



99 army hopefuls already through stage 1 in the army recruitment Page 2



▲ Brigadier Sotja Dlamini addresses the army hopefuls as other officials watch on at KaMethula in the Shiselweni region, the 33rd constituency to host the event.

Eswatini
celebrates
historic gains
in HIV fight



By Thokozani Mazibuko

ESWATINI's relentless fight against HIV and AIDS has achieved remarkable success, with the latest UNAIDS report revealing that the country has surpassed global treatment targets and drastically reduced new infections. According to the report, new HIV infections have fallen sharply from a staggering 21,000 per year in 2000 to approximately 4,000 in 2023, marking one of the most significant national turnarounds in the global HIV response.

■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2

900 jobs created through Mpakeni Dam project — EWADE CEO Sithole

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By Thokozani Mazibuko

ESWATINI's relentless fight against HIV and AIDS has achieved remarkable success, with the latest UNAIDS report revealing that the country has surpassed global treatment targets and drastically reduced new infections.

According to the report, new HIV infections have fallen sharply from a staggering 21,000 per year in 2000 to approximately 4,000 in 2023, marking one of the most significant national turnarounds in the global HIV response. These results place Eswatini among the world's leading examples of effective HIV management, reflecting years of sustained political will, strong community involvement, and an unwavering commitment to universal access to treatment.

A model for the world

The report further confirmed that Eswatini has surpassed the UNAIDS 95-95-95 treatment targets, an ambitious global goal aimed at ending AIDS as a public health threat.

This means that 94% of people living with HIV know their status, 97% are receiving antiretroviral treatment, and 96% of those on treatment have achieved viral suppression meaning their viral load is so low that they can live healthy lives and cannot transmit the virus sexually.

UNAIDS praised Eswatini for its coordinated national response, which has been supported by government policies, civil society organizations, and international partners such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund.

"Eswatini has demonstrated that ending AIDS is possible," read part of the UNAIDS statement.

"Through strong leadership, community engagement, and health system investment, the country has transformed what was once

Eswatini celebrates historic gains in HIV fight



▲ Minister of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula delivering his remarks.

the world's highest HIV prevalence rate into a story of hope and resilience."

Life expectancy on the rise

The impact of these health gains is being felt across society.

The country's life expectancy has increased from 45 years in 2009 to 57 years in 2021, reflecting a significant improvement in public health outcomes.

This progress has been largely attributed to expanded access to HIV treatment and improved healthcare delivery.

Health experts note that as more people access life-saving antiretroviral therapy and

routine viral load monitoring, HIV is now managed as a chronic condition rather than a fatal disease.

Prevention and Innovation

The success is also linked to widespread access to HIV testing services, the introduction of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for those at higher risk, and the decentralization of viral load testing laboratories to regional health facilities.

These innovations have brought services closer to communities, improved patient monitoring, and helped identify treatment gaps quickly.

A united front against HIV

Minister of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula recently commended all stakeholders for their role in achieving these milestones, noting that the journey toward ending AIDS continues.

"These achievements are the result of collective effort from our healthcare workers to the people living with HIV who have shown courage and commitment," he said. "Eswatini is proof that with determination, we can overcome even the toughest challenges."

Civil society groups also welcomed the report, emphasizing the importance of maintaining momentum through continued education, stigma reduction, and youth-focused prevention programs.

While celebrating the success, experts warn against complacency, urging sustained investment in prevention, treatment, and education particularly among young people and key populations who remain vulnerable.

Nonetheless, Eswatini's progress serves as a powerful reminder that the fight against HIV/AIDS can be won through unity, compassion, and science-driven policies.

As the Kingdom continues to strengthen its healthcare systems, Eswatini stands tall as a global beacon of hope in the quest to end AIDS by 2030.

"This milestone means we are not only maintaining progress but moving towards more modern, patient-friendly treatment options," said the Ministry of Health spokesperson Nsindiso Tsabedze. "Injectable ART will help reduce stigma and improve quality of life for thousands of emaSwati." Tsabedze explained.

99 army hopefuls already through stage 1 in the army recruitment ... from the Manzini and Shiselweni regions

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF) has successfully completed the Shiselweni leg of its national army recruitment race, marking yet another milestone in the ongoing nationwide exercise.

The recruitment drive, which took place on Monday, concluded at KuMethula the 33rd constituency to host the event with three hopefuls, two males and one female, emerging victorious in the first stage of the rigorous selection process.

After the first stage the army hopefuls will be called in for medicals.

According to UEDF spokesperson Brigadier Sotja Dlamini, the exercise in the Shiselweni region proceeded smoothly, with strong turnout and high levels of discipline among the participants.

"We are thankful to God Almighty and to His Majesty King Mswati III for guiding us throughout this process and for ensuring the continued success of the recruitment race," he said.

The Brigadier added that the army remains committed to fairness, transparency, and national representation in the recruitment

process, which seeks to identify the most capable and committed young Emaswati to serve in the force.

"The enthusiasm we have seen across constituencies has been remarkable. Our youth have demonstrated determination, strength, and patriotism qualities that are essential for service in the Defence Force," he said.

With the completion of the Shiselweni leg, the total number of successful army hopefuls from both the Manzini and Shiselweni regions has now reached 99.

The recruitment team will now move to the Lubombo region, before concluding the national tour in Hhohho, where the final group of candidates will compete for selection.

The recruitment race, which began earlier this month, has been met with great anticipation and excitement across the country.

Communities have turned out in large numbers to cheer on local youth as they take part in the physically demanding selection stages, which test endurance, discipline, and mental strength.

The exercise forms part of the army's broader effort to strengthen its human resource base, ensure regional balance in recruitment, and offer employment opportunities to young Emaswati.

As the race moves eastward to Lubombo, Brigadier Dlamini expressed optimism that



▲ Brigadier General Sotja Dlamini.

the spirit of discipline and unity displayed so far would continue to define the process.

"The Defence Force stands ready to serve and protect the nation, and we believe that through this recruitment race, we are discovering a new generation of patriots ready to

uphold that noble duty," he said.

The next recruitment event is expected to take place later this week in the Lubombo region, before the final selection stage in Hhohho brings the 2025 national army recruitment drive to a close.

Dvuladvula aftermath:

Stories by Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, has assured the nation that government is not cheating anyone when it comes to tax deductions, saying all tax processes are done in full transparency and in accordance with the law.

Speaking to Eswatini Daily News, Minister Rijkenberg explained that deductions are guided strictly by the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) regulations and that neither government nor employers manipulate the figures. “Government doesn’t cheat anyone when it comes to tax,” said Rijkenberg. “PAYE is calculated based on the income an employee earns, and the deductions go straight to the Eswatini Revenue Service. There are clear brackets and procedures that are followed.” The minister added that citizens should take time to understand how the PAYE system works so that they can verify deductions on their payslips. He noted that tax transparency is a cornerstone of good governance and that all public servants and private employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the tax tables published annually by ERS.

Rijkenberg also reaffirmed government’s commitment to maintaining fiscal discipline and fairness in all financial dealings, stating that taxes collected are reinvested into essential national services such as health, education, and infrastructure.

The finance minister concluded by urging all taxpayers to comply with the country’s tax laws, adding that doing so strengthens the nation’s ability to deliver on its development goals.

Govt not cheating anyone on tax – Finance Minister



▲ People withdrawing money from an ATM. The picture used here does not mean the persons identified in this picture are linked to the story. (Pic: Internet) Inset: Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg.

... Minister clarifies PAYE structure A amid civil servants’ Dvuladvula

THE Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, has clarified how the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system works in the country following widespread concerns among civil servants over higher-than-expected deductions from their recently reviewed salaries and backpays.

Speaking to Eswatini Daily News Minister Rijkenberg said the seeming spike in PAYE deductions observed this month is a result of backpay and salary adjustments that temporarily push most civil servants into higher tax brackets.

“When backpays or increments are effected, most civil servants’ salaries enter the 33 per cent PAYE bracket,” he explained. “This is because the tax calculation considers the total earnings within a given period, and when you receive several months’ worth of pay at once, it appears as though your monthly income has significantly increased.”

The Minister said it was important for public servants to understand that this does not mean they are being overtaxed, but rather that the tax system is automatically adjusting to the increased total earnings for the period in question.

He noted that the PAYE system in Eswatini is progressive, meaning individuals pay a higher rate as their income rises, while those earning below a certain threshold remain exempt.

“Government doesn’t tax or collect PAYE on those earning E3,500 and below, because they fall under the non-taxable income threshold,” he said. “There are varying brackets in as far as PAYE is concerned, with each range taxed differently. The system is designed to ensure fairness, so that lower

earners are protected while higher earners contribute proportionally more.”

The Minister further explained that once salary structures normalize in subsequent months without the one-off effect of backpay the majority of workers’ PAYE deductions will automatically return to their normal levels.

He urged civil servants to remain calm, assuring them that no new tax policy or rate change had been introduced alongside the salary review.

“We have not increased PAYE rates. The system remains exactly the same as before. What happened this month is a technical reflection of arrears being processed together with regular earnings,” he said.

Minister Rijkenberg also encouraged employees to verify their PAYE statements and payslips to understand the calculation process. He advised that any queries could be directed to the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS), which is mandated to assist workers in understanding how their income tax is computed.

Economists have backed the Minister’s explanation, noting that backpay adjustments are known to trigger temporary changes in tax deductions in most countries that use progressive tax systems.

Meanwhile, some civil servants expressed relief after the clarification, saying it helps them understand why their net pay appeared smaller than anticipated.

“We thought government had increased taxes without informing us,” said a primary school teacher from the Shiselweni region. “It’s good that the Ministry has come out to explain this.”

The Ministry of Finance is expected to issue a formal advisory circular to all

government ministries and departments to help employees better interpret their payslips following the salary review implementation.

UNDERSTANDING PAYE BRACKETS IN ESWATINI

According to the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS):

- E0 - E3,500: No PAYE (tax-free threshold)
- E3,501 - E8,000: 20% PAYE
- E8,001 - E12,000: 25% PAYE
- E12,001 and above: 33% PAYE

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Mncopi vilane sprints to win at KuMethula army recruitment

... As local barber Maxwell Mbhamali claims second place

Stories By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE KuMethula Inkhundla athletics event proved once again that sporting talent in Eswatini comes from all walks of life.

On Saturday, 22-year-old Mncobi Vilane from Nkomonye Umphakatsi sprinted his way to a spectacular first-place finish in the male category, showcasing not only raw speed but also unwavering determination.

Vilane, who is best known in his community as a soccer player, stunned spectators with his explosive start and consistent pace throughout the course. Competing against some of the region’s fastest runners, he surged ahead in the final stretch to cross the finish line first, greeted by thunderous cheers from supporters.

“I thank the heavens for today’s success,” an emotional Vilane said after the race. “I came here to give my best, and all the hard training has finally paid off. This victory motivates me to push even harder in my football and athletics journey.”

Coaches and event organizers praised the young athlete’s performance, noting that his agility and stamina from soccer have clearly translated well onto the track. They believe Vilane has the potential to shine both on the football field and in competitive athletics if given the right support.

Barber with a buzz for speed

Adding a touch of inspiration and surprise to the day’s event was 28-year-old Maxwell Mbhamali from Mbangweni Umphakatsi, who clinched second place in the same category.

Mbhamali, affectionately known as “The Fast Barber” by his peers, traded his salon clippers for running shoes and nearly stole the show. Despite being an amateur runner, his performance impressed many, proving that passion and determination can take anyone to the podium.

“When I’m not cutting hair, I’m out here training,” he said with a grin. “Running keeps me focused and reminds

me that speed isn’t just for the track it’s a mindset.”

Spectators were quick to cheer him on, calling him an example of how talent can emerge from unexpected places.

“He’s not just good with the razor he’s quick on his feet too,” joked one supporter from the crowd.

Community spirit and talent on display

The KuMethula Inkhundla race, part of the broader Lubombo regional athletics programme, aims to discover hidden athletic potential across local communities. The event drew a strong turnout, with both seasoned runners and newcomers taking part.

Organizers commended the enthusiasm from young people in the area, noting that community-based competitions like this help foster unity, discipline, and healthy lifestyles.

“These races bring our youth together in a positive way,” said one official. “They remind us that talent is everywhere in schools, on the soccer field, and even in the barbershop.”

The road ahead

For Vilane, the win marks a promising step forward in what could become a dual career in both football and athletics. He expressed gratitude to his community, coaches, and family for their support, pledging to continue representing Nkomonye Umphakatsi with pride.

“This is only the beginning,” he said confidently. “There’s more to come.”

Meanwhile, Mbhamali says he will return to his barbershop with renewed pride and perhaps a few new customers eager to get their hair cut by one of the fastest barbers in the region.

The KuMethula Inkhundla event ended with celebrations and laughter, proving once more that Eswatini’s rural communities are bursting with talent, waiting to be discovered whether on the soccer field, the racetrack, or behind the barber’s chair.



▲Mncobi Vilane who won the Ku-Methula Inkhundla Army recruitment race.



▲Maxwell Mbhamali, the barber, who came second in the army recruitment race at KuMethula.



▲Temalangi Dlamini.

Nhlangano track star shines

THE Nhlangano Track Athletics Club continues to produce rising stars, and this weekend’s KuMethula Inkhundla race was no exception.

Twenty-two-year-old Temalangi Dlamini, a talented runner from Nkomonye Umphakatsi, stormed through the course to claim victory in the female category, earning praise from both spectators and fellow competitors.

Temalangi, who represents the Nhlangano Track Athletics Club, displayed remarkable endurance and determination, leading the pack from start to finish. Her performance was not only a personal triumph but also a proud moment for her club and community.

“It felt like home turf,” Temalangi said after the race, smiling as she caught her breath. “I know these hills and the roads so well, and that gave me confidence. The support from the crowd made me push even harder.”

A growing force in women’s athletics

The KuMethula Inkhundla race forms part of the regional athletics circuit aimed at identifying and nurturing talent across Eswatini’s constituencies. This year’s event saw an impressive turnout, with athletes from various track clubs and communities competing in both male and female categories.

Temalangi’s victory adds to her growing list of achievements on the track. Coaches describe her as a dedicated and disciplined athlete, with an unmatched work ethic and a natural gift for long-distance running.

Her friend, Siyabonga Dube, praised her consistency and hunger for success.

“Temalangi has been improving race after race,” he said. “She’s not just running to win she’s running

with purpose. Her goal is to represent Eswatini at the national and international level, and we believe she has what it takes.”

Off the track, Temalangi serves as an inspiration to many young women in her community. She often participates in youth sporting events and encourages girls to take up athletics as a way to stay focused, healthy, and empowered.

“Running has taught me discipline and self-belief,” she shared. “I want young girls in Nkomonye and across Eswatini to know that they can achieve anything if they stay committed.”

A bright future ahead

With her latest victory, Temalangi has now qualified for the upcoming regional championships, where she will compete against top athletes from other parts of the country. Her club is already preparing her for the event, focusing on speed and endurance training.

