

E4.4 billion
in taxes
uncollected

... ERS targets non-compliant sectors

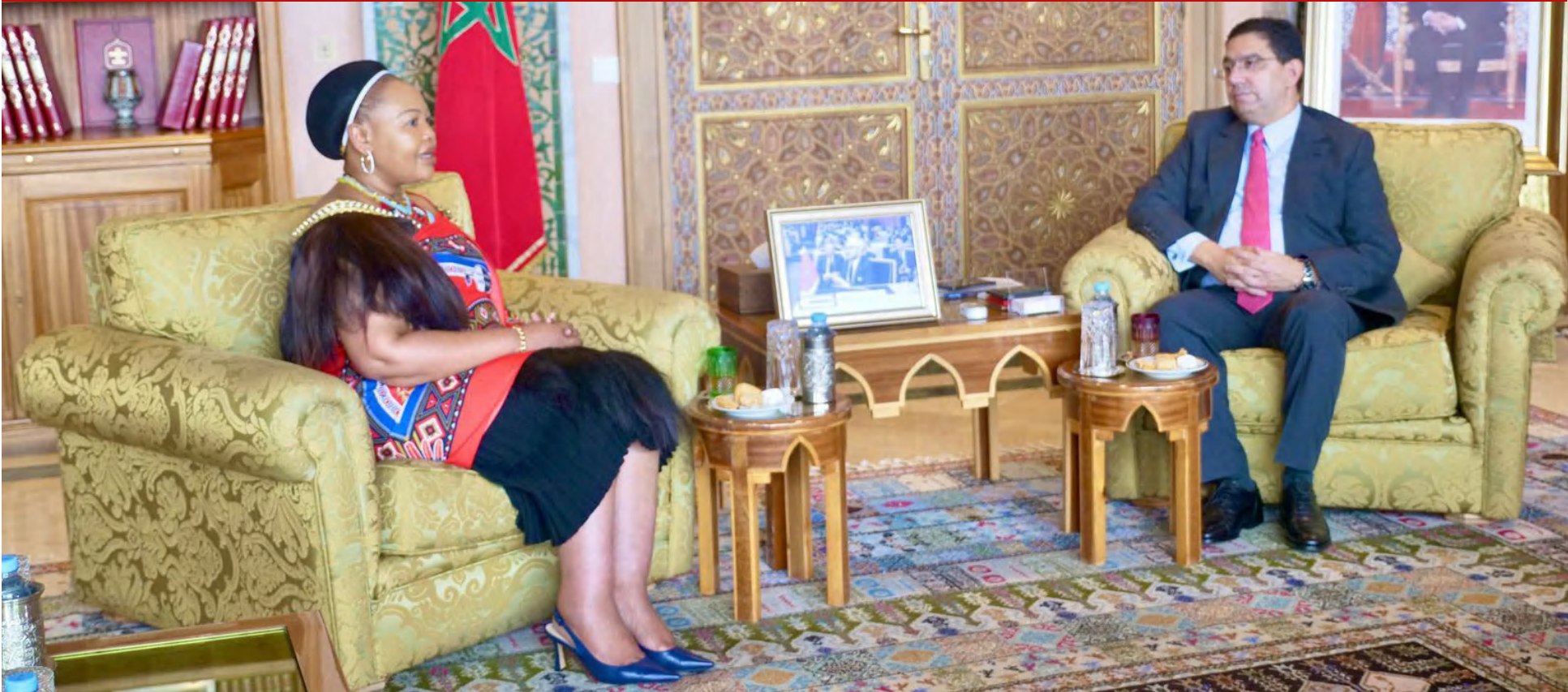
By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) has uncovered a tax gap of more than E4.4 billion that should have been paid to government coffers but was not declared or collected. The revelation came as Finance Minister Neal Rijkenberg launched the 2025 Income Tax Filing Season and the Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP) at the ERS headquarters in Ezulwini on Wednesday.

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▲ Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu in discussions with Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Nasser Bourita.

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damning UNESWA
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... UNESWA staff member paid
E300 000 sitting at home

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By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) has uncovered a tax gap of more than E4.4 billion that should have been paid to government coffers but was not declared or collected.

The revelation came as Finance Minister Neal Rijkenberg launched the 2025 Income Tax Filing Season and the Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP) at the ERS headquarters in Ezulwini on Wednesday.

Rijkenberg said the findings of a recent tax-gap analysis painted a worrying picture of low compliance and under-declaration across major sectors of the economy.

“The analysis revealed an estimated E4.4 billion in taxes that were due but not declared or paid. This figure represents potential revenue that could have been channelled towards national priorities such as health-care, education and infrastructure,” said the Minister.

The Minister said, according to the report, Value Added Tax (VAT) accounted for the largest share of unpaid revenue, amounting to E1.3 billion.

Rijkenberg mentioned that the wholesale and retail sector was found to be the biggest offender, contributing roughly E600 million to the total gap. It was followed by manufacturing, with E305 million, and construction, with E127 million in unremitted taxes.

The minister said the figures underscore the persistent challenge of tax evasion and under-reporting, despite progress in improving tax systems over the past decade.

“Some businesses continue to operate informally or under-declare their income, which creates unfair competition for compliant taxpayers and deprives the government of vital revenue,” he said.

In response, the ERS has developed the Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP), a new framework aimed at closing compliance gaps, improving taxpayer behaviour, and modernising revenue administration.

The plan focuses on data-driven audits, risk-based enforcement, and partnerships with industries to promote voluntary compliance.

ERS Commissioner General Brightwell Nkambule said the plan is designed to strengthen transparency and fairness in tax collection.

“The CIP will enhance our ability to detect non-compliance early through data matching, digital tracking, and taxpayer segmentation. It also recognises that enforcement alone cannot solve the problem; we must en-

State is highly suspicious of tax-evading churches

By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) has turned its attention to the religious sector.

The Minister for Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, has said that faith organisations are now under formal investigation for suspected tax evasion.

The ERS is highly suspicious of non-compliance in this sector and will investigate it as a key component of its Compliance Improvement Plan for the 2025 tax-filing season.

At a press briefing, the Minister for Finance, Rijkenberg, told the media that while many churches operate properly, the agency is ‘highly, highly suspecting’ that some insti-

tutions are abusing tax-exempt status.

“We are not planning on taxing churches, but we need to make sure that tax evasion is not something happening within churches,” he said.

He added that many assemblies do not hold proper annual general meetings (AGMs), do not present financial statements to members, and may allow unchecked leadership spending.

Worth noting is that under Eswatini law, religious organisations may be exempt from income tax if their activities are strictly evangelistic or charitable. The minister said the exemption is not automatic and remains conditional.

“Exemption does not equal immunity,” he emphasised, adding that organisations relying heavily on commercial operations may be subject to audit and review.

E4.4 billion in taxes uncollected

... ERS targets non-compliant sectors



▲ Finance Minister Neal Rijkenberg.

courage a culture of voluntary compliance,” said Nkambule.

Nkambule added that the ERS has already begun integrating its systems with digital platforms such as TaxEase and the TaxPal App, which allow individuals and companies to file their returns online, reducing both paperwork and errors.

Launching the 2025 filing season under the theme ‘Doing Your Part Matters,’ Rijkenberg urged all taxpayers individuals and corporations alike to meet their filing and payment deadlines.

The deadlines announced were, October 31, 2025, for companies and business associations, and November 30, 2025, for individuals, including company directors, Members of Parliament, and trustees.

The minister reminded taxpayers that exempt organisations such as NGOs, charity bodies, churches, and cooperatives must re-apply annually for exemption status and submit their audited financial statements.

Meanwhile, economists have described the E4.4 billion tax gap as a wake-up call for the country. Economic analyst Dr Mandla Dlamini said the shortfall shows how much potential revenue Eswatini is losing every year due to weak enforcement.

“E4.4 billion is roughly 8 to 10 per cent of the national budget. If that money were collected, the government could significantly reduce borrowing and invest more in social programmes,” he said.

He added that while voluntary compliance

campaigns are important, the ERS should also tighten audit procedures and strengthen penalties for tax evasion.

“Taxpayers respond to incentives and deterrents. If evasion goes unpunished, compliance will remain low,” Dlamini said.

Meanwhile, Business Eswatini Chief Executive Officer E Nathi Dlamini welcomed the ERS’s push for transparency but cautioned against approaches that could stifle legitimate enterprises.

“We support efforts to close the tax gap, but enforcement must be balanced with business sustainability. Small and medium enterprises, in particular, need more support and education to comply effectively,” he said.

He said many SMEs operate informally due to complex registration requirements and a limited understanding of tax obligations.

“Simplifying compliance and providing digital tools like TaxEase are steps in the right direction,” he added.

Meanwhile, Rijkenberg also announced that the ERS and the Treasury are finalising the rollout of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) by April 2026.

The system will digitise all government procurement and payment processes to curb corruption, prevent leakages, and speed up supplier payments.

“IFMIS will eliminate paperwork and make it almost impossible for invoices to

be lost or manipulated. It will also help ensure that every lilangeni due to the state is tracked in real time,” said the Minister.

He acknowledged that implementation may face resistance but insisted that difficult reforms must go ahead for the sake of accountability. To complement enforcement, the ERS is continuing its Sondzela Sikhulume programme, which allows taxpayers to disclose unpaid obligations voluntarily without facing prosecution, provided they engage in good faith.

“This programme shows we are willing to work with taxpayers, not against them. It is a practical way for those with outstanding issues to regularise their affairs and avoid penalties,” said Rijkenberg.

Meanwhile, Financial governance expert Nolwazi Kunene said the tax gap points to a broader issue of transparency in both the private and public sectors.

“Tax compliance depends on trust. People are more likely to pay tax if they believe it is used efficiently. The government must pair strict enforcement with visible improvements in service delivery,” said Kunene.

She urged the Ministry of Finance to publish annual tax-gap reports and update the public on how recovered funds are spent.

“Accountability should flow both ways taxpayers must pay, and government must deliver,” she said.

Concluding the briefing, Rijkenberg said closing the E4.4 billion tax gap will require cooperation from everyone.

“Compliance is not a burden, it is an investment in the stability and growth of our economy. By doing your part, you ensure that the government can continue to provide the infrastructure and public goods that make it possible for businesses to thrive,” he said.

He added that strengthening compliance will reduce Eswatini’s reliance on external loans and enable the country to fund its own development priorities.

“Together, we can close the compliance gaps, build a stronger revenue base, and create the Eswatini we all aspire to see,” Rijkenberg concluded.



His remarks mark a notable shift in government approach. For years, the faith sector in Eswatini has benefited from broad trust and minimal financial oversight.

On the same note Bishop Samson Hlatshwayo, the President of the Eswatini League of African Churches, welcomed transparen-

cy but warned of collateral effects on smaller congregations.

“We call for clear, fair processes so that legitimate faith work is not harmed,” he said.

He expressed concern that many rural churches operate without accountants and warned that sweeping audits might undermine community services.

Meanwhile, tax policy experts say the move is overdue. Lecturer and Economist Mkhosi Thwala described the broad exemptions as a structural leak in the tax base.

He pointed to data from the South African Revenue Service (SARS) which recovered over R740 million (approx. E29 billion) from 33 audited churches in South Africa in 2022.

He cautioned, however, that enforcement must balance revenue goals with protecting faith organisations that deliver essential services.

By Ncaba Ntshakala
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Eswatini, Morocco cement ties through landmark cooperation agreement

THE Kingdom of Eswatini and the Kingdom of Morocco have officially launched their first-ever Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC), which is a new chapter in diplomatic and economic collaboration between the two nations.

The historic session, held in Rabat recently, was co-chaired by Eswatini's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Pholile Shakantu, and Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccan Expatriates, Nasser Bourita.

The inaugural session builds on nearly three decades of diplomatic engagement since Eswatini and Morocco established formal relations in 1996. The relationship took a major leap forward when Eswatini opened its mission in Rabat in 2020 which was hailed as a move that symbolised a deepening commitment to collaboration. Over the past two years, preparatory expert meetings held in Eswatini paved the way for the Joint Commission, culminating in this major gathering which saw the signing of a joint communiqué outlining a comprehensive cooperation roadmap for 2026–2028.

The roadmap sets an ambitious agenda for bilateral collaboration across multiple sectors including education, technical cooperation, economic promotion, diplomatic exchange, and international funding. It highlights a mutual vision to translate diplomatic goodwill into tangible benefits for citizens, promoting sustainable development and shared prosperity.

Among the most notable agreements signed was the visa waiver for service and



▲ Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu shaking hands with Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Nasser Bourita.

diplomatic passport holders, a measure expected to simplify official exchanges between the two governments and reinforce commitments to regional integration and free movement.

Another key highlight was the agreement on diplomatic training, which will allow young Eswatini diplomats to undertake short-term training in Morocco. The training will include exposure to international diplomacy and practical courses in French and Arabic, languages critical to global diplomacy. Minister Pholile Shakantu expressed appreciation for Morocco's continued support in developing Eswatini's

diplomatic capacity, noting that "the strengthening of our human capital is vital to Eswatini's global engagement and the advancement of our national interests on the world stage."

Dialogue

In the field of justice, the two countries agreed to cooperate in strengthening their Ministries of Justice, establishing frameworks that promote judicial dialogue and enhance access to justice.

Again, youth development emerged as another major focus area of the session. Recognising the transformative role of sports and cultural exchange, Minister Shakantu

extended an invitation for young emaSwati footballers to receive professional training in Morocco, a country globally recognised for its football excellence. She congratulated Morocco for its recent success at the Under-20 World Cup and wished the North African nation well ahead of the upcoming AFCON tournament.

Cooperation

Furthermore, tourism cooperation also featured prominently in the talks, with both nations committing to enhance capacity-building for tourism managers, trainers, and operators. Morocco's experience as one of Africa's leading tourism destinations presents a valuable opportunity for Eswatini to learn best practices in hospitality management, marketing, and sustainable tourism. Both Ministers expressed optimism that such collaboration would unlock economic potential and contribute to diversifying Eswatini's economy.

Under the broader cooperation framework, Morocco emphasized its support for Eswatini's development agenda by pledging to sponsor emaSwati professionals for study and learning tours in Morocco. The visits will target strategic areas such as infrastructure, resource mobilisation, and project management. The Moroccan government also committed to supporting Eswatini's efforts in mobilising international funding for key national projects..

As a symbol of this deepened partnership, Morocco announced that it will host an "Eswatini Economic Week" in Rabat in 2026. The event will provide a platform to showcase Eswatini's investment potential, attract investors, and strengthen trade linkages between the two economies.

Government invests E7.6 mln in Cancer screening mobile Clinics

By Delisa Magagula

THE Ministry of Health, led by Minister Mduduzi Matsebula, has launched and commissioned four mobile screening clinics.

This was done to bolster cancer detection efforts in Eswatini. Funded through a loan from the World Bank and costing E7.6 million, these mobile units are expected to reach underserved areas across all regions and enhance early diagnosis of cancers, especially cervical cancer.

In a formal launch event, Minister Matsebula described the initiative as a critical step in the Kingdom's fight against cancer.

He emphasised that detecting cancer at its earliest stage greatly increases treatment success and survival. By bringing screening services closer to communities removing barriers of distance and cost the mobile clinics are designed to make vital health checks more accessible and equitable.

