab states to convince Hamas to return all the Israeli hostages, its key leverage in the war. (Reuters)

Suspects in Louvre jewel heist arrested near Paris

SUSPECTS have been arrested over the brazen jewellery heist at the Louvre, just as one of them was about to fly out of France, the Paris prosecutor said on Sunday.

Two men in their 30s and originally from the capital's Seine-Saint-Denis suburb - which includes some of the country's most deprived areas - were detained on Saturday evening, according to Le Parisien newspaper, which first broke the story.

They were known to French police and one of the suspects was about to fly to Algeria from Charles de Gaulle airport, the newspaper said.

There was no indication on Sunday that any of France's stolen crown jewels had been recovered.

PROSECUTOR ANGERED BY LEAK

Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuau did not say how many people were arrested or give any more details about them. In a statement, she deplored the fact that information about their arrest was leaked.

"This revelation can only hinder the investigative efforts of the 100 or so mobilised investigators, both in the search for the stolen jewellery and for all the perpetrators. It is too early to provide any specific details," Beccuau said.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez, under public pressure to deliver results a week to the day after the robbery, congratulated investigators in a tweet, but gave no more detail.

Four hooded thieves made off with eight

precious pieces worth an estimated \$102 million from the Louvre's collection on October 19, exposing security lapses at the world's most-visited museum.

They broke in using a crane to smash an upstairs window during opening hours and escaped on motorbikes.

News of the robbery reverberated around the world, prompting soul-searching in France over what some regarded as a national humiliation.

The stolen treasures included a tiara and an earring from the jewellery of Queen Marie-Amélie and Queen Hortense from the early 19th century.

The crown of Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon III, was found damaged outside the museum. The thieves apparently dropped the piece, made of gold, emeralds and diamonds, as they made their getaway.

Built in the late 12th century, the Louvre Palace used to be the official residence of the kings of France, until Louis XIV abandoned it for Versailles. It was turned into a museum for the royal art collection in 1793, four years after the French Revolution.

Its huge collection of masterpieces, including the Mona Lisa and the Venus de Milo statue, brought in 8.7 million visitors, opens new tab last year.

(Reuters)



▲ The Louvre robbery in broad daylight was unexpected.

Eswatini
Daily News

Lifestyle & entertainment :

Daliwonga shuts down Spring Bash

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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THE spring air at IF's Lounge was heavy with groove, rhythm, and a contagious spirit of celebration on Saturday night, as South African Amapiano powerhouse Daliwonga headlined the long-awaited Spring Bash, delivering a performance that fans will talk about for months to come.

From the moment the first beat dropped, it was clear that this was no ordinary night out, it was a full-blown musical experience that threaded together Eswatini's vibrant talent and South Africa's global Amapiano flair under one ecstatic roof.

The evening's festivities began with Obsession, who took to the stage at around 9 pm with a three-step set that immediately lured early attendees to the dance floor. However, midway through his set, the sound system suffered a brief technical hiccup, forcing an unplanned pause.

But true to his name and passion, Obsession returned to the decks an hour later, refusing to let the glitch steal the night's energy. His resilience was rewarded as the crowd cheered him on, vibing to a smooth recovery that reminded everyone why live music is all about the moment, imperfect, unpredictable, and magical. By 11 pm, gospel music took over the atmosphere as Linda Dlamini graced the stage with "Esandleni." The sudden switch from party tunes to praise anthems created a refreshing moment of unity; fun-loving fans raised their voices in powerful harmony, echoing the lyrics word for word.

Linda continued to captivate the audience with "Phathi Gama LikaJesu" and "Imimoya", transforming the venue into a temporary church of joy. It was a moment of reflection, proof that gospel has a rightful seat at the table of entertainment, and that spirituality and rhythm can coexist beautifully under neon lights. Then came the moment everyone had been waiting for. At the stroke of midnight, Daliwonga emerged to thunderous cheers and flashing phone cameras. Dressed sharply and smiling with that effortless confidence that only a star can wear, he kicked off his set with "Hawayu", sending the crowd into a collective scream of recognition.

Phones lit up the venue like stars in a digital sky as he transitioned into "Kunkra", followed by "Abo Mvelo," and just like that, the dance floor turned into a living, breathing organism, moving in sync with every piano chord and bassline drop. When he performed "Dipatje Taa Felo", chaos erupted, in the best way possible. People jumped, whistled, and shouted lyrics at the top of their lungs. IF's Lounge became a musical volcano ready to erupt. The track's deep bass and infectious hook proved, once again, why Daliwonga remains one of Amapiano's most magnetic performers.

He wasn't done yet. "Izolo" followed, and if the crowd hadn't already lost their voices, this was the final blow. Couples swayed, friends hugged, and strangers



▲ Amapiano star Daliwonga performing at the IF's Lounge's Spring bash.

danced together, united by rhythm. And just when everyone thought he had emptied his bag of hits, Daliwonga flipped the script and surprised fans with "Gangnam Style". It was a playful curveball that showed off his versatility and stage charm. "What a catalogue. What an artist," murmured one fan near the front, still gasping for breath after the frenzy. Indeed, Daliwonga didn't just perform, he conquered.

Once Daliwonga's set came to a close, Eswatini's very own DJ Bandora took over, ensuring that the energy never dropped an inch. His well-curated Hip-Hop set reminded everyone of his star quality and his deep understanding of crowd dynamics. Every transition was sharp, every drop intentional, and every track well-chosen. He played with tempo, flirted with nostalgia, and kept heads nodding throughout, proving that Eswatini's DJs can stand toe-to-toe with any international act.