The Nhlangano Track Athletics Club has become a breeding ground for young talent, continually producing athletes who perform exceptionally well at both local and national competitions.

As Temalangi crossed the finish line to loud cheers and applause, one thing became clear Eswatini’s athletics future is in good hands.

“I’m grateful for my coaches, teammates, and community,” she said modestly. “This win is for all of us. The journey continues.”

With her eyes now set on representing Eswatini in future national events, Temalangi Dlamini stands as a symbol of determination, community pride, and the bright promise of women’s athletics in the Kingdom.

Brigadier warns army hopefuls: “avoid pregnancy and trouble with the law”

THE ongoing national army recruitment exercise took a serious tone this week as Brigadier General Sotja Dlamini issued a stern warning to successful army hopefuls, urging them to avoid getting pregnant or being arrested before the training phase begins.

Speaking during the recruitment process in the Lubombo region, Brigadier Dlamini cautioned candidates that discipline and personal conduct remain central pillars of military life even before they officially commence training.

He warned that those who engage in behavior that compromises their readiness or tarnishes

the image of the Eswatini National Army could lose their hard-earned opportunity.

“We are proud of those who have successfully made it this far, but the journey is not yet over,” Dlamini said. “You must protect this opportunity with your life. Avoid trouble, stay disciplined, and most importantly, do not get pregnant. Once you are caught in such situations, you automatically disqualify yourself.”

The Brigadier emphasized that the army values physical fitness, emotional stability, and discipline, and any candidate who engages in criminal activities or irresponsible behavior before official enlistment will be dropped without

hesitation.

He further implored all hopefuls to avoid public misconduct, stay away from illegal gatherings, and always keep their identification documents ready, as the recruitment team continues to verify the eligibility of candidates across the region.

“We want soldiers who are ready to serve the nation with pride, not those who will bring embarrassment to the uniform,” he added.

Dlamini also appealed to local councils (Bandlancane) in the various constituencies to assist in monitoring the behavior and conduct of successful candidates, ensuring that only those

of good standing proceed to the next stage.

The recruitment exercise in the Lubombo region continues to attract hundreds of young men and women, many of whom see the opportunity as a gateway to employment and national service. Meanwhile, reports indicate that some candidates from other regions had already been disqualified due to issues such as falsified documents and failure to meet the physical requirements, prompting the Brigadier’s strong warning to the remaining hopefuls.

“This is not just a job it’s a lifetime commitment to the protection of our Kingdom,” Dlamini concluded.

Knife-wielding man forces pupils to perform lewd acts

By Delisa Magagula

TWO pupils from one of the schools in Mbikwakhe, Matsapha, are recovering from a terrifying ordeal after they were allegedly threatened by a man who forced them to perform lewd acts at knifepoint before robbing them.

The incident occurred shortly after 9 p.m. on Monday when the two teenagers, said to be in a relationship, were spotted by the man while they were sharing a kiss along a quiet stretch near the community.

According to community police member Sikhumbuzo Ngwenya, the man confronted the pupils and asked them what they were doing outside at that hour.

When the pupils explained that they were heading home, the man allegedly ordered them to continue kissing and went as far as demanding that they perform improper activities while he watched.

Ngwenya said when the teenagers refused, the man pulled out a bush knife and threatened them with violence if they did not obey.

“He ordered them to continue kissing while pointing the bush knife at them. The frightened pupils complied because they feared for their lives,” Ngwenya said.

After a few moments, the man reportedly ordered the teenagers to hand over all their belongings, including mobile phones and money.

“He then took their cellphones and a small amount of cash before running away. The children later told us they preferred to be robbed rather than obey his sexual demands,” said Ngwenya.

Community police, who were patrolling nearby, were alerted by a passerby who had seen the pupils crying. They managed to trace and detain the suspect later that night. Ngwenya said when questioned, the man denied the allegations, claiming he had only confronted the teenagers because he was shocked to find them engaging in immoral behaviour.

“He told us he was trying to stop them from doing wrong things and that he was surprised when we accused him of pulling a knife,” Ngwenya said.

The suspect was handed over to the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) for further investigation. Police Deputy Spokesperson and Communications Officer Inspector Nosipho Mnguni confirmed the incident and said the suspect was in custody.

“We can confirm that a man has been handed over to the police by community members following allegations of assault, threats of violence, and robbery involving two school pupils. Investigations are ongoing,” Mnguni said.

She commended the quick response by community police, saying such cooperation between residents and law enforcement often helps prevent tragedies.

Meanwhile, the mother of the girl involved said she was deeply shaken by the incident and saddened that her daughter was in such a situation.

“I was disheartened when I heard what happened. I am also disappointed that my



▲ The pupil who was force into committing the lewd act.

daughter is dating at such a young age

However what hurts most is that a grown man could threaten and humiliate children like that,” she said.

The mother said her daughter was too traumatised to speak further and refused to be interviewed.

“She just cries when we talk about it. I am grateful she was not physically harmed, but she is not the same. I am worried about her mental state,” she said.

The boy’s parents also expressed outrage, saying they could not believe a man from their own community could act with such cruelty.

“We raised our children to respect adults. For a man to turn around and threaten them like that it’s painful. We are just thankful they are alive,” the father said. Meanwhile, Eswatini Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) Director Nonhlanhla Dlamini strongly condemned the incident, saying the man’s actions were not only criminal but also psychologically damaging to the children.

“Even if he Abelieved the pupils were misbehaving, no adult has the right to humiliate, threaten, or assault children. He should have reprimanded them or reported them to their parents or the police,” Dlamini said. She added that both pupils would need psychological support.

“These children are going to carry trauma from that night. The threat of sexual violence leaves lasting scars. They need counselling, follow-up, and close monitoring both at home and school,” Dlamini said.

Police have not yet revealed the suspect’s age or whether he is known to the victims. However, sources close to the investigation said he is believed to be in his thirties and resides within the Mbikwakhe area.

REPS spokesperson Mnguni said investigators are still gathering evidence,



▲ Police Deputy Spokesperson and Communications Officer Inspector Nosipho Mnguni.

including statements from the victims and community members who responded to the incident.

“At this stage, we cannot confirm whether the suspect will face charges of attempted rape, assault, or robbery, as investigations are ongoing,” she said.

Mngun urged parents and community members to protect children from potential predators by ensuring they are home before dark.

“We continue to appeal to parents to be vigilant. Children, especially teenagers, should not be walking around at night. Adults should also act responsibly and report any concerning behaviour to the police rather than taking matters into their own hands,” she said.

Residents in Mbikwakhe have described the incident as one of the most disturbing acts they have heard of in recent months. Some said they were shocked that a man could use the pretext of moral correction to commit such an offence

One resident, who asked not to be named, said, “We are always telling our children not to be out late, but we also expect adults to protect not prey on them. What this man did is unforgivable,”

Community police have called for greater cooperation between schools, parents, and the community to prevent similar incidents.

“We cannot be everywhere at once. Parents must know where their children are. At the same time, we must all be responsible enough not to exploit or harm them,” said Ngwenya.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE) has announced a major employment milestone under the E2.6 billion Mpakeni Dam Project, with 900 Emaswati now directly employed in various phases of the project.

EWADE Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Samson Sithole, described this achievement as a landmark moment in the country's economic and infrastructural development.

"The employment of 900 Emaswati is a huge milestone in the history of the country," said Dr. Sithole during a media briefing this week. "This is not just about constructing a dam, it's about creating opportunities, empowering our people, and shaping a sustainable future."

The Mpakeni Dam project, located in the Lubombo region, forms part of Eswatini's broader effort to ensure water security, agricultural growth, and rural development. The construction has absorbed local labour in multiple areas, including civil engineering, masonry, transport, administration, catering, and environmental monitoring.

Dr. Sithole said that employment creation has been one of the project's central goals from the outset, ensuring that communities around the project site benefit directly from its progress.

"We made a commitment that Emaswati should be the primary beneficiaries not only when the dam is complete but throughout its construction. Today, 900 of our citizens are earning a living from this project, supporting their families and communities," he added. The EWADE CEO also revealed that over E600 million from the total E2.6 billion budget has already circulated within Eswatini's economy through local procurement and contracts.

"This project is pumping money directly into the national economy. Local contractors, transporters, and suppliers are gaining new business opportunities, while small enterprises in nearby areas are thriving because of the increased activity," Dr. Sithole noted.

Beyond job creation, EWADE has

'900 jobs created through Mpakeni Dam project'

... A milestone in Eswatini's history – EWADE CEO Sithole



▲ An aerial view of Mpakeni Dam construction site. (Inset) EWADE CEO Dr Samson Sithole.

prioritized skills development and capacity building among local workers. Many of the 900 employees are receiving on-the-job technical training in construction, water management, and environmental conservation skills that will remain useful long after the project's completion.

"We are not only employing people; we are building a skilled workforce for future national projects. These Emaswati will carry forward the knowledge gained here into other areas of infrastructure and development," Dr. Sithole explained.

The Mpakeni Dam project is a cornerstone of Eswatini's long-term development vision, supporting food security, irrigation expansion, and resilience against climate change.

Employment

Once operational, the dam is expected to supply water for thousands of hectares of farmland, enabling communities to engage in commercial and smallholder agriculture.

Economists have hailed the employment and local spending figures as signs of a productive public investment, with ripple

effects expected across the construction, retail, and service sectors.

Dr. Sithole emphasized that the success of the project so far reflects the power of collaboration between government, local communities, and international development partners. "The Mpakeni Dam stands as a symbol of national progress. It shows what Eswatini can achieve when we unite behind a shared vision. These 900 jobs are not just numbers, they represent dignity, livelihoods, and hope for a better tomorrow," he concluded.

Two nabbed for possession of protected wildlife parts

By Thokozani Mazibuko

IN a continued crackdown on illegal possession of wildlife products, police in Siteki have arrested two men for being found in possession of a grey duiker skin and a bushbuck horn without a licence or permit.

According to a statement issued by the Deputy Police Information and Communications Officer, Assistant Superintendent Nosipho Mnguni, the suspects, aged 27 and 29, were arrested in the early hours of Monday, 27 October 2025, at around 04:30 a.m., in the Nsulutane area under the Lubombo Region.

The police said the two men were charged under the Game Act, which prohibits the possession, trading, or transportation of game products without proper documentation.

"On 27/10/2025 at about 0430 hours, Siteki Police arrested and charged two men aged 27 and 29 of Nsulutane for being found in possession of a grey duiker skin and a bushbuck horn without a licence or permit while at Nsulutane area," read part of the police statement.



The suspects are currently in police custody and are expected to appear before the Siteki Magistrates Court to face charges related to the unlawful possession of protected wildlife specimens.

Police sources revealed that the arrests followed a routine patrol operation

conducted in the early hours of the morning as part of the ongoing efforts to curb wildlife crime in the region. The operation aims to address the increasing cases of poaching and illegal wildlife trade, which threaten the country's biodiversity and conservation initiatives.

The grey duiker and bushbuck are among Eswatini's protected species, commonly found in forested and rural areas. Possessing or trading their body parts without authorization violates national wildlife protection laws and carries severe penalties, including imprisonment or heavy fines.

The Deputy PICO urged members of the public to refrain from engaging in illegal hunting or wildlife trade and to report any suspicious activity to the nearest police station. "We continue to remind the public that wildlife belongs to all of us, and protecting it is a shared responsibility. Anyone found in unlawful possession of game products will face the full might of the law," the Deputy PICO emphasized.

Environmental and conservation groups have commended the police for their vigilance, saying such arrests send a strong message to those involved in wildlife crimes.

"This is an important step in deterring poaching and protecting Eswatini's natural heritage," said a representative from a local conservation organization.

The public has been encouraged to assist law enforcement by reporting cases of poaching, illegal trade, or suspicious possession of wildlife parts through the Eswatini Police Service toll-free crime stop lines.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Over 250 delegates expected at Inaugural MSME Indaba

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade (MoCIT) has officially launched the inaugural Eswatini Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Conference 2025 Set to take place from November 10-12, 2025, at the Royal Villas Hotel in Ezulwini, the conference will bring together approximately 250 delegates.

African development banks set to expand lending, S&P says

JOHANNESBURG — S&P Global Ratings said African regional development creditors are poised to expand lending to fill national financing gaps, as capital buffers strengthen and new frameworks increase their borrowing headroom. The ratings agency said Africa's supranational lenders are increasingly central to plugging investment shortfalls and stabilising economies as external financing tightens.

Stocks take a breather as markets brace for tech earnings

LONDON — Global shares paused their rally on Tuesday after recent hefty gains as expectations for a thawing in global trade tensions kept risk appetite keen, while the bull run in tech stocks counted on a bumper round of mega-cap earnings this week. The likelihood of lower borrowing costs in the U.S. and Canada this week supported bonds and kept the dollar pinned as investors waited to see just how dovish the Federal Reserve might be on the outlook.



FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.9053	17.3679
G.B. Pound	22.5931	23.2660
EURO	19.6547	20.2661
Bank Rate (July 2023)		7.50%
Prime Rate (July 2023)		11%
Inflation (July 2023)		4.5%
Petrol	E21.60/Litre	
Diesel	E22.90/Litre	
Paraffin	E17.25/Litre	

Eswatini strengthens PPP framework

By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI, through the Ministry of Finance, has begun a series of high-level capacity-building sessions under the African Legal Support Facility (ALSF) to enhance the country's readiness for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).

The training, taking place at the Hilton Garden Inn in Mbabane, will run until November 5, 2025 and forms part of the broader Eswatini PPP Advisory Project aimed at equipping government officials and key stakeholders with the tools to manage PPP processes effectively.

The Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Vusi Dlamini, opened the session, underscoring the government's intention to deepen collaboration with the private sector while upholding transparency and accountability in public investment.

"Our goal is to ensure that Eswatini's PPP framework aligns with international standards and provides value for money for the public while attracting credible private investment," said Dlamini.

The ALSF, a pan-African institution hosted by the African Development Bank, provides legal and technical assistance to African governments in complex commercial transactions including PPPs, infrastructure development, and natural resource management.

In Eswatini's case, the facility's focus is to help the government strengthen its PPP policy environment, standardise project documentation, and manage fiscal risks associated with long-term concessions.

Representing the ALSF Cynthia Kankindi whose role at ALSF Legal Counsel within the Operations Division, emphasised the importance of building a sustainable and transparent framework that encourages both domestic and international investors to participate confidently in Eswatini's development agenda.

"Public-Private Partnerships are not just about private financing; they are about aligning interests, allocating risk appropriately, and ensuring accountability," said Kankindi.

The capacity-building programme is implemented in collaboration with DLA Piper and Delta Consulting Group, global advisors with expertise in PPP structuring, negotiation, and risk management.

Over the coming weeks, participants from government ministries, parastatals, and oversight institutions will undergo intensive modules covering PPP project identification, legal frameworks, financial modelling, procurement, and contract monitoring.