The four new trucks will operate regionally, rotating through rural and peri-urban communities to provide screening for cancers including cervical, breast and other opportunistic diagnoses.

The Ministry states that mobile deployment is part of a broader strategy to expand coverage beyond static health-facility settings.

Worth noting is that cancer burden in Eswatini remains high. Estimates place the age-standardised incidence rate of cervical cancer at 84.5 cases per 100,000 women, with a mortality rate of 55.7 per 100,000.

Recent data suggest that in 2023 there were approximately 417 new cervical-cancer cases with an age-standardised incidence of about 95.9 per 100,000 women; the estimated



▲ The Minister for Health Mduduzi Matsebula during the media briefing of the launch of the mobile screening clinics

mortality rate that year was 64.3 per 100,000 women. "From 2016 to 2022, the national cancer-control programme recorded 1,171 cases of cervical cancer among women aged 15–49, with around 500 deaths in that cohort. Despite screening programmes, uptake remains limited," the report read in part.

Another study found that only about 44 per cent of women aged 25–59 in the selected clinics were classified as adhering to the national screening guidelines.

Study

Another earlier study reported that only 29.3 per cent of women aged 18–69 had ever received cervical cancer screening in certain regions. The national 'Elimination Acceleration Plan' for cervical cancer sets targets to raise screening coverage among eligible women (ages 25–49) to at least 70 per cent and treatment of pre-cancerous lesions

to 90 per cent by 2030.

Meanwhile, the mobile clinic initiative is financed through a government borrowing arrangement supported by the World Bank.

Eswatini's engagement with the World Bank includes the Health System Strengthening for Human Capital Development project, which has among its objectives the improvement of health-service delivery, covering reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health, as well as non-communicable diseases.

According to the Ministry, the procurement plan for that project outlines mechanisms for acquiring equipment, consumables and strengthening health-service systems.

In a broader sense, the World Bank approved a E75 million loan in 2022 to support Eswatini's post-Covid-19 economic recovery, which also referenced improving public-service delivery including health-

related services. While that loan is not exclusively for cancer screening, it reflects the financial relationship and the context in which health-system investments are being made.

Meanwhile, Minister Matsebula noted that the mobile clinics will operate across all regions, facilitating outreach in hard-to-reach areas and reducing load on fixed facilities.

By delivering screening closer to where people live, the Ministry hopes to improve early detection, reduce late-stage diagnoses and improve survival outcomes.

For example, given the high incidence of cervical cancer and the fact that many women may not access fixed-facility screening due to distance, transport cost or clinic congestion, mobile units help lower access barriers.

"The drive is aligned with the national acceleration plan's goal of reaching underserved populations and integrating screening with other women's health services," said Matsebula in previous interviews.

The Ministry has also emphasised that these trucks will be staffed by trained health-care providers, equipped with screening tools and linked to referral pathways for further diagnosis and treatment when needed.

The logistical challenge of sample transportation, follow-up and treatment referral is acknowledged in planning documents and the national plan for cervical cancer elimination. While the launch is a notable step, challenges remain. Low screening uptake persists due to attitudinal barriers. The national acceleration plan also underscores the need for digital systems, quality-assurance mechanisms, and ensuring timely treatment of precancerous lesions and invasive disease. Monitoring and evaluation will need strong data systems, which have been flagged as an area for improvement.

SHOCKING:

Stories by Thokozani Mazibuko

MINISTER of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, has expressed shock and disappointment after discovering that an employee of the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) was being paid a full salary while staying at home and doing nothing.

Speaking during the official handover of the Final Task Team Report to the university's management on Monday, the Minister described the revelation as unacceptable and a clear reflection of the administrative and accountability challenges facing the institution.

"I am shocked that someone got paid for doing nothing while sitting at home by this institution," Minister Nxumalo said. "However, it is not time to point fingers but to find a way forward."

The Minister explained that the decision to establish the special task team was not directed by Cabinet but was his personal initiative aimed at uncovering the root causes of the ongoing issues at UNESWA.

"I wasn't directed by Cabinet to commission this task team. I just made a decision

UNESWA Staff member paid E300 000 sitting at home

to assemble intellectuals to compile this report," he said.

Minister Nxumalo revealed that Cabinet has since reviewed the findings and expressed great satisfaction with the quality and depth of the report, which offers practical recommendations to restore the university's integrity and efficiency.

"Cabinet was so impressed by the work that has been accomplished, and soon this week a new task team of six or seven members will be appointed for the implementation phase," the Minister confirmed.

He added that Cabinet has instructed that all the recommendations contained in the report be implemented to address the serious lapses uncovered.

"I was instructed to reduce this task team, and Cabinet directed that the findings be implemented," he noted.

While acknowledging the magnitude of the challenges facing UNESWA, Minister

Nxumalo called for unity and collective effort from all stakeholders to restore the university's credibility and academic excellence.

"There is a lot that needs to be done, and I am sure everyone has the best interest at heart to turn this situation around," he said.

The Final Task Team Report was compiled earlier this year following concerns over governance, financial management, and operational inefficiencies within UNESWA. It is expected to serve as a blueprint for reform, guiding the university toward greater accountability, productivity, and sustainability.

Senior officials from the Ministry of Education and Training, UNESWA Council members, faculty representatives, and student leaders attended the handover ceremony, which symbolized a renewed commitment to transparency and reform in Eswatini's higher education sector.



▲ Minister of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo.



Minister promises to engage PM over UNESWA staff CoLA issues

MINISTER of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, has assured staff members of the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) that their concerns regarding salaries and the long-standing Cost of Living Adjustment (CoLA) will be taken seriously and discussed at the highest level of government.

Addressing university employees during a meeting at the Kwaluseni campus this week, the Minister acknowledged the difficult financial circumstances facing academic and non-academic staff, as well as the frustrations caused by delayed salary payments.

"I am aware of your CoLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) request, and I will deliberate the matter with the Prime Minister, Russell Mmiso Dlamini," Nxumalo said.

He further expressed empathy for the challenges faced by university personnel, saying he personally feels the weight of the institution's financial struggles.

"I am aware of the situation you

are in and the concerns that you have raised. It is very painful not to be paid on time, and every month I spend sleepless nights when it comes to the payment of your salaries," he added.

Minister Nxumalo urged staff members to maintain open dialogue with management and the Ministry rather than resorting to protests, emphasizing that peaceful engagement was the most productive way to achieve lasting solutions.

"It is better to resolve issues on the table than to be engaged in protests," he cautioned. "His Majesty doesn't like protests, and it is better to keep him happy."

The Minister also shared some positive developments regarding financial support for the institution, revealing that the World Bank had already taken steps to assist UNESWA with a significant contribution.

"I would like to applaud the World Bank for wanting to assist the institution financially, as there is already E5 million that has been planted at UNESWA," Nxumalo announced.

He noted that this funding would

be instrumental in stabilizing the university's operations and possibly addressing some of its pressing financial obligations.

The meeting came amid growing discontent among staff over stagnant salaries, delayed payments, and rising living costs. The Minister's engagement was seen as an effort to restore dialogue and rebuild trust between government and the university workforce.

Nxumalo reiterated government's commitment to ensuring that the university remains functional and continues to deliver quality higher education despite current fiscal challenges.

"We are all working towards the same goal to ensure that UNESWA remains strong, sustainable, and capable of shaping the future of our nation through education," he concluded.

The session ended with staff representatives welcoming the Minister's assurances, though they emphasized the need for timely action to ease the financial strain facing employees and the institution at large.

Minister hands over damning UNESWA task team report

MINISTER of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, on Monday officially handed over a comprehensive report compiled by a special task team to the management of the University of Eswatini (UNESWA). The handover marks a significant step in government's ongoing efforts to revitalise the country's premier institution of higher learning.

The report, commissioned earlier this year, was produced by a task team mandated to investigate the challenges currently confronting UNESWA and to propose practical recommendations to enhance its performance, governance, and sustainability.

Speaking during the handover ceremony, Minister Nxumalo emphasized the importance of unity and renewed commitment towards improving the quality of tertiary education in the Kingdom.

"Let us take a new leaf and a new chapter for the future of our children and their education in the country," he said.

The Minister expressed confidence that the report will serve as a roadmap to guide the university in strengthening its academic standards, financial management, and overall institutional efficiency. He urged both management and staff to work collectively to implement the recommendations and reposition UNESWA as a centre of excellence in higher education.

Nxumalo further commend-

ed the task team for its diligence and professionalism in conducting consultations and compiling the findings. He noted that the government remains committed to supporting UNESWA and ensuring that it continues to produce graduates who contribute meaningfully to the nation's social and economic development.

Receiving the report on behalf of the institution, UNESWA Vice Chancellor Professor Justice Mthethwa expressed gratitude to the Minister and the task team for their dedication. He assured the gathering that the university's management would carefully study the report and implement the proposed recommendations where feasible.

Critical time

"This report comes at a critical time for the university. We are ready to work collaboratively with the Ministry and other stakeholders to ensure that the institution not only overcomes its challenges but thrives in the years ahead," said the Vice Chancellor.

The handover event was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Education and Training, UNESWA Council members, faculty representatives, and student leaders.

The Task Team Report is expected to influence key decisions on the university's funding model, academic reforms, infrastructure development, and governance structure laying the foundation for a more sustainable and competitive higher education sector in Eswatini.

ESCCOM celebrates young women in ICT, emphasizing collective progress

Stories by Taonga Nkhata
and Gift Martyn

THE Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) has proudly honoured two exceptional young women who were part of the 2025 Girls in ICT Sponsorship Programme.

The event was held at ESCCOM new headquarters at Ezulwini on Wednesday.

The event celebrated the accomplishments of two exceptional young women: Ms. Tembuso Ngwenya, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, and Ms. Siphesihle Shongwe, studying for a Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical & Electronic), both at UNESWA. They were recognized for their achievements within ESCCOM's Girls in ICT initiative, a programme dedicated to encouraging and enabling young women to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

During the ceremony, ESCCOM's Chief Executive Officer, Mvilawemphi Dlamini, reaffirmed the Commission's dedication to closing the gender gap in the technology sector. He highlighted their commitment to supporting and investing in young women, noting that these two students would join a total of six participants in the programme. Dlamini explained that each student receives comprehensive support from the Commission, including coverage for tuition, textbooks, stationery, accommodation, a



▲ ESCCOM Chief Executive Officer, Mvilawemphi Dlamini, Siphesihle Shongwe, Tembuso Ngwenya, Macanjana C. Motsa, Under Secretary, Dr Rejoice Maseko

monthly allowance, and a high-quality laptop to aid their studies.

"However," he emphasized, "this sponsorship is not just a gift; it's a commitment and a responsibility. We expect our beneficiaries to dedicate themselves to their studies and fully embrace this opportunity." He added that the sponsorship agreement stipulates that beneficiaries who underperform or fail to meet academic standards risk termination and potential repayment of funds.

The Girls in ICT Sponsorship Programme is a vital part of ESCCOM's broader efforts to promote digital inclusion and create opportunities for women in the information and communications technology field.

Macanjana C. Motsa, Under Secretary for

the Ministry of ICT, encouraged the students to focus on their future aspirations, regardless of their backgrounds. She urged them to dedicate themselves fully to their education, citing Dr. Rejoice Maseko as an example of a woman who achieved success through focused study.

Nomvelo Ngwenya, sharing her experience as a programme beneficiary, spoke about the transformative impact of the initiative. "Over the past year, I have seen firsthand how this program benefits not only individual girls but also the collective progress of young women entering the world of technology and innovation," she stated.

She further explained that the Girls in ICT initiative is a global movement that empow-

ers young women to explore and thrive in technology, opening doors to education, employment, leadership, innovation, and contribution. Through the scholarship, beneficiaries have the privilege of experiencing the ICT industry firsthand through internships, mentorship, and professional exposure at ESCCOM.

"We have learned work ethics, professional communication, and the value of teamwork in real workplaces," Nomvelo continued. "This scholarship is a unique opportunity, a bridge between our dreams and our potential. It challenges us to rise, to lead, and to ensure that no girl is left behind in the digital world. As recipients, we have a responsibility to carry this vision forward, to empower, inspire, and give back, 'Because when one girl rises, she lifts others with her.'"

The atmosphere at ESCCOM headquarters was filled with pride and hope. The stories shared and commitments made served as a reminder that empowering one girl today can transform the digital future of an entire nation. Through initiatives like the Girls in ICT Sponsorship Program, ESCCOM continues to champion equality, innovation, and opportunity, proving that when young women are given the tools to dream, they also gain the power to build. The event not only celebrated academic excellence but also reaffirmed a collective vision for a future where every young woman in Eswatini has the confidence, skills, and support to thrive in technology and beyond.

Eswatini moves closer to adopting National Child Online safety strategy

IN a significant step toward securing the digital future of its children, Eswatini is finalizing a comprehensive National Child Online Protection (COP) Strategy.

This vital meeting has gathered a comprehensive group of stakeholders dedicated to children's welfare in the country, including representatives from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Ministry of Education, CANGO, UNESCO, UNICEF, REPS (Royal Eswatini Police Service), the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Mobile Network Operators, Members of the Youth Board and Other key organizations forming the Children's Consortium in Eswatini to review and refine the draft framework.

The Child Online Protection Strategy addresses online risks and potential harms faced by children while empowering them to safely and meaningfully benefit from digital opportunities. It adopts a multi-sectoral and holistic approach to protect children from online abuse and promote the positive use of digital platforms.

The strategy emphasizes the need for strong coordination among stakeholders in implementing both existing and new initiatives related to child online protection. It highlights the vital roles played by government ministries and agencies, regulators, ICT and telecommunications companies, civil society, educators, parents, caregivers, and children themselves in safeguarding children's rights online.

Leading the development of this strategy is the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM), in its capacity as the National Cybersecurity Agency, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Information,

Communications, and Technology (MICT) and with technical support from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Today's session marks the culmination of months of collaborative work, following initial consultations held in June. The strategy outlines a five-year roadmap (2026-2030) aimed at creating "a safe, inclusive, and empowering cyberspace for all children in Eswatini."

"This strategy is a critical component of our national cybersecurity and child protection efforts," said a representative from MICT. "It underscores our shared responsibility to ensure that our children can explore, learn, and connect online without fear of harm."

The draft strategy is built on five key pillars, each addressing major areas of child online safety:

Strengthening Governance and Legal Frameworks: Establishing clear leadership, and improving laws and enforcement mechanisms.

Building Capacity and Awareness: Implementing nationwide training and public education campaigns.

Improving Response Services: Ensuring that victims of online abuse receive timely and effective health, social welfare, and legal support.

Promoting Research and Innovation: Using data-driven insights to inform policy and develop innovative child safety solutions.

Fostering ICT Industry Responsibility: Partnering with technology companies and mobile operators to design safer digital platforms and enforce responsible online practices.

The validation meeting, facilitated by consultant Noris Chirwa, adopted a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach. Partic-



ipants, including representatives from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministry of Education, Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS), UNICEF, and the Youth Board were divided into thematic working groups to critically review the strategy's components.

"The input from every sector, from education and justice to technology and young people themselves, is what will make this strategy both effective and inclusive," Chirwa noted.

Following group deliberations, the findings were presented in a plenary session to inform the final refinement of the strategy and its implementation plan.

Once officially adopted, the National Child Online Protection Strategy will become Eswatini's guiding framework for a coordinated national response to digital threats against children. It will also align the



▲ Noris Chirwa.

