



▲ National Commissioner of the Royal Eswatini Police Service Vusi Manoma Masango appeared before the PAC on Monday.

No REPS recruitment this year – NATCOM

By Thokozani Mazibuko

NATIONAL Commissioner of the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS), Vusi Manoma Masango, has confirmed that there will be no recruitment of new police officers this year. He disclosed this during an appearance before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Monday, where he addressed several administrative and operational issues affecting the police service.

Responding to questions from committee members, Masango explained that recruitment is guided strictly by the establishment approved by the Ministry of Public Service.

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FNB Eswatini injects E5.48 million into social and economic development

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Stories By Thokozani Mazibuko

NATIONAL Commissioner of the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS), Vusi Manoma Masango, has confirmed that there will be no recruitment of new police officers this year. He disclosed this during an appearance before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Monday, where he addressed several administrative and operational issues affecting the police service.

Responding to questions from committee members, Masango explained that recruitment is guided strictly by the establishment approved by the Ministry of Public Service. He said the police service cannot independently decide to hire new officers without official authorisation.

“The year has ended, and we only rely on the posts provided by the Ministry of Public Services when it comes to recruitment,” he told the PAC, which is chaired by Mhlangatane Member of Parliament and Deputy Speaker Madala Mhlanga.

His remarks come amid growing public speculation about the possibility of new recruitments following retirements and rising operational demands. Masango stressed that the REPS continues to manage its manpower within the limits of approved staffing levels and budgetary constraints.

On a separate matter, the National Commissioner addressed concerns over the police service’s longstanding decision to stop hiring external drivers. He said the directive

No REPS recruitment this year – NATCOM

was introduced after repeated challenges linked to discipline among previously hired civilian drivers.

“We no longer hire drivers because of ill discipline. We decided to upgrade officers internally,” Masango said. He added that training police officers to assume driving duties ensures better accountability and strengthens the overall effectiveness of the service.

Masango further noted that the limited availability of vehicles also influenced the decision. He said most departments within the police service do not own vehicles and instead rely on cars allocated from the Central Transport Administration pool.

“Most importantly, it is our service to the country in safety and security,” he explained, emphasising that internal capacity-building remains key to maintaining operational readiness.

The PAC session highlighted ongoing resource pressures within the police service, including staff shortages and logistical constraints. Despite these challenges, Masango reaffirmed the REPS’ commitment to fulfilling its mandate of maintaining law, order and public safety.



▲ Deputy Speaker Madala Mhlanga who chairs the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).



▲ Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg in Parliament on Monday.

MP urges Finance Minister to handle salary review appeals with care

Ntfonjeni Member of Parliament Raymond Dlamini has called on Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg to ensure that all appeals arising from the national salary review are handled thoroughly, fairly and in a manner that preserves peace and stability in the country.

Speaking during the Midterm Budget Review debate in the House of Assembly, Dlamini said the appeal process would determine whether public confidence is restored or whether discontent resurfaces within the civil service.

The salary review, implemented earlier this year, has been one of the most impactful financial developments for public sector employees. Although it brought adjustments to several pay scales, it also attracted concerns from individuals and groups who felt the increments were uneven or did not reflect years of service. Dlamini said the Ministry for Finance needed to manage expectations by ensuring that every appeal submitted receives proper attention and a clear explanation.

He emphasised that many public servants have

pinned their hopes on the appeal process, with some believing that their grievances will be resolved through clarity or corrective adjustments. According to Dlamini, any mishandling of the appeals could trigger dissatisfaction that may result in protests, petitions or broader labour disruptions.

“We appeal to the Minister for Finance to handle the appeals in the salary review satisfactorily so that we do not see protests or complaints in the country,” he said. Dlamini added that maintaining harmony in the public sector is not only in the interest of workers but also essential for the smooth operation of government services.

The Ntfonjeni MP further noted that the country’s economic environment is already under pressure from rising expenditure demands, particularly the expanded wage bill. He said social tensions caused by unresolved salary issues would only worsen the situation, making it difficult for the government to focus on broader economic recovery measures. Dlamini urged the Ministry to communicate clearly with all affected parties to avoid speculation and misinformation.

Budget cuts, investor confidence, high capital spending key to sustainable growth — Neal

MINISTER for Finance Neal Rijkenberg has outlined a series of fiscal strategies aimed at ensuring Eswatini stays on a sustainable economic path despite the rising pressure created by the new salary budget.

Responding to MPs during the Midterm Budget Review debate, Rijkenberg stressed the need for discipline, improved efficiency and targeted spending as the government adapts to its expanded wage bill.

The Minister said the government will study proposals for budget cuts across ministries to create space for the increased salary commitments. He emphasised that maintaining fiscal sustainability remains a cornerstone of investor confidence, adding that the country’s recent investment performance reflects positively on Eswatini’s economic environment.