Eswatini has long recognised the potential of PPPs to close its infrastructure financing gap. However, limited technical capacity and inconsistent project preparation have previously constrained implementation.

The country adopted a formal PPP Policy and established a PPP Unit under the Ministry of Finance, but experts say the success of future projects will depend on strengthening institutional readiness.

According to economic analysts, the ALSF programme comes at a critical time. The country faces fiscal constraints, with public debt



▲ Government stakeholders who attended the meeting.



▲ Nkululeko Dlamini, Director of Supply Chain Management at the Ministry of Finance.

nearing its upper limit and limited room for traditional borrowing.

Mobilising private capital through well-structured partnerships could enable Eswatini to deliver strategic projects in energy, transport, health and water sectors without over-stretching the national budget.

Regional economist Thabo Vilakati, speaking on the sidelines of the training, said capacity-building efforts like this one are essential to ensuring Eswatini's PPPs meet international due diligence standards.

"Many countries in the region have struggled with PPPs because they went to market before they had the right legal or financial structures in place," he said.

"This training ensures Eswatini avoids that pitfall. Investors want clarity they want to know the rules are clear, the contracts are fair, and the state understands its obligations," he said in addition.

Worth noting is that, across Africa, the ALSF has been instrumental in improving governments' negotiation positions and reducing exposure to poorly structured deals.

Countries such as Rwanda, Kenya and Ghana have previously benefited from similar advisory projects that helped them streamline PPP frameworks and attract billions in infrastructure investment.

For Eswatini, aligning with these standards could significantly boost investor confidence.

Analysts note that with a relatively small domestic market and limited fiscal space, the kingdom must rely on legal precision and institutional integrity to draw in credible partners. This makes the ALSF's involvement particularly strategic.

Participants at the Hilton training emphasised that transparency is not just a moral requirement but an economic one. PPP contracts often span decades and involve complex performance metrics.

Without strong oversight and contract management, such agreements can expose governments to fiscal risks and long-term liabilities.

Kankindi reminded attendees that robust procurement and monitoring frameworks are central to protecting the public interest.

"Transparency builds trust. Investors are more willing to engage when they know the process is fair, and citizens gain confidence when they see accountability mechanisms in action," she said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance's PPP Unit is expected to use insights from this training to develop a more consistent pipeline of bankable projects.

While several proposals have been discussed in sectors such as renewable energy, industrial development and transport, few have reached financial close due to technical and legal bottlenecks.

By building internal capacity, the government aims to move from concept to implementation more effectively. One senior official from the Ministry noted that Eswatini's goal is to ensure every PPP proposal undergoes rigorous feasibility assessment before reaching the procurement stage a key principle of the toolkit being taught.

Ultimately, the PPP Advisory Project reflects Eswatini's intent to move toward a model of shared growth, where the private sector plays a central role in national development. If executed well, experts believe it could usher in a new era of infrastructure expansion and job creation.

"This training is not a one-off event, it's part of an ongoing journey to institutionalise best practices in how we partner, procure, and deliver for our people," said Dlamini.

The ALSF-supported programme will continue through early November, culminating in a technical review session expected to outline a roadmap for Eswatini's next generation of PPP projects ones designed to be transparent, viable and transformative.

By Delisa Magagula

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade (MoCIT) has officially launched the inaugural Eswatini Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Conference 2025

Set to take place from November 10-12, 2025, at the Royal Villas Hotel in Ezulwini, the conference will bring together approximately 250 delegates representing local and regional MSMEs, private sector businesses, Government ministries, financial institutions, and international development organisations.

Speaking during the launch at the Ministry's boardroom on Tuesday, Minister Manqoba Khumalo said they were looking forward to unlocking endless opportunities.

Themed 'Unlocking Opportunities for MSMEs in Eswati', the conference aims to strengthen collaboration among entrepreneurs, public-private partners, and development institutions to accelerate economic transformation.

Delegates will participate in trade exhibitions, panel discussions, and industry networking sessions focused on funding access, innovation, market competitiveness, and technology adoption.

The platform will also serve as a national forum to share solutions to common challenges faced by small businesses and promote inclusive growth across sectors.

Khumalo noted that the event reflects the government's ongoing efforts to build a resilient MSME ecosystem under the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Company (SEDCO), which falls under his ministry.

"The Ministry is confident that the conference will become an annual national platform to highlight the contribution of MSMEs to job creation, women and youth empowerment, and economic diversification," he said.

Eswatini targets
12% growth by 2029

The Eswatini MSME Conference 2025 forms part of the government's broader economic transformation drive aligned with His Majesty King Mswati III's Nkwe mandate, which aims to boost national economic growth to 12 per cent by 2029.

Speaking at the launch, Minister for Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo said the conference will complement ongoing national programmes designed to strengthen small business development and expand Eswatini's participation in regional and global markets.

He said the 12 per cent growth target is achievable if the country continues to invest in MSME development, innovation, and competitiveness.

"The MSME sector remains central to achieving inclusive and sustainable growth," he said.

The Minister highlighted that the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Company (SEDCO) is spearheading key interventions to improve access to markets, financing, and technology.

These initiatives, he said, are supported by a range of development partners, including the European Union through the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Through these partnerships, the government is working to review the National MSME Policy, establish a certification and standards scheme, and develop entrepreneurship growth hubs

Over 250 delegates expected at Inaugural MSME Indaba



▲ Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo during the launch.



▲ SEDCO CEO Khethiwe Mhlanga and SME Director Meluleki Dlamini.

to improve the competitiveness of local products domestically and internationally.

Khumalo said these interventions are part of an integrated approach to boost industrialisation and job creation while ensuring that Eswatini's small businesses can thrive in a digital and globally competitive economy.

He expressed confidence that the inaugural MSME Conference will serve as a springboard for collaboration and innovation, positioning the sector as a major driver of national growth.

"The journey towards 12 per cent growth by 2029 demands that all stakeholders government, private sector and development partners work together to unlock opportunities for MSMEs and strengthen Eswatini's economic foundation," Khumalo said.

Govt implores private sector
to support MSMEs

Minister for Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo has called on the private sector to make pledges and contribute resources towards the upcoming Es-

watini MSME Conference 2025, saying collaboration is key to the country's economic recovery and transformation.

Speaking during the launch on Tuesday, the Minister urged companies, government departments and development agencies to support the initiative either financially or in kind, emphasising that collective effort will determine the success of the conference and the wider MSME ecosystem.

"Let us work together to accelerate growth for our local MSMEs. It has been proven globally that collaboration between government, private sector players, financiers, and development partners is key to unlocking MSME potential and building thriving national economies," he said.

He added that the Ministry, through its parastatals and SEDCO, is committed to ensuring entrepreneurs receive the necessary platforms to scale up their competitiveness.

Khumalo highlighted that the European Union and UNDP have already demonstrated their support through programmes that enhance market access, policy reform, and product certification.

He encouraged local businesses to follow their example by aligning their corporate social investments with MSME development initiatives.

The Minister said the upcoming conference will provide a platform for networking, exhibitions, and policy dialogue enabling entrepreneurs, financiers, and policymakers to identify solutions to persistent business challenges such as limited financing, regulatory hurdles, and technology adoption.

"The MSME Conference will not only spotlight the achievements of local entrepreneurs but also present an opportunity for stakeholders to commit to tangible actions that strengthen the sector," he said.

Khumalo further confirmed that in the coming days, the Ministry will roll out a series of public awareness campaigns through print, digital and broadcast media to encourage participation and support.

He concluded by officially declaring the Eswatini MSME Conference 2025 launched, expressing optimism that the platform will grow into a national flagship event for enterprise development.

By Colleen Goko

JOHANNESBURG — S&P Global Ratings said African regional development creditors are poised to expand lending to fill national financing gaps, as capital buffers strengthen and new frameworks increase their borrowing headroom.

The ratings agency said Africa's supra-national lenders are increasingly central to plugging investment shortfalls and stabilising economies as external financing tightens.

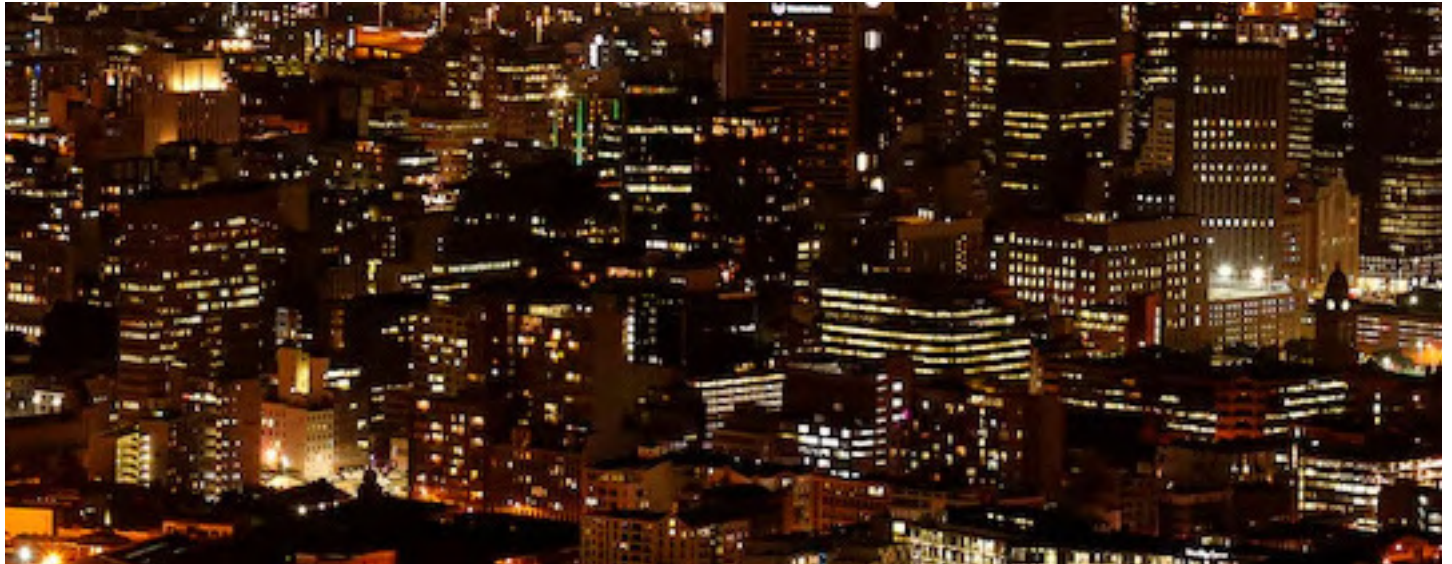
With climate and infrastructure funding dominating their pipelines, S&P expects regional creditors to take on a larger role through 2025.

In its October release of the Supranationals 2025 Special Edition, S&P said updates to its multilateral lending institution framework could lift risk-adjusted capital ratios by about 10 per cent, potentially unlocking \$600-\$800 billion in additional sovereign lending capacity by development banks.

S&P uses the measure to judge how much more an issuer can safely lend without weakening its credit profile. A higher ratio means a stronger ability to absorb losses.

S&P identified the African Development Bank (AfDB), East African Development Bank, African Trade & Investment

African development banks set to expand lending, S&P says



▲Electricity lights up the central business district of Cape Town, South Africa.

Development Insurance, and Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) as key players.

The AfDB has kept its AAA rating with "extremely strong" capital adequacy, expanding its portfolio to \$27.3 billion in 2024 and signaling plans to scale up both

sovereign and private-sector lending in coming years, the report said.

BADEA also lifted its exposure to \$3.8 billion and aims to disburse roughly \$18 billion between 2025 and 2029.

S&P cited hybrid capital issuance and exposure-exchange agreements - where

lenders swap parts of their loan portfolios to spread risk - as tools that bolster resilience amid higher global rates.

Overall lending by multilaterals rose 4 per cent between 2021 and 2024, with Africa accounting for 19 per cent of the total. (Reuters)

Stocks take a breather as markets brace for tech earnings

By Samuel Indyk and Wayne Cole

LONDON — Global shares paused their rally on Tuesday after recent hefty gains as expectations for a thawing in global trade tensions kept risk appetite keen, while the bull run in tech stocks counted on a bumper round of megacap earnings this week.

The likelihood of lower borrowing costs in the U.S. and Canada this week supported bonds and kept the dollar pinned as investors waited to see just how dovish the Federal Reserve might be on the outlook.

Safe-haven gold, meanwhile, fell back below \$4,000 an ounce as a drop of almost 10 per cent in six sessions squeezed leveraged money out of what were very crowded trades.

"There is a fundamental reason why gold has gone up and that is mostly demand from central banks," said George Lagarias, chief economist at Forvis Mazars.

"What we're seeing is a very natural and, dare I say, welcome correction. The market needs to cool off and proceed at a more natural pace," he added.

Stocks pause after records

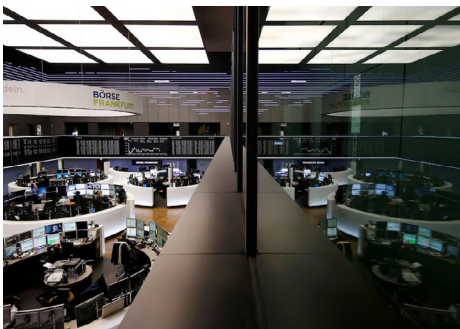
Several global share markets that have recently surged to all-time highs took a breather on Tuesday.

Europe's STOXX 600 was down 0.2 per cent after hitting a lifetime high on Monday. Major bourses in Frankfurt and Paris were close to unchanged on the day, while Britain's FTSE 100 edged up to a new peak.

Spain's IBEX also inched up to touch a new record, surpassing its previous peak at the onset of the financial crisis in 2007.

S&P 500 futures and Nasdaq futures were a touch higher heading towards the Wall Street open.

"Investors are moving with a little more caution on Tuesday as there are significant



▲The trading room of Frankfurt's stock exchange (Boerse Frankfurt) is reflected in the window of the visitor's gallery during afternoon trading session in Frankfurt Germany.

risk events ahead, including the FOMC meeting and the start of the MAG7 earnings reports," said Daniela Hathorn, senior market analyst at Capital.com.

"The outlook for equities is going to depend largely on how these factors interact, with a confirmation from the Fed of future cuts and a positive guidance outlook from the MAG7 as the ideal scenario for more upside."

There are lofty expectations for the "Magnificent Seven" tech heavyweights reporting this week, with Microsoft, Alphabet, Apple, Amazon and Meta Platforms all needing strong results to justify stretched valuations.

Japan's Nikkei eased 0.6 per cent, having surged 2.5 per cent on Monday as a rally in all things tech lifted it to gains of almost 27 per cent so far this year.