Kingdom with regional and international standards on online child safety, reaffirming Eswatini's commitment to fostering a secure, responsible, and child-friendly digital environment for its youngest citizens.

Princess Sakhizwe urges unity, pride in local products

Stories by Delisa Magagula

HER Royal Highness Princess Sakhizwe has called on emaSwati to embrace unity, pride, and integrity in building the Made in Eswatini movement.

Speaking at the Unlock Made in Eswatini Breakfast Session held at the UN House in Mbabane on Wednesday, the Princess commended entrepreneurs, government, and development partners for their collective effort in supporting Eswatini's economic transformation.

"Unlocking requires courage, collaboration, and clarity of vision. It challenges us to unlock our personal mastery, our institutional readiness, and our national alignment toward a shared future of economic empowerment," said the Princess

She emphasised that the Made in Eswatini mark should not only represent quality products but also reflect integrity, innovation, and pride.

"This is our story and our story is one of potential ready to be unlocked. Let us ensure that every product or service carrying that mark tells our story," she said.

Princess Sakhizwe announced that registration for the 2026 Made in Eswatini Consumer Fair will open on November 1,



▲ Her Royal Highness Princess Sakhizwe during the Unlock Made in Eswatini Breakfast Session at UN House in Mbabane.

2025, with the Made in Eswatini Licensing Journey beginning on January 1, 2026.

She urged small and medium enterprises

to step forward, saying the next three years must define an era of empowerment for local producers and job creators.

...Mbabane Municipality commits to empowering MSMEs

THE City of Mbabane has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the 'Made in Eswatini' movement and strengthening opportunities for women- and youth-led enterprises.

Municipal CEO Gciniwe Fakudze confirmed that Mbabane will host the Made in Eswatini Consumer Fair and Consumer Choice Awards for the next three years, describing the city as the heartbeat of Eswatini's governance and economic activity.

"These flagship events are platforms for empowerment, collaboration, and economic transformation. A thriving local economy must be inclusive and future-focused," she said

Market access

Fakudze outlined five pillars of collaboration designed to grow the Made in Eswatini ecosystem: market knowledge, market access, entrepreneurial capacity, consumer trust, and sustainability.

Under these pillars, the municipality plans to support the development of a Market Intelligence Platform, a Loyalty Card Program, and a 'Choose Local' campaign that promotes Eswatini-made goods.

She added that the municipality's partnerships will encourage eco-friendly manufacturing and open pathways for local enterprises to participate in carbon solution initiatives.

"Together, we are building a city made in Eswatini," she concluded.

Made in Eswatini unveils strategic roadmap for 2026–28



▲ A Peculiar People Chairman Melusi Zox Dlamini.

THE Made in Eswatini Initiative has unveiled a three-year strategic plan aimed at positioning Eswatini's products and services as globally competitive brands rooted in authenticity and innovation.

The roadmap, presented by A Peculiar People, runs from January 2026 to December 2028 under the theme Fuelling the Next Generation of Job Creators.

The strategy focuses on five pillars, growing market knowledge, expanding market access, increasing entrepreneurial capacity, building consumer confidence, and championing sustainability.

By 2028, the initiative aims to establish the Made in Eswatini Mark as a trusted

symbol of quality, enhance entrepreneurial skills through training and mentorship, and influence consumer behaviour towards supporting local goods. Past achievements include the launch of the Made in Eswatini Mark, Consumer Choice Awards, and a suite of digital platforms made in Eswatini. Africa, Madeineswatini.co.sz, and madeineswatini.store.

Sold out

In 2024 alone, the Made in Eswatini Consumer Fair hosted 141 MSMEs, 90% of which were women-led, with 57 product lines sold out and over 1,200 consumers attending.

A Peculiar People Chairman Melusi Zox Dlamini said the next phase will deepen partnerships with government, the private sector, and development agencies to sustain growth.

... The K3Y joins forces to unlock mastery, drive entrepreneurial growth

THE Made in Eswatini movement has deepened its collaborative vision through a new partnership with The K3Y, marking the start of a three-year journey to strengthen entrepreneurial capacity, leadership, and innovation in the Kingdom.

Hosted at the UN House in Mbabane, the Unlock Made in Eswatini Breakfast Session served as a high-level platform to reflect on lessons learned, unpack the role of personal mastery, and outline the next phase of the Made in Eswatini strategy. The session brought together entrepreneurs, government officials, corporate partners, media, and international development agencies under one purpose to unlock the resilience, agility, and innovation needed for local enterprises to thrive regionally and globally. The highlight of the session was the introduction of The Unlock Mastery Journey, a leadership development

programme curated by The K3Y.

The initiative is designed to empower entrepreneurs with practical tools to refine their leadership mindset, enhance collaboration, and strengthen business sustainability. Sian Louw, Founder of The K3Y, said the programme is built on the principle that economic transformation begins with personal growth.

Confidence

"Before we can unlock businesses, we must first unlock people. The Unlock Mastery Journey is about equipping entrepreneurs with clarity, confidence, and connection so they can build not only stronger enterprises, but a stronger Eswatini," she said.

She added that The K3Y's collaboration with A Peculiar People will help position Eswatini as a model of inclusive, purpose-driven entrepreneurship.

The partnership forms part of the wider Made in Eswatini 2026–2028 Strategic Cycle, which seeks to elevate local brands,

increase access to markets, and build consumer trust in Eswatini-made products and services.

The programme will work hand in hand with upcoming flagship events such as the Made in Eswatini Consumer Fair and Consumer Choice Awards, both confirmed to remain in Mbabane for the next three years. Participants at the breakfast session described the collaboration as a timely step in nurturing leadership and innovation within Eswatini's MSME sector.

The organisers concluded that true transformation will require partnerships rooted in shared vision and accountability.

"This is more than a business agenda. It's a movement to unlock people's potential because when we master ourselves, we master our economy," she said. The K3Y partnership marks a new chapter in the Made in Eswatini journey, one that combines strategy, self-mastery, and collaboration to fuel the next generation of job creators.



▲ The K3Y Founder Sonia during the session.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

ERS disbursed E3.2bln in tax refunds last year

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) is committed to ensuring that taxpayers who have overpaid their taxes receive their funds back promptly. This commitment was highlighted by ERS Commissioner General, Brightwell Nkambule, who disclosed the monumental scale of the tax refund payments made by the revenue service.

Wall St. on record high as Nvidia hits \$5tn

WALL Street's main indexes hit record highs on Wednesday, with Nvidia becoming the first company to surpass a \$5 trillion valuation, while investors awaited an expected Federal Reserve rate cut and a wave of Big Tech results. Shares of Nvidia rose 4.7 per cent, storming past the milestone after CEO Jensen Huang announced \$500 billion in AI chip orders and plans to build seven supercomputers for the U.S. government.

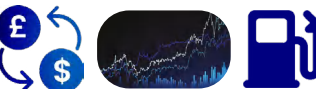
Dollar mixed ahead of Fed rate decision

NEW YORK — The dollar was mixed on Wednesday before the Federal Reserve is expected to cut rates, with investors focused on Fed Chair Jerome Powell's outlook for the economy even as the federal government shutdown leaves a vacuum of economic data. The greenback got some support from signs the U.S. and China are set to agree to a trade war truce. The dollar index was last up 0.19 per cent on the day at 98.87. The euro fell 0.14 per cent to \$1.1632.



FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.7695	17.2338
G.B. Pound	22.4659	23.1349
EURO	19.4833	20.1186
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	



'Wholesale-retail sector has largest tax gap'

... accounts for a quarter of the E4.4 billion tax gap



▲ERS Commissioner General, Brightwell Nkambule and Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg joined by ERS top management during the launch of the 2025 Income Tax Filing Season and the Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP) at the ERS headquarters in Ezulwini on Wednesday.

By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) has unveiled an assessment of the country's tax compliance landscape, revealing a persistent total tax gap estimated at E4.4 billion.

The data, presented by Minister for Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, specifically identifies the Wholesale and Retail sector as the single most challenging area, contributing over a quarter of the entire shortfall.

This briefing was convened to unpack the ERS Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP), with Minister Rijkenberg outlining key compliance focus areas and the treatments the ERS will implement to enhance taxpayer compliance.

Rijkenberg also highlighted important dates for the 2025 Income Tax Filing Season.

The ERS report specifies that the total cumulative tax gap, factoring in multiple tax types, stands at E4.302 billion, which aligns with the E4.4 billion figure cited by the ERS.

This deficit includes gaps in Value Added Tax (VAT), Pay As You Earn (PAYE), Corporate Income Tax (CIT), and Individual Income Tax (PIT). The figures presented show that VAT alone accounts for an estimated E1.359 billion of the total gap, while CIT contributes E1.131 billion.

The PIT gap is recorded at E1.196 billion, with PAYE accounting for the remainder at E615 million.

"The Total Tax Gap figures are derived from sectoral estimates of non-compliance across the economy. Manufacturing, Construction, and other economic sectors all contribute to the shortfall, but the data places the Wholesale and Retail sector distinctly ahead in terms of absolute contribution to the non-compliance rate across all tax heads," said the Minister.

He further said, the sector-specific breakdown isolates the Wholesale and Retail industry as the source of the largest total tax gap.

According to the ERS report, the sector's total non-compliance amounts to E1.133 billion. This figure represents approximately 26.3% of the total E4.302 billion tax gap across all tax types and sectors.

The ERS data presented at the briefing explicitly highlighted the Wholesale and Retail sector as the most challenging especially VAT.

"The E1.133 billion shortfall for Wholesale and Retail is primarily driven by gaps in VAT and Corporate Income Tax. The sector's estimated VAT Gap is reported at E603 million, and its CIT Gap estimate stands at E417 million. These two tax types alone account for over E1 billion of the sector's total non-compliance," reads the report.

For comparison, the Manufacturing sector is the next largest contributor to the overall VAT Gap, with an estimate of E305 million.

Meanwhile, the Construction sector's VAT Gap estimate is E127 million, while all other sectors combined contribute E304 million to the total VAT shortfall of E1.359 billion.

In the realm of Corporate Income Tax, Wholesale and Retail's E417 million gap also

leads the sectoral breakdown. The Manufacturing sector's CIT gap is E244 million, and the Agriculture sector is listed at E127 million.

Further analysis from the ERS briefing provided insight into compliance levels by segment for the period of April to September 2025.

The data presented covers Business Provisional Tax (BUSPROV), Corporate Income Tax (CORPINC), Pay As You Earn (PAYE), and VAT. While overall compliance rates generally hover above the 80% mark for BUSPROV, CORPINC, and PAYE across segments, the compliance rate for VAT shows a more varied performance.

In the ERS report, it was illustrated that the performance of the VAT segment appears lower than the other three tax types in certain areas, consistent with the substantial VAT Gap estimate across sectors.

The core purpose of the press briefing, as presented by Minister Rijkenberg, was to communicate the measures to be implemented in the new Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP).

"The CIP is designed to address the challenging figures by enhancing taxpayer compliance and focusing treatment efforts on the areas of greatest weakness. The publication of these specific data points underscores the ERS's intention to target resources towards the identified high-risk sectors and tax types, notably the E603 million VAT gap within the Wholesale and Retail sector," he said.

The ERS has stated its primary objective through the briefing is to share this vital information to encourage voluntary compliance ahead of the announced 2025 Income Tax Filing Season deadlines.

By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) is committed to ensuring that taxpayers who have overpaid their taxes receive their funds back promptly.

This commitment was highlighted by ERS Commissioner General, Brightwell Nkambule, who disclosed the monumental scale of the tax refund payments made by the revenue service.

The revelation came as Finance Minister Neal Rijkenberg launched the 2025 Income Tax Filing Season and the Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP) at the ERS headquarters in Ezulwini on Wednesday.

According to Nkambule, the ERS spent a staggering E3.2 billion on tax refund payments to compliant taxpayers during the last financial year.

Furthermore, the Commissioner General revealed that, on average, the ERS disburses approximately E362 million every month in refunds.

He said this significant expenditure underscores the fundamental principle of a tax refund system in Eswatini, a refund occurs when the amount of tax a taxpayer has paid to the ERS (through mechanisms like Pay As You Earn (PAYE) or Provisional Tax) exceeds their actual, calculated tax liability for the year.

The ERS is legally mandated to return this overpayment to the taxpayer.

When asked about the frequent complaint regarding the time it takes to process

these refunds, Commissioner General Nkambule offered a clear explanation, emphasising the need for stringent verification procedures.

“The primary reason for delays is the fine scrutiny every refund has to go through. This thorough audit process is critical to protect national revenue against fraudulent claims, ensuring that only legitimate overpayments are reimbursed,” said Nkambule.

Nkambule also addressed a specific category of refund claims that often involves longer processing times, refunds related to goods, such as vehicles, imported from South Africa.

To accelerate the validation and payment of these specific claims, the Commissioner

ERS disbursed E3.2bln in tax refunds last year



▲ ERS Commissioner General, Brightwell Nkambule.

General confirmed that the ERS is actively working with the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

Nkambule said this inter-agency collaboration is aimed at streamlining the exchange of necessary documentation and verification of claims, ultimately benefiting taxpayers involved in cross-border trade and transactions.

The ERS further encouraged all taxpayers due a refund whether individuals, businesses, or claimants of import duties to ensure their annual Income Tax Returns are filed accurately via the ERS's digital platforms like TaxEase.

“A complete and accurate filing is the essential first step in ensuring a smooth and timely refund process. The Eswatini Revenue Service is the government agency responsible for the assessment and collection of taxes and duties in Eswatini,” said Nkambule.



▲ Industry players that graced the event.

Govt needs E1.2bln to clear arrears at once



▲ Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg during the event.

By Delisa Magagula

THE government needs E1.2 billion to clear arrears and pay suppliers in full, Minister for Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, said during the briefing.

Responding to concerns that late payments to suppliers contribute to tax non-compliance, Rijkenberg said payments submitted to Treasury are generally processed well within the 90-day contractual period.

“Since there have been payments to suppliers, I can honestly say that older than 90-day delays at Treasury are rare,” he said.

The Minister urged suppliers to understand that government contracts operate on a 90-day payment cycle and that providing goods or services to the government effectively involves extending credit.

“We need to understand that people who supply the government, are going to have to understand they do provide the government with credit. It’s a decision for a supplier to the government to say, I’m willing to supply the government, understanding the pay-

ment terms of the government, understanding that 90 days I’m giving to government to pay. At the same time, can I afford, knowing that the rules of ERS say, once I’ve invoiced,” said the Minister.

Rijkenberg further explained that loans have been tabled in Parliament to ensure the government has sufficient funds to clear all outstanding arrears and pay suppliers once and for all.

“So, I appeal to government suppliers to please understand that if you supply the government, you do need to make sure you understand the dynamic you’re getting yourself into and the possible issues that come with it.

But at the same time, we have tabled two loans in Parliament that we believe, if approved this year, we will have enough money in the budget to pay things. I’ve submitted two more loans, \$57.5 million U.S. dollars, so E1.6 billion,” said Rijkenberg.

This announcement comes as part of the Eswatini Revenue Service’s Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP), which outlines measures to improve taxpayer compliance ahead of the 2025 Income Tax Filing Season.