“To be on the sustainable path is critical and crucial. It shows investors out there that we are a country worthy of investment. We have moved to the top in Africa among countries that investors have chosen to invest in. E13 billion last year and this year we have E10.4 billion,” he told the House.

Rijkenberg assured MPs that the country’s fiscal buffers remain intact, including the Stabilisation

Fund which currently stands at E2.5 billion. He added that Southern African Customs Union receipts are expected to be favourable in the coming year, offering additional fiscal breathing space.

The Minister also cautioned against borrowing for consumption, saying Eswatini must maintain debt discipline. “It is wrong to take debt for consumption. Our capital expenditure is good compared to other countries. We should ensure that with this high capital expenditure, we enhance growth,” he said.

He reiterated that interest rates in Eswatini remain relatively high, making responsible borrowing even more important for state finances. According to the Minister, safeguarding macroeconomic stability is essential if the country is to pursue its ambition of achieving double-digit growth in the future.

Rijkenberg said part of the long-term solution to balancing the public wage bill lies in restructuring and modernising the civil service. He confirmed that the government is still considering the introduction of an early retirement programme as one of the options to reduce staffing pressures in the public sector.

“We do need to look into early retirement. We have to find a way to open a window and identify those who are no longer needed in government,” he said.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

MIDTERM BUDGET REVIEW DEBATE

Salary pressures, corruption, economic strain dominate debate

THE Midterm Budget Review debate in the House of Assembly on Monday was marked by strong concerns over the country's fiscal direction, with Members of Parliament warning that ballooning salary costs, persistent corruption and slow private sector growth continue to threaten Eswatini's financial stability.

The debate followed the presentation of the Midterm Budget Review by Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg, who outlined the status of public finances, economic growth prospects and performance. Minister for Tinkhundla Administration and Development Sikhumbuzo Dlamini was among the first to respond.

He welcomed the confidence shown by the Minister for Finance, describing it as a sign that stability may be achieved if decisive actions are taken. Dlamini said his ministry would support measures aimed at strengthening cash flow management while also exploring strategies to stimulate economic growth.

However, he raised a strong warning about the impact of the salary review implemented earlier this year. According to Dlamini, the revised salary structure has placed the country under significant strain. He cautioned that the expanded wage bill may become unmanageable without urgent reforms. Dlamini added that the biggest leak in public finances remains corruption, and he called upon the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Prince Simelane, to intensify efforts to eradicate corrupt activities that continue to drain state resources.

Mhlangatane Member of Parliament and Deputy Speaker Madala Mhlanga echoed these concerns. He said the nation is anxious about how the government will continue to sustain salary obligations without affecting frontline services. He stressed that service delivery would inevitably decline unless the government finds new ways to

generate revenue and cut waste. Mhlanga described the situation as serious, adding that Parliament must collectively push for solutions that protect essential services while safeguarding financial stability.

MP Futhi Ngcamphalala from the Lubombo Region focused on the country's Stabilisation Fund, a reserve intended to cushion the nation whenever Southern African Customs Union receipts decline. She requested clarity on how much has already been deposited into the fund and whether it is being managed in line with long-term economic resilience strategies. Ngcamphalala cautioned strongly against borrowing money to pay salaries or suppliers, saying taking a loan to pay off another loan could trigger a dangerous cycle of dependency. She insisted that stabilisation should come from sound management rather than unsustainable borrowing.

Hhukwini MP Alec Lushaba commended the Minister for Finance for maintaining consistency in reporting the country's financial picture each year. He noted however that while economic indicators show growth on paper, many emaSwati are not experiencing the benefits. Lushaba said the economy remains unable to support local suppliers, some of whom have been forced to close due to delayed payments from the government. He criticised the contradiction between the Minister's report and findings from the Auditor General, which revealed substantial losses linked to corrupt activities within state structures. Lushaba called on the judiciary to take a more active role in addressing corruption. He added that the



▲MPs in the House of Assembly during a Sitting on Monday.

focus should not be on the country's debt-to-GDP ratio alone, but on practical measures to create jobs and stimulate economic expansion.

Kubuta MP Masiphula Mamba questioned the absence of updates regarding the country's commitments to climate change mitigation. He said the House expected a clearer report on progress made in fulfilling climate-related obligations. Mamba also challenged the shift from projections of double-digit growth to a revised six per cent outlook.

He argued that a truly strong economy must be driven by the private sector. Mamba expressed worry about the persistent delays

in paying government suppliers, which he said continue to undermine confidence and economic continuity.

Lobamba Lomdzala MP Marwick Khumalo concluded by calling for tangible evidence of economic growth. He said statistical projections were not enough unless citizens and businesses could feel the impact. Khumalo noted that many countries now prioritise their own citizens in the awarding of tenders and suggested that Eswatini should rethink its approach to procurement to protect local industries. He said the current economic environment requires deliberate strategies to support national participation in public contracts.