Japan's new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi met U.S. President Donald Trump in Tokyo to discuss defence ties, trade and a package of investments in the U.S. under a \$550 billion deal struck earlier this year.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan edged down 0.6 per cent, while Chinese blue chips slipped 0.2 per cent. The Shanghai Composite Index cracked the 4,000 level for the first time since mid-2015, although it closed below. (Reuters)



▲OPEC logo.

Oil falls nearly 2% as investors assess Russia sanctions, OPEC+ output plans

By Stephanie Kelly

LONDON — Oil prices fell by nearly 2 per cent on Tuesday in a third day of declines as investors assess the effect of U.S. sanctions on Russia's two biggest oil companies along with a potential OPEC+ plan to raise output.

Brent crude futures were down \$1.09, or 1.7 per cent, to \$64.53 a barrel at 1253 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures were down \$1.07, or 1.8 per cent, at \$60.24.

"Traders weighed up progress in U.S.-China trade talks and the broader outlook for supply," ANZ said in a morning note.

Brent and WTI last week registered their biggest weekly gain since June, reacting to U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to impose Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia for the first time in his second term, targeting oil companies Lukoil and Rosneft.

Investors continue to chew over how effective those sanctions on Russia might be.

"The oil market is still debating whether the latest sanctions will impact Russian oil exports or not, with market players reducing somewhat the supply risk premium built in last week," said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

The effect of sanctions on oil-exporting countries will be limited because of surplus capacity, International Energy Agency

Executive Director Fatih Birol said on Tuesday.

Following the U.S. sanctions, Russia's second-largest oil producer, Lukoil, said on Monday it would sell its international assets.

This is the most consequential action so far by a Russian company in the wake of Western sanctions over Russia's war in Ukraine, which started in February 2022.

Meanwhile, Indian refiners have not placed new orders for Russian oil purchases since sanctions were imposed, as they await clarity from the government and suppliers, sources told Reuters on Tuesday.

OPEC+, which groups the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, is leaning toward another modest output boost in December, four sources familiar with the talks told Reuters.

Having curbed production for several years in a bid to support the oil market, the group started reversing those cuts in April.

Investors will watch the prospect of a trade deal between the U.S. and China, the world's two biggest oil consumers, with Trump and President Xi Jinping due to meet on Thursday in South Korea.

Beijing hopes Washington can meet it halfway to "prepare for high-level interactions" between the two countries, Foreign Minister Wang Yi told U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a phone call on Monday. (Reuters)

A Sudanese paramilitary force is battling the last pockets of resistance in a Darfur city that has endured a brutal 18-month siege and where a full takeover would entrench a geographical division of the country between rival military factions.

The advance by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has also raised fears of reprisals against the estimated 250,000 people remaining in al-Fashir, the final holdout of the Sudanese army in the western Darfur region, and of an escalation of fighting elsewhere in Sudan.

Since Sunday, when the RSF said it had captured the army's headquarters in al-Fashir, RSF fighters have been detaining fleeing civilians in nearby towns and villages, witnesses as well as humanitarian and military sources said. Some 26,000 people had been displaced by the fighting, the International Organization for Migration said.

Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan confirmed in a broadcast speech his forces had decided to retreat from the city "given the destruction and intentional kill-

Sudanese force's capture of Darfur city could entrench country's split

ings of civilians."

Two Sudanese military sources said on Monday that thousands of soldiers from the army and allied former rebel groups were surrounded by RSF fighters after retreating into neighbourhoods in western al-Fashir.

RISK OF PARTITION

Darfur, the RSF's stronghold, is home to a parallel government it created, and RSF sources say it is also the current base for top RSF leaders including General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti.

"The RSF's full control of the Darfur region could have dangerous and worrying consequences in the future in terms of partition," Massad Boulos, U.S. senior adviser for Arab and African affairs, told Al Jazeera Mubasher.

He compared that prospect to Libya, where competing governments linked to military factions



▲ A ceiling damaged by shelling shrapnel at a displaced persons center in El Fasher, Sudan,

based in the east and west created a de facto geographical split.

The RSF, which has been locked in a civil war with the army for more than two-and-a-half years, could also use the momentum to try to regain ground elsewhere in Sudan, analysts said.

Unless the latest push for U.S.-brokered peace talks makes progress where past attempts have stalled, that could worsen a conflict which has already caused famine, triggered waves of ethnically driven violence and displaced millions of people.

The army was able to oust the RSF from the capital Khartoum earlier this year, but the paramilitaries have amassed advanced weaponry including long-range drones that could allow them to attempt a comeback, one military and one RSF source said.

POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER ADVANCES

U.N. chief Antonio Guterres said foreign provision of weapons and increasing external interference in the war were undermining the chances of a political solution. The army accuses the United Arab Emirates of providing military support to the RSF, which the UAE denies.

"We haven't seen a sign that RSF leadership is content with just western Sudan," said Alan Boswell, Horn of Africa director for Crisis Group. "So as long as they are receiving enough supplies to continue a war effort, they still look like they are continuing to escalate this war."

The RSF made gains over the weekend in the strategic city of Bara, North Kordofan, which puts it within hours of Khartoum.

"Our liberation of al-Fashir is the liberation of Sudan, all

the way to Port Sudan We are coming and we are coming heavy," said RSF second-in-command Abdelrahim Dagalo speaking in a video dated Sunday released by the force from the army's al-Fashir base.

"The new Sudan goes forward, the old Sudan gets destroyed," one soldier can be heard chanting, a key slogan for the RSF-led authority.

In a statement on Monday, the RSF said it would protect civilians in al-Fashir and that humanitarian preparations were being made.

CIVILIANS ROUNDED UP

Two military sources and two humanitarian sources said the RSF appeared to be directing fleeing civilians to towns around al-Fashir where it aimed to set up displacement camps.

Eyewitnesses who arrived in Tawila - a town to the east controlled by a neutral force that has absorbed hundreds of thousands of fleeing civilians - told Reuters they had been directed to the nearby town of Garney on foot, and that hundreds of people including women and children remained in RSF custody there.

Adults and children who had left al-Fashir via unsafe roads were "dehydrated, malnourished, some injured and all traumatized," said Denise Brown, the top U.N. official in Sudan.

Activists have long warned of revenge attacks on civilians from the Zaghawa tribe after the intense fight for the city, as happened in the Zamzam displacement camp to the south.

RSF officials released videos on Sunday saying they were providing safe passage for former fighters, though other videos posted by activists but not verified by Reuters appeared to show RSF fighters shooting unarmed men and cheering around dead bodies.

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Microsoft, OpenAI reach new deal valuing OpenAI at \$500 billion



▲ The ChatGPT app icon on a smartphone in this illustration.

MICROSOFT and OpenAI reached a deal to allow the ChatGPT maker to restructure itself into a public benefit corporation, valuing OpenAI at \$500 billion and giving it more freedom in its business operations.

The deal removes a major constraint on raising capital for OpenAI that has existed since 2019, when it signed a deal with Microsoft that gave the tech giant rights

over much of OpenAI's work in exchange for costly cloud computing services needed to carry it out.

As its ChatGPT service exploded in popularity, those limitations became a notable source of tension between the two companies.

CEO Sam Altman will not get equity in the restructured company, an OpenAI spokesperson said, in a reversal from discussions

last year that he would receive equity. The company has no plans to focus on a potential public offering, the spokesperson said.

MICROSOFT TO KEEP 27% STAKE

Microsoft will still hold a stake of about \$135 billion, or 27%, in OpenAI Group PBC, which will be controlled by the OpenAI Foundation, a nonprofit, the companies said. The Redmond, Washington-based firm has invested \$13.8 billion in OpenAI, with Tuesday's deal implying that Microsoft had generated a return of nearly 10 times its investment.

Microsoft shares rose 2.5%, sending its market value above \$4 trillion again.

The deal keeps the two firms intertwined until at least 2032, with a massive cloud computing contract and with Microsoft retaining some rights to OpenAI products and AI models until then, even if OpenAI reaches artificial general intelligence (AGI), the point at which AI systems can match a well-educated human adult.

With more than 700 million weekly users as of September, ChatGPT has exploded in popularity to become the face of AI for many consumers after OpenAI's founding as a nonprofit AI safety group. As the company grew, the Microsoft deal constrained OpenAI's ability to raise funds from outside investors and secure computing contracts as the crush of ChatGPT users and its research into new models caused its computing needs to skyrocket.

"OpenAI has completed its recapitalization, simplifying its corporate structure," Bret Taylor, the OpenAI Foundation's board chair, said in a blog post. "The nonprofit remains in control of the for-profit, and now

has a direct path to major resources before AGI arrives."

Microsoft's previous 2019 agreement had many provisions that rested on when OpenAI reached that point, and the new deal requires an independent panel to verify OpenAI's claims it has reached AGI.

"OpenAI still faces ongoing scrutiny around transparency, data usage, and safety oversight. But overall, this structure should provide a clearer path forward for innovation and accountability," said Adam Sarhan, CEO of 50 Park Investments.

Gil Luria, head of technology research at investment firm DA Davidson, said the deal "resolves the longstanding issue of OpenAI being organized as a not-for-profit (organization) and settles the ownership rights of the technology vis-à-vis Microsoft. The new structure should provide more clarity on OpenAI's investment path, thus facilitating further fundraising."

Microsoft also said that it has secured a deal with OpenAI where the ChatGPT maker will purchase \$250 billion of Azure cloud computing services. In exchange, Microsoft will no longer have the right of first refusal to provide computing services to OpenAI.

Microsoft also said that it will not have any rights to hardware produced by OpenAI. In March, OpenAI bought longtime Apple design chief Jony Ive's startup io Products in a \$6.5 billion deal.

(Reuters)

PayPal unveils partnership with OpenAI for payments on ChatGPT

PAYPAL, opens new tab said on Tuesday it entered into a deal with OpenAI that will allow ChatGPT users to buy products using the payment firm's platform, sending its shares up 10%.

The company also raised its profit forecast for the year again, banking on resilient consumer spending, and announced its first dividend in its 27-year history.

PayPal said the OpenAI partnership will connect its global merchant network to ChatGPT, enabling businesses to sell products and services within the wildly popular generative AI app that has more than 800 million weekly active users.

AI shopping tools are emerging as the next big shift in online retail, as they can autonomously research, compare and purchase products for consumers.

These tools act as digital assistants by understanding user preferences, setting budgets, evaluating reviews and tracking prices over time.

"Agentic commerce is seen by some as a potential 'silver bullet' to leverage PayPal's large and global user base and reignite growth on what could be (to be proven as it's still very early days) a next-gen commerce platform," analysts at Evercore ISI said.

Wall Street is in the middle of an AI gold rush, as banks, investors and tech firms race to harness AI to reshape how money is made, managed and moved.

PayPal said the integration of its platform with OpenAI will make millions of products discoverable and purchasable through ChatGPT.

"We want PayPal to be available anywhere



▲ A smartphone with the PayPal logo is placed on a laptop in this illustration.

and everywhere that consumers want to pay and we want merchants to be able to sell to consumers anywhere and everywhere," CEO Alex Chriss said in a call with analysts.

RAISES FORECAST, SETS FIRST-EVER DIVIDEND

PayPal said it now expects full-year adjusted EPS between \$5.35 and \$5.39 versus \$5.15 to \$5.30 earlier. Analysts had projected \$5.24, according to estimates compiled by LSEG.

Its board approved a quarterly dividend of 14 cents per share, representing a targeted payout ratio of 10% of adjusted profit.

"We've moved this business from defense to offence and from stabilization to acceleration," Chriss said.

The company has overhauled its business

under Chriss in recent years by prioritizing profitability over aggressive revenue growth.

Once a pandemic-era favorite, PayPal experienced a downturn as consumers returned to physical stores and spending patterns stabilized, prompting the company to focus on high-margin businesses and cost-cutting measures. Apple shares had struggled earlier this year on concerns over tough competition in China and uncertainties around how the company would navigate high U.S. tariffs on Asian economies such as China and India, its major manufacturing hubs.

The latest smartphones, including the iPhone 17 line-up and the iPhone Air, wooed

back customers from Beijing to Moscow within the first few weeks of launch, while the company has swallowed the high costs from the tariffs.

Analysts said the iPhone Air's slim design could help fend off rivals such as Samsung Electronics (005930.KS), opens new tab, while early sales of the iPhone 17 outperformed its predecessor by 14% in the U.S. and China, data from research firm Counterpoint showed.

Brokerage Evercore ISI expects the strong demand for Apple's latest iPhones to help it surpass market expectations for the three-month period ending in September and issue upbeat forecasts for the quarter ending in December.

Apple is the third company to hit the \$4 trillion mark after Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab and Microsoft (MSFT.O), opens new tab. Nvidia currently tops the table with a market value of more than \$4.5 trillion.

Microsoft reclaimed its membership of the exclusive club after shares rose 2.2% following a deal with OpenAI to allow the ChatGPT maker to restructure itself into a public benefit corporation.

Apple's cautious approach to AI had fueled concerns it could lose out on what could be the industry's biggest growth catalyst in decades. Recent reports also indicate that the company is losing a number of its senior artificial intelligence executives to Meta (META.O), opens new tab.

The company was slow to roll out its Apple Intelligence suite, including a ChatGPT integration, while an AI upgrade to its voice assistant Siri has been delayed until next year. (Reuters)

U.S. President Donald Trump lavished praise on Japan's first female leader Sanae Takaichi in Tokyo on Tuesday, welcoming the new prime minister's pledge to accelerate a military buildup, while also signing deals on trade and rare earths.

Takaichi, who took office a week ago, is a protegee of Trump's ally and golfing buddy Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who was assassinated in 2022. She repeatedly invoked that legacy with gifts and references to the warm ties between the two men, and applauded Trump's push to resolve global conflicts.

Trump's spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said the Japanese leader also promised to nominate Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Both governments released a list of projects, opens new tab in the areas of energy, artificial intelligence and critical minerals in which Japanese companies are eyeing investments of up to \$400 billion in the U.S.

Tokyo pledged to provide \$550 billion of strategic U.S. investments, loans and guarantees earlier this year as part of a deal to win a reprieve from Trump's punishing import tariffs.

Those gestures may temper any Trump demands for Tokyo to spend more towards its security in the face of an increasingly assertive China, calls Takaichi sought to head off by promising to fast-track plans to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP.

"Everything I know from Shinzo and others, you will be one of the great prime ministers," Trump told Takaichi as they sat down to discussions accompanied by aides at Tokyo's Akasaka Palace. Becoming Japan's first female prime minister was "a big deal", Trump added.

TAKAICHI INVOKES ABE LEGACY

Takaichi repeatedly referred to Abe's affection for Trump and gave him the former prime minister's putter encased in glass, a golf bag signed by Japanese major winner Hideki Matsuyama and a gold-leaf golf ball.

Venezuela's Nobel winner backs Trump as Maduro pressure builds

ON January 6, 2025, four members of Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado's team piled onto a couch in a Capitol Hill office, across from Mike Waltz, who was soon to become Donald Trump's national security adviser. Machado made a cameo via video call from her hideout in Venezuela.