Wall St. on record high as Nvidia hits \$5tln

By Marc Jones and Rae Wee

WALL Street's main indexes hit record highs on Wednesday, with Nvidia becoming the first company to surpass a \$5 trillion valuation, while investors awaited an expected Federal Reserve rate cut and a wave of Big Tech results.

Shares of Nvidia rose 4.7 per cent, storming past the milestone after CEO Jensen Huang announced \$500 billion in AI chip orders and plans to build seven supercomputers for the U.S. government.

The stock has risen about 50 per cent so far this year, and has been among the top boosts to U.S. equities in 2025. Apple briefly topped \$4 trillion in market cap on Tuesday, while Microsoft trades above that level.

"While the \$5 trillion milestone seems unfathomable in a historic context, it comes in the wake of a company that has managed to outperform on all metrics," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B. Riley Wealth Management.

The S&P 500 tech index gained 1.4 per cent, while the Philadelphia SE Semiconductor index added 2.1 per cent.

Meta and Microsoft were flat, while Alphabet gained 0.3 per cent ahead of their earnings results after markets close.

At 09:46 a.m. ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.6 per cent, the S&P 500 gained 0.35 per cent and the Nasdaq Composite rose 0.66 per cent.

The three major indexes have hit a series of record highs in recent days, driven by optimism around artificial intelligence, positive earnings momentum and expectations of rate cuts from the U.S. central bank.



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

Boeing tab fell 3 per cent after the planemaker reported a charge of nearly \$5 billion related to delays in its 777X jet program, while Caterpillar tab shares jumped nearly 10 per cent after beating third-quarter profit expectations.

Seagate Technology shares rose 13.5 per cent after the company forecast second-quarter earnings above Wall Street estimates.

Peers Sandisk and Western Digital gained 7.3 per cent and 8.7 per cent, respectively.

Verizon rose 3 per cent after beating estimates for quarterly profit and wireless subscriber additions.

S&P consumer staples dropped 0.9 per cent. Both Kraft Heinz and cadbury-maker Mondelez International trimmed their annual profit forecasts, sending shares down 2.4 per cent and 4.2 per cent, respectively.

Of the 222 companies in the S&P 500 that have reported so far, almost 85 per cent have posted earnings above analyst expectations, according to data compiled by LSEG as of Wednesday.

Fed outlook, trade deals eyed

The Fed is widely expected to trim rates by a quarter of a percentage point later in the day with traders expecting another 25 basis point cut in December.

After nearly a month of a U.S. government shutdown that has kept key economic data under wraps, investors will hunt for clues on the Fed's rate path after leaning on private surveys and corporate announcements to fill the void. Investors will also keep an eye on any plans to end the central bank's "quantitative tightening" policy - a long-running effort to shrink its balance sheet.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump began the final leg of his Asia trip, saying he had reached a deal with South Korea and was optimistic about an agreement with China's Xi Jinping. Talks between the two counterparts are set for Thursday in the port city of Busan. Among other stock moves, Fiserv slumped 44.3 per cent after lowering its annual earnings forecasts for the second consecutive quarter. (Reuters)



▲ U.S. dollar banknotes.

Dollar mixed ahead of Fed rate decision

By Karen Brettell

NEW YORK — The dollar was mixed on Wednesday before the Federal Reserve is expected to cut rates, with investors focused on Fed Chair Jerome Powell's outlook for the economy even as the federal government shutdown leaves a vacuum of economic data.

The greenback got some support from signs the U.S. and China are set to agree to a trade war truce.

The dollar index was last up 0.19 per cent on the day at 98.87. The euro fell 0.14 per cent to \$1.1632.

Both the European Central Bank and the Bank of Japan are expected to hold rates steady on Thursday.

The yen was a fraction stronger at 152.04 per dollar. It strengthened after U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent urged Japan's government to give the central bank scope to raise interest rates, escalating his warning to Tokyo against keeping the yen too weak through prolonged low borrowing costs.

Bessent, who was in Japan with Trump for talks with the newly-formed government of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, has repeatedly criticised the BOJ for its slow pace of rate hikes.

Britain's pound and the Australian dollar were also big movers, linked to changes in central bank policy expectations, though the Bank of England and Reserve Bank of Australia do not meet until next week.

Sterling shed 0.5 per cent against the dollar to \$1.3203, its lowest in nearly three months, as markets see an increasing chance of a BoE rate cut this year, and maybe as early as next week.

Data last week showed that British inflation unexpectedly held steady in September. A report earlier this month also showed that British workers' pay grew at the weakest pace since 2022 and the jobless rate nudged higher. Goldman Sachs said on Tuesday it expected the BoE to cut rates next month, having previously seen no easing this year.

The Aussie dollar rose after hotter-than-expected quarterly consumer price data threw into doubt a rate cut from the RBA next week, or even at the following meeting in December.

It reached \$0.6617, the highest since October 7. The Canadian dollar gained after the Bank of Canada reduced its key overnight interest rate to 2.25 per cent on Wednesday, as widely expected, and signaled this could mark an end to its cutting cycle unless the outlook for inflation and the economy changed.

Bitcoin dipped 0.20 per cent to \$112,630. (Reuters)

Oil steadies as US-China meeting comes into focus

By Ahmad Ghaddar

LONDON — Oil prices steadied on Wednesday as investors weighed optimism over a meeting between the leaders of top consumers the U.S. and China against an expected increase in production quotas from the next OPEC+ meeting.

Brent crude futures were up 11 cents, or 0.2 per cent, to \$64.51 a barrel at 1020 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures gained 6 cents, or 0.1 per cent, to \$60.21. China's foreign ministry said Chinese President Xi Jinping would meet U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday in the South Korean city of Busan.

It said the meeting would "inject new momentum into the development of U.S.-China relations", adding that Beijing was ready to work together for "positive outcomes".

China also said that it was open to continuing cooperation with the U.S. on fentanyl after Trump said he expected to reduce tariffs on Chinese goods in exchange for Beijing's commitment to curb exports of precursor chemicals.

Also supporting prices was an expected



▲ A drone view of a pump jack and drilling rig south of Midland, Texas, U.S.

fall in U.S. crude and fuel inventories last week.

Crude stocks fell by 4.02 million barrels for the week ended October 24, market sources

said, citing American Petroleum Institute figures on Tuesday.

Gasoline inventories dropped by 6.35 million barrels, while distillate inventories fell by 4.36 million barrels from a week earlier, the sources said.

"The API report showing large draws for crude and refined products last week in the U.S. is giving some modest support to prices," UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo said.

Brent and WTI last week registered their biggest weekly gains since June after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia for the first time in his second term, targeting major oil companies Lukoil and Rosneft.

Still, doubts that sanctions would offset oversupply and talk of an OPEC+ output increase pressured prices; both benchmarks fell 1.9 per cent, or more than \$1, in the previous session.

OPEC+, the world's largest group of oil-producing nations, is leaning towards a modest output boost in December, four sources familiar with the talks said, with two sources citing an additional 137,000 barrels per day.

On Tuesday, the CEO of Saudi state oil giant Aramco said crude oil demand was strong even before sanctions were imposed on Russian oil majors and Chinese demand was still healthy. (Reuters)

NETFLIX is looking to vertical video as a way to experiment with new content types, said CTO Elizabeth Stone, speaking at the TechCrunch Disrupt 2025 conference on Tuesday.

The exec noted the company didn't want to compete directly with apps like TikTok or other short-form drama apps, but did acknowledge there are more ways that Netflix can take advantage of the mobile platform.

In response to a question about the competitive landscape on mobile, Stone agreed there are times when consumers are looking for something Netflix offers, like a TV show, movie, or game, but there are other times they want "something more snackable." In these moments, Netflix needs to be able to offer "a broader variety of content," she said. "We're testing a vertical video feed on mobile devices that starts to reimagine what mobile is, and kind of meets consumers where they are now and how they're using mobile today."

That feed, announced earlier this year as a test, allows members to scroll through clips of its original titles. The goal is to encourage Netflix users to be inspired to watch the show or movie. However, the company may have bigger plans for how that feed can be utilized, Stone's comments suggested.

The exec pointed to Moments, a video clipping feature in the Netflix app that lets users clip and share their favorite scenes from a show or movie.

There's potential for seeding those short clips into the vertical video feed, but Stone didn't directly confirm this plan. Instead, she said more vaguely the company would experiment with "different types of content" that could be in the vertical feed, as well as "different ways to clip and share content."

Netflix CTO says more vertical video experiments are coming ... but streamer is not competing with TikTok



▲ The startup began when Fedus had a conversation with Cubuk (whose friends call him "Doge") about seven months ago. Cubuk was one of Google Brain's foremost machine learning and material science researchers.

"We've been innovating on Moments, which allows kind of a social connection to some of the content by allowing a member to take a clip and share it with their networks," she said, adding that the feature is a type of

short-form experience. "But [Netflix] is not intending to copy or chase exactly what a TikTok or others are doing because we think that there's a certain type of entertainment — or moment of truth — that's especially

valuable to our members, and we really want to be focused there, versus trying to be all things at every moment, which I don't think needs to be a core part of the strategy," Stone added. (Tech Crunch)

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E32⁰⁰

1KG CHOICE BURGER



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OpenAI will have ‘legitimate AI researcher’ by 2028 – CEO

OPENAI says its deep learning systems are rapidly advancing, with models increasingly able to solve complex tasks faster.

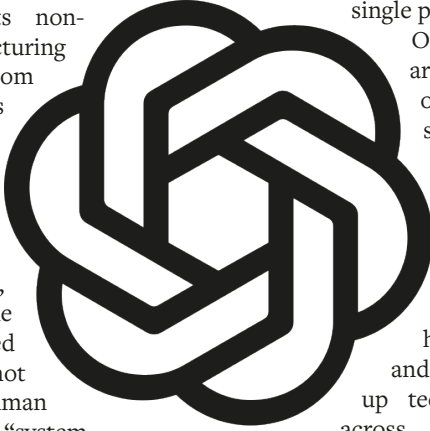
So fast, in fact, that internally, OpenAI is tracking toward achieving an intern-level research assistant by September 2026 and a fully automated “legitimate AI researcher” by 2028, CEO Sam Altman said during a livestream Tuesday.

The ambitious timeline comes on the same day OpenAI finalized its transition to a public benefit corporation structure, moving away from its non-profit roots. This restructuring releases OpenAI from limitations tied to its non-profit charter, while also opening up new opportunities for capital raising.

Jakub Pachocki, OpenAI’s chief scientist, joined Altman on the livestream. He described this AI researcher — not to be confused with a human who researches AI — as a “system capable of autonomously delivering on larger research projects.”

“We believe that it is possible that deep learning systems are less than a decade away from superintelligence,” Pachocki added. He described superintelligence as systems smarter than humans across a large number of critical actions.

To achieve those goals, OpenAI is betting on two key strategies: continued algorithmic innovation and dramatically scaling up “test



time compute” — essentially how long models spend thinking about problems. Current models can handle tasks with a roughly five-hour time horizon and match top human performers in competitions like the International Mathematical Olympiad, Pachocki said. But he believes this horizon will extend rapidly, in part by allowing models to spend far more computational resources thinking through complex problems. For major scientific breakthroughs, he said, it would be worth dedicating entire data centers’ worth of computing power to a single problem.

OpenAI says these goals are in line with the firm’s overall push to advance scientific research and allow AI to potentially make discoveries faster than human researchers, tackle complex problems beyond current human capabilities, and dramatically speed up technological innovation across multiple fields like medicine, physics, and technology development.

Altman also said the restructuring creates a framework to support OpenAI’s aggressive timeline for AI research assistants while maintaining a commitment to responsible AI development. Under the new structure, the non-profit OpenAI Foundation, which is focused on scientific advancement, will own 26% of the for-profit and will govern the research direction. (Tech Crunch)



▲ A rescued pangolin bought off a wildlife seller is seen resting at the Green Finger Garden in Lagos, Nigeria.



▲ Poachers gather after capturing an olive ridley sea turtle in a fishing community along the Ibeju-Lekki coastline in Lagos, Nigeria, July 29, 2025. Conservationists warn that endangered species such as sea turtles are rapidly disappearing along Nigeria's southern coast due to poaching.

NIGERIA will impose fines of up to 12 million naira (\$8,200) and jail terms of up to 10 years on traffickers of ivory, pangolin scales and other wildlife in a sweeping new bill passed by its Senate on Tuesday.

Conservation groups say the law could help curb organised crime networks which have made Nigeria a major hub for illegal wildlife trade. The networks have been linked with more than 30 tonnes of ivory since 2015 and over half of global pangolin scale trafficking between 2016 and 2019.

The Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill, passed by the lower parliament in May, updates decades-old laws that allow offenders to spend three months to five years in jail or pay fines as low as

Nigeria to impose more stringent penalties on wildlife traffickers

100,000 naira (\$68) for trafficking.

The Bill grants the Nigerian Customs investigators powers to track financial flows, and search and detain aircraft and vessels transporting prohibited wildlife. Judges will be allowed to fast-track cases and seize assets.

The law, which also prohibits pollution of wildlife habitat and the eating of endangered wildlife, aligns Nigeria with global treaties and enables extradition of offenders.

“This is a huge win for Nigeria and

shows, without any doubt, that we remain committed to stamping out wildlife trafficking and protecting our unique fauna and flora,” said Terseer Ugbor, the lawmaker who sponsored the bill.

Environmental groups welcomed the move, saying it will help protect wildlife.

“For too long, traffickers have used Nigeria as a transit country for the illegal wildlife trade, bringing endangered wildlife from all over Africa through our porous borders, ports and airports to export them illegally

to Europe and Asia,” said Tunde Morakinyo, Executive Director, Africa Nature Investors Foundation (ANI).

They urged swift presidential assent before the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, a UN-affiliated international agreement summit in Uzbekistan in November.

(Rueters)

Presence of ‘aggressive’ Hawks members at Katiso Molefe’s house ‘concerning’

CAPTAIN Maxwell Wanda has told the Madlanga Commission details of the takedown of Katiso “KT” Molefe, where the presence of Hawks members is in question.

Wanda is a former member of the political killings task team (PKTT) and was part of the operation at Molefe’s house as a crime scene investigator.

Molefe is accused of ordering the hit on Armand Swart.

The takedown at Molefe’s house took place on 6 December 2024 and Wanda said he was not aware of the suspect’s identity until the team arrived at the house.

Molefe arrest

Wanda said when they arrived at Molefe’s house in Sandhurst, they found him in his dining room.

“When we arrived, there was a person [Lehasa Moloi – Molefe’s bodyguard] sitting next to the tennis court along the driveway and handcuffed. Next to him were two firearms – a rifle and a pistol.

“A few metres from him, on the other side of the driveway, next to the gymnasium, there was another pistol on the ground,” Wanda said.

“Witness A took us through the crime scene and took us to a white BMW. In it there was a rifle bag on the back seat and three or four rifle magazines loaded with ammunition.



▲ Controversial businessman Katiso “KT” Molefe.

We saw a fleet of cars, some under the carport, some in the open garage.

“Inside the house, there was a well-set-up office and we saw documents. Among those documents, there were three other A4 paper pages full of specimen signatures.”

Some documents were taken by Witness A, while the A4 pages and the ballistics exhibits – two pistols and one rifle with magazines and bullets – were taken by Wanda’s colleague.