Next up was Young Zesh, who stepped on stage at around 12:45 am and immediately shifted the mood with a heartfelt cappella intro. His voice, unfiltered and raw, pierced through the buzz of the night like a warm sunrise after a storm. He performed "Sivumeleni", followed by "Senibeketele", which had the audience softly singing along. When he called Lesia Musiq to the stage for their collaboration "Ikhalenda", the chemistry between the two artists was undeniable. It was artistry in motion, a beautiful exchange between rising talents. He closed off his set with "KaKhoza", his signature anthem, sealing his place as one of Eswatini's most promising performers.

Zee the DJ then turned up the tempo with a sizzling Amapiano set, fusing smooth transitions with infectious drops. Her ability to read the room and feed off the audience's energy showed experience beyond her years. From vibey instrumentals to soulful vocal-infused piano hits, Zee kept the night alive and moving. At 1:50 am, South African Kwaito legend Thebe took the stage, and the atmosphere shifted from digital beats to old-school rhythm. It was time for the grown



▲ South African music legend Thebe rendering his Kwaito set on stage.

folks to relive their glory days, and Thebe delivered with veteran precision.

He opened with "Groovers' Prayer", sending waves of nostalgia across the venue. As he moved into "Ungawa Kum", fans who grew up in the Kwaito era sang and danced like teenagers again. He followed up with "Bula Boot", "Nomathemba", and the ever-funky "Monate Mpolaye", reminding everyone that true classics never die. His performance was more than music; it was a time capsule, a reminder of when rhythm was raw, lyrics were playful, and performance was driven by soul.

By the time the lights dimmed and the last beat faded, one thing was certain, Spring Bash 2025 had delivered beyond expectation.



▲ Eswatini artist Young Zesh enticing fun lovers.

From gospel and hip-hop to amapiano and kwaito, the event was a melting pot of genres and generations, tied together by one unshakable love: music.

Daliwonga's headlining act stood out as the crown jewel of the night, polished, explosive, and full of character. His effortless blend of vocals and stage charisma proved why he's one of South Africa's most bankable performers.

Despite the early technical hiccups, every act from Obsession's determination to Thebe's nostalgic finish, contributed to an unforgettable evening that celebrated both the present and the past of Southern African music. Spring had officially sprung, and IF's Lounge was its heartbeat.

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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THE Hub City was transformed into a colourful playground of laughter, rhythm, and nostalgia this past Saturday as the Annual Manzini Club Lion Family Fun Day once again lived up to its reputation as one of the country's most vibrant social events.

Held on Saturday at Manzini Club from morning till late, the event was a spectacular blend of music, culture, family, and fun, wrapped beautifully in a 1960s-inspired theme that transported attendees into an era of bold fashion, soulful music, and unfiltered joy.

From the very first hour, the Manzini Club grounds buzzed with life. The air was filled with the giggles of children, the chatter of parents, and the sound of music weaving through the venue like an invisible string tying everyone together.

The Family Fun Day, now a staple in Eswatini's social calendar, was designed with children at heart. From horse riding to jumping castles, face painting, and interactive games, kids enjoyed an unforgettable day under the Eswatini sun. The atmosphere was one of pure excitement, families picnicked on the grass, old friends reconnected over braai smoke, and strangers bonded over shared laughter.

While the Family Fun Day catered perfectly to kids, it did not leave the adults behind. The stage came alive with a star-studded lineup that blended the new and the legendary, a true musical journey across decades and genres.

At the heart of the entertainment stood none other than legendary Kwaito group, Trompies, clad in a retro-inspired outfit that nodded to the 1960s theme. They brought charisma, energy, and professionalism that reminded everyone why they remain international icons.

The iconic kwaito ensemble, synonymous with South Africa's golden era of dance music, sent waves of nostalgia through the crowd. From "Sweetie Lavo" to "Magasman", every beat was a reminder of why Trompies'

Manzini Lion Club Family Fun Day roars to life



sound still moves hearts decades later. Their synchronised moves and unmistakable stage presence brought back the essence of the old-school township groove, fun, fearless, and full of character.

The lineup didn't stop there. A diverse mix of local and regional acts took turns lighting up the stage. Tilungu, Wicked, Brandon, M'du, Ntombs, Wassabee, Kelly ItsAllBlaq, Itallo, and Crooks each brought a unique flavour, ensuring the event catered to every musical palate. From Afro-soul and deep house to kwaito and Amapiano, the performances showcased Eswatini's growing artistic diversity. The energy was contagious, people of all ages found their rhythm, whether dancing barefoot on the grass or swaying near the food stalls with plates of sizzling local cuisine in hand.



▲ A section of kids with family members playing together.

Mount Zion Experience inspires spiritual renewal

THE Mount Zion Experience once again proved to be a powerful beacon of faith and unity, drawing gospel lovers from diverse communities into a shared night of worship and spiritual renewal.

Held on October 24, 2025, at the Metropolitan Evangelical Church, this annual event lived up to its reputation as a transformative evening where music, prayer, and fellowship converged to uplift hearts and souls. From the moment the doors opened at 7 pm, the church was filled with an atmosphere charged with anticipation and reverence.

The theme for the night, 'All White, All Night,' was more than a dress code; it symbolised purity, unity, and spiritual awakening. Attendees embraced the theme wholeheartedly, their white garments creating a stunning visual tapestry that enhanced the sacred ambience of the evening.

The program featured a rich tapestry of worship experiences, including tra-

ditional hymns, contemporary gospel songs, and soul-stirring performances by beloved artists. The event's lineup featured acts including Takie Ndou, Sphiwo Ndoni, Shekinah Motsa, Mzayoni, Zamar Mabuza, and Simiso Simelane, among others. The blend of music styles honoured both the heritage and the evolving expressions of gospel music, making the event accessible and inspiring for believers of all ages and backgrounds.

Pastors and spiritual leaders took turns guiding the congregation through moments of heartfelt prayer and reflection, encouraging attendees to deepen their faith and connection with God. The sense of community was palpable, as strangers became family united by their shared devotion and the collective experience of worship.