During the meeting, David Smolansky, who runs Machado's office in Washington, explained how Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua was controlled by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, according to two people present who described the meeting. Waltz scribbled notes the whole time, they said.

The meeting, details of which have not been previously reported, was part of a high-stakes gamble by Nobel Peace Prize-winner Machado to align with hawks in the Trump team who argue that Maduro – through links to criminal gangs – represents a direct threat to U.S. national security, despite U.S. intelligence reports casting doubt on that view.

Reuters conversations with more than 50 sources, including former and current U.S. officials, members of the Venezuelan opposition and informants to U.S. security agencies, provide new details about efforts by members of Machado's team to help the Trump administration build the case for an aggressive stance against the Venezuelan government, despite worries about blowback from Trump's policies on Venezuelan immigrants living in the United States.

Opposition leaders held multiple meetings with the Trump team before and after his inauguration, seeking increased pressure



Trump heaps praise on Japan's first female leader, signs rare earths deal

Trump also met Abe's widow, Akie Abe, who gifted him a painting with the words PEACE written in large gold lettering.

Abe was the first foreign leader to meet Trump after his 2016 election victory and the two went on to forge a close bond over several rounds of golf in the United States and Japan.

Over a lunch of U.S. rice and beef, and vegetables from Takaichi's hometown of Nara, she presented Trump with a map of major investments Japanese firms have made in the United States since his last visit in 2019.

Japanese companies on the list of possible future investors included Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (7011.T), opens new tab, SoftBank (9434.T), opens new tab, Hitachi (6501.T), opens new tab, Murata Manufac-

turing (6981.T), opens new tab and Panasonic (6752.T), opens new tab, among others.

Japanese carmaker Toyota would also open auto plants in the United States to the tune of \$10 billion, Trump said.

Toyota did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump said Japan also plans to purchase Ford's (F.N), opens new tab burly F-150 pickup truck, now rarely seen on the country's narrow roads, a symbol of how far Tokyo is willing to go to win his favour.

Trump praised Japan's efforts to buy more U.S. defence equipment, while Takaichi said his role in securing ceasefires between Cambodia and Thailand, and Israel and Palestinian militants, was an "unprecedented" achievement.

They signed a deal to bolster supplies of critical minerals and rare earths, as their nations seek to reduce China's dominance of some areas of key electronic components.

After lunch, Trump met relatives of people abducted by North Korea in the 1960s and 1970s. While some were later repatriated, Japan continues to press Pyongyang for a full accounting of all the abductees and the return of any who remain alive, a cause championed by Abe.

Trump, who has repeatedly said he is open to meeting North Korea's reclusive leader Kim Jong Un during his five-day Asia visit, said the U.S. was with the families "all the way".

(Reuters)



▲ Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado greets supporters atop a vehicle during a campaign rally for the presidential election, in Merida state, Venezuela.

on Maduro. Allies contributed research for reports supporting the stance. Team members fed details about Maduro and the gangs to security agencies, the sources said.

The reporting suggests the opposition lent legitimacy to the idea that Maduro controls Tren de Aragua, advocating for the theory publicly and in private, seeing its interests align with the Trump administration. Reuters could not establish whether the campaign influenced Trump's policies.

In the months after the Waltz meeting, Washington designated Tren de Aragua as a terrorist organization threatening the United States and under Maduro's control. It has offered a \$50 million reward for his arrest.

Since September, the U.S. military has bombed at least eight drug boats off the

coast of Venezuela, part of a major naval build-up in the Caribbean. Only a fraction of U.S.-bound cocaine passes through the South American country, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Trump said the 11 people killed in the first strike were members of Tren de Aragua, without offering evidence. Earlier this month, Trump said he authorized covert CIA operations in Venezuela and has said strikes on its territory might be in the cards.

Machado is unwavering in her support for Trump's militarized strategy, saying Maduro should step down to prevent escalation.

Machado declined to comment for this story. Waltz, now the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, did not respond to questions about the January 6 meeting.

Venezuela's Information Ministry did not respond to detailed requests for comment from Maduro about the allegations made in this story.

In office since 2013, Maduro has overseen economic collapse, and is accused of extrajudicial executions, corruption and political repression, opens new tab. Backed by the military, he refused to relinquish power despite international recognition that the Machado-led opposition won 70% of the vote in a presidential election last year.

Sanctions, negotiations and criminal indictments have failed to unseat him.

"You cannot have freedom without strength when you are facing a criminal structure," Machado said, when asked on NPR after her October 10 Nobel win whether the U.S. military should intervene to restore democracy to Venezuela, which has the world's largest proven oil reserves.

Machado dedicated her prize to the Venezuelan people and to Trump, "for his decisive support of our cause."

Maduro told Trump in a September letter it was "absolutely false" his government was connected to drug gangs. Maduro says accusations of rights crimes are untrue and insists Venezuela is a democracy.

Reuters was unable to reach any representatives of Tren de Aragua.

Several governments in Latin America say Tren de Aragua, originally a prison gang and now present across South America, is a major threat in their countries. However, a U.S. appeals court rejected the idea it was mounting "an invasion" into the United States in a case brought by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) against the administration's deportation policy. (Reuters)

Christian Maz to take ‘One Man Show’ to America

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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CHRISTIAN MAZ, one of Eswatini’s most celebrated poets and performers, is preparing to take his dynamic One Man Show across the Atlantic to the United States of America next year.

This exciting development followed an exclusive interview, after the resounding success of the fourth edition of his show, held last weekend in Sandton, South Africa. The One-Man Show has become a powerful platform for Christian Maz to showcase his poetic talent and connect deeply with diverse audiences. The recent Sandton event marked a significant milestone, drawing enthusiastic crowds and earning high praise for its originality and emotional impact. Building on this momentum, Christian Maz revealed that the upcoming American edition is part of a broader vision to globalise his performances.

“For the 4th edition, we chose America because we are trying to travel globally with these shows until they become the greatest thing that has ever happened to us,” Christian Maz explained. His ambition is clear: to elevate the One Man Show from a regional sensation to an internationally recognised artistic phenomenon. Christian Maz credits much of his success to the collaborative spirit that has surrounded his journey.

He highlighted the vital role played by the Eswatini diaspora, particularly students at South African universities, who have embraced and championed his work. “EmaSwati in universities in South Africa did justice,” he said, acknowledging their



▲ Christian Maz.

enthusiastic support and engagement. Moreover, Christian Maz emphasised the importance of fellow Eswatini artists who have contributed creatively and morally to the One-Man Show’s growth. Their collective efforts have helped shape the show’s unique identity and ensured it resonates authentically with audiences from various backgrounds.

Looking ahead to the American edition, Christian Maz expressed profound gratitude and humility. “It’s all grace and God. God’s works so humble me,” he shared, reflecting on the spiritual strength that fuels his artistic endeavours. The decision to bring the One Man Show to America opens exciting new opportunities for cultural exchange and artistic growth.

DJ Young headlines ‘Soul & RnB Picnic’

MANZINI is gearing up for an electrifying musical experience, as South African music star DJ Young has been confirmed to headline the much-anticipated ‘Soul & R&B Picnic’ scheduled for December 29, 2025.

The event will take place at the scenic Manzini Club Lawns, running from 10 a.m. until late into the night, promising a day filled with soulful beats and vibrant rhythms. Themed ‘White Tops and Blue Jeans,’ the picnic invites attendees to embrace a casual yet stylish dress code, setting the tone for a relaxed but unforgettable celebration of soul and R&B music.

Ticket prices have been structured to accommodate a wide range of fans: early bird general admission is priced at E100, with main tickets available for E150, and at-the-gate tickets set at E200. For those seeking premium experience, early bird VIP tickets cost E350, main VIP tickets are E400, and gate VIP tickets will be E450. Tickets are conveniently available at all Galitos outlets in Eswatini.

DJ Young, whose birth name is Moloko Alfred Lodwick Manganyi, is more than just a DJ; he is a passionate music producer and performer who has carved out a significant niche in the South African music scene. Since embarking on his musical journey in the mid-2000s, DJ Young has become synonymous with energetic performances and expert production, earning him a loyal fan base and



▲ DJ Young.

critical acclaim.

Raised in Johannesburg’s Norwood neighbourhood, DJ Young was immersed in the vibrant sounds of house music from an early age. His formative years were shaped by the influence of legendary artists such as DJ Fresh, Oskido, Glen Lewis, Frankie Knuckles, Iggy Smalls, and Kaskade. These icons inspired him to delve deeply into the art of DJing and music production, setting

the foundation for his future career.

Starting in 2005, DJ Young dedicated himself to producing music, spending countless hours honing his craft and mastering the nuances of house music. His commitment paid off as his work began to receive positive feedback from friends and online music communities, fueling his ambition to rise among the top DJs and producers in the industry.



▲ Nkhondlo Cho event organiser Caregiver.

Nkhondlo Cho Poetry Show postponed

THE highly anticipated poetry show ‘Nkhondlo Cho’ has been postponed, much to the disappointment of fans and poetry enthusiasts eagerly awaiting the event.

Originally scheduled for October 31, 2025, from 2 pm to 5 pm, at the William Pitcher Dining Hall, the postponement comes amid unforeseen circumstances involving the immediate closure of the college hosting the event. The show was set to mark a significant comeback for Soul Therapy, a collective renowned for its impactful and thought-provoking contributions to the poetry scene over the years. Organiser Caregiver announced the postponement, citing the college closure and uncertainty surrounding its reopening as the primary reasons for the delay. “We’d like to notify you about the postponement of our event, which we were supposed to host at William Pitcher this Friday. This is due to the immediate closure of the college and the uncertainty of its reopening. Even though we’ve postponed the event at William Pitcher, we’re still going to host our ‘Nkhondlo Cho’ at Kwaluseni campus on a date to be communicated soon. We’re deeply sorry for any inconvenience caused. Thank you for understanding, siyacolisa kakhulu,” Caregiver explained.

Mission

Despite the setback, Caregiver reassured poetry lovers that the spirit and mission of Soul Therapy remain undeterred. The collective’s goal with ‘Nkhondlo Cho’ is to reignite hope and reconnect with audiences who may have felt distanced during the group’s recent absence. “We want to put it out there to the people that ‘Soul Therapy’ is back and ready to deliver just like it has been doing over the years. We also want to revive hope to those who had lost hope in us,” he stated.

‘Nkhondlo Cho’ was positioned to be a landmark event, designed to appeal not only to seasoned poetry aficionados but also to newcomers curious about the art form. Caregiver extended a warm invitation to all, emphasising that the show’s unique blend of storytelling, rhythm, and emotion would captivate even those who may not initially consider themselves fans of poetry.

Young Zesh ready for Mbombela

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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ESWATINI musician Young Zesh is gearing up for a landmark performance at one of Mpumalanga's most anticipated events, the RMT All White Celebration.

The event is scheduled for November 1, 2025, at the Valencia Sports Ground in Mbombela. In an exclusive interview, Young Zesh shared his excitement and readiness to take the stage alongside some of the region's biggest names.

The RMT All White Celebration is renowned for its electrifying atmosphere and diverse lineup, drawing music lovers from across South Africa and neighbouring countries. For Young Zesh, being invited to perform at such a prestigious event is a significant milestone in his career. "The RMT All White Celebration is one of the biggest platforms in Mpumalanga, and being part of it means a lot to me," he said. "It's a chance to showcase what I stand for as Young Zesh and to connect with new audiences who've been supporting my journey from afar."

Young Zesh's music is characterised by its authentic blend of cultural influences, heartfelt lyrics, and dynamic rhythms. His ability to fuse traditional sounds with contemporary beats has earned him a loyal fanbase and respect among fellow artists. Performing alongside established acts at the RMT event is both a humbling and motivating experience for him. "Performing alongside big artists is both humbling and inspiring. It pushes me to bring my best



▲ Young Zesh.

energy and reminds me that the dream is real," he explained. "I have so much respect for everyone on that lineup, and I'm excited to share the same stage and deliver something unforgettable."

The artist promises that his set will be a memorable journey for the audience, combining emotional depth with high-energy performances. "People can expect a high-energy, emotional, and authentic set from me. I'm bringing a mix of my signature sound, new unreleased vibes, and some crowd favourites," Young Zesh revealed. "It's going to be a full experience,

something that represents growth, culture, and passion."

Beyond the music, the RMT All White Celebration is known for its vibrant community vibe, where attendees dress in all white, symbolising unity and celebration. Young Zesh encouraged fans and newcomers alike to join the festivities. "To everyone out there, make sure you pull up to the RMT All White Celebration! It's going to be pure fire, good music, good energy, and beautiful people all in white. Let's make history together, Mbombela see you there," he concluded.

Karaoke Nights set to electrify IF's Lounge

ESWATINI'S music scene is set to ignite with energy and excitement this week with the much-anticipated 'Karaoke Nights.'

Scheduled for this Wednesday evening at IF's Lounge, the event is set to be an unforgettable fusion of live music, laughter, and a vibrant community atmosphere, running from 6 p.m. well into the night. The spotlight will shine on some of Eswatini's most talented performers, including Zwile, Mayeem, and Best Duo, who are expected to deliver captivating performances that showcase the depth and diversity of local music. Complementing the live acts, the night will also feature performances by resident DJs, with the charismatic Thando taking the role of MC to keep the energy high and the crowd engaged throughout the evening. As a special touch, the event doubles as the 'Spring Bash Thank You Party,' celebrating the success of previous gatherings and the growing community spirit around this midweek musical tradition. Entry to 'Karaoke Nights' is completely free, and guests will be treated to a complimentary meal, ensuring that the event is accessible and welcoming to all. Attendees are encouraged to embrace the all-white dress code, adding a stylish and cohesive visual element to the night's festivities. In an exclusive interview, Mistosoul, the Entertainment Manager at IF's Lounge, shared his enthusiasm about the event's growing popularity as it enters its third month. He attributes the success of 'Karaoke Nights' to a genuine passion for music and a strong commitment to nurturing local talent. "We have been receiving massive support



▲ Zwile.

for this mid-week concept," Mistosoul said. "Our love for music and commitment to supporting local artists and musicians in the country drives us to create this platform. This event is another opportunity for us to uplift local musicians while providing our patrons with an entertaining and laid-back atmosphere where live musicians can mesmerise the audience."

Mistosoul also highlighted the event's unique theme, which transcends a simple dress code. The combination of denim and white is designed to foster a sense of unity

and style among attendees, transforming the evening into a celebration of community and culture. "The denim and white theme add a fashionable touch to the evening, making it not just a night of music but also a celebration of community and culture," he explained. He further emphasised the warm hospitality that IF's Lounge is renowned for, assuring that every guest and performer will feel welcomed and appreciated. "We pride ourselves on delivering the best experience for our guests, and we want every musician and DJ to shine on that night," he added.



▲ Abel Kein.