While Wanda and his colleagues

were processing the crime scene, a combat member of the PKTT requested that he proceed to the gate where the Hawks members were. “On my arrival at the gate, I saw a group of people who were members of the Hawks. I identified them by their golf T-shirts, which had the Hawks emblem and their three or four vehicles with the Hawks emblem. They were next to the main gate on the outside. The gate was closed,” said Wanda.

(The Citizen)



▲ ArcelorMittal iron ore mine in Mount Nimba, Liberia.

Liberia replaces mines minister

Liberia has replaced its mining minister and top mining regulator, the office of President Joseph Boakai announced, as the West African nation and iron ore producer pursues talks with Washington on investments in its critical minerals sector.

The new minister, R. Matenokay Tingban, served as deputy mining minister under former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

The decision to appoint him in place of the previous minister, Wilmot J.M. Paye, is part of moves to improve governance and efficiency, Boakai’s office said in a statement on Monday, without elaborating.

A second statement on Tuesday named a new head for the state

mining regulator.

The changes come as Liberia seeks to attract foreign investment into its mining industry, which recently identified deposits of lithium, cobalt, manganese and rare earths, minerals vital for electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met Liberian Foreign Minister Sara Beysolow Nyanti in Washington on October 17 to discuss expanding U.S. participation in mining, the State Department said.

Tingban will oversee a ministry central to Liberia’s plans to boost investor confidence under Boakai’s “ARREST Agenda”, a five-year national development strategy. (Rueters)

DONALD Trump and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung finalised details of their fraught trade deal at a summit in South Korea on Wednesday, and the U.S. president also sounded an optimistic note about a looming summit with China’s Xi Jinping.

“We made our deal, pretty much finalised it,” Trump said at a dinner with Lee and other regional leaders on the sidelines of an Asia Pacific forum.

The allies unveiled a deal in late July under which Seoul would avoid the worst of U.S. tariffs on its imports by agreeing to pump \$350 billion of new investments into the United States in return for lower tariff rates.

But talks over the structure of those investments had been deadlocked and both sides had played down expectations for a deal during Trump’s visit.

“Prospects were not bright even last night, and there was dramatic progress on the day,” Kim Yong-beom, South Korea’s top presidential policy chief, told reporters, without providing further details.

Trump and Lee agreed that Seoul can split its promised \$350 billion investment fund into \$200 billion in cash to be paid in instalments and capped at \$20 billion per year, Lee’s aides said. The other \$150 billion is to be spent on investments in shipbuilding, which South Korea has promised to help Trump restore.

The South Koreans said the two sides agreed to split profits 50/50 before the initial investments are recouped, and to only pursue commercially viable projects. U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick would head an investment committee to

Trump announces trade breakthrough with South Korea



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump meets with South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders’ summit in Gyeongju, South Korea.

assess potential projects.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the details of a Korea trade deal, which needs to be ratified by South Korea’s parliament.

Arriving from Tokyo hours after North Korea test-fired a nuclear-capable cruise missile, Trump was given a lavish welcome by Lee in Gyeongju, a historic city hosting this

year’s Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

His talks with Xi are set for Thursday in the port city of Busan.

Speaking to reporters en route to South Korea, Trump dismissed the North Korean missile test and said he was squarely focused on his meeting with Xi, leader of the world’s second-largest economy.

He added that he expects to reduce U.S. tariffs on imports of Chinese goods in exchange for a commitment from Beijing to curb exports of fentanyl precursor chemicals.

The United States could halve the levies of 20% on Chinese goods it now charges in retaliation for the export of such chemicals, the Wall Street Journal said.

China’s foreign ministry said the meeting of the two leaders would “inject new momentum into the development of U.S.-China relations”, and Beijing was ready to work together for “positive outcomes”.

Skipping the main APEC summit, Trump attended a dinner on Wednesday with Lee and other countries’ leaders. He was due to meet Xi before departing on Thursday.

Negotiators from the world’s top two economies hashed out a framework on Sunday for a deal to pause steeper American tariffs and Chinese rare earths export controls, U.S. officials said. The news sent stocks to record peaks.

Beijing has been more circumspect about the prospect of an agreement, but in a possible sign of thawing, China bought its first cargoes of U.S. soybeans in several months, Reuters reported exclusively on Wednesday.

(Reuters)

Hurricane Melissa, strongest storm ever to hit Jamaica, roars onward into Cuba

HURRICANE Melissa unleashed devastation in Jamaica as the strongest storm on record ever to hit the Caribbean island nation, and roared later on Wednesday into eastern Cuba, smashing the city of Santiago and flooding rural land.

A Category 5 storm with sustained winds of 185 mph (298 kph) when it barrelled into Jamaica, Melissa had been downgraded to a still dangerous Category 3 when it hit Cuba with sustained winds of 120 mph, the U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

“Life-threatening storm surge, flash flooding and landslides, and damaging hurricane winds are ongoing this morning,” the center said.

The historic storm blasted western Jamaica, demolishing homes, knocking down swaths of trees and washing out roadways. Authorities did not yet release details of fatalities but said they expected loss of life.

Eyewitness reports and videos on social media from Jamaica showed vehicles destroyed by flying debris, hotel doors blown off hinges and roofs scattered across neighborhoods. Video of the airport in Montego Bay showed inundated seating areas, broken glass and collapsed ceilings.

The storm was expected to weaken some as it crossed Cuba but would remain a dangerous hurricane upon reaching the Bahamas.

In eastern Cuba, around 735,000

people were evacuated from homes as the storm approached, authorities said. By mid-morning, President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Cuba had already suffered extensive damage and warned residents against letting down their guard, urging them to remain sheltered.

In southwestern Jamaica, the parish of St. Elizabeth was left “underwater,” an official said, with more than 500,000 residents without power. “The reports that we have had so far would include damage to hospitals, significant damage to residential property, housing and commercial property as well, and damage to our road infrastructure,” Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness said on CNN after the storm had passed. (Reuters)

US to withdraw some troops from NATO’s eastern flank



THE United States plans to cut the number of troops present on Europe’s eastern flank, including soldiers who were to be stationed at Romania’s Mihail Kogalniceanu air base, Romania’s defence ministry said on Wednesday. The ministry said the decision was expected given changes in Washington’s priorities, and that roughly 1,000 U.S. troops would continue to be stationed in Romania. Between 1,000 and 1,200 U.S. troops rotated out a month ago and will not be replaced, it said in a statement.

Washington’s European allies have been told previously by the administration of President Donald Trump that they will need to take more responsibility

for their own security as the United States focuses more on its own borders and on the Indo-Pacific region.

“The American decision is to stop the rotation in Europe of a brigade that had elements in several NATO countries,” the defence ministry said.

Defence Minister Ionut Mosteanu told a news conference that the brigade had troops in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia.

He said Bucharest’s ties with Washington remained strong and that the permanent allied presence remained “considerable”, at around 3,500 NATO troops including U.S. soldiers.

(Reuters)



▲ Homes damaged by Hurricane Melissa on Tuesday in Kingston, Jamaica.

‘Methodist Medley’ hits 800 000 YouTube views

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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NOTHANDO Hlophe, one of Eswatini’s most beloved gospel artists, has once again captured the hearts of worshippers and music lovers alike with her latest single, “Methodist Medley.”

This soulful track, featured on her recently released album ‘A New Dawn,’ has now surpassed an impressive milestone of 800,000 views on YouTube, affirming its widespread impact and the deep connection it has forged with audiences. The recording of “Methodist Medley” took place during a live session at the Mavuso Trade Centre on June 7, 2025, as part of the vibrant launch event for ‘A New Dawn.’

The album itself is a testament to Nothando’s spiritual journey, blending heartfelt worship with contemporary gospel sounds. “Methodist Medley” follows the success of another powerful track from the album, “Sithumela Wena,” which has already garnered over 330,000 views on YouTube, further solidifying Nothando’s place as a leading voice in gospel music.

What makes “Methodist Medley” particularly special is its deep roots in Nothando’s personal faith history. The song is a loving tribute to the hymns she grew up singing in the Methodist Church, a foundation that shaped her early spiritual life. By weaving together these timeless melodies with modern gospel arrangements, Nothando created a bridge between tradition and contemporary worship, evoking nostalgia while inspiring renewed faith.

In discussing the song’s meaning,



▲ Nothando Hlophe.

Nothando Hlophe shared that the hymns are far more than mere songs to her, they are a reflection of her identity and a gateway to cherished childhood memories of Sunday mornings filled with prayer and harmony.

Hymns

“These hymns carry the essence of my faith journey,” she explained. “They remind me of God’s faithfulness throughout my life and the comfort that comes from His presence.”

At its heart, “Methodist Medley” is a prayer for divine protection and guidance. The lyrics speak to the universal human experience of navigating life’s uncertainties and the solace found in trusting God’s sheltering presence. Nothando emphasised the song’s message of hope, stating, “We all go through seasons of uncertainty, but His presence is our constant shelter. I want this song to remind people that they are never alone, God is with them, always.”

ItsAllBlaq joins Mzansi Braai Festival lineup

ESWATINI’S talented female DJ, ItsAllBlaq, is set to bring her electrifying energy to the inaugural Mzansi Biggest Braai Festival, taking place from November 28 to 30, 2025.

This highly anticipated event promises to be a vibrant celebration where great food, incredible music, and authentic African culture converge for an unforgettable weekend. Hosted at the stunning Karoo 62 in Ladismith, South Africa, the festival is much more than a traditional braai; it is a powerful cultural experience that embodies the spirit of #AfricaToTheWorld, blending the soul of South Africa with the heartbeat of the entire continent.

Expressing her gratitude for the opportunity, ItsAllBlaq shared, “I’m honoured to be a blessing at the Mzansi Biggest Braai Festival in Cape Town this November. I can only thank God.” Her involvement underscores the rising recognition of Eswatini’s musical talent across Africa and highlights the festival’s dedication to showcasing diverse and dynamic artists from the continent.

At the heart of the festival is the Main Stage, which will host electrifying performances from some of Africa’s biggest names alongside international acts, ensuring the energy remains high from day into night. This stage is set to offer a rich musical experience that captures the diversity and vibrancy of African music, promising to be a highlight for attendees. Complementing this is the Elevate Stage, a creative launchpad designed to spotlight emerging talent and artistic

expression from across Africa.

Adding to the festival’s dynamic atmosphere is the Hypelink Stage, created in partnership with a major media powerhouse and dedicated to the sounds that move today’s generation. Featuring genres such as Amapiano, 3-Step, and Tech music, this stage is curated to keep the crowd dancing well into the night.

Beyond music, the festival also embraces the passion of motor enthusiasts through the Chrome & Wheels Zone, a high-energy rally that brings together bikers and car lovers in a celebration of speed, style, and culture. This zone captures the essence of iconic bike and car rallies, offering a vibrant community space where passion meets precision.

Parade

Festival-goers can witness a stunning rally parade featuring motorcycles and custom cars cruising the grounds, showcasing exceptional craftsmanship and design. The excitement continues with a burnout competition, while the zone also celebrates the rich heritage of biker and car culture through music, food, and storytelling. Competitors will battle for top honours in various categories, with prizes that reward excellence and innovation, making the Chrome & Wheels Zone a must-see attraction for any motor enthusiast attending the festival.

Adding an adventurous and athletic dimension to the event is the Wild Mile Challenge, a professional trail running competition that takes place across the rugged Karoo terrain. Open to both seasoned and



▲ ItsAllBlaq.

new runners, the course tests endurance, strength, and skill, offering participants a unique opportunity to engage with the natural beauty surrounding the festival while pushing their physical limits.



▲ Heavy K.

Heavy K, Mas Musiq to light up Manzini stage

THE Manzini Club is gearing up for an electrifying night as South African music sensations Heavy K and Mas Musiq prepare to take the stage at the upcoming Manzini Fun Fair.

Scheduled for December 27, 2025, the event will run from 10 am until late into the night. Tickets for the Manzini Fun Fair are available in multiple phases to accommodate fans eager to experience the live performances. Early birds can secure their spots with Phase 1 tickets priced at E100, followed by Phase 2 at E150, Phase 3 at E250, and Phase 4 at E350. For those who decide to join the festivities on the day of the event, tickets will be sold at E400.

Heavy K, born Mkhululi Siquila in Port Elizabeth, has become a household name in the South African music scene. Beginning his production journey at the tender age of 16, Heavy K moved to Johannesburg in 2013 to fully immerse himself in the music industry. Over the years, he has released several successful albums, notably the ‘Respect the Drumboss’ series and ‘Khusta,’ which have cemented his reputation as a leading DJ and producer.

His multi-platinum singles such as “Inde” and “Uyeke” have resonated widely, earning him collaborations with renowned artists including Bucie, Professor, and international star Ed Sheeran. Heavy K’s recent exploration of the 3-Step genre with his 2023 album ‘Respect The Drumboss 2 (3-Step Edition)’ showcases his commitment to evolving his sound and pushing musical boundaries.

Spotlight

Sharing the spotlight will be Thabo Ngubane, professionally known as Mas Musiq, a dynamic music producer and DJ hailing from Tembisa. With a foundation built on a Sound Engineering qualification, Mas Musiq entered the music production scene in 2019 and quickly made waves. His talent caught the attention of DJ Maphorisa, a pivotal figure in his career development.

Mas Musiq’s co-production of Samthing Soweto’s hit “Isiphithiphithi” marked a significant milestone, while his own tracks like “Zaka” featuring Aymos and “Emcimhini,” a collaboration with DJ Maphorisa, Kabza De Small, and Myztro, have become anthems within the Amapiano genre.

PHAKAMA MPUMALANGA FESTIVAL 2025:

Eswatini's top models to grace runway

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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TWO top models from Eswatini are set to make a remarkable impression at the upcoming Phakama Mpumalanga Festival.

Nondumiso Msibi, representing Eswatini, and Mercy Mathebula from South Africa, will grace the runway on November 1–2, 2025, at Mantana Gardens, Ngwenya Estate in White River, Mpumalanga. Their participation signals Eswatini's growing influence and ambition within the regional fashion industry.

Top Models Eswatini, the agency behind this dynamic duo, has a proud history of showcasing Swati talent on international platforms. This year marks their third consecutive appearance at the Phakama Mpumalanga Festival, a fact that underscores the agency's consistent growth and rising reputation.

Mbalenhle Manana, the director of Top Models Eswatini, expressed deep pride in the models' ability to elevate the brand's image beyond national borders. "We are always grateful for the opportunity given to Top Models Eswatini. They always showcase great versatility and stage presence. They are like a moving work of art which makes the runway vibes high, owning it and making the festival unforgettable," she said.

Manana highlighted that the models' professionalism, creativity, and consistency have been instrumental in establishing Top Models Eswatini as a respected name in the regional fashion scene. Their participation in high-profile events such as Phakama

reflects the evolution and maturation of Swati fashion and modelling standards. "It is not just about walking the runway; it's about representing the culture, the creativity, and the future of Eswatini fashion," she added.

This November is particularly significant for Top Models Eswatini, as the Phakama Festival will be their second international showcase within the month. Earlier, the agency made a strong impression at the MFR Fashion Week in Pretoria, South Africa, further solidifying its presence in the competitive African fashion market.

Fashion

"It is going to be our second gig for Top Africa Models as we had our first fashion show last week in Pretoria at MFR Fashion Week," Manana explained.