MP urges access to the Indian Ocean, stronger economic buffers

By Thokozani Mazibuko

NGUDZENI MP Charles Ndlovu has urged the government to explore bold and long-term strategies to stabilise Eswatini's economy, including forging regional partnerships that could grant the Kingdom access to the Indian Ocean to establish new revenue streams.

Ndlovu was speaking during the House of Assembly debate on the Midterm Budget Review tabled by Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg. The MP said the country can no longer rely heavily on the volatility of Southern African Customs Union receipts, which remain one of Eswatini's primary income sources. He argued that without sustainable buffers, the nation risks financial shocks that could undermine development and service delivery.

Ndlovu told Parliament that access to the ocean, even through bilateral agreements or regional corridors, would open significant economic opportunities for Eswatini. He said a maritime link would allow the country to benefit from port revenues, transshipment activities, export logistics and industrial expansion.



▲Ngudzeni MP Hon. Charles Ndlovu.

"Access to the Indian Ocean as a country can establish new revenue lines," said Ndlovu, stressing that landlocked nations around the world have secured external trade corridors through strategic partnerships. He added that maritime access would reduce transport costs for exporters, increase competitiveness and attract new investment in logistics and manufacturing.

The Ngudzeni MP then pressed the Minister for Finance to outline whether the government has concrete plans in the pipeline to cushion the country against

future declines in SACU receipts and variations in domestic tax collection. He said the country needed long-term safeguards that would stabilise the economy regardless of external shocks.

"Are there any plans the government has in the pipeline to cushion the SACU receipts and the tax collection to sustain the economy?" he asked. Ndlovu's concerns were echoed by several MPs throughout the debate, who warned that the current reliance on SACU poses ongoing fiscal risks, especially in years when receipts drop due to

regional trade fluctuations.

Many legislators urged the Ministry for Finance to strengthen the Stabilisation Fund and accelerate domestic revenue reforms to prevent the country from depending on unpredictable inflows. The Midterm Budget Review presented by Minister Neal Rijkenberg highlighted moderate economic growth projections and increased infrastructure investments. However, MPs argued that growth on paper does not necessarily translate into financial stability, particularly if revenue remains heavily dependent on external sources.

Ndlovu emphasised that the country must invest in economic diversification, noting that strengthening manufacturing output, tourism, agriculture and the transport sector would provide a more reliable revenue base. He said a maritime corridor would align with these diversification efforts and could be developed in partnership with neighbouring countries.

He also challenged the government to intensify efforts to broaden the tax base instead of overburdening existing taxpayers. According to him, improving efficiency in tax collection, combating illicit trade and formalising informal economic activities would significantly improve revenue without imposing additional pressure on struggling households.

Fraud reports triple in Eswatini

By Delisa Magagula

FRAUD cases reported to the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) have risen sharply this year.

According to the Director of the Fraud and Commercial Crimes Unit, Nicholas Jele there is a growing risk to stokvels, unsuspecting investors, and mobile money users.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, has officially launched Fraud Awareness Month to encourage public vigilance. The Assistant Commissioner Jele, who heads the Fraud and Commercial Crimes Unit, speaking during an interview, said REPS has received 1,832 fraud case reports so far in 2025, compared to 576 in 2024.

He explained that the increase is two-sided, as it shows more people know how to report, but it also means more are being scammed. Jele said many of the new reports are internet-based fraud, including phishing, spoofed messages and fraudulent money-transfer requests.

He cautioned the public about sharing sensitive banking information, especially PINs, and emphasised verification when receiving unexpected instructions. "REPS has also established a specialised Digital Forensic Unit to improve investigations into cyber and commercial crime, enabling the collection and preservation of digital evidence," he said.

Jele said another growing concern is the FACATA scam, which involves fraudsters manipulating victims into approving mobile-money transfers. He warned that the scammers often impersonate banks, mobile providers, or even police, contacting victims via SMS or calls to persuade them to approve transactions.

"In one scandal, REPS identified that two major unregistered stokvels were targeted through FACATA-style schemes. These stokvels operated without formal bank accounts; they reportedly carried large



▲ There are many new reports of internet-based fraud, including phishing, spoofed messages and fraudulent money-transfer requests.

amounts of cash, making them more vulnerable to fraud," he said.

Jele recommended that savings groups (stokvels) should register formally, open bank accounts, and avoid holding large sums of cash physically. "When money is in a formal account, it's safer and traceable as there is paperwork and a trail; we follow that trail, it is easier to follow it," he said.

Investigations into FACATA have already resulted in arrests. In one case, six suspects, including a traditional healer (inyanga), were arrested after being linked to a scam involving over E955,691, according to court papers.

Investment fraud emerging in Eswatini

On top of FACATA scams, REPS is tracking investment fraud. Nicholas Jele, Director of the Fraud and Commercial Crimes Unit, confirmed that 13 investment fraud cases have been reported in 2025.

These schemes often promise unusually high returns through unregistered entities. Jele warned people to always seek professional advice from banks, police, and lawyers about sound investment advice.

"We are seeing more cases of people be-



▲ Nicholas Jele, Director of the Fraud and Commercial Crimes Unit.

ing approached with unsolicited investment offers. Many of these schemes are not registered with the Financial Services Regulatory Authority, and they are illegal. Citizens must verify before investing," he said.

Meanwhile, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) recently issued a warning against E-Wealth Investment Es-

watini, a company not licensed to provide financial services in the country.

FSRA Chief Executive Ncamiso Ntshali said E-Wealth has been approaching members of the public with promises of high returns. It is not authorised, and anyone approached should report it with their whistleblower line, 800 9011.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

MAFUTSENI Member of Parliament Sabelo Mtetwa has called for urgent reforms in the country's education curriculum, insisting that Information Technology should be introduced as a compulsory subject at the primary school level.

Mtetwa made the call during Monday's House of Assembly debate on the Midterm Budget Review tabled by Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg.

His remarks sparked renewed discussion on the country's readiness to compete in a rapidly evolving digital economy.

Mtetwa argued that Eswatini's future economic growth depends heavily on the level of technological exposure young learners receive at an early age.

He said it was no longer sustainable for pupils to encounter computer literacy only later in high school, as the global job market increasingly favours individuals with strong digital skills.

According to him, countries that have made significant progress in innovation, entrepreneurship and economic diversification began by aligning their education systems with modern technological demands.

"IT subjects should be added to subjects

MP calls for IT subjects introduction in Primary Schools

in primary school level for the country to develop," he said, warning that Eswatini risks lagging behind its regional and international counterparts if bold steps are not taken. Mtetwa noted that several African countries, including Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa, have already integrated coding, digital literacy and computer studies into their early education frameworks, strengthening the technological foundation of their future workforce.

He added that modern education is incomplete without digital competencies, especially at a time when technology underpins sectors such as agriculture, finance, health, manufacturing, transport and government administration.

According to Mtetwa, building digital capacity from primary school will empower learners with problem-solving skills, strengthen innovation and create a generation capable of driving local and global technological solutions.

During the debate, MPs were discussing the state of the economy, government spending patterns and strategic investments outlined in the Midterm Budget Review. Mtetwa linked the need for IT education to the broader national economic strategy, telling Parliament that long-term development requires a labour force that is technological-



▲ Mafutseni Member of Parliament Sabelo Mtetwa.

ly literate and globally competitive. He said the success of future industries depends on the education reforms implemented.

He further argued that introducing IT subjects early would help bridge the digital divide between urban and rural learners.

Mtetwa said technology should not be a

privilege enjoyed only by pupils in well-resourced schools, but a right accessible to every child regardless of geography or economic background.

He urged the government to invest in basic digital infrastructure across primary schools, including affordable devices, computer labs, internet connectivity and teacher training programmes.

Several MPs agreed with the sentiment, noting that digital education is fundamental to modern governance and economic operations.

Some legislators pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic had highlighted the gaps in digital readiness, as many pupils were unable to access online learning due to limited exposure to computers and inadequate ICT infrastructure. They said the country must learn from those experiences and prioritise technological development within the education sector.

Mtetwa also raised concerns about Eswatini's competitiveness in regional employment markets. He said many multinational companies prefer countries with a workforce that is digitally proficient, making it crucial for the education system to adapt.

According to him, children who learn ICT skills early are more confident, creative and flexible in adapting to technological changes.

End of Year Thanksgiving Prayer Service



▲His Majesty King Mswati III and Her Majesty The Indlovukazi following the proceedings.



▲His Majesty King Mswati III addressing the Nation.



▲His Majesty King Mswati III standing solemnly during the service.



▲Pastor Mark Burns, a renowned evangelical leader, televangelist and spiritual advisor to US President Donald Trump in high spirit while delivering his sermon during the National Prayer.



▲Emazinyane joined the proceedings.



▲Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu (right) with Senate President Lindiwe Dlamini.



▲Attendees at the End of Year Thanksgiving Prayer Service.



▲South African Gospel artist Sindi Ntombela rendering her set during the event.

E100 million ease for suppliers

By Delisa Magagula

THE government has released E100 million to settle outstanding invoices owed to suppliers and service providers.

This signals a renewed attempt to stabilise relations with the business community after months of delayed payments. The move follows the E130 million paid out last week, after a group of frustrated suppliers stormed the Treasury Department demanding action on arrears that had stretched for over half a year.

The latest allocation forms part of a broader effort by the Ministry of Finance to restore confidence among suppliers, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), who form the bulk of the government's procurement chain and have been the most affected by delayed payments.

Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg confirmed the new disbursement, saying the government was working on plans to facilitate payments this week and settle another tranche of arrears. "We are working on making sure everything supplier is paid and they can operate their businesses," said the Minister.

His acknowledgement that the government remains behind on supplier payments comes at a time when pressure has been building across several sectors, with SMEs reporting cash-flow crises severe enough to push some toward high-interest informal lenders.

The backlog has hit small businesses hardest. Many of the suppliers who received payments in last week's E130 million tranche were SMEs who had gone over six months without payment.

Some suppliers told business associations they were struggling to pay workers, restock goods, renew licences, or service business loans due to the delays.

One Mbabane-based catering supplier, who asked not to be named for fear of losing future government business, said her company incurred debt after waiting months for payment.

"We had to borrow money just to keep the doors open. When the arrears drag on for months, you get desperate. You take whatever loan you can find because you have salaries to pay," said the supplier.

A Manzini-based construction services provider shared a similar experience, noting that the backlog distorted all their projections for the year. He said some small contractors had paused operations while waiting for payments. "You can't take on new jobs when you haven't been paid for the last one," he said.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Eswatini Business Community (FESBC) confirmed that payments have begun to flow to several of its members. CEO Ben Simelane noted that while he did not yet have consolidated figures on how many suppliers had been paid, there had been significant improvement compared to recent months.

"We appreciate the commitment from the government that suppliers will be paid weekly going forward," Simelane said. He also welcomed a directive from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Trade instructing all MSMEs experiencing payment delays to submit their cases through a WhatsApp line provided by SEDCO.

He said the system could help the ministry



▲ Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg.



▲ FESBC CEO Ben Simelane.

track recurring problems and identify sectors most affected by the arrears. Simelane added that predictability in payment cycles remained essential. "If suppliers know when money is coming in, they can plan, budget, and keep people employed," he said.

Furthermore, treasury officials faced growing scrutiny earlier this month when several suppliers arrived at their offices demanding updates on overdue invoices.

The Ministry of Finance later confirmed that the E130 million paid out last week was sourced from the Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE). The funds provided short-term relief but also underscored the extent of arrears accumulated over the past year.

The government has not released the full value of the outstanding debt, but business groups estimate that arrears run into the hundreds of millions, spread across ministries, municipalities, parastatals, and public projects that stalled due to delayed funding.

The delays have had ripple effects across multiple industries, which include manufacturing suppliers supplying uniforms, PPE, and consumables to ministries reporting shrinking production schedules.

Transport operators contracted for government projects said they struggled with fuel costs while waiting for payments, and food suppliers for schools, hospitals, and government programs experienced shortages as credit with wholesalers tightened.

On the list were also construction firms, especially smaller ones, that paused projects or downsized teams due to a lack of liquidity.

An owner of a stationery and printing business that supplies ministries said he recently reduced staff hours because government payments were delayed. "It's not that there is no work. The orders are there. The payments are not," said the owner.

Worth noting is that payment delays are not new, but suppliers say the situation has escalated sharply over the past year. The combination of slower revenue inflows, increasing service demands, and the government's expanding project pipeline tightened liquidity within the Treasury.

Rijkenberg has acknowledged the delays but attributed them to cash-flow timing issues rather than a lack of budget allocation.

Despite the latest payment release, suppliers remain cautious. Business groups say the real test will be whether the government maintains weekly payments throughout the next quarter, especially as public institutions move into a period of increased procurement.

An SME owner in Matsapha said she welcomed the E100 million release but hoped the Treasury would keep the momentum.

She said once people stop getting paid again, the whole ecosystem collapses.

"For now, the E230 million released over two weeks signals progress, but clearing the remaining arrears will require consistent disbursements, closer coordination between ministries, and stronger communication with suppliers who depend on government work for their survival," concluded the Minister for Finance.

► Central Bank of Eswatini building.



BRIEFS

Wall Street fluctuates ahead of Nvidia results

WALL Street's main indexes struggled for direction on Monday, ahead of a packed week that includes AI giant Nvidia's earnings and the resumption of government data releases, while Alphabet rose after Berkshire Hathaway disclosed a stake in the company.

Google-parent Alphabet jumped 4.6% to a record high after Berkshire Hathaway revealed a new \$4.3 billion stake in the company and further reduced its stake in Apple. Apple shares fell 1.4%.

Tanzania pres.names new finance minister

TANZANIA'S President Samia Suluhu Hassan on Monday named the East African country's ambassador to China, Khamis Mussa Omar, as the finance minister in her new cabinet after last month's disputed election.

In a televised address, Hassan said she had retained Anthony Mavunde as mining minister and Mahmoud Thabit Kombo as foreign affairs minister in her cabinet.

Oil prices steady

OIL prices were little changed on Monday as loadings resumed at Russia's Novorossiysk export hub after a two-day suspension at the Black Sea port that had been hit by a Ukrainian attack.

Brent crude was down 8 cents, or 0.1%, at \$64.31 a barrel by 12:49 p.m. ET (1749 GMT). U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude eased 10 cents, also 0.2%, to \$59.99. (Reuters)



FX RATES

Notes/Cash

	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.8536	17.3187
G.B. Pound	22.1877	22.8580
EURO	19.5936	20.2012
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	



FNB Eswatini injects E5.48 mln into social and economic development

Stories By Delisa Magagula

THE First National Bank (FNB) Eswatini and the FNB Eswatini Foundation injected a combined E5.48 million into Corporate Social Investment (CSI) projects during the 2024/25 financial year.

This was revealed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Thokozani 'TK' Dlamini during an interview where he laid out the bank's financial performance, operational highlights, and its continued commitment to social impact. According to Dlamini, the bank directed E3.85 million towards CSI programmes and strategic sponsorships across its priority sectors.

These include economic growth and entrepreneurship, sports development and inclusion, community wellbeing and social impact, education and youth empowerment, and cultural promotion and environmental awareness.

The investments form part of the bank's structured approach to supporting initiatives that align with national priorities and the needs of communities across the country.

A significant portion of this year's investment went into fostering entrepreneurship. "In collaboration with FNB Eswatini, the FNB Eswatini Foundation co-sponsored the Entrepreneur of the Year Awards 2024 with a contribution of E1.6 million. E1 million from FNB Eswatini and E600,000 from the Foundation, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in the Kingdom," Dlamini said.

Noteworthy, the EYA awards are regarded as one of the country's key platforms for recognising and strengthening entrepreneurship, especially among emerging and small businesses.

In addition to the awards, the Foundation disbursed a further E1.6 million to projects that fall under its pillars of knowledge economy, gender diversity and inclusion, environment and climate change, and humanitarian support.

These initiatives, according to Dlamini, are designed to create long-term impact and align with the broader developmental agenda of Eswatini.

Reaffirming the bank's long-standing relationship with the communities it serves, Dlamini emphasised that the financial contributions reflect intention, not mere corporate language.

"At FNB Eswatini, we believe in giving back to the communities we serve, supporting initiatives that drive social impact, empower people, and create lasting positive change. Nasitsi sitintile Eswatini, it's not simply because it is a nice thing to say, we are being intentional about allocating our capital to the economy to contribute to the country's long-term growth. That is why we say, sitintile Eswatini futsi asiyindzawo," he said.

Beyond CSI commitments, the CEO provided a detailed account of operational and strategic initiatives undertaken by the bank during the financial year.

These changes, he said, position the institution for future growth and enhance competitiveness in the banking sector. One of the major internal developments was strengthening employee experience and organisational structure.

"We led with employee experience, honouring our commitment to investing in



▲ FNB Eswatini Executive team during a recent meeting on the financial year results.



▲ FNB Eswatini CEO Thokozani TK Dlamini says the bank has given back E5.48 million for the residents.

our people, the engine of the business's well-being and fostering connections for success," Dlamini noted. As part of this effort, the bank successfully onboarded the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief People Officer (CPO) functions at the executive level.

This was accompanied by the recruitment of critical roles across the Retail and Commercial Segments, as well as Human Capital and IT support functions. These appointments, according to Dlamini, were aimed at strengthening business partnering, improving internal capabilities, and enhancing value extraction across different operations.

Dlamini further shared that he conducted CEO roadshows across the entire staff complement to introduce himself formally and engage employees in the bank's strategy and operational objectives.

The bank also made significant strides in improving its digital capabilities and customer service platforms. One of the major technological milestones of the year was becoming fully operational on the Eswatini Payment Switch.

This upgrade now allows FNB customers to

send money instantly to clients of other local banks, eliminating the traditional waiting times associated with interbank transfers. Additionally, FNB completed the CMA EFT migration, transitioning clients transferring funds to Common Monetary Area countries from the old EFT system to the SWIFT channel.

The service is now accessible through the bank's Forex on App platform, providing customers with greater convenience and security when transacting across borders. During the period under review, the bank also launched an evolved private banking value proposition aimed at improving the experience of its private clients.

Dlamini said the new value proposition ensures that the service standards meet global benchmarks while addressing the specific needs of local high-net-worth individuals.

In line with its strategic direction, FNB strengthened its focus on delivering integrated financial advice across its customer base. According to the CEO, this forms part of a broader effort to support the financial resilience of clients and ensure that the bank's offerings respond to the changing economic environment. Another key focus area was the bank's commitment to supporting national economic growth, particularly in the agricultural sector. Dlamini revealed that the Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB) team signed the first green loan for a solar power generation plant during the year. He described this as the first of several environmentally aligned financing initiatives the bank intends to pursue.

The bank has also continued reinforcing its stance on providing exceptional customer service. Dlamini said improvements have been made across various touchpoints to ensure reliability, speed, and consistency in customer interactions.

"While the financial year closes, projects undertaken reflect the bank's ongoing intention to support customers, communities, and the broader economy. The bank's strategic focus, technological enhancements, and CSI commitments remain central pillars of its operational blueprint for the years ahead," he said.

Eco-bag standard sets new compliance burden for businesses

By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI's draft national standard on 'Eco Friendly Bags' PRD/SZNS 103:2025, is set to introduce strict compliance requirements that will significantly influence the operations of local manufacturers, importers and retailers.

The proposed standard, currently under public review, follows Parliament's suspension of the single-use plastic bag ban earlier this year, citing weak alternatives and insufficient regulations.

The new standard outlines the technical, safety and performance specifications for any product marketed as an eco-friendly bag in Eswatini. It establishes criteria for biodegradability, material composition, load performance, hygiene, labelling, and chemical safety.

Worth mentioning, this draws exclusively from PRD/SZNS 103:2025, issued by the Eswatini Standards Authority (SWASA), and the resolution passed in Parliament in April 2025, suspending the plastic ban.

According to PRD/SZNS 103:2025, any bag sold or supplied as eco-friendly must undergo a full set of certified laboratory tests. These include biodegradability performance, tensile strength, load capacity, abrasion resistance, chemical toxicity, colour fastness and compostability.

The draft specifies that eco-friendly bags must demonstrate a minimum of 90 per cent biodegradation within 180 days under controlled composting conditions. This requirement is outlined under the biodegradation test method referenced in the standard.

Additional performance requirements listed include:

1. Abrasion resistance: minimum 10,000 cycles
2. Tensile strength: must meet category-



▲ The call for plastic ban is countrywide.

specific thresholds

3. Toxicity: must not contain prohibited aromatic amines, carcinogenic substances, heavy metals or phthalates

4. Colour fastness: must withstand rubbing and exposure without leaching dyes
"Manufacturers will be required to provide results from accredited laboratories

as proof of compliance. The standard states that no eco-claim may be made without documentary evidence and formal certification," reads the draft in part.

Clause 4 of the standard identifies preferred materials for eco-friendly bags, including indigenous natural fibres. These materials include sisal, lulala, lutindzi and wild date palm (lisundvu). The provision is designed to promote renewable and biodegradable inputs.

The clause also permits the use of compostable polymers and recycled plastics, provided the final product meets the biodegradation and chemical safety thresholds outlined elsewhere in the document.

The encouragement of indigenous fibres is expected to create new opportunities for rural producers, but the testing obligations may limit smaller enterprises that cannot fund laboratory assessments.

Meanwhile, clause 5.1 introduces a minimum recycled content requirement for any plastic-based eco-friendly bag. Products must contain at least 50 per cent recycled material. Producers will have to maintain traceable documentation to prove the origin and composition of recycled content.

The requirement is expected to influence procurement practices for manufacturers and importers who rely on virgin plastics. Businesses may need to establish supply agreements with regional recyclers or adapt production processes to ensure consistent recycled content.

Clause 9 sets out hygiene requirements for the production environment. Manufacturers must ensure that bags intended for carrying food are handled and packaged under

sanitary conditions. The standard includes provisions for cleanliness, contamination controls and safe storage.

The hygiene requirements apply to both domestic manufacturing facilities and foreign suppliers exporting bags into Eswatini. Worth noting, the new standard is expected to create compliance costs for manufacturers and importers. Businesses will need to secure accredited testing, modify production materials, redesign labels and ensure supply chain traceability.

Retailers may also face changes in procurement, as they will only be permitted to stock certified eco-friendly bags once the standard comes into effect. Import-dependent companies will have to require foreign suppliers to meet Eswatini's requirements, which may differ from standards applied in other countries.

In April 2025, Parliament voted to suspend the single-use plastic bag ban for seven years. The parliamentary select committee reported that most of the alternative bags supplied in the market were non-biodegradable, failed durability tests, and were misleadingly labelled as environmentally friendly.

The draft standard appears to respond directly to the gaps identified in the parliamentary report. The proposed biodegradation benchmarks, chemical safety requirements and labelling controls closely match the concerns raised by legislators.

PRD/SZNS 103:2025 is under public review. Once adopted, it will serve as the national benchmark for eco-friendly bags in Eswatini. Manufacturers, suppliers and retailers will be required to align their products and operations with the standard.

Businesses will need to prepare for full compliance, including laboratory testing, documentation, and supply chain adjustments.

A manager at a major supermarket chain, speaking on condition of anonymity because the review process is ongoing, said retailers are bracing for operational adjustments once the standard is adopted.

"We will have to change suppliers immediately. Any bag that enters our stores will need certified proof of biodegradability and safety. It's a big shift because most of the bags we use now don't meet these requirements," said the retailer.

A representative from a local packaging manufacturer said the industry is preparing for higher compliance costs.

"Testing alone is expensive. Biodegradation, tensile strength, and toxicity each need accredited labs. Small manufacturers will struggle unless the government supports the transition," said the representative.

The manufacturer added that the 50 per cent recycled content requirement will force companies to rethink sourcing.

"We will need a stable recycled material supply. That means new contracts and new production tools," he said.

An importer who supplies bags to wholesalers raised concerns about border clearance times. He said customs will want proof of every claim. If the supplier overseas doesn't meet Eswatini's standard, a shipment stalls.

"We're already talking to factories we buy from to understand what changes they must make," said the importer.



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You have read the rest, now read the best

Wall Street fluctuates ahead of Nvidia results



▲ A trader works on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City, U.S.

Tanzania president names new finance minister, keeps foreign, mining ministers

TANZANIA'S President Samia Suluhu Hassan on Monday named the East African country's ambassador to China, Khamis Mussa Omar, as the finance minister in her new cabinet after last month's disputed election. In a televised address, Hassan said she had retained Anthony Mavunde as mining minister and Mahmoud Thabit Kombo as foreign affairs minister in her cabinet. Last week Hassan chose the previous finance minister, Mwigulu Nchemba, to be prime minister. Hassan was declared the landslide winner

of the October election, but the vote was marred by clashes with security forces over the exclusion of her main challengers. Rights groups and opposition parties say hundreds were killed in the clashes, though the government disputes those figures as exaggerated. Hassan has promised to investigate the election violence and on Friday offered condolences to bereaved families, her most public acknowledgement of the turmoil, which has caused the country's biggest political crisis in decades. (Rueters)



▲ Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan addresses elected legislators at the Parliament Buildings in Dodoma, Tanzania.



▲ Oil pumpjacks and tanks are pictured in a farmer's field near Kindersley, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Oil prices steady after loadings resume at Russian export hub

OIL prices were little changed on Monday as loadings resumed at Russia's Novorossiysk export hub after a two-day suspension at the Black Sea port that had been hit by a Ukrainian attack. Brent crude was down 8 cents, or 0.1%, at \$64.31 a barrel by 12:49 p.m. ET (1749 GMT). U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude eased 10 cents, also 0.2%, to \$59.99. Both benchmarks rose more than 2% on Friday to end the week with a modest gain after exports were suspended at Novorossiysk and a neighbouring Caspian Pipeline Consortium terminal, affecting the equivalent of 2% of global supply. Novorossiysk resumed oil loadings on Sunday, according to two industry sources and LSEG data. However, Ukraine's attacks on Russian oil infrastructure remain in focus.

"Early weakness was due to the resumption of loadings in Novorossiysk, but was short-lived...", said Scott Shelton, energy specialist at TP ICAP Group. Ukraine's military said on Saturday that it hit Russia's Ryazan oil refinery, and Kyiv's General Staff said on Sunday that the Novokuibyshevsk oil refinery in Russia's Samara region had also been struck. "Investors are trying to gauge how Ukraine's attacks will affect Russia's crude exports in the long term," said Fujitomi Securities analyst Toshitaka Tazawa. Investors are also monitoring the impact of Western sanctions on Russian supply and trade flows. The U.S. imposed sanctions banning deals with Russian oil companies Lukoil and Rosneft after November 21 to try to push Moscow towards peace talks over Ukraine. (Rueters)

Prosecutors seek life term for Darfur militia 'axe murderer'

PROSECUTORS sought a life sentence for a Janjaweed militia leader convicted of atrocities in Sudan's Darfur region, telling the International Criminal Court on Monday he was guilty of murder and ordering others to commit mass crimes.

"You literally have an axe murderer before you," prosecutor Julian Nicholls told a special hearing called to determine a sentence for Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman - also known as Ali Kushayb.

Nicholls said Kushayb, 76, had at one point used an axe to kill two people, and described him as an enthusiastic, energetic and effective perpetrator of the abuses carried out in the Darfur region more than 20 years ago.

DEFENCE WANTS SEVEN-YEAR SENTENCE

His conviction in October on 27 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, torture and the orchestration of rape and other atrocities by the militia, is the court's first successful prosecution linked to the conflict.

Lawyers for the defendant - who had argued that he was not Kushayb and was the innocent victim of mistaken identity - are due to present their views on his sentencing later this week.

In court documents, the defence has called for a maximum of seven years in pris-



▲ Displaced Sudanese gather after fleeing Al-Fashir city in Darfur, in Tawila, Sudan. on with credit for time served, which could see him freed in months.

Lawyers representing victims told judges on Monday a seven-year sentence was too low considering the severity of the crimes

Darfur's conflict first erupted in 2003 when mostly non-Arab rebels took up arms against Sudan's government, accusing it of marginalising the remote western territory.

Sudan's then government mobilised mostly Arab militias, known as the Janjaweed, to crush the revolt, unleashing a wave of violence that the U.S. and human rights groups said amounted to genocide.

In 2005, the United Nations Security Council referred the case to the ICC, a Hague-based court set up to try the worst crimes when local courts fail.

In court documents, the defence has called for a maximum of seven years in prison with