Ivyson Tour welcomes Abel Kein, OG King

ESWATINI is on the brink of a historic musical event as one of Africa's most influential hip-hop artists, Nasty C, prepares to headline the Ivyson Tour, alongside Abel Kein and OG King.

The event is set to be held at Mdzimba View Shisanyama on October 31, 2025. The Ivyson Tour, named after Nasty C's moniker "Ivyson," represents much more than a concert series. It is a powerful celebration of personal growth, cultural identity, and legacy building. Vuyani Ndzimandze, the event curator, highlighted the special significance of bringing the tour to Eswatini. "The Eswatini edition is about connecting that energy with our local creative culture, giving fans a world-class experience while showcasing the best homegrown talent," he said. "It's more than a concert, it's a movement that celebrates ambition, youth, and self-belief."

Ticket sales have reflected the excitement surrounding the event, with early bird tickets selling out rapidly. General presale tickets are currently available at E200, while the Ivyson VIP experience offers enhanced access and amenities for E500. For those seeking the ultimate experience, the Ivyson Max tickets are priced at E800, promising premium seating and exclusive perks. General admission tickets at the door will cost E250, ensuring the event remains accessible to a broad audience eager to witness this landmark performance.

Moment

The concert's lineup promises an electrifying night, headlined by Nasty C's dynamic performance. Alongside him, a carefully curated roster of top local artists and DJs will bring their distinctive styles and energy, creating a diverse and engaging musical journey. Ndzimandze assured fans that the production values would match the scale of the event. "Expect top-tier sound, lights, visuals, and an atmosphere that will leave people talking long after the night ends," he said. "From Nasty C's unmatched performance to a lineup of local stars bringing fire to the stage, this is going to be Eswatini's biggest music moment of the year." At its core, the Ivyson Tour carries a message of unity, inspiration, and the relentless pursuit of dreams. It aims to create a space where music and culture converge to uplift and motivate young people, reinforcing the power of self-belief and ambition. "The Ivyson Tour is about unity, inspiration, and living out your dreams in real time," Ndzimandze emphasised. "Whether you're coming for the music, the culture, or the vibe, you'll be part of something legendary. Don't miss your chance to witness history in Eswatini on October 31."

Mariah the Scientist set to perform in SA for the first time in 2026

GET ready, South Africa - American singer and songwriter Mariah the Scientist is coming. The R&B star will headline the WAV Festival, a new event presented by Afro Nation, which aims to celebrate the rising influence of R&B across Africa. The festival is set to take place on January 2, 2026, at the Green Point Track in Cape Town, marking The Scientist's debut performance in South Africa.

Acts

Joining her on stage will be a mix of international and local acts, including Kelvin Momo, Shekinah, Manana, Nanette, Kujenga and Yandani, with more names to be announced. The line-up promises a blend of smooth R&B and soul, bringing together artists who are shaping the sound of contemporary African music. Born Mariah Buckles in Atlanta, Georgia, The Scientist first gained attention in 2018 with her debut EP, "To Die For", which she released independently while studying biology at St. John's University - hence her stage name. Her blend of emotional lyricism and dreamy, melodic production quickly caught the attention of industry heavyweights. In 2019, she signed with RCA Records and released her debut studio album, "MASTER", executive produced by Tory Lanez. The project introduced her distinct sound - intimate storytelling wrapped in minimalist, spacey production - and earned her critical acclaim as one of the most promising new voices in R&B. She followed it up with "RY RY WORLD" in 2021, which featured singles like "Always n Forever" (featuring Lil Baby) and "2 You". The album cemented her reputation for crafting vulnerable yet confident music that explores themes of love, heartbreak and self-discovery. In 2023, she released "To Be Eaten Alive", her third project and most personal work to



American singer and songwriter Mariah the Scientist.

date, featuring tracks like "From a Woman" and "Bout Mine". The Scientist's music often draws from real-life experiences, and her airy vocals paired with cinematic production have helped her stand out in a crowded R&B scene. Her style combines classic R&B sensibilities with a futuristic edge, appealing to both old-school fans and new listeners alike. Her upcoming performance in Cape Town will give fans a rare chance to experience her live vocals and storytelling up close. (IOL)

A-Reece, Rickelle Jones celebrate Brielle's first birthday with heartfelt moments

SOUTH African rapper A-Reece (real name Lehlogonolo Ronald Mataboge) and his long-time partner, Rickelle Jones, celebrated their daughter Brielle's first birthday and took to Instagram to share a glimpse of the celebration. Jones shared a carousel of images on Sunday, October 26, showcasing the colourful birthday celebrations, with balloons in the room as they were surrounded by loved ones. Brielle wore an adorable white tutu skirt and wore a birthday crown, while Jones wore a white dress as well that features purple and green leaves printed all over it. A-Reece kept it simple and classy with a white shirt, blue jeans and white sneakers. In order to protect her daughter's privacy, the content creator only shared pictures with her daughter's face away from the

camera. She simply captioned her post: "one of one." While the rapper commented: "familia primero", which translates to family first. The couple announced last July that they are expecting after proudly displaying the baby bump in a 90s-like photo shoot. After announcing their pregnancy, Jones shared her pregnancy journey with her followers through stunning photoshoots she did throughout her pregnancy. In November, she announced the arrival of her baby with an adorable photo of the baby's tiny hand resting on her chest as she also revealed her name in the caption and wrote: "Brielle." Jones and A-Reece have been in a loving relationship for a long time, even before his success as a musician. Their relationship has been documented on social media, with Jones sharing glimpses of their lives with fans on social



South African rapper A-Reece (real name Lehlogonolo Ronald Mataboge) and his long-time partner, Rickelle Jones, celebrated their daughter Brielle's first birthday. media through her Instagram as well as her YouTube accounts. While they post about their relationship online, the pair always keep their relationship matters private. Social media users flooded the comment section as they wished Brielle a happy birthday. (Reuters)

How a Naples museum protects its treasures

WITH the art world on high alert for any sign of the missing Louvre jewels, one Italian collection says its method of creating a photographic fingerprint of its own priceless gems and artefacts could make them harder to break apart and sell on. A team of gemology experts has spent more than a decade studying the most valuable pieces of the collection at Naples' Tesoro di San Gennaro. Using microscopes and specialised equipment, the team has photographed more than 10,000 stones. As well as the armed security and alarmed displays that provide physical protection for the site, the process has allowed them to certify the unique characteristics of the gems to provide a kind of forensic fingerprint that experts liken to DNA. Major European museums have declined to comment on their security protocols in the wake of the Louvre theft, but the Naples method offers a rare insight into some of the measures used by institutions. "If the Louvre had adopted this security system, thieves would not be able to resell the stones from the stolen jewellery," says Paolo Lillo, a former professor of investigative gemology at La Sapienza University in Rome, who led the mapping work, told Reuters. "The stones would be identified, even if cut, at the first official quality certification by an international body." Reuters was unable to verify whether the French museum had undertaken a comparable analysis of the stolen stones. The museum did not respond to requests for comment. Louvre director Laurence des Cars has said she had repeatedly warned that the centuries-old building's security was in a dire state. She said exterior security cameras did not offer full coverage of the facade, adding that the window through which the thieves broke in was not monitored by CCTV. The Paris prosecutor said on Sunday suspects had been arrested over the robbery, but declined to give further details, saying newspaper reports about the arrests would hinder the search for the stolen jewellery and the perpetrators. The San Gennaro treasures, a trove of sacred art and jewels, have been assembled over seven centuries from donations from popes, royals and the wealthy. It includes a cross adorned with emeralds and diamonds given by Joseph Bonaparte, the eldest brother of Napoleon, who was king of Naples in the 1800s. Nestled beside Naples' cathedral, the museum houses over 21,000 pieces, among them a mitre encrusted with nearly 4,000 precious stones and a necklace with over 1,500 gems. (Reuters)



A team of gemology experts has spent more than a decade studying the most valuable pieces of the collection at Naples' Tesoro di San Gennaro.



WEARING multiple layers, staying hydrated, and warming up before exercising can help you stay safe and enjoy the cold weather.

There may be some risks for people with certain conditions.

Staying physically active, whether in hot or cold weather, is one of the best things you can do for your health. It can help support your brain, heart, and mental health, reduce your risk of chronic illness, and help you live longer.

Some research suggests that sedentary behavior becomes more prevalent in winter. This is possibly due to the perceived challenges of adapting to environmental changes, such as lower temperatures.

However, there are several ways to stay active and motivated during cold weather, whether you're outside or inside. Being active in cold weather may even bolster some of the benefits of exercise.

Continue reading to learn about tips for staying active in cold weather, including its benefits and potential risks.

Why is it important to stay active during cold weather?

Staying active year-round is important for maintaining your physical and mental health, as well as preventing chronic conditions like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

Sedentary activity is associated with several changes in key bodily functions, such as:

- ▶ decreasing energy, muscle mass, and bone density
- ▶ increasing fat mass, blood pressure, and inflammation
- ▶ decreasing immune function and metabolic rate

Consider speaking with a healthcare professional or personal trainer if you're unsure how to stay active in cold weather. They can help develop a program tailored to your needs and provide guidance and tips to support you.

Warm up before cold weather exercise

Cold weather can trigger several physiological changes that impact your energy, muscle function, and flexibility.

For instance, your blood vessels constrict (vasoconstriction) when they're cold, and your metabolic rate increases to help retain as much heat as possible. Your muscles, tendons, and joints are also stiff.

Warming up before exercise can help reduce your risk of injury and naturally increase blood flow to retain heat.

Before exercise, spend 5 to 10 minutes performing dynamic exercises to warm up your body.

Wear proper layers to stay warm

Wearing proper clothes can help you enjoy, stay safe, and perform well during cold weather activities.

The most effective method for staying dry and warm is to wear multiple layers of clothing. This can help regulate your body temperature by preventing overheating or hypothermia.

The three main types of layers include:

▶ **Base layer:** This is the layer closest to your skin. Choose a breathable layer that can wick away sweat. The aim of this layer is to eliminate moisture while providing some insulation.



▶ **Mid-layer:** This thicker layer goes over your base layer to help trap in heat. There are many types of materials and thicknesses, and the best type will depend on the weather and the intensity of exercise.

▶ **Outer layer:** This layer goes over your mid-layer. It's designed to protect you from the elements, including wind, rain, and snow.

Many people also choose to change their layers between warming up and exercise to help prevent the accumulation of sweat, which can cause wet clothes and keep you colder.

Stay hydrated and eat enough food

Your body uses more energy to regulate its temperature when it's exposed to cold weather, which means you burn more calories and use more water.

It's important to eat a balanced meal that's high in carbohydrates 1 to 2 hours

before exercising in cold weather, as your body uses more glycogen to stay warm.

Low temperatures also reduce your perception of thirst, which means you may be less inclined to drink water. However, cold air can cause excessive water loss, thereby increasing the risk of dehydration.

Before exercising in cold weather, fill up your water bottle with hot water to prevent it from getting cold. You can also bring a hot flask of tea.

Be prepared

Being prepared before performing physical activity outside can help prevent accidents and keep you warm. Some ways to help you prepare include:

- ▶ checking the forecast for precipitation and wind chill
- ▶ having the right equipment, such as nonskid shoes or shoe crampons
- ▶ packing an extra layer
- ▶ letting others know where you're going

carrying a fully charged phone with you

Physical activities to try in cold weather

There are many cold weather activities that can help support your fitness goals, and these will likely vary depending on where you live. Some examples of outdoor activities you can do include:

- ▶ walking, jogging, or hiking
- ▶ raking leaves
- ▶ cycling
- ▶ cross-country skiing
- ▶ alpine skiing
- ▶ ice skating
- ▶ snowshoeing
- ▶ snow shovelling

Keeping active in cold weather doesn't mean you only have to go outside. For instance, you can try:

- ▶ joining a fitness class, such as yoga, Pilates, and Zumba
- ▶ swimming or trying aquatic exercises



at an indoor pool
► indoor sports, such as squash, soccer, and rock climbing

Exercising at home during the winter

There are many at-home workouts you can do to stay active. Following online videos is an effective way to stay motivated and on track. There are also many apps, forums, and online group classes you can join if you'd like to be part of a group.

What are the benefits of exercising in cold weather?

Some research has found that exercising in cold weather may enhance the effects of certain exercise benefits. This may include increasing:

- the number of calories you burn
- immune system function
- oxygen to the brain, thereby increasing brain function
- endorphins, thereby boosting your mood

What are the risks of exercising in cold weather?

There may be possible risks to consider when exercising in cold weather, especially if you live in an area with snow, ice, or extremely low temperatures.

According to a 2021 review, exercising in cold weather may affect the respiratory and dermal (skin) systems. For instance, exposure to cold air can cause dry skin and more severe conditions, such as frostnip and frostbite.

Inhaling too much cold air may cause exercise-induced bronchoconstriction, potentially leading to excessive mucus production, wheezing, and chest pain.

If you have a heart condition like coronary heart disease (CHD), speak with a doctor about the best cold weather exercises for you. Cold weather may increase the risk of heart attack or stroke in people with CHD because it increases cardiac workload, which means the heart works harder to pump blood. Another possible risk of exercising in cold weather is hypothermia, which occurs when your body temperature drops below 95°F (35°C). Some factors that may increase the risk of hypothermia include:

- being outside for long periods
- not eating enough food
- not drinking enough water
- wearing wet clothes
- stopping high intensity exercise abruptly

Warming up and being prepared before exercising can help you prevent any risks.

The bottom line

There are many different activities you can do to stay active during the cold weather.

Some outdoor activities include walking, skating, skiing, and shoveling snow, while some indoor activities include swimming, playing squash, and doing yoga.

It's important to be prepared before exercising outside in cold weather to help prevent injuries. This includes wearing multiple layers, staying well hydrated, and warming up.

Consider speaking with a healthcare professional or personal trainer if you're unsure how to start exercising outside. They can develop a program tailored to your needs. **Healthline**

Kiwi, supplements may improve constipation

THE British Dietetic Association has released dietary guidelines for chronic constipation.

These guidelines discuss specific foods, supplements, and drinks that may provide relief. Dietitians say other lifestyle choices, such as exercise and stress management, may also help. If constipation persists or is accompanied by other symptoms, it's important to see a doctor.

Chronic constipation affects more than 1 in 10 people worldwide. This condition can disrupt daily life with symptoms like infrequent bowel movements, hard stools, and abdominal discomfort. While many people turn to dietary changes for relief, past medical guidelines have mostly focused on general advice to eat more fiber or drink enough water, offering little detail on what actually works. Now, for the first time, the British Dietetic Association (BDA) has developed comprehensive, evidence-based dietary guidelines for adults with chronic constipation, drawing on results from 75 clinical trials. The guidelines were published on October 13 in the Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics.

These recommendations identify specific foods, supplements, and drinks that can improve symptoms — and reveal which popular remedies may not help at all.

Dietary approaches to chronic constipation

To create the new guidelines, the BDA convened a Guideline Steering Committee of seven experts in nutrition, dietetics, gastroenterology, and gut physiology.