The Phakama Mpumalanga Festival is renowned for its vibrant fusion of fashion, music, and art, attracting designers, models, and creatives from across Africa. It serves as a vital platform for emerging and established talent to network, collaborate, and showcase their craft to a diverse audience. For Top Models Eswatini, the festival is more than a runway event; it is a stage for cultural exchange and a celebration of African creativity.

Manana emphasised that the agency's involvement in such events goes beyond mere exposure. It is about representation and inspiring the next generation of Swati models to pursue their ambitions with confidence and determination. "Our participation is a reminder of how far Eswatini's fashion has come and how bright the future continues to look," she said.



▲ Top model Nondumiso Msibi.



▲ Tribal Natives.

Native Xperience returns

THE much-anticipated return of Tribal Natives to Malandela's Lifestyle on November 1, 2025, signals a vibrant cultural rebirth for Eswatini's music and heritage scene.

The event, known as the Native Xperience, is set to ignite the spirit of African identity through a powerful blend of music, dance, and storytelling, marking its second edition with even greater depth and innovation. For DJ Ash, one-half of the iconic Eswatini duo Tribal Natives, this upcoming performance is far more than a concert, it is a homecoming and a renewal of purpose. "Honestly, it feels amazing to be coming back with the Native Xperience," she shared. "This event has always been close to our hearts because it's not just about performing, it's about reconnecting with our roots and our people."

The Native Xperience is designed as an immersive cultural journey that transcends conventional music performances. DJ Ash explained that every element, from the live percussion to the traditional attire, is carefully curated to embody African identity. "When we say 'Natives,' we're talking about connecting to the spirit of Africa, the rhythm, the ancestral energy, the communal vibe," she emphasised.

Since their debut, Tribal Natives have distinguished themselves by fusing Afrohouse beats with traditional Swati sounds, creating a unique musical style that bridges the ancient and the contemporary. Their performances frequently feature traditional Eswatini instruments such as the emahlokohloko, a type of wooden percussion, alongside vocal chants inspired by local ceremonies. This combination crafts a deeply spiritual and transcendent experience that elevates their shows beyond entertainment into the realm of ritual and cultural expression.

Evolution

Looking ahead to the upcoming Native Xperience, DJ Ash promises an evolution in the group's artistry. "This edition will introduce new layers of live instrumentation and collaborations with vocalists and dancers," she revealed. "The energy is deeper, and our set is bolder." Audiences can expect a cinematic and emotionally charged performance that pulses with the heartbeat of Eswatini, reflecting both tradition and innovation in equal measure.

The event also highlights the strength of Eswatini's creative community. DJ Ash praised fellow performers such as Tendanness and Lution, noting that their participation underscores a spirit of unity rather than competition. "Their inclusion is a celebration of community," she said. This collective approach not only enriches the musical experience but also symbolises the growing cohesion and creativity within the country's music scene.

True Classic joins Nasty C's Ivyson Tour

THE upcoming Ivyson Tour will be a landmark event for Eswatini's music scene, with True Classic set to support the electrifying headliner, Nasty C.

Scheduled for October 31, 2025, at the scenic Mdzimba View Shisanyama, this concert is more than just a musical performance, it is a celebration of personal growth, cultural identity, and legacy building that resonates deeply with the youth and creative communities. Named after Nasty C's moniker "Ivyson," the tour embodies a movement that champions ambition, self-belief, and the relentless pursuit of dreams.

Vuyani Ndzimandze, the event curator, emphasised the significance of hosting the Ivyson Tour in 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 explained.

Ticket demand has been robust, reflecting the excitement surrounding the event. Early bird tickets sold out quickly, signalling strong anticipation. Currently, general presale tickets are available for E200, offering an affordable entry point for many fans. For those seeking a more immersive experience, the Ivyson VIP tickets priced at E500 provide enhanced access and amenities, while the Ivyson Max tickets at E800 promise premium seating and exclusive perks. General admission tickets at the door will be sold for E250.

The concert lineup is designed to deliver



▲ True Classic crew.

a dynamic and unforgettable night. Nasty C's headline performance will be complemented by a carefully curated selection of top local artists and DJs, each bringing their own distinctive style and energy to the stage. This blend of talents promises a diverse musical journey that will captivate the audience from start to finish.

Production

Ndzimandze assured fans that the production values would be of the highest standard, matching the scale and ambition 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."

Beyond entertainment, the Ivyson Tour carries a powerful message of unity and inspiration. It seeks to create a space where music and culture converge to uplift and motivate young people, reinforcing the importance 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."

‘It’s not easy being a slay queen’

INNO Morolong has never been one to shy away from the spotlight.

The influencer, club promoter, and reality TV star has made headlines for both her glamorous lifestyle and fiery personality.

Now, she is prepared to share her perspective in Slay Queens, a daring new Showmax documentary series set to premiere on October 31.

Morolong has shared that she wanted to be part of the documentary because she has not actually told her life story. “I hardly open up, but this show made me open up about many things. It’s also more about the lifestyle that I’m used to living, so it was easy for me to agree to be part of it,” she says.

The other side of Morolong

For Morolong, the series is more than just glitz and luxury; it’s a chance to show the world who she really is beyond the headlines. “I’m always misunderstood. People always assume the worst, but this documentary made me show my other side, from humble beginnings to where I am now.

“I hope my story inspires young girls from small towns that if I can make it, they can also make it.”

As a single mother and entrepreneur navigating one of the most competitive industries in entertainment, Morolong says her journey has not been easy.

“In life it’s important to be patient; good things come to those who wait,” she says.

“I hope viewers learn that with hard work and dedication, you can achieve almost everything. Furthermore, it’s important to believe in God and put Him first in everything you do.” But behind the glitz, she

admits, lies a darker side of the so-called “slay queen” lifestyle.

“It is not easy being a slay queen. It takes a lot of money and time to maintain that high-standard look.

“Some girls fall into debt or end up stranded in foreign countries; others even face abuse or depression but hide it behind the flashy lifestyle.”

The term is unfairly vilified

Still, Morolong believes the term “slay queen” has been unfairly vilified.

“People think slay queens are high-class escorts or something like that. Even a hard-working woman like Beyoncé can look and be labelled a slay queen, but she’s also a wife and a mother.

“Some women just love to glam up and look good, and that doesn’t make them bad people,” says Morolong.

And when it comes to the role of men in this world, she is refreshingly honest.

“Men are natural providers. When they feel like flashing

money, they always want to be seen with women who look like slay queens.

“Most men do pay women to always look a certain way so they can shine.”

(Sunday World)



▲ Inno Morolong has never been one to shy away from the spotlight.

Mpumelelo Mseleku opens case after ‘fake’ cops raid house

MPUMELELO Mseleku, the head of a security firm and reality TV star, has filed a criminal complaint after eight men posing as police officers broke into his house.

Mpumelelo is the son of businessman and popular polygamist Musa Mseleku.

Mpumelolo was home at his Ballito apartment on Wednesday, October 22, with his heavily pregnant partner, Amanda Biyela, when the men stormed into his abode at about 11pm. Not wearing any police uniform, the armed men are said to have broken down the door to his apartment, using what his lawyer, Thabani Mpungose of Thabani Mpungose Attorneys, claimed was a fake search warrant with a fraudulent signature and unofficial stamp.

Fake search warrant

Mpungose detailed to Sunday World how the men gained access to the complex without a security code and went to Mpumelelo’s apartment.

“They broke the door to gain access into the apartment and produced a fraudulent search warrant,” Mpungose said.

“We verified the warrant’s inauthenticity with the authorities and the district commissioner, who showed us a real one.” The men claimed to be from the crime intelligence department, which Mpungose later confirmed to be untrue.

“They accused him of drug dealing, money laundering, fraud, dealing in illicit goods, and being in possession of an unlicensed firearm,” Mpungose said during an interview with Sunday World on Wednesday.

“They did not make any arrests but said they were conducting a search based on the warrant. He had R30 000 in the house, which



▲ Mpumelelo Mseleku, the head of a security firm and reality TV star, has filed a criminal complaint after eight men posing as police officers broke into his house.

was stolen during the raid.

“There was a bullet missing from his licensed firearm, which they stole. They damaged the door of the apartment, and it has not yet been repaired.”

Case of theft filed

Mseleku, through his legal team, has opened a case with the Durban Central police.

“We opened a case of theft, fraud, damage to property, defamation, and misrepresentation.

“We found that two of the men were indeed real [police] officers, and the other guys were private security. The district commissioner also confirmed that the warrant is

fake,” Mpungose said.

KwaZulu-Natal police spokesperson Colonel Robert Netshiunda confirmed to Sunday World that a criminal case has been opened.

“Police in Durban Central have opened a case of house robbery following an incident in which a couple was allegedly robbed of their belongings at their residence on Douglas Grove in Ballito on Tuesday, October 21, 2025,” said Netshiunda.

“Reports indicate that the couple was at their home when at least eight people came to their house and reportedly posed as police officers. The suspects allegedly stole an undisclosed amount of money.”

(Sunday World)



Somizi celebrates graduation from Villioti Fashion Institute

MULTI-MEDIA personality, Somizi Mhlango has completed his education journey at Villioti Fashion Institute.

The Metro FM presenter took to Instagram to share pictures of the milestone with his followers. In his caption, he penned a message of gratitude to those who supported him on his journey.

“Thanks to my family. My friends for the love and support. My Fans for cheering me on from the beginning. @villioti-fashion words can not explain. Special shout out to @moosas_fabrics u made this journey easier.”

Mhlango was studying part time at Villioti Fashion Institute and has been open with his followers about his fashion design journey. His friends and followers took to the comment section to congratulate him on his achievement. Renowned fashion designer Gert Johan Coetzee wrote: “Congratulations friend!! Super proud of you”

Legendary gospel musician Dr Rebecca Malope who is also a budding fashion designer wrote: “Congratulations so proud of you !!!”

Multi Platinum selling artist Vusi Nova wrote: “Milestone! Congratulations you’ve always pushed boundaries, It’s who you are. I have no doubt you will continue building yourself and inspiring. Bravo ” The Somphire founder in September closed the 2025 Durban Fashion Fair with an unforgettable show. Mhlango’s show was a star-studded affair, which saw Mzansi’s favourite celebrities take to the runway.

Among the models he chose to showcase his line were “The Real Housewives of Durban” OG Sorisha Naidoo, popular make-up artist and beauty influencer Mhlali Ndamase, DJ and influencer Sithelo Shoji and his daughter Bahumi Mhlango, among other A-listers.

Mhlango’s fashion empire is slowly growing; he has already dressed his daughter and legendary musician Judith Sephuma.

(IOL)

Doesn't All Food Boost Energy?

YES, but in different ways. Sugary drinks, candy, and pastries put too much fuel (sugar) into your blood too quickly.

The ensuing crash leaves you tired and hungry again. "Complex carbs," healthy fats, and protein take longer to digest, satisfy your hunger, and provide a slow, steady stream of energy.

Oatmeal

It's a complex carbohydrate. That means it's full of fiber and nutrients. Oatmeal is slower to digest and supplies energy evenly instead of all at once, and it is whole grain and gluten-free. A bowl in the morning will keep you going for hours.

Eggs

A single one has just 70 calories, and yet has 6 grams of protein. That provides fuel that gets released slowly. It also has more nutrients per calorie than most other foods. That helps it satisfy hunger. As a result, you're more likely to skip that mid-morning doughnut in the office break room that will spike your blood sugar and crash your energy.

Chicken

Trimmed of skin, it's a great source of lean protein. A piece of grilled chicken with some steamed or lightly dressed greens makes a perfect light lunch that won't weigh you down and will fuel you steadily until dinner. And chicken has less of that unhealthy saturated fat than other meats like pork, beef, and lamb.

Beef Liver

Without enough vitamin B12, your energy can lag. This is one of the best sources. It also has loads of protein to keep you fueled for a long time. If you just can't do liver, you can get your B12 from meat, poultry, fish, and eggs.

Oysters

Besides being a good source of low-fat protein, they're loaded with zinc. That helps your body fight off germs that could run you down and make you feel tired. Try them raw with a squeeze of lemon when they're in season, or roast them in the oven or on the grill.

Beans

They're a great source of protein, especially if you're vegetarian or vegan. Beans also have plenty of fiber to help slow digestion. They're rich in magnesium, too. That helps your cells make energy.

Sardines

They're not for everyone, but sardines do provide high-quality animal protein for steady energy. They also have loads of omega-3 "marine" fatty acids (EPA and DHA) that help prevent heart disease. If they're just too fishy for you, try salmon, tuna, or mackerel.

Walnuts

It's those omega-3s again. Walnuts have one in particular that your body uses for

Foods that boost your energy



energy (alpha-linolenic acid). Though nuts are high in calories, studies show that people who eat them don't gain weight or have other signs of bad health from them. That could be because the fiber slows how your body takes them in and the "healthy" fats satisfy hunger.

Coffee

It's where many of us get our morning caffeine jolt. And it works. It boosts your energy and keeps you more alert. Just don't overdo it. Caffeine can make you jittery and interfere with your sleep if you have too much, you're not used to it, or you have it late in the day.

Tea

A simple cup of tea is a low-calorie way to replace sugary sodas and soft drinks that can spike and then crash your energy levels in the middle of the day. That switch makes you more likely to get the nutrients and fluids you need each day, which can

help keep you alert and energized. Some teas have caffeine that can give you a little boost, too.

Berries

Blueberries, blackberries, strawberries: They're perfect if you want something sweet that doesn't have the calorie blast and "sugar crash" of a doughnut or candy bar. Berries also have antioxidants and other nutrients that help nourish and protect cells all over your body.

Dark Chocolate

If you just have to have candy, this is a good choice. It's lower in sugar than candy bars and milk chocolate. It's also been shown to improve mood and brain function. Antioxidants in the cocoa can help protect cells, lower blood pressure, and improve blood flow. This can keep you healthy and energized. Dark chocolate does have fat, so check the label and keep portions small.

Water

When your body doesn't have enough, you get tired. It also helps carry fuel and nutrients to your cells and helps get rid of waste. People who drink more of it usually take in less fat, sugar, salt, cholesterol, and total calories. That leaves more room for healthy nutrients that keep you energized. It's especially important to drink up when you exercise. Have 8 ounces before and after your workouts -- more if your circuit is longer than 30 minutes.

Foods for Exercise

The best fuel for exercise is carbohydrates, preferably "complex" ones like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Healthy fats from fish, nuts, vegetable oils, and avocados can help fuel endurance sports like long-distance running. Protein can help boost an immune system worn down by exercise. It can also repair muscle that tears naturally when you strengthen it, like when you lift weights, for example. **WebMD**



AS you write up your health to-do list this year, find out from your doctor which cancer screenings you should have.

These tests can help catch the disease early, and in some cases, treat it at the same time.

Breast Cancer

A test can often find this type of cancer when a lump is too small for you to feel, and before the disease has spread to other parts of your body.

► **Mammogram.** This is the main way doctors check for breast cancer. It uses X-rays to create pictures of the inside of your breasts.

A 3D mammogram takes several pictures so your doctor can see your breast from different points of view.

A technician will place one breast at a time on a special platform. Then a clear plastic paddle will press on your breast to spread it out. This is done to make sure the X-ray gets all your tissue in the picture. You may need to change positions so the technician can take pictures from different views. You'll have to hold your breath for a couple of seconds. Sometimes, mammograms can find something abnormal that requires a biopsy to tell if it is cancer or not. The likelihood that an abnormality will turn out to be cancer depends on your age and your other risk factors for breast cancer. This is why women of different ages have different recommendations.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) says women ages 50 to 74 should have mammograms every other year.