Sphiwo Ndoni, the director of the Mount Zion Experience, expressed heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the event's success. "Speechless! We give God all the glory and

honour. Thank you fam for your amazing love and support. Thank you to our beautiful Mount Zion Experience Team, Band, BVs, Marketing Team, Organising Team, The Beloved artists, Pastors, Sponsors, and you, our beloved family. You all made this year's experience a great success, your energy, your love. We are amazed. May the good Lord bless you," Ndoni said, capturing the spirit of collaboration and devotion that made the evening memorable.

The event also showcased the power of gospel music and worship to transcend individual differences and bring people together in a celebration of faith. The 'All White Affair' theme, with its emphasis on purity and spiritual enlightenment, helped cultivate an environment where worshippers could focus fully on their spiritual journey and the collective joy of praise.



▲ Sphiwo Ndoni, the director of the Mount Zion Experience during the event.

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SOME nutrients can help boost hair, skin, and nail health. Getting enough quality sleep and other home remedies can also help.

Shiny hair, glowing skin, and strong nails are often seen as external symbols of health. But there's more to it than that.

"You've probably heard it said that the skin is the largest organ in the body. Well, along with skin, the hair and nails are all a part of the integumentary system," says Elizabeth Rimmer, founder and director of London Professional Aesthetics.

She says all three share a common constituent: keratinocytes. "Keratinocytes grow from stem cells and produce and store keratin — a protein that makes our skin, hair, and nails not only tough but also water resistant," Rimmer notes.

Read on to learn more about how to improve hair, skin, and nail health.

Can you boost hair, skin, and nail health with diet?

A 2019 review identified a link between micronutrient deficiencies and cutaneous abnormalities in hair, skin, and nails.

Examples of cutaneous abnormalities include:

- acne
- eczema
- psoriasis
- other skin conditions

In particular, researchers said low intake or low absorption of certain vitamins and minerals may be the culprit.

These vitamins and minerals include:

- B vitamins
- fat-soluble vitamins like A, E, and K
- zinc
- iron
- copper
- selenium
- essential fatty acids

Similarly, a 2017 study concluded that multiple kinds of nutrient deficiencies can result in hair loss.

"Layers of the skin are connected to a huge vascular network, and our hair follicles and roots are also fed by a blood supply we want to be nutrient rich," explains Amir Sadri, M.D., a consultant plastic surgeon at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

These direct connections with the bloodstream mean the skin and hair are often the first place you can visibly see nutrient deficiencies. Sadri says any factors that affect the hair will also affect the nails.

"This is because they're both made from keratin," he explains.

What the diet can and can't do

A healthy diet can improve your skin, hair and nail health. However, the importance of diet shouldn't be overstated, as there will always be other factors at play.

These factors can include:

- genetics
- general health status
- age

However, Rimmer believes there are several ways to support hair, skin, and nail health through your diet.

These include:

eat a varied diet with lots of colors and textures

- increase protein and iron intake
- limit alcohol consumption
- limit sugar consumption
- favor healthy fats over processed and

saturated fats

A balanced diet containing lots of colors and textures is best. She also says increasing your protein and iron intake is key.

"Protein helps with new cell generation and will benefit as an all rounder," she explains.

"Iron is another building block for the integumentary system and it's abundant in red meat. If you are vegetarian or vegan then max out your diet with pulses (beans and lentils) to ensure you're getting your recommended daily amount," Rimmer suggests.

However, it's important not to take an iron supplement without speaking with a health-care professional first. Iron supplements can lead to constipation and, less commonly, iron poisoning.

It is also best to limit certain foods and drinks.

"Drinking too much alcohol and eating highly processed, sugary, and fatty food is not good for your skin, hair, and nails," says Savas Altan, medical aesthetic at Vera Clinic. "Over time, alcohol consumption can cause dry, brittle, breaking hair, and cause excessive hair loss."

Likewise, Altan says excess sugar in the diet can encourage the degradation of collagen and elastin in your skin.

This can prompt a loss of firmness and elasticity long term, causing sagging and wrinkles on the skin.

Does sleep affect your hair, skin, and nail health?

A 2019 study involving forty subjects suggests that there's a potential link between sleep quality and acne.

"While you're sleeping your body is busy recovering," says Rimmer. "Collagen production increases, peaking within the first

few hours of sleep."

That said, a lack of sleep may affect your hair, skin, and nails even more.

"You could argue that the hair, skin, and nails are last in the queue to benefit from lifestyle factors," says Rimmer. "They'll also be the first to deteriorate with sleep deprivation."

Sleep and stress hormones

Sadri adds that a lack of sleep can cause a rise in stress hormone cortisol which interferes with our body's ability to mend itself overnight.

In turn, this can cause brittle nails, skin inflammation, and problems with hair growth.

The general advice is for adults to get at least 7 hours of sleep per night. However, Rimmer says sleep needs can vary from individual to individual, so you may feel you need less or more.

At-home treatments to try

There are many at-home and in-salon solutions you can try to help boost the health of your skin, hair, and nails.

For hair

Rimmer recommends looking for products that contain ketoconazole.

"It's an ingredient in shampoo used to treat fungal infections, but it can also be useful for those with thinning hair," she says. It's "commonly prescribed as a first line supplement to help with thinning hair. There have been studies to demonstrate a thickening of the hair shaft and number of hairs" with its use.

Sadri also recommends looking for products with the following ingredients:

- rosemary oil

- biotin
- vitamin A
- vitamin C
- vitamin E

They keep your scalp healthy and nourish your hair follicles, he says.

It is best to avoid sulfates. These are often found in shampoos and are used to create a lather. According to Rimmer, they can irritate the scalp and negatively impact hair growth.

For skin

"The 'go to' essentials for skin include a facial cleanser used morning and night for a full minute, rinsed away with tepid water, and patted dry with kitchen paper, keeping the skin oil and debris free," says Rimmer.