Their goal was to review the totality of scientific evidence on diet-based approaches for chronic idiopathic constipation in otherwise healthy adults.

Secondary constipation — that's caused by another condition or medications — was not the focus, though the researchers say the findings may be cautiously applied in those cases.

The team conducted four systematic reviews and meta-analyses, each targeting a different category of dietary intervention:

- fiber supplements
- probiotic and synbiotic supplements
- food, vitamin, and mineral supplements
- foods, drinks, and whole diets

Only randomized controlled trials (RCTs) were included for supplements, to ensure high-quality evidence.

Other types of intervention trials were also reviewed for foods and drinks, but guideline statements were only made when at least two RCTs supported the finding.

The researchers searched electronic databases between February 2022 and July 2023. Two reviewers independently screened studies, extracted data, and assessed risk of bias, resolving any differences with additional team members.

Additionally, wherever possible, they pooled results in meta-analyses.

Effect sizes were reported as either risk ratios for binary outcomes (such as the number of people who improved) or mean differences for continuous measures (such as bowel movements per week).

The committee used the GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment,



Development and Evaluation) approach to rate the quality of evidence — from high to very low — and to determine whether each recommendation should be “strong” or “qualified.” A strong recommendation meant the intervention was likely to benefit most people with chronic constipation; a qualified recommendation meant benefits might depend more on individual circumstances.

Statements were finalized through a modified Delphi consensus process, requiring at least 85% agreement among committee members.

New guidelines for constipation relief

The guidelines include 59 dietary recommendation statements — 27 strong and 32 qualified — across supplements, foods, and drinks. Evidence quality was often limited: 66% of statements were based on low-quality evidence, 20% on very low, and only 14% on moderate-quality studies.

Fiber supplements

Psyllium stood out as the most consistently effective fiber supplement, increasing the number of people who experienced relief, boosting stool frequency, and softening stool consistency. Some other fibers, like polydextrose or inulin mixtures, did not improve treatment response. Fiber supplements could increase flatulence, but generally didn't worsen bloating or abdominal pain.

Probiotics

Overall, probiotics slightly increased the chance of symptom improvement and raised stool frequency, although effects varied widely by strain. Bifidobacterium lactis increased stool frequency but not consistency, while multi-strain probiotics slightly softened stools.

Few strains showed consistent benefits for global symptoms, and no single strain could be recommended across all outcomes.

Side effects were generally mild and similar to placebo.

Synbiotics

Supplements combining probiotics and prebiotics did not improve stool frequency, stool consistency, or global symptoms, based on the small number of available trials.

Mineral and herbal supplements

Magnesium oxide improved both overall constipation symptoms and quality of life, with moderate-quality evidence.

Senna, despite its popularity, showed no consistent benefit for treatment response or stool frequency when results from two trials were combined.

Specific foods

Kiwifruit improved certain symptoms, such as reducing abdominal pain and the sensation of incomplete evacuation, and may be preferred over psyllium for people prone to bloating or gas. Rye bread increased bowel movements but also slightly worsened overall gastrointestinal symptom scores compared to white bread, though the effect was small and might not matter to all patients.

Drinks

High mineral-content water — particularly those rich in magnesium and sulfate — was more effective than low-mineral water at helping people achieve softer stools or more frequent bowel movements. However, it did not improve overall symptoms, abdominal pain, or quality of life compared to low-mineral water. The mineral content in the studies was far higher than typical U.S. tap water. **Healthline**

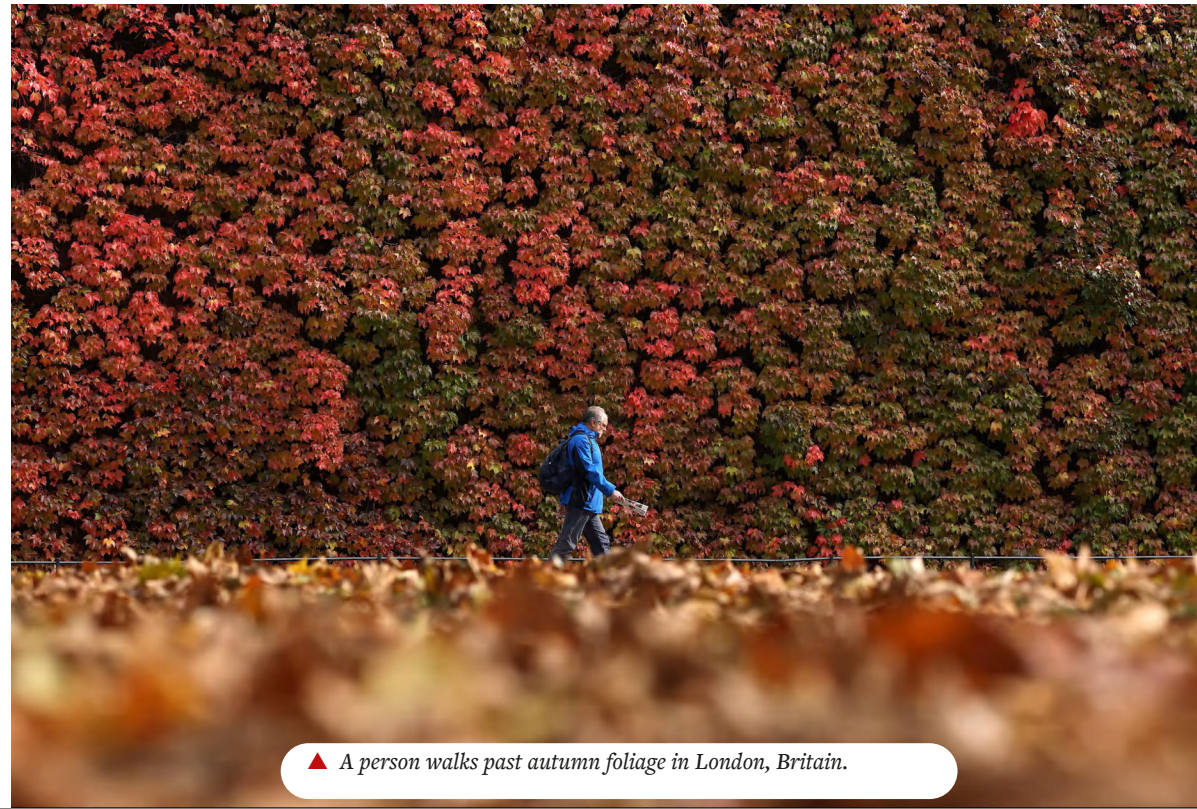
NEWS IN PICTURES



▲ A general view of athletes in action during the women's cycling points race at the UCI Track World Championships in Santiago, Chile.



▲ Pope Leo XIV prays as the Book of the Gospels is held over newly ordained Miroslaw Stanislaw Wachowski during a Mass for his Episcopal Ordination in St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican.



▲ A person walks past autumn foliage in London, Britain.



▲ Women hold photographs of Thailand's Queen Mother Sirikit, 93, as people react following the announcement of her death, outside King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand.



▲ A firefighting helicopter drops water over food warehouses hit by an overnight Russian missile strike in Kyiv, Ukraine.



▲ Members of the Royal Thai Army fire a cannon salute outside the Grand Palace, after the body of Thailand's Queen Mother Sirikit was transferred there from King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital following her death, in Bangkok, Thailand.

Dimitrov wins on comeback as Paris Masters enters new era

GRIGOR Dimitrov returned to action by beating Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 in the first round of the Paris Masters on Monday as the event made its debut in its new La Defense Arena home.

After being held for nearly 40 years at Paris' Bercy Arena, the tournament has moved across the city to set up shop in the cavernous multi-purpose arena.

Opened in 2017, the venue is best known as the home ground of French Top 14 rugby club Racing 92 and for having played host to the swimming events at the Olympics last year. It also welcomes concerts and political rallies.

Now in its current guise as a tennis venue, La Defense Arena boasts the second largest showpiece court on the current global tennis circuit - second only in size terms to the US Open's Arthur Ashe Stadium.

It was the scene of a triumphant comeback for former world number three Dimitrov as he played his first match since having to retire injured from his fourth-round match at Wimbledon when leading two sets to love against eventual champion Jannik Sinner.

"Winning or losing this match today would have been a win for me, I'm just so happy to be able to compete again," 34-year-old Dimitrov said on court.

"I had to be extremely patient with my-



▲ Grigor Dimitrov.

self... clearly I'm playing against such an amazing player but I'm just grateful (to win)."

Dimitrov overcame fervent home support in the night session to grind out the first set on a tie-break against the big-serving Frenchman Mpetshi Perricard.

Bolstered by his lead, the Bulgarian swiftly secured the first break of the match in the opening game of the second set and never looked back as he glided through to the round of 32.

There he will meet either former Russian world number one Daniil Medvedev or

Spain's Jaume Munar, who play on Tuesday.

RUBLEV v FEARNLEY

Russian 12th seed Andrey Rublev earlier raced to a 6-1, 6-4 win over Britain's Jacob Fearnley.

Rublev cruised through the opening set before pouncing on Fearnley's serve at 4-5 to book his spot in the second round.

"Jacob didn't feel the serve in the first set, which helped me a bit," Rublev said. "He played well in the second and I'm happy to have won."

Earlier, the event opened with a pair of hard-fought wins for French wildcards.

Arthur Cazaux christened the new 17,500-capacity centre court with a 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4) triumph over Italy's Luciano Darderi.

Shanghai Masters runner-up Arthur Rinderknech then further delighted the local fans with a win by the exact same score against Hungary's Fabian Marozsan.

Rising Italian hope Flavio Cobolli kick-started play on court one with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over Czech Tomas Machac and Kazakh 13th seed Alexander Bublik defeated Australia's Alexei Popyrin 6-4, 6-3.

Tenth seed Karen Khachanov will complete the day's play against American qualifier Ethan Quinn.

(Supersport)

Parliament demands answers from SAFA over Mokoena blunder

SAFA President Danny Jordaan might have declared the Teboho Mokoena suspension saga as water under the bridge, but it appears the matter is far from settled if Parliament has its way.

According to the National Assembly Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Sport, Arts and Culture, Joseph McGluwa, SAFA will have to account to the committee regarding the embarrassing administrative error.

FIFA docked South Africa three points in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers for fielding Mokoena, who

was suspended for the game against Lesotho after accumulating yellow cards against Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

The blunder threw Bafana Bafana's qualification campaign into turmoil, but Hugo Broos' charges showed great resilience to regroup and secure a spot at next year's World Cup, which will be staged across the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

"SAFA must come [before Parliament] because I have listened and members today were deliberating, saying SAFA must come because they cannot just get off the hook," McGluwa told Thabiso Mosia on Ra-

dio 2000.

"Before December, even if it's via Zoom, they must come and give us answers because I think they almost left us in big trouble as far as what transpired. We can't claim a victory now and all of a sudden forget what happened.

"What if we had lost that game [against Rwanda]? Then what would have happened to us, preventing South Africa from going to the World Cup? So they will definitely come and, by December at the latest, they must appear before Parliament."

(Supersport)



▲ Aston Martin committed a "very minor" procedural breach of Formula One's cost cap regulations.

Aston Martin escape sanctions after 'very minor' F1 cost cap breach

Aston Martin committed a "very minor" procedural breach of Formula One's cost cap regulations last year due to exceptional circumstances but will face no penalties, the sport's governing body said on Tuesday.

The International Automobile Federation (FIA) said the other nine teams and five engine manufacturers were all in compliance, despite speculation last week that a more substantial breach might be announced.

The FIA said the breach, involving a failure to submit signed versions of its audited annual financial statements by a March deadline, was due to unpredictable circumstances

outside the team's control.

Significantly, Aston Martin had not exceeded the cost cap level.

The Silverstone-based team had acted cooperatively and in good faith, added the FIA, entering an Accepted Breach Agreement last month to resolve the matter.

"The Cost Cap Administration confirm that there is no accusation or evidence that AMR has sought or obtained any undue advantage as a result of the breach," the FIA said.

Speculation about a team being in breach of the cost cap had mounted after the FIA was late publishing the accounts for the 2024 season.

(Supersport)



▲ SAFA President Danny Jordaan.

Pirates’ Champions League exit a blessing in disguise?

ORLANDO Pirates’ painful exit from the competition could be a blessing in disguise for the Buccaneers.

Pirates were knocked out of the CAF Champions League after losing on penalties to Saint-Eloi Lupopo of the DR Congo this past weekend. Yanela Mbuthuma missed the final kick as Lupopo held their nerve to advance to the group stages of the competition.

As painful as it was to lose the game on penalties after coming back from what looked like an impossible 3-0 deficit to force the game into the penalty shootout, the Pirates faithful must look at the positives from this disappointing loss.

One of the positives is that the Pirates players showed a lot of resilience and maturity as a result. After being subjected to unfair treatment in Lubumbashi and losing 3-0 in the first leg, they won 3-0 at home, forcing the game into a penalty shootout. This showed that the players are hungry for success this season.

Coach Abdeslam Ouaddou will need this never-say-die attitude from his charges if they are to claim titles on the domestic front. Having successfully defended their MTN8 title, the Buccaneers still have the Carling Knockout, the Nedbank Cup, and the Betway Premiership titles to play for this season.

Another positive from their CAF Champions League loss is that the early exit gives them a chance to finally end Mamelodi Sundowns’ dominance in the league. I mean, with no CAF football to worry about, Ouaddou has no excuse not to win



▲ Abdeslam Ouaddou, head coach of Orlando Pirates celebrates during the CAF Champions League.

the Betway Premiership this season.

Pirates are currently second on the log with 18 points after eight games, trailing log leaders Sundowns by only three points, but they have two games in hand over the Brazilians. This is a perfect opportunity to topple the Brazilians and go all the way to win the league title.

Also, with Sundowns set to continue their continental football jour-

ney after sweeping aside Remo Stars of Nigeria in the second preliminary round and reaching the group stages of the CAF Champions League, this presents Ouaddou and his charges with a chance to end their long drought insofar as winning the league title is concerned. Pirates last won the league title back in the 2011/12 season.

(Supersport)

Aston Martin confirms American F2 star as third driver

ASTON Martin confirmed that American Jak Crawford will serve as the Formula 1 team’s third driver for the 2026 season.

A member of the team’s development program since 2024 after a stint as a Red Bull F1 junior, Crawford is currently second in a tight Formula 2 battle this season, 19 points behind Leonardo Fomoro with two races remaining.

The 20-year-old North Carolina native also made his F1 grand prix weekend debut in an FP1 appearance in Mexico City last week.

“I’m incredibly proud to be confirmed as the Third Driver for 2026,” Crawford said. “It’s a huge moment in my journey with Aston Martin and a big motivation to keep learning and contributing.”

“Over the past two seasons, I’ve learned so much from being in the Formula 1 environment, both at the factory and trackside.

de. I’ll be doing everything I can to support the team and continue developing as a driver.”