The American Cancer Society says women ages 45 to 54 should have it done once a year, although you could start as early as 40 if you want to. Those 55 or older should get them every 1-2 years. If you're more likely to get breast cancer because of a family history or other reasons, check with your doctor. You might need to have mammograms earlier and more often than these guidelines recommend. You may also need to add other screening tests, such as an MRI.

► **Breast self-exams.** Most health groups don't recommend that women do these anymore. If it's something you'd like to do to be familiar with your breasts, talk to your doctor about what you should look and feel for. If you or a partner notice a new lump or nodule in your breast or under your arm, you should see your doctor. Trust yourself.

Lung Cancer

It's the deadliest cancer in women, and it's no secret that smoking is the major cause. If you're a regular tobacco user, you may want to talk to your doctor about coming up with a plan to quit. There are medications that are effective and safe to help you quit. You usually take them for 3-6 months. There is also nicotine replacement. Doctors check for lung cancer with a low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan. It uses X-rays to take pictures of your lungs. It's an easy procedure. You lie on your back and raise your arms over your head as the table moves through the scanner. You hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds while it's done.

You should probably get an LDCT scan once a year if you:

- Are ages 50 to 80
- Have a 20 pack-year smoking history



Cancer screening tests every woman should get

(calculated by multiplying the number of packs of cigarettes smoked per day by the number of years you smoked; if you smoked 2 packs daily for 10 years, you have 20 pack years of smoking)

► Smoke now, or you quit within the past 15 years

► Your doctor will let you know if and when it's OK to stop getting annual scans.

Colorectal Cancer

It's the third most common cancer in women. Since the disease usually starts with growths called polyps in your colon, a part of your digestive system, some screening tests look for them. The goal is to find them before they can turn into cancer or while they're still in the early stages.

► **Colonoscopy.** Your doctor will check your entire colon and rectum with a flexible tube that has a camera on the end. You'll need to do some prep work. A day or so before it's done, you'll only be allowed to drink liquids, and you'll take a laxative to clean out your colon.

The procedure, which takes about 30 minutes, shouldn't hurt. You'll get numbing medication as well as medicine to make you drowsy or put you to sleep. Your doctor will usually remove any polyps and perhaps bits of tissue from your colon. Then they'll send them to a lab to get checked for signs of cancer.

► **Flexible sigmoidoscopy.** It's a lot like a colonoscopy, but not quite as thorough. Your doctor can only check about a third of your colon. On the positive side,

you don't have to do as much prep, and you can usually stay awake. This test takes about 20 minutes.

► **Fecal tests.** Both the guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT) and the fecal immunochemical test (FIT) look for tiny amounts of blood in your poop because cancers in the colon and rectum sometimes bleed. You use a special kit that lets you collect a small amount of your poop at home. You send the kit to a lab, where technicians check the samples. You may have to avoid certain foods and medicines beforehand. A stool DNA test is similar, but the lab will also check for traces of cells from polyps or cancer with changes in their genes.

You should get your first colorectal cancer screening test when you're 45 years old. You may need to do it earlier if you're more likely to get colorectal cancer. If you're older, ask your doctor whether you need to.

How often you should get tested after that depends on which type of screening you get and whether an earlier screen revealed polyps. The USPSTF recommends:

► Colonoscopy once every 10 years (or 5 years if polyps were discovered in an earlier screen), or

► Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 10 years, plus FIT every year (but the American College of Physicians says flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years, plus FOBT or FIT every 3 years), or

► FOBT or FIT every year.

Cervical Cancer

It starts in cells that line the cervix, the

lower part of your uterus. With one of these tests, your doctor can often spot these slowly changing cells before they cause trouble.

► **Pap test.** You lie on a table with your feet in leg rests. Your doctor puts a tool called a speculum into your vagina to widen it enough to see your cervix. Then they'll use a special scraper or brush to remove a sample of cells. You might feel a little discomfort. The cells go to a lab, which tests them for cancer.

► **Human papillomavirus (HPV) test.** It can be done along with the Pap test, using the same collected cells. The lab checks to see if you're infected with HPV, a virus that causes most cases of cervical cancer.

Generally, beginning at age 21, women should get a Pap test every 3 years. Beginning at age 30. Your doctor will recommend the best strategy for you, based on things like your age, test history, and likelihood of getting cancer.

Skin Cancer

The USPSTF doesn't recommend for or against skin exams, but the American Cancer Society says regular checks by your doctor are a good way to find skin cancers early. If you've had the disease in the past or you have family members who've had it, ask your doctor how often you should get a skin exam. Your doctor will look for any moles or other growths on your skin that might be cancer. You can also check your skin for changes yourself at least once a month.

WebMD

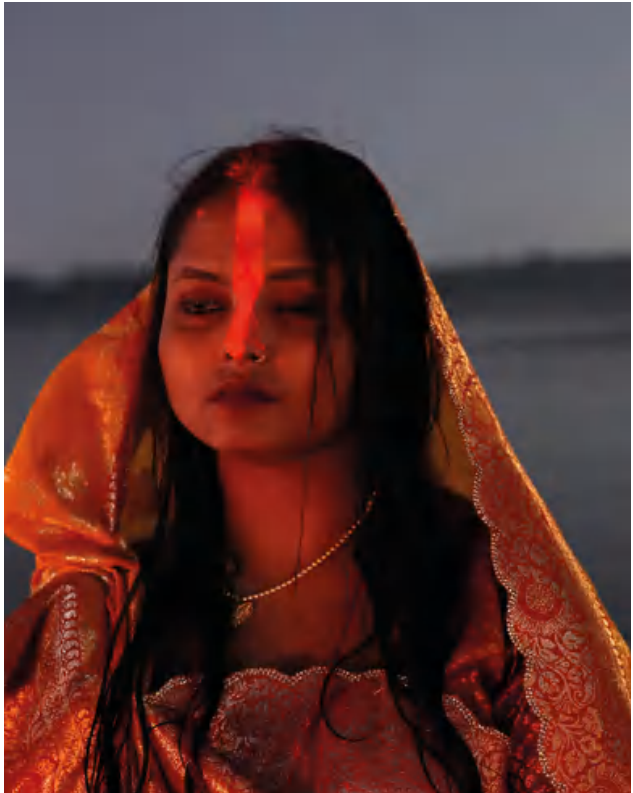
Around the world in pictures



▲ A woman stands at the door of her makeshift tent at a ‘Eglise de Jesus-Christ des Saints des Derniers Jours (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), turned into a shelter for some of the more than 1.3 million Haitians who have been internally displaced due to gang violence, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.



▲ Democratic candidate for New York City Mayor, Zohran Mamdani, shakes the hand of a cab driver while campaigning in Manhattan’s Upper East Side neighborhood during early voting in New York City.



▲ A Hindu woman with “sindhur”, or vermilion powder, on her forehead stands in the water as she worships the Sun god at the bank of the river Yamuna during the Hindu religious festival of Chhath Puja in Noida, India.



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump speaks as Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi gestures towards military personnel, aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, at the U.S. Navy’s base in Yokosuka, Japan.



▲ An albino squirrel looks up at a visitor at the Company’s Garden in Cape Town, South Africa.



▲ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and federal officers detain a migrant as he walks out from a hearing during targeted detainment at a U.S. immigration court in Manhattan, New York City.

Pogba nears return after more than 2 years out

PAUL Pogba, who has not played a competitive match since September 2023, could make his debut for AS Monaco soon, manager Sebastien Pocognoli said, stressing the need to temper expectations ahead of the midfielder's return. The former Juventus and Manchester United player joined Ligue 1 club Monaco on a free transfer in June. The 32-year-old was handed a four-year ban in February 2024 after

testing positive for DHEA, which boosts testosterone levels. The suspension was cut to 18 months after a successful appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. "For the moment, things are going well, I expect it to be a short time before he's back in the squad," Pocognoli said on Tuesday. "When he returns, we'll need to work together to assess him as a player." "The Paul of Manchester United or his first period at Juventus dates

back several years now," he said. "Every player evolves according to their age and experience, so we'll have to judge him based on his background and his age." "From what I see, he still possesses the technique we know he has. The rhythm of the matches will give us some answers. He can be the best version of himself at AS Monaco; in any case, it will be my role to try and guide him towards that level." (Rueters)



▲ Former Juventus and Manchester United player Paul Pogba joined Ligue 1 club Monaco on a free transfer in June.

Juve pick Spalletti as new coach

JUVENTUS Serie A club have chosen Luciano Spalletti as their new head coach, Italian newspapers reported on Wednesday, adding that the official announcement is expected late in the day or on Thursday. Juventus have sacked head coach Igor Tudor after failing to win their last eight matches in all competitions, the Serie A club said on Monday. The club did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Spalletti, the former Italian head coach, said on Tuesday that he had not yet been contacted regarding the vacant managerial position at Juventus, but he was eager to make a return to the dugout after his disappointing performance with the Italian team. "It would be nice for me to get a new opportunity to get back into the game after that," Spalletti said at an event in Milan, adding that any manager would be happy to take the Juventus job. According to newspapers the official announcement could come after the Juventus-Udinese match scheduled for 1730 GMT on Wednesday. (Rueters)



▲ Luciano Spalletti is reportedly joining Juventus.

World Cup playoffs to be held in Rabat

MOROCCO's capital Rabat will host next month's African World Cup playoffs, using three different stadiums for the three matches, the Confederation of African Football said on Wednesday. Nigeria take on Gabon on November 13 at 1600GMT, followed by Cameroon against the Democratic Republic of Congo at 1900 GMT. A draw, to be held on Thursday, will decide which game is played at the Stade El Barid and which will go ahead at Prince Heritier Moulay El Hassan Sports Complex. he semi-final winners then meet in a deciding game on November 16 at the Stade Prince Heritier Moulay Abdellah with

the winners advancing to the inter-continental playoffs in March. Nine African teams have already qualified for the World Cup, each finishing top of their groups, and the March playoff will decide the continent's 10th representatives at next year's finals in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. The four teams in the November playoffs were the best runners-up across the nine African qualifying groups. Four different stadiums in Rabat will be used at the Africa Cup of Nations finals, which start on December 21. The newly built Stade Prince Heritier Moulay Abdellah will host the Cup of Nations final on January 18. (Rueters)

Kurt-Lee Arendse excited to be back for the Boks

SPRINGBOK wing Kurt-Lee Arendse said he is excited to represent the national side again when he runs out against Japan on Saturday. Arendse plays his first match against the Asian nation after spending much of the international season recovering from injury. He only featured in four of the 10 games played by the Springboks this year, doing so last in their 38-22 defeat to the Wallabies at Ellis Park in August. He was again named to start at left wing, though his usual wing partner, Cheslin Kolbe, will feature at fullback. Instead, Arendse will play opposite Ethan Hooker for the first time. Arendse raring to go Arendse, himself a flexible utility back, was eager to play in such a dangerous back-three combination.

"I'm really excited to be back. It's not Cheslin's first time playing fullback," Arendse said, referring to the two occasions Kolbe started there for the Boks – last against Ireland in 2022 – while moving there from wing when needed, and playing 15 in the French Top 14. "I am looking forward to playing with him. He's one of the best players in the world and I am excited to be on the field with him," Arendse said. The 29-year-old said it was somewhat frustrating being out injured but he tried not to think about this. Instead, he saw injuries as being part of the sport and took the chance to run errands at home. He said he was happy for the players who slotted in for him during the six matches he missed for the Springboks, saying they took their opportunities. (Super Sport)



▲ Springbok wing Kurt-Lee Arendse.

Real seeking compensation from UEFA in Super League case

Real Madrid are seeking compensation from UEFA after the club said on Wednesday that the Regional Court of Madrid had dismissed appeals filed by UEFA, the Spanish football federation (RFEF) and LaLiga in the matter of the Super League.

Real were one of 12 European clubs that backed the breakaway competition in 2021 before support for the controversial event collapsed under fan and government pressure.

European soccer body UEFA had also stopped the formation of the Super League but, in December 2023, the European Court of Justice said UEFA and FIFA had contravened EU law by doing so.

Last year, a Spanish judge ordered FIFA and UEFA to halt their opposition to a parallel European competition, ruling they were practising anti-competitive behaviour and abusing their dominant position.

“Real Madrid welcomes the decision by the Regional Court of Madrid to dismiss the appeals lodged by UEFA, the RFEF and LALIGA, confirming that UEFA, in the matter of the Super League, seriously infringed European Union competition rules in line with the CJEU ruling, abusing its dominant position,” it said. “This ruling paves the way for the club to claim substantial damages.”

(Reuters)



▲ Real Madrid players celebrating a goal.

F1, FIA and Ecclestone bid to throw out Massa’s lawsuit over 2008 title

FORMULA One, its ex-boss Bernie Ecclestone and the governing FIA on Wednesday sought to throw out Felipe Massa’s lawsuit over the 2008 world championship, arguing the former Ferrari driver’s mistakes were what cost the Brazilian the title.

Massa is suing at London’s High Court for a declaration that he should have won the 2008 championship, which he lost to Lewis Hamilton by a single point, and is seeking around 64 million pounds (\$85.9 million) plus interest.

His case turns on the “crashgate” scandal at the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix, which Massa was leading from pole position when fellow Brazilian Nelson Piquet Jr crashed to try and help his Renault team mate Fernando Alonso, who won the race.

Piquet in 2009 revealed he had been ordered to crash by team bosses, who were subsequently banned. Massa’s lawyers say Ecclestone already knew the crash was deliberate and Ecclestone and then-FIA president Max Mosley failed to investigate it.

Massa argues the results of the Singapore Grand Prix – which Hamilton finished third, scoring six points – should have been annulled with the result that he would have won the title. Lawyers for F1, Ecclestone and



▲ Former F1 driver Felipe Massa.

the FIA, however, say the case was brought too late and argue Massa and Ferrari’s errors in Singapore – including a disastrous pitstop in which Massa accidentally knocked down a crew member – are the reason he lost the race and ultimately the championship.

Massa sat in the public gallery for the first day of a three-day hearing and smiled as Ecclestone’s lawyer David Quest told the court Massa had “performed very poorly” in Singapore, where he finished 13th and scored no points. (Reuters)

Tyrese Maxey, 76ers rally past Wizards in OT

TYRESE Maxey scored 23 of his 39 points in the fourth quarter and overtime as the visiting Philadelphia 76ers remained unbeaten after storming back from a 19-point third-quarter deficit to beat the Washington Wizards 139-134 on Tuesday.

Washington led 126-116 with 2:41 remaining in regulation before the Sixers capped a 17-4 run with 10 straight points to tie the game on Quentin Grimes’ 3-pointer with 38.7 seconds left. After the Wizards scored the first five points in overtime, the Sixers answered with six straight points, and Philadelphia put the game away at the foul line in the final seconds.

Joel Embiid scored 25 points in 23 minutes for Philadelphia while Grimes scored 23. Maxey produced nine of the Sixers’ 13 points in overtime.

Alex Sarr paced Washington with 31 points and 11 rebounds while Kyshawn George scored 20 points.

Bucks 121, Knicks 111

Giannis Antetokounmpo continued his hot start by scoring 23 of his game-high 37 points in the second half, sparking Milwaukee’s comeback from a double-digit deficit to a win over visiting New York.

Antetokounmpo added eight rebounds and seven assists -- including six rebounds and six assists in the second half. He is averaging 36.3 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists per game this season. Ryan Rollins scored a career-high 25 points for the Bucks, who trailed by 14 points in the second quarter.

Jalen Brunson put up 36 points for the Knicks, who have lost two straight after opening the season 2-0. Brunson played the final 6:13 with an apparent right leg injury. Mikal Bridges amassed 24 points and 11 rebounds.

Jimmy Butler III put up a game-high 21 points without shooting a free throw and Golden State, holding James Harden scoreless in the second half, blitzed Los Angeles in San Francisco.

On a night when the Clippers were called for just five fouls, the Warriors overcame a 3-for-4 night at the free-throw line by burying 17 of 45 (37.8%) from beyond the arc. Butler hit nine of his 12 shots overall and three of his four 3-point attempts. Stephen Curry chipped in with 19 points.

With Harden scoring all 20 of his points, the Clippers overcame an early 15-point deficit to take a 49-46 halftime lead.

(Reuters)



▲ Tyrese Maxey scored 23 of his 39 points in the fourth quarter and overtime.

MTN PREMIER LEAGUE BUILD-UP

It's a 'Super Sunday'
....As big guns clash head-on

By Chris Dlamini

AN exciting Sunday is lined up for MTN Premier League fans this weekend - four giant teams collide on matchday four of the league. It is faltering Manzini Wanderers taking on a revamped Mbabane Highlanders and Royal Leopard against Mbabane Swallows. These will get underway on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre in Manzini. Here are some of the highlights about these fixtures;

A must-win for Nyanga!
M. Wanderers vs. Mbabane Highlanders
Date: Sunday, November 2, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 4pm
Entry ticket: E50

- This could simply be the second biggest fixture in the land after the Mbabane Derby between Mbabane Highlanders and Mbabane Swallows. Who has won it the most in the last three seasons? What are the interesting factors ahead of Sunday? Let's get to it.

- 1. Wanderers winless**
- In three games, Liweseli (Wanderers) has yet to win a match. They have lost the last two and played one draw, putting them in the relegation zone early in the season.
- 2. The Coaches**
- The host team's head coach, Nyanga 'Crooks' Hlophe is under pres-

sure already and needs a win, but against an Ernest Mavuso-led Inkunz'emnyama (Highlanders) sitting on second in the standings after three games. Mavuso is fancied to again record another victory, a consecutive third.

Legends Factor
- It does take some former stars of the game to inspire a team. It is on that premise that legends like Stanford Ncube and Khayelihle 'Karas' Dlamini's involvement in both sides may go a long way in shaping these teams and motivating the current players. Ncube is working with Nyanga 'Crooks' Hlophe at Wanderers as a physical trainer, while Karas is the new Public Relations Officer (PRO) at Highlanders. Both former stars donned the two giant teams' jerseys.

The Fans
- In any case, the Mavuso Sports Centre is a small arena when these two teams are at their best as they have the numbers. Highlanders have been well-watched since matchday 1, and Wanderers just need a win. Otherwise, their numbers have impressed as well.

Head-To-Head (Last three seasons):
2024/25
M. Wanderers was inactive.
2023/24
(16/12/23)
M. Highlanders 1-1 M. Wanderers
11/05/24
M. Wanderers 1-6 M. Wanderers
2022/23
(26/10/22)
M. Wanderers 0-2 M. Highlanders
(14/05/23)
M. Highlanders 3-0 M. Highlanders

Edwin returns to face Caleb

Royal Leopard vs. Mbabane Swallows
Date: Sunday, November 5, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 2pm
Entry ticket: E50
- The rivalry between these two goes a long way - they have been the most dominant sides in the 20th century domestically, and that is also evidenced by their Confederation of African Football (CAF) status. They had both been ranked, with Leopard still in the top 100. They have been in dog-eat-dog situations for various honours, being the league and major knockout titles like the Ing-



▲ Manzini Wanderers captain Mlamuli Mlaba Nkhambule.



▲ Andile Mpisane showcasing his skills.

wenyama Cup.

- 1. Revenge mission**
- How ever one takes it, both sides could be in a vengeful mission. The host team may want to better last season's second round goalless draw. It was a crucial time of the season in April, and Leopard needed to win to retain their summit status at that time, but the game ended in a draw. Swallows, on the one hand, know they lost 1-0 to Leopard in the first round and did not win any title. This term, they are determined to compete for honours.

- 2. The Coaches**
- They certainly respect each other given previous battles they had - Caleb Ngwenya even won the league leading Mbabane Swallows three seasons ago. Ngwenya meets up with a decorated Edwin Matsebula, fresh from the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26 second preliminary round, amid an exit. They are all going for the kill.

- 3. Log Standings**
- Leopard must play catch-up after spending the past week engaged in the two-legged TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup games, where they lost in the second preliminary stage. Leopard only has a point attained from their opening matchday security forces derby draw with Young Buffaloes.

Head-To-Head (Last three seasons):

2024/25
(11/12/24)
M. Swallows 0-1 R. Leopard
(16/04/25)
R. Leopard 0-0 M. Swallows
2023/24
(21/10/23)
R. Leopard 1-1 M. Swallows
(10/12/22)
M. Swallows 2-2 R. Leopard
(07/05/23)
R. Leopard 4-2 M. Swallows



Three Oyama Dan Blacks for Japan grading



▲Oyama karatekas during a local tournament.

By Chris Dlamini

HARD work pays, even when it means resisting pain.

This is what three of Eswatini’s Oyama Kyokushinkaikan Karate stars can attest to - they are on their way to Japan, just home to martial arts.

These are Sensei Zweli Thwala, Sensei Sivekelo Mgoci, and Sensei Sikhumbuzo Lukhele.

“They are accompanying our students who will be competing in the international tournament in Japan. They will also be graded for their next Dan stage,” affirmed Sensei Musa Ginindza, who is the Oyama Kyokushinkaikan Karate Eswatini (OKKE) Secretary.

He said the three senior black belts had a

huge task to do well in Japan, explaining that Dan gradings were always tough with several fights to go through.

Meanwhile, Sensei Thwala is going for his 5th Dan Black, while Mgoci and Lukhele are vying for their 4th Dan Black. The Senseis will be in the company of four top karate students in the likes of national ladies open weight champion Nelly Gama, Under-60kg national and STANLIB Oyama Champ of Champs 2024 champion Gcina ‘Sylvester’ Dlamini, Under-70kg national champion Mpendulo Maqonga and Under-80kg champion Lungelo Sibandze.

All four will miss the STANLIB Oyama Champ of Champs 2025 edition billed for Saturday, November 1, at the Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini. Sensei Ginindza confirmed the four students were billed to travel to Japan soon after the weekend, which is why they could not risk them for injuries.



▲Volleyball team in action during a recent competition.

Zone VI club championships battle set for Saturday

By Sibusiso Masilela
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SATURDAY is a big day for the volleyball premier division teams.

Four elite sides will be fighting for the four Zone VI club championships scheduled for Polokwane, South Africa, in December.

The top two teams from each category—men’s and ladies’—will qualify for the regional club championships.

These matches will be played at the national club championships, set for the Mavuso Sports Centre.

Both men’s and ladies’ teams will compete at this venue.

The security forces derby between Correctional and REPS in both categories.

Zakhele ladies will take on Scorpions in the other ladies’ categories while Bob Cats will take on Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force.

The champions will take home E4 000 courtesy of the mother body, while the

runner-up will receive E3 000.

Eswatini National Volleyball Association (ENVA) vice Secretary Philile Lokotfwako said preparations for the tournament are proceeding smoothly.

“We are looking forward to the grand closing of the national championships and urge fans to attend the games in numbers. We would like to apologise to clubs and other stakeholders for the delay of the grand closing due to administrative issues,”she said.

The prize breakdown for males and female’s categories

1.E4 000	
2.E3 000	
3.E2 000	
Ladies fixture	
Correctional	vs REPS
Zakhele	vs Scorpions
Males	
BobsCats	vs UEDF
Correctional	vs REPS
Bob Cats	vs UEDF

SBS Juniors tourney for UNESWA courts

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE Eswatini National Tennis Association continues to nurture talent.

The mother body will host the Swaziland Building Society juniors tournament on Saturday at UNESWA courts.

The competition will be having three categories under 14,12, and 10, in what promises to be action action-filled day.

ENTA national development coach Njabulo Mbhamali announced the tournament on Wednesday.

“We are inviting teams to attend the jun-

ior competition in numbers as we continue to groom young talent. We are looking forward to a successful event as part of our effort to improve the sport,” he said.

Mbhamali also thanked the sponsor for continued support.

“We are grateful to the sponsor for continued support, which has played a major role in the development of the sport in the country,” he said.

Some of the teams that will attend the competition include Recreation, Olymp Africa, Siteki, Matsapha, Correctional and Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS), among others.

The tennis juniors’ national team recently attended an international competition held in South Africa.



▲Male tennis juniors Phiwokuhe Sibandze and Zwelethu Mkonta with Tennis Association president Ncaba Mkhali.

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
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Nsingizini runs to CAF



▲ The Shiselweni based side accusing the Tanzanian side of using an ineligible technical bench during the second preliminary round tie between the two clubs.



▲ Simba Head coach Pantev Dimitar Nikolaev.

COULD Nsingizini Hotspurs make a dramatic return to the CAF Champions League through a boardroom decision? MTN Premier League champions Nsingizini Hotspurs have since lodged a complaint to CAF over the eligibility of the Simba SC technical bench.

The Shiselweni based side accusing the Tanzanian side of using an ineligible technical bench during the second preliminary round tie between the two clubs.

The Mandla Qhogi-led side are claiming that Bulgarian coach Pantev Dimitar Nikolaev played a provital role in the team during the two legs without having a proper qualification.

“We have established that Mr. Pantev Dimitar Nikolaev (Head coach) has no required qualification and has played a pivotal role in the two matches in question, while we have addressed this with the opposition in the first leg. According to CAF rules, a coach who does not possess the necessary qualifications shall not sit on the bench during the matches of CAF interclub competitions,” the club said.

The local side further told CAF that Simba’s Nikoleav was registered as a manager despite being the head coach.

“Therefore, they submitted a team list with Mr. P Dimitar Nikolaev as a team manager on both matches (1st leg 19/10/2025) while he is the head coach of the team (SIMBA SC). Mr. Boyko Kamaenov Simeonov is an assistant coach; however, he was regis-

tered as team staff because he did not have the necessary credentials. Both officials were involved in coaching in both the first and second leg matches.

The back-to-back Momo cup winners also stated that the Tanzanian side further registered three ineligible technical bench members, including South African trainer Wayne Sandilands, who is part of Wydad Casablanca.”

“Our opposition (SIMBA SC) from Tanzania applied some tricks to dodge the system and the rules by registering an illegible

technical team members from the one who appeared in the matchday (Mr. Seleman Abdallan Matola, Mr. Darian Oliveria Goncalves Wilken, Wayne Sandilands. Mr. Matola was on the grandstand because he did not have the necessary documents to sit on the bench. Mr. Wilken is currently the first Assistant coach, while Mr. Sandilands is the current Goalkeeper coach at Raja Athletic Club (Formerly Known As Raja Casablanca),” the club said.

The team’s Chief Executive Officer, Banele Ngobe, confirmed the letter and stated that

they are waiting for a response from the continent’s body.

Simba SC advanced to the group stages with a 3-0 aggregate scoreline, ending the local side’s dream of earning E12 million bounty.

E20 000 increase for first round winners

GOOD news for MTN Premier League teams.

First round winners will take home E120 000 at the end of the current campaign, following the E20 000 increase.

The previous prize for the incentive stood at E100 000, and it was won by Royal Leopards.

The 2025/26 season champions walk away with E1.1 million first prize money, which has been increased by E100 000 as exclusively revealed by our sister publication Eswatini Financial Times.

The recently renewed three-year league sponsorship is at E22.5 million.

The player of the season award winner will

receive an improved prize money of E17 000, which is an E2 000 increase from last season’s E15 000.

The new breakdown has seen the introduction of the youngest player of the season award, which carries an E6 000 incentive.

Players will vote for their best colleague in the newly introduced player’s player of the season award worth E10 000.

The player of the month award has shoot up by E500 from E6,500 to E7,000.

The new season breakdown was confirmed by Premier League of Eswatini Chief Executive Officer Pat Vilakati on Wednesday.

The participation fee for the 16 teams is E110 000.



▲ PLE CEO Pat Vilakati.



E200k for MulaSport NFD champs

CHAMPIONS for the MulaSport National First Division league will receive E200 000 at the end of the season.

This follows the E20 000 increase from E180 000 following the injection of E4.5 million three-year sponsorship by the betting company.

The first-round winners will receive an improved E55 000 carrot compared to last season’s E50 000.

Malanti Chiefs won the two

prizes last season on their way to the elite league.

The winner for the youngest player of the season award will take home E 4,000.

The player of the season will take home E9 000 while the top goal scorer will receive E6 000.

Winners for the player of the stands to pocket E2 500.

This is according to a breakdown released by PLE Chief Executive Officer Pat Vilakati.

The full breakdown

Premier League

- 1. E1.1 million
- 2.E550 000.
- 3.E370 000.
- 4.E240 000.
- 5.E110 000.
- 6.80 000.
- Position 7-11 E45 000.
- Position 12-16 - E100 000.
- Participation fee E110 000.

Individual awards

- Player of the season E17 000
- Top goal scorer E14 000.
- Goalie of the season E11 000.
- Coach of the season E11 000.
- Fair player award E11 000.
- Players player E10 000.
- Youngster E6 000
- Best PRO E6 000.
- Player of the month E7 000.
- Ref of the season E8 000.
- Assistant ref E6 000.

First Division

- 1.E200 000.
- 2.E90 000.
- 3.E60 000.
- Position 4-8 E20 000.
- Position 9 -12 E10 000.
- Position 13-16 E5 000.
- Participation fee E30 000

Individual awards

- Player of the season E9 000.
- Player of the month E2 000.
- Top goalscorer E6 000.
- Goalie of the season E5 000.
- Coach of the season E5 000.
- Fair play award E5 000
- PRO of the season E4 000.
- Youngster E4 000.



Gcina part ways with Ubombo Sugar

WHAT an unsweetened decision.

Ubombo Sugar FC have parted ways with head coach Gcina Dlamini.

The two parties ended their ties on Tuesday evening with only three games into the current MTN Premier League campaign.

The Big Bend-based team recently suffered a 2-1 loss to capital city giants Mbabane Swallows.

Dlamini led the team to the semifinals of the 2025 8Bet Trade Fair cup since his move to the sugar belt side last season.

Dlamini confirmed the news when reached for comment.

“I wish the team the best of luck in its future endeavours following my successful stint. There are no hard feelings in the separation as it has been done by mutual consent by both parties,” he said.

Ubombo Sugar FC Public Relations Officer (PRO) Jada Smith also confirmed Dlamini’s exit.

“It’s true we have parted ways with the coach and wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours,” she said.

Dlamini has previously coached several local sides such as Moneni Pirates, Manzini Sea Birds, and Denver Sundowns.