What products you use will mostly depend on your skin type. However, Rimmer says every skin care routine should include SPF. She says an oil-free SPF should be applied every day regardless of the weather forecast.

Lastly, Rimmer recommends retinol, a derivative of vitamin A, to refine skin texture and improve uneven skin tone.

It is best to avoid oil. Oil is a popular ingredient in skin care products. However, Rimmer believes it may be best avoided if you have breakout-prone skin.

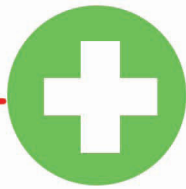
"I know there are lots of celebrities who endorse the use of oil, but for me it's a big no," she says. "In my opinion, it only serves to increase the likelihood of breakouts and problem pigmentation and doesn't serve the health of your skin."

For nails

"The constant exposure to weather and water (not to mention ingredients in soaps and alcohol rubs) leaves cuticles dry and brittle," says Rimmer.

(Healthline)





SEROTONIN sends signals between nerve cells. It may help regulate many body functions, including mood, bowel movements, and sleep. Some medications help boost serotonin levels and improve mood.

Serotonin sends signals between nerve cells. It may help regulate many body functions, including mood, bowel movements, and sleep. Some medications help boost serotonin levels and improve mood.

Serotonin is both a neurotransmitter and a hormone. This chemical is produced by nerve cells and sends signals between them.

Serotonin is found in many parts of the body, including the digestive system, blood platelets, and the central nervous system. It's also thought to regulate mood.

Serotonin is made from the essential amino acid tryptophan. This amino acid enters the body through the food you eat and is commonly found in meat, dairy products, eggs, and nuts.

What does serotonin do?

Serotonin affects every part of you — from your emotions to your motor skills. It helps with sleeping, healing, and digesting. Serotonin is also thought to be a natural mood stabilizer.

Serotonin helps your body to:

- balance your mood and experience pleasure
- heal wounds
- clot blood
- control movement
- More specifically, serotonin intervenes in these functions:

Bowel movements: About 90% of the serotonin in your body is produced in your intestines. It helps control bowel movements and function.

Mood: Serotonin in the brain is believed to regulate feelings, including happiness and anxiety. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are thought to help treat mood disorders by increasing serotonin activity in your brain.

Nausea: Serotonin in your stomach and intestines helps your body feel nausea and start vomiting in response to illness, foods, or other conditions.

Sleep and waking: Neurotransmitters, including serotonin, regulate your ability to stay awake. While you sleep, serotonin is involved in switching between REM and non-REM sleep.

Blood clotting: Platelets in your blood store serotonin. When your body needs to repair damage, platelets release serotonin to help stop bleeding and heal wounds.

Sex drive: Serotonin is involved in controlling the body's sexual functions. This may be why medications that affect serotonin levels are associated with sexual side effects.

Serotonin and mental health

Some medications used to manage mental health conditions work by changing how your brain uses serotonin. Early theories suggested that chronic low serotonin is the main cause of depression. However, recent research now suggests this process is likely more complicated.

Mood disorders like depression may be caused by a combination of factors, including brain changes, life experiences, and health conditions. Even so, antidepressant medications continue to be an important first-line treatment for mood disorders, along with psychotherapy.

Serotonin vs. dopamine

Like serotonin, dopamine is a chemical com-



Everything you need to know about serotonin

municator found in the brain and many other parts of the body.

Both of these neurotransmitters are associated with your mental well-being, so it can be easy to confuse them. But there are also some key differences between the two.

How to increase serotonin

Only a healthcare professional can determine if you need to boost your serotonin levels. High levels of serotonin may lead to toxicity and unwanted side effects, so it's important to take your medications following a doctor's recommendations.

Medication, as well as natural options, can increase serotonin levels.

SSRIs

SSRIs are the most commonly prescribed type of antidepressant medication. They increase serotonin levels in the brain by blocking the reabsorption of serotonin, so more of it remains active.

There are several SSRIs, including fluoxetine (Prozac) and sertraline (Zoloft).

When you're taking medications that affect serotonin, you'll want to speak with a doctor before using other medications or supplements. Mixing medications may put you at risk of a serious condition called serotonin syndrome.

Supplements

Some supplements may have the ability to raise serotonin levels. However, they're not a replacement for medications prescribed by a doctor and should not be taken alongside medications that affect your serotonin levels.

Supplements that may affect serotonin

include:

St. John's wort: The herb St. John's wort increases serotonin in the body. Some believe it is effective for treating depression, but this has not always been supported by research.

SAME: This supplement is promoted as a treatment for depression, but more research is needed to understand its effects on mood and serotonin levels.

Tryptophan: This substance can be converted into serotonin in your brain, potentially raising your serotonin levels. Some research suggests it could help improve mood and reduce anxiety.

All of these supplements can increase your risk for serotonin syndrome, as well as cause other side effects and interactions.

Speak with a healthcare professional before trying any new supplements or herbal remedies, especially if you're taking prescription drugs.

Natural serotonin boosters

The following strategies may help you balance your serotonin levels and improve your mood:

Exposure to bright light: Bright sunlight may help your mood, which is why light therapy is commonly recommended for treating seasonal depression. SAD lamps are an option for home therapy in winter or when access to bright sunlight is difficult.

Exercise: Regular exercise has many benefits for overall health. It can have mood-boosting effects and may trigger the release of serotonin.

Health-promoting diet: Following a balanced diet lowers the risk of many health conditions. Although research is limited, eating foods that may promote serotonin production could positively affect mood.

Meditation: Meditating can help relieve stress and promote a positive outlook on life. What is serotonin syndrome?

Medications, supplements, and other substances that increase serotonin levels in your body can lead to serotonin syndrome.

Serotonin syndrome can happen when you:

- start taking a new medication that boosts serotonin levels
- increase the dosage of an existing medication
- take more medication than the amount prescribed
- use an additional medication, supplement, or drug that also affects serotonin levels

The symptoms of serotonin syndrome include:

- tremors
- sweating
- nausea
- vomiting
- restlessness
- anxiety

Severe symptoms can include:

- headache
- flushed skin
- dilated pupils
- disorientation
- increased reflexes (hyperreflexia)
- muscle twitches or spasms
- high fever
- muscle stiffness
- rapid heart rate
- high blood pressure
- irregular heartbeat

To diagnose serotonin syndrome, a doctor will perform a detailed history and physical exam.

(Healthline)

NEWS IN PICTURES



▲ A woman holds an umbrella in rainy and windy weather at Trocadero Square with the Eiffel Tower in the background in Paris as Storm Benjamin hits parts of France.



▲ Former hostage Alon Ohel is welcomed home, after he was discharged from the hospital following his release from captivity in Gaza, where he was held after being kidnapped during the deadly October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas, in Lavon, Israel.



▲ A woman is standing on a street flooded by rains caused by Tropical Storm Melissa, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.



▲ Portland Trail Blazers coach Chauncey Billups leaves the Mark O. Hatfield U.S. Courthouse after a hearing following his arrest on federal gambling charges in Portland, Oregon.



▲ Kites fly at Dolphin Beach ahead of the Cape Town International Kite Festival, which raises funds for mental health support, in Cape Town, South Africa.



▲ The demolition of the East Wing of the White House, the location of President Trump's proposed ballroom is seen from an elevated position

Sundowns cruise into Champions League group stages

MAMELODI Sundowns cruised to a routine 2-0 victory over Remo Stars in the second leg of the CAF Champions League preliminary round at Loftus Versfeld on Sunday afternoon. Sundowns dominant Nuno Santos and Peter Shalulile were on target as the Brazilians sealed a dominant 7-1 aggregate triumph, booking their place in the group stages of Africa’s premier club competition for an impressive 11th consecutive season.

Having dismantled the Nigerian side 5-1 in the first leg, Sundowns hardly needed to break a sweat to confirm their qualification. Head coach Miguel Cardoso, however, refused to take any chances, naming a strong starting line-up. Ronwen Williams, Malibongwe Khoza and Miguel Reisinho made way, while Denis Onyango, Grant Kekana and Arthur Sales were restored to the starting XI in what proved another comfortable outing for the Tshwane giants in front of their home supporters.

Santos opened the scoring in the 21st minute, controlling expertly inside the box before firing home from an Aubrey Modiba cross on the left flank. The visitors faced an uphill battle from that moment, and their hopes were effectively extinguished when Shalulile doubled the lead on the stroke of half-time to make it 2-0.

It was the Namibian striker’s second goal in as many matches, effectively putting qualification beyond doubt. The second half was largely a formality, with Sundowns content to keep possession and control the tempo while Remo Stars sought to avoid further damage against the 2016 African champions.

Cardoso took the opportunity to



▲ Peter Shalulile of Mamelodi Sundowns celebrates goal with teammates during the CAF Champions League.

ring the changes, introducing several fresh legs to wind down the clock. The reigning South African champions never needed to get out of second gear as they comfortably booked their passage to the next phase.

Real challenge begins now Masandawana continue to underline their dominance at this stage of continental competition. Last season, they dispatched Mbabane Swallows of Eswatini 8-0 on aggregate,

and their relentless pursuit of continental glory took another step in the right direction.

The real challenge, however, begins in the group phase, where Sundowns will face stiffer opposition. The draw for the round-robin stage is set to take place early next month where the 16 winners from the second qualifying round will be drawn into four groups of four teams.

(Supersport)

Kaze hails Chiefs fans after Confed Cup success

CEDRIC KAZE praised Kaizer Chiefs’ fans for inspiring his team after Amakhosi scored three early goals to kill off AS Simba and book their place in the Caf Confederation Cup group stages.

The second leg of this final qualifier was played on Sunday at Dobsonville Stadium, where fans are closer to the pitch than at FNB Stadium, Chiefs’ usual home venue. After a goalless draw in Lubumbashi in the first leg, Chiefs shot out of the blocks in Dobsonville and were 3-0 up inside 26 minutes.

Chiefs’ goal spree Chiefs have been battling to hit the back of the net all season, but they had no such issues here, with Etiosa Ighodaro, Zitha Kwinika and Glody Lilepo all scoring.

There was no way back for

Simba though they did manage a consolation goal in the second half.

“In these games we need the crowd to be loud. This stadium, where the crowd is closer to the pitch, it gave us energy and I believe in the first 15 to 20 minutes that made a real difference,” Chiefs co-head coach Kaze told SABC Sport.

“We are very happy to qualify, to go through to the group stages” he added.

“You can see how happy the fans are. We went into the game with the right mentality from the first minute to try and make things happen. I am very happy for the club and the players, who put in a tremendous effort.”

(Supersport)



▲ Cedric Kaze praised the Chiefs supporters at Dobsonville Stadium on Sunday.

Gritty Australia sink US to win LPGA’s International Crown

Minjee Lee led the way as Australia stunned the United States in the final to win the LPGA Tour’s International Crown for the first time on Sunday in South Korea.

The Australians clinched victory in the biennial team golf trophy when world No 3 Lee beat Angel Yin and Hannah Green downed Yealimi Noh in their singles matches, both 2 and 1.

Steph Kyriacou and Grace Kim tied their foursomes match with Lilia Vu and Lauren Coughlin, but by that time, the result was already in the bag.

Lee, a three-time major winner, said the team nature of the victory made it even more special.

“I’m so happy that I could do it with these girls, it was just a lot of fun this whole week,” she said.

“Playing match play is something different and we don’t get to do it too often.”

Lee came through a close battle with Yin, with neither player managing to edge more than one ahead until the Australian broke clear at the end.

Kyriacou said the Australians had to dig deep to lift the trophy in their fifth appearance in the competition, including a runner-up finish to Thailand two years ago.



“In a lot of our matches, we were behind the eight-ball, especially going into the back nine,” said Kyriacou.

“We managed to come back in every match with me and Gracey.

“I think having grit throughout the week got us over the line.”

Australia beat the World team in Sunday morning’s semifinals while the Americans got the better of Japan.

The World team beat Japan for third place after singles wins for England’s Charley Hull and New Zealand’s Lydia Ko over Ayake Furue

and Rio Takeda respectively.

Mao Saigo and Miyu Yamashita beat Taiwan’s Hsu Wei-ling and Canada’s Brooke Henderson in the foursomes match.

(Supersport)

Mbappe and Bellingham strike as Real Madrid edge Barcelona in fiery El Clasico

Goals from Kylian Mbappe and Jude Bellingham earned Real Madrid a 2-1 victory over Barcelona in a spiky El Clasico on Sunday that snapped a four-match losing streak against their rivals and extended their lead atop the LaLiga standings. Mbappe opened the scoring in the 22nd minute with a close-range finish after a perfectly timed through ball from Bellingham.

However, Barcelona capitalised on a mistake by Arda Guler to equalise in the 38th minute through Fermín Lopez.

Real regained the lead five minutes later when Bellingham tapped in from inside the six-yard box following an inspired run and cross by Vinicius Jr.

Real had several chances but were denied by an excellent display from Barca keeper Wojciech Szczesny, who kept out Mbappe's penalty early in the second half.

Barcelona barely threatened Real keeper Thibaut Courtois after the



▲ Goals from Kylian Mbappe and Jude Bellingham.

break and finished the match with 10 men after midfielder Pedri earned a second yellow card for a sliding tackle from behind on Aurelien Tchouameni in added time.

Real moved to 27 points at the top of the LaLiga standings, five ahead of Barcelona in second.

(Supersport)

Sinner fights back against Zverev to claim 'special' Vienna crown

JANNIK Sinner clinched his fourth title of the season on Sunday as the Italian rallied from a set down to beat Alexander Zverev in the final of the Vienna Open.

Sinner dropped his first set of the tournament before staging a comeback to see off Zverev 3-6, 6-3, 7-5 to land the 22nd title of his career.

It is his second triumph in Vienna, where he also lifted the trophy in 2023, and extended his winning run on indoor hard courts to 21 matches going into next week's final Masters 1000 of the year in Paris.

But the top seed had to do it the hard way after falling behind as world No 3 Zverev, who had won four of seven previous meetings, secured the only break of the first set to take the upper hand.

"It was such a difficult start in this final for me," said Sinner.

"I went a break down, had some chances in the first set but couldn't use them. He was serving very well, but I just tried to stick there mentally and play my best tennis when it came."

Sinner replied though by racing 3-0 ahead in the second set as he forced a decider against the 2021 champion.

Zverev saved two break points in the fifth game of the third set but Sinner maintained the pressure despite battling a thigh issue in his first event since retiring with cramp at the Shanghai Masters.

Sinner created another opportunity at 5-all with a blistering backhand down the line and won a lengthy rally the following point to snatch the key break.

A routine hold wrapped up victory for the 24-year-old who has reached the final in eight of his 10 tournaments this season, with Sinner ad-



▲ Jannik Sinner.

ding to his titles at the Australian Open, Wimbledon and Beijing.

"The third set was a bit of a rollercoaster, but I was feeling the ball very well at times, so I tried to push

and I'm very happy of course to win another title," Sinner added.

"It's very special."

(Supersport)

Roars, tears as local hero Tabuena wins International Series Philippines

An emotional Miguel Tabuena fell to his knees and kissed the turf at his home Sta. Elena Golf Club after winning the International Series Philippines on Sunday for the biggest victory of his career.

A brilliant third straight round of seven-under 65, including a spectacular chip-in for birdie at the 15th, saw the Filipino stretch away to 24-under par and win by three strokes.

The Japanese pair of Kazuki Higa (65) and Yosuke Asaji (67) finished joint second on 21-under to head a high-quality chasing pack.

But the day was all about local hero Tabuena, playing with a colossal weight of expectation on his shoulders at his home course in front of family, friends and large crowds following his every move.

The 31-year-old held his nerve until the final putt for par was safely in the cup.

"I'm still on a high right now," said Tabuena, his voice cracking with exhaustion, elation and pure emotion.

"I've always wanted to get my hands on one of these trophies and it was nice that the first one is at home, in my home club.

"I'm so thankful for everyone who came out, my family, my friends."

It was his fourth win on the Asian Tour but first on the elevated International Series of \$2 million events bankrolled by LIV Golf.

'DREAM COME TRUE'

Tabuena dominated a loaded field containing four major champions to carry away the sparkling new trophy and a cheque for \$360 000.

"I'm speechless right now

and exhausted, but I'm glad that we were able to get it done this week."

The final group all started on 17-under par and it was Tabuena who made the early move with birdies at the second and third.

The challenge from playing partners Sarit Suwannarut and Sampson Zheng melted away as they both carded 69 to finish at 20-under par in a share of fourth.

It was a second successive Sunday of disappointment for Thailand's Sarit, who began last week's final round of the Macau Open with a two-shot lead only to card a three-over 73 and finish fourth.

Tabuena moves to second in the International Series order of merit with three events to play.

The series winner will be granted a place on the LIV Golf league roster for 2026.

"It's certainly different playing at home," said Tabuena, who shed more tears as he was hugged by his mother Lorna, father Luigi, wife Sandra and 22-month-old daughter Paloma on the 18th green.

"It's a dream come true. It's special."

It was the most prestigious tournament ever staged in the Philippines, but none of the major winners managed to make a run at Tabuena.

Charl Schwartzel, the 2011 US Masters champion, was the best of them as a final-round 68 took him to 14-under par and a share of 12th.

Two-time major winner Dustin Johnson was a shot further back after a 6,7 and the 2018 Masters champion Patrick Reed finished on 11-under after a 70.

(Supersport)



▲ Miguel Tabuena.



▲ KFC CEO Nigel England making his remarks.



▲ Schools representatives following proceedings during the presentation.

Stories by Chris Dlamini

UNEARTHING great legends is the mission for one of Eswatini's best-ever soccer players, the legendary Absalom 'Scara' Thindwa.

Rated by many as the best import to come from Eswatini to play in South Africa (SA), Thindwa, a respected Kaizer Chiefs legend who scored goals for fun, is now into developing youngsters to become future stars and great legends of the game.

"The dream of our Academy is about to become a reality. We expect to have our first trials in early November, and it will all start at the Bulembu schools. From there, we will then see how we move forward to make it a national project," said Thindwa during the KFC/Scara Thindwa Foundation Schools Soccer Tournament prize-giving ceremony on Thursday.

This was at Alliance Foods at the Matsapha Link building. Thindwa grew up in Bulembu and played his football there before he was recruited by Chiefs. That is one of the reasons he has opted to open the academy in the Bulembu Havelock Mine Village, where even the house he grew up in is still there.

'Scara' Foundation Academy trials at Bulembu

Thindwa said it was important that Eswatini took development seriously to have the best players who can revive the national team Sihlangu Semnikati's electric performances and compete for qualification into bigger tournaments.

"With KFC and the Foundation, we are already doing what we can for these youngsters and for both boys and girls, but we also need to see these children linked with clubs once they are over the age groups we cater for here," he said.

Thindwa said they needed that relationship with the country's teams in the Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) to ensure the talent was not going to waste once it was spotted in the schools. The KFC/Scara Thindwa Foundation Schools Soccer Tournament covers under-17 girls, under-13 and under-14 boys. Meanwhile, the top three schools per category were rewarded with prizes in the form of sports equipment.



▲ Retiring ESSA Treasurer Felicity Dlamini receiving a token of appreciation from Scara Thindwa foundation chairman David Matse.

'... Proud to help develop future stars'

GRASSROOTS development exposes potential and opportunities.

This is one of many reasons KFC Eswatini, under Alliance Foods, is continuing to support soccer development via schools. Speaking at the KFC/Scara Thindwa Foundation Soccer Tournament 2025 prize presentation event on Thursday, KFC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Nigel England made it clear they were not about to cut ties with schools and the foundation.

"We're here to celebrate the cream of the crop in the 2025 edition. You are all here because you have done exceptionally well. As KFC Eswatini, we are excited and proud to be part of this development

programme.

"We're already looking forward to next year's edition and hopefully many more to come," he said, much to a huge round of applause.

England said sport was good for the brain as it also boosted academic excellence. He said that the Scara Thindwa Foundation was doing a great job in unearthing young talent to make them greater legends in the future. England then took a moment to congratulate the winning schools, while also acknowledging all the participating schools.

He further noted an increase in the number of schools that competed in the 2025 edition.

Mu and Lee gets MRPA League going

AFTER unceremoniously parting ways with Dixie's International, the MRPA Pool League is back in action.

MRPA is an acronym for Manzini Regional Pool Association (MRPA). After months of idleness, and a league season that was abruptly ended due to a loss of sponsorship midway through, they have a new partner.

MRPA has partnered with Mu and Lee (Mlandvo Investments) as a sponsor for the league. They are already in matchday three (3), which was underway over the weekend.

However, at the time of compiling this report, the results were not yet available with some fixtures set for Sunday. The league has 10 teams.

After matchday 2, Stairs Pool Team were at the summit with six points, one ahead of Way Inn Pool Team, who they edged in the opening day clash over a fortnight ago.

"The league is sponsored to the tune of E30 000 and we're still in the



▲ Mlue and Lee pool league Way Inn.

early stages since its kick-off," said Musa Dlamini, the interim MRPA Secretary.

However, he said despite a few

challenges in the opening week, everything was now on course and progressing as expected.



How Leopard blew away E7mln bounty opportunity





▲ Royal Leopards players during the penalties against AS Union Maniema.

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

IT was close yet so far for local CAF Confederation Cup envoys, Royal Leopard.

‘Ingwemabalabala’ lost their ground on home soil against Union Maniema in the lottery shootout, ending their dream of earning E7 million on Saturday at Somhlolo National Stadium if they advanced to the group stages of the continent’s second premier club competition.

We give insight into the second preliminary round clash played at the country’s football mecca.

1. Lack of home support

Royal Leopard lacked home support, with a paltry crowd of over 100 fans, despite the reasonable E40 entrance fee.

The home side needed home support during this crucial assignment following their gallant display during the first leg match.

The Leopard Marketing committee should do better in the future by mobilising the home fans during international assignments.

2. Lack of prolific goal scorer

The team didn’t have a prolific goal scorer on the day following Interim Coach Mfanzile ‘Fash’ Dlamini’s decision to bench Felix Badenhorst over Ghanaian international Mo-hammed Anas.

This was evident during the second half As Badenhorst netted the crucial equaliser a few minutes before fulltime after coming in for Anas.

3. Edwin Matsebula’s absence

The one match suspension of head coach Edwin Matsebula affected the team as it lacked a leader from the bench.

This resulted in goalkeeper Mlamuli Makhanya taking a penalty after some of the senior players, such as Felix ‘ Fela’ Badenhorst, snubbed the penalty during the shoot-out as the available technical bench failed to

4. Fanelo Tsabedze’s absence

The team didn’t have enough depth from the bench on the day due to the absence of Fanelo Tsabedze.

Tsabedze could have been a better option to relieve the workaholic Junior Magagula during the second half.

Magagula looked tired during the second half following his gallant performance.

The silky Magagula was unlucky to miss the opening spot kick during the lottery shootout.

5. Experienced ‘Mbhonyo’ overlooked

The technical bench should have introduced the tried and tested Ncamiso ‘ Mbhonyo’ Dlamini during the second especially in penalties ahead of the preferred first choice Mlamuli Makhanya.



▲ AS Union Maniema players celebrating their victory over Royal Leopard.

instruct one of the senior players to take the penalty at such a big stage.



▲ Sibonelo ‘Jekwa’ Simelane fighting for the ball against a AS Union Maniema player.

Dlamini is a big match temperament player, which he has proven for both the country and the club in the same competition in 2022.

6. Shaky central defence

The central defensive pairing of Gift

Gamedze and Mzwandile Mabelesa looked suspect.

The duo was caught napping during the opposition goal scored by Jordi Kusungua.

Both players have a bright future ahead of them, and there is room for improvement.

Nsingizini hold Simba SC, crash out

By Chris Dlamini

IT was always a big and difficult task for Nsingizini Hotspurs.

The Eswatini debutants in the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League 2025/26 blew it about a week ago when they lost 3-0 at home in the first leg.

This is what Nsingizini had to overturn in Tanzania against a side as fierce as Simba SC - last season's TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup runner-up and once top 20-ranked in the Confederation of African Football (CAF) club rankings.

The second leg ended goalless, but that only meant a 3-0 aggregate win for Simba SC, and advancement to the group stage where a slightly over E12 million cash boost is guaranteed. The visiting side, Insingizi Yezulu (Nsingizini) in this instance, put up a brave performance in front of a massive 60 000 crowd at the Benjamin Mkapa Stadium, but they needed to win 3-0 to force the match into the dreaded penalty shootout on a 3-3

aggregate score. If not, a 4-0 win would have simply seen them in the group stage, and around E12 million richer. A 4-0 win would result in a 4-3 aggregate win for Insingizi.

However, it was not to be as Simba SC did the job in the first leg, and had no pressure in front of their home crowd with a 3-0 cushion. Nsingizini had reached the second preliminary round after edging Zimbabwe's Simba Bhora in the first preliminary stage. The green and white outfit will now shift focus to their MTN Premier League title defence as they seek a consecutive Champions League experience. In their domestic return, Tabankulu Celtics had initially been set to play them on November 12 at Tabankulu Stadium. However, the Premier League of Eswatini will give direction on their return to action in the league.

Meanwhile, Nsingizini played in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup last season after Green Mamba opted not to participate. However, they were walloped by South Africa's (SA) Betway Premiership side Stellenbosch with an 8-0 aggregate score.



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs players.

'Shoes' steers 'Bull' to send second win in a row

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela
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Mbabane Highlanders..... (1) 1,
Ayanda Mabuza 7th
Amawele..... (0) 0,

WIN pretty, win ugly, just win Mbabane Highlanders.

This was the story for the capital city giants during their match against stubborn Amawele FC.

The crowd pullers grinded results against the newcomers through an Ayanda 'Shoes' Mabuza first-half goal at Mavuso Sports Centre under scorching heat.

The result helped Highlanders record their second consecutive league win at the same venue following their recent 2-0 win over Manzini Sea Birds.

The 'Black Bull' had a perfect start to the match when Mabuza put them upfront with a sublime finish.

The former Rangers FC player finished off a Siphwe Cele low cross, causing scenes of jubilation from fans after easily beating the advancing Bhekisisa Sikhondze.

Amawele were not deterred by the early goal as they continued to play with purpose, with the likes of Njabulo Magongo and Mhlengi Mngometulu causing some problems for the opposition defence.

The match went to the break with Highlanders enjoying a slender lead.

The second half saw the two coaches Vusizwe Mahlalela and Ernest Mavuso making some changes.

Mahlalela introduced former Highlander's striker Sibusiso Tfwala, who gave the opposition defence marshalled by Vusi Vilakati.



▲ Ezulwini United veteran player Mphucuko 'Smoothies' Dlamini celebrating their winning goal.

Smooth win for United

Ezulwini United..... (1) 1,
Mphucuko Dlamini 40th
Moneni Pirates.....(0)0

HE is a special player.

This is none other than Ezulwini United veteran playmaker Mphucuko Dlamini.

The marauding player earned his team maximum points against Moneni Pirates with a spot kick in during a pulsating MTN Premier League clash played at Mavuso Sports Centre on Sunday.

The former Mbabane Highlanders converted the spot kick five minutes before the break after Pirates defender Mthobisi Zwane handled a Siboniso Motsa low cross.

The goal was a setback for Pirates following their early miss before the half hour mark after Senanelo Nkhambule missed a chance

from a break attack.

The match went to the break with United enjoying a slender lead.

Pirates came back with some sense of urgency upfront following the introduction of former Ezulwini United striker Andile Mamba.

Mamba nearly levelled matters in the 74th minute when his glancing header went wide from a Vukile Khumalo pass.

Pirates finished the man with ten men after goalkeeper Bernard Ayikwei was given marching orders before fulltime following a professional foul on Kwenzokuhle Khumalo.

The Meck Mwase-led side has suffered back-to-back losses to following the recent 2-0 to Young Buffaloes.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders players Ayanda Mabuza ,Msimisi Zwane and Siyabonga Mkhonto celebrating their 1-0 over Amawele.



**Real edge
Barcelona
in fiery
El Clasico**
Page 20

**'Shoes' steers
'Bull' to send
second win
in a row** Page 23



Eswatini Monday 27
October, 2025
Daily News
Sport



Nsingizini hold Simba SC, crash out

● Goalless draw not enough as Eswatini outfit needed a 4-0 win to reach the slightly over E12 million guaranteed cash prize group stage.