Crawford will serve as the reserve driver behind Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll, replacing Felipe Drugovich in the position.

“It is great to see Jak progress to become our Third Driver for 2026,” team principal Andy Cowell said. “Over the past two years, he has shown his value as a key member of our driver squad and built up a valuable bank of experience and test mileage.

“Jak has impressed in the simulator, having completed regular sessions at the AMR Technology Campus to support our race operations and car development. Jak’s performances in Formula 2 have also been outstanding, and we are excited to continue supporting his growth as he takes on a bigger role.”

(Supersport)



▲ Jak Crawford.

Sinner says ‘impossible’ to finish year as world No 1

JANNIK Sinner said Tuesday that he had come to terms with finishing the season behind rival Carlos Alcaraz in the rankings.

The Italian world No 2 lost top spot in the standings when he was felled to the Spaniard in the final of the US Open in September – after having held it for 65 weeks.

“It’s impossible (to finish the year at No 1). Honestly, I’m not thinking about this at the moment. It’s going to be a goal for next year,” Sinner told reporters ahead of his opening match at the Paris Masters.

Trailing the Spaniard by less than 1 000 points, Sinner could theoretically overtake Alcaraz if he wins the Paris Masters and his rival fails to reach the last four.

But he will then have to defend 1 500 points at the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin – which he won in 2024 – whereas his rival was eliminated in the group stage and has few points to lose.

“This year it’s not in my hands,” Sinner simply added. “It’s impossible (to finish the year at No. 1). Honestly, I’m not thinking about this at the moment. It’s going to be a goal for next year,” Sinner told reporters ahead of his opening match at the Paris Masters.

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has few points to lose.

“This year it’s not in my hands,” Sinner simply added.

He comes into the event in the French capital on good form after winning the Vienna Open on Sunday.

But the long season has taken its toll on the 24-year-old.

He retired after suffering from cramps at the Shanghai Masters earlier in October and experienced problems with his thigh in the Austrian capital.

“It was not the same issue at all (in Vienna),” Sinner revealed.

“I feel like (it) was normal. You know, I played five days in a row. The final was very physical. It can happen.”

The four-time Grand Slam champion said he was “not worried physically” ahead of his opening match in Paris on Wednesday against Belgium’s Zizou Bergs.

“The body feels good now. A bit tired, of course, playing five matches in a row and coming here is not much time to recover,” he said.

“But I’m happy how I’m feeling. I recover every day better.”

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“But I’m happy how I’m feeling. I recover every day better.” (Supersport)

All eyes on winless Wanderers!

Stories By Chris Dlamini

. . . As faltering hub side meets second-placed Highlanders, Leopard return from CAF to face Swallows

CAN history repeat itself?
This question is one to ponder as hub giants Manzini Wanderers occupy a familiar spot to the 2023/24 season when they had a relegation place finish. They spent last season inactive on the field but active in the courts, where they successfully challenged their relegation. Wanderers take on their giant rivals Mbabane Highlanders this weekend at Mavuso Sports Centre and the latter has won two consecutive games, only losing to defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs on opening matchday. This fixture, alongside fresh from the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26 second preliminary stage exit Royal Leopard’s face-off with Mbabane Swallows, make our PICK OF THE WEEK. Manzini Wanderers vs. Mbabane Highlanders Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
As things stand, not all is well at Manzini Wanderers - the giant is faltering once again and head coach Nyanga ‘Crooks’ Hlophe finds himself under pressure too early into the season. Going to matchday four (4) without a win but a single draw and two defeats, Hlophe must be filling the pressure piling up as his side will be undoubted underdogs against an impressive Mbabane Highlanders. The latter narrowly lost to Nsingizini Hotspurs in a game they deserved to win, but since then they have won the next two games that followed. Wanderers just lost to minnows Rangers 2-0 while Highlanders edged elite debutants Amawele 1-0, and prior to that beat Manzini Sea Birds 2-0. Highlanders has the quality in its squad, blended with the experience that Hlophe does not have. He will have to conjure a winning plan or face more pressure from their supporters who are already showing signs they fear a repeat of the 2023/24 season. This is the biggest game



of the league’s matchday four (4).
A definite watch!
Key Players
1. Mlamuli ‘Mlaba’ Nkambule (M. Wanderers Captain, midfielder)
2. Sikhumbuzo Mazibuko (M. Wanderers forward)
3. Sphiwe Hopewell Cele (M. Highlanders winger)
4. Ayanda ‘Shoes’ Mabuza (M. Highlanders forward)



Royal Leopard vs. Mbabane Swallows
Venue: Mkhuzweni Technical Centre, Bulheleni
Should it feel like jumping from the pot to the fire for Royal Leopard?
Coming from a tough second preliminary stage two-legged encounter with Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) rivals, AS Maniema Union in the past week, meeting their tough and bitter rivals Mbabane Swallows looks quite another challenge - at least on paper. However, Leopard showed their class and quality in the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26, despite exiting the competition via a penalty shootout at Somhlolo National Stadium, Lobamba. If they put up this form against the Beautiful Birds of Mbabane, then it is safe to say the police outfit are favourites. This will be their second MTN Premier League match after a goalless draw against security forces derby rivals, Young Buffaloes. Leopard will want to record their first win and equal Swallows’ current four points in three games. Both sides will be all out to get the all-important points in the battle to dethrone Nsingizini Hotspurs who won last season’s title. Better be there, or be squared.
Key Players
1. Junior Magagula (R. Leopard midfielder)
2. Simanga Masangane (R. Leopard midfielder)
3. Njongo Mazibuko (M. Swallows forward)
4. Nhlanhla Ngwenya (M. Swallows attacking midfielder)

‘Birds’ for Leopard homecoming



By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI taekwondo Association (ETF) is ready to welcome the world into local terrains.

The mother body has since intensified preparations for the 2025 World Taekwondo official's seminar to be held in the country between November 7-16, 2025, at Esibayeni Lodge.

The mother body is will this weekend host a refresher course on Saturday at Zakhele hall in preparations for the eight days seminar.

The preparatory course will be conducted by international coaches Bongani Nxumalo, Master Choe, and Sandile Mchunu.

ETF Secretary Mbongeni 'Ndo' Sibandze confirmed the latest news when contacted.

"We will be having a refresher course in preparation for the course, and this will help our coaches to align themselves with the international standards ahead of the main course. We would like to thank World Taekwondo for giving us the opportunity to host the international course," he said.

The mother body will also send the national team to the African Taekwondo Union Zone VI club championships in November, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

The national team qualified for the inaugural continental cup after excelling in the zonal qualifiers held two months ago in Maputo.

ETF gears up for international seminar



▲ Taekwondo artists and officials during a recent competition.



▲ Darts players in action during the ESRIC E150 000 league.

Perfect start for Green Spears in ESRIC Darts League

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

DARTS giants Green Spears have made a perfect start in the 2025 Eswatini Royal Insurance Corporation Darts League.

The national league is sponsored by E150 000 by the insurance company.

The green and white ensemble is currently sitting at the summit of the log standings with 12 points after four matches.

The defending champions are fresh from recording two wins over the weekend against Umlilo and Eswatini Royal Insurance Corporation by 15-5 and 18-2, respectively.

They are followed by Scorpions by 12 points with an inferior points difference.

Scorpions are also in fine form after getting the better of Scorpions 19-2 during the league matches.

Eswatini National Darts Association (END) Public Relations Officer Flag Nxumalo said they are happy with the progress of the league.

"We are pleased with the performance of the teams and looking forward to another successful season. We urge teams to continue behaving themselves throughout the season and adopt the spirit of fair play in order not to taint the image of the sport," he said.

Nxumalo also thanked the sponsor for continued support.

"We are grateful for the support of the sponsor, which contributes towards the development of the sport in the country," he said.

The full results

1. Zebras 20 -1 ESRIC.
2. Mbabane City 9 12 Vipers.
3. Smesh 11 -10 Green Roses.
4. Green Spears 15 -5 Umlilo.
5. Green Arrows 12 -10 Remnants.
6. Scorpions 19 -2 Malkerns Bulls.

Game 4

1. ESRIC 2-18 Green Spears.
2. Malkerns Bulls 11-10 Smesh .
3. Remnants 12 -10 Umlilo.
4. Green Roses 7-14 Zebras.
5. Mbabane City 3 -17 Scorpions.
6. Vipers 10 -11 Green Arrows.

Cricket Association celebrates women



▲ Female cricket youngsters during the World Women Day celebration clinics held in Lavumisa.

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE Eswatini Cricket Association (ECA) has honoured women for their role in the development of the sport in the country.

The association recently celebrated the International Cricket Association Women cricket week through a mini competition at Lavumisa Sports Ground. ECA confirmed the updates through a press statement.

"In celebration of the inaugural ICC Women's Cricket Week, Eswatini proudly showcased the spirit of inclusivity through a vibrant female participation programme, blending the fun of the cricket initiative with an energetic under-11 mini cricket competition. Played on a portable pitch

and dusty ground, this moment perfectly captures what Cirio stands for: that cricket truly can be played anytime, anywhere by anyone," the association said.

The mother body further celebrated World Teachers Day in appreciation of their partnership with local schools.

ECA is also running coaching clinics in collaboration with local schools as part of their national development programme.

"We appreciate all the amazing teachers who go beyond the classroom to nurture, guide, and inspire our young cricketers across Eswatini. Your dedication has been instrumental in growing the game of cricket, teaching discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship both on and off the pitch," the association said.

ECA will next year kickstart a national development program sponsored by Century Fashions.

By Sibusiso Masilela
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GRACIOUS in defeat.
Nsingizini Hotspurs says they have gained valuable experience in the 2025 CAF Champions League.

The Shiselweni-based side president, Derrick Shiba, said this after their exit in the second preliminary round of the continent’s premier club competition.

The MTN premier league defending champions were knocked by Tanzania giants Simba SC on a 3-0 aggregate scoreline, missing out on the E12 million carrot for reaching the group stages.

“Greetings Nsingizini Family, our Champions League journey ends here. But what a battle, what a performance, heads held high as our focus shifts to the domestic competition where we must defend our league title to bounce back to the CAF Champions League next year,” he said.

Shiba further stated that they will continue thriving to reach the group of the premier club competition next year.

“The objectives remain the same for the future of African football, where the starting point is to qualify for the group stage of the competition. Playing one of the best clubs in Africa has taught us so many lessons which will! help the club to grow moving forward,”

We have gained valuable experience – Derrick Shiba

he said.
He also thanked the entire Nsingizini family for their contribution towards the team’s continental run.

Firstly, we thank player number 12 (supporters) for being with the club in every stage of the competition, your support brings energy to all of us to try again tomorrow. Secondly, to the players who have put up an outstanding performance in their debut CAF Champions League. Lastly, to the sponsors, board, and management who made it possible to put up a first-world preparation throughout our journey,”Shiba said.

The Mandla Qhogi-led side knocked out the Zimbabwean side Simba Bhora FC in the preliminary round before being booted 3-0 on aggregate by Tanzanian giants Simba SC.



▲ Nsingizini Hotspurs palyers and president Derrick Shaba.

Let’s support MaMkhize – ‘Karas’

Stories By Chris Dlamini

CAPITAL city giants Mbabane Highlanders’ South African President Shauwn ‘MaMkhize’ Mkhize has backing from the team’s legend.

Expected to be unveiled as the now black and gold outfit, after Mkhize made a few innovations, including changing the traditional black and white colours, Dlamini was asked about the new president.

“We must support the one at the helm of the club,” he said.

Dlamini further revealed that he was yet to meet Mkhize and her son, Andile Mpisane, also a player and chairman for the capital city giants. “I have been to training sessions and watched our last game against Amawele, but I’m yet to meet the President and Andile,” said Dlamini.

He also explained that it had a while since the team approached him and had some dis-

cussions before he agreed.
“The club is rebuilding, and it needed a face. I was seen as that person, and I can only appeal for support and unity,” he said.

Dlamini has not yet resumed his duties but expects to do so once the club officially announced it. “I know the GM Makhoba only so far, but I’m ready to represent the club,” he said.

Dlamini said he was looking forward to working well with everyone, including the media. It must be mentioned that Dlamini was a fan favourite during his heyday as a skilled left-footed winger at Highlanders.

He was renowned for his trademark step-overs and free kicks that delivered major titles and unforgettable moments for the black and gold outfit. Inkunz’emnyama, as Highlanders is fondly known, is yet to name its full management committee (MC).

It remains to be seen who is on it as the club’s patron Charles ‘Ace’ Jele recently confirmed they only recommend names, but it was Mkhize with the final say.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders players.

Winless Wanderers, raging ‘Bull’ face off

The MTN Premier League 2025/26 fixtures are coming in thick and fast.
As the league enters matchday 4 this weekend, giants will collide. Two big fixtures are on the menu for the fans.

These are the fixtures pitting faltering hub giants Manzini Wanderers against a rising Mbabane Highlanders or raging Bull as their loyalists would also prefer to call them, and also Royal Leopard against their bitter rivals Mbabane Swallows.

Wanderers and Highlanders will cross swords at Mavuso Sports Centre in Manzini, which is the latter’s fourth consecutive match at the tiny arena this season. Leopard, fresh from the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup second preliminary stage where they exited after losing on penalties, will host Mbabane Swallows at Mkhuzweni Technical Centre in the Hhohho Region.

Leopard will be coming from a mid-week fixture with minnows Ezulwini United on Wednesday. Swallows will be their second match since their TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup exit at the hands of AS Maniema Union of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

“We’ll show Swallows this is no CAF but domestic football at Mkhuzweni,” commented Swallows’ Public Relations Officer (PRO) Knowledge ‘Bhambo’ Ngwenya about their fixture with Leopard.

His counterpart, Frank Hurube, said it was undoubtedly a big game for them, but they were ready for it and the mid-week clash with Ezulwini United on Wednesday. Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Petros ‘Pat’ Vilakati also affirmed the latest fixtures.

“As usual, this weekend is one where we’ll have our family day fixture but we’ll give out all the details in due course,” he said.

Vilakati was referring to the renowned Y’ello Sunday activations, likely to feature the big fixture between Wanderers and Highlanders.

Wanderers will be hunting for their first win as they have only a point in three games while Inkunz’emnyama (Highlanders) will be out to earn their third consecutive win and push for the top spot as they are only a point behind Malanti Chiefs. Highlanders won 1-0 over Amawele on Sunday, while Wanderers lost 2-0 to Rangers on Saturday.



▲ Legend Khayelihle ‘Karas’ Dlamini in action during the Simphambanweni Milling tournament.



**Pirates
Champions
League exit a
blessing?**
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**Let's support
'MaMkhize' –
'Karas'**

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**We have gained valuable
experience – Derrick Shiba**

● ***Nsingizini Hotspurs President Derrick Shiba says the club has gained invaluable experience in 2025 CAF Champions League. *Page 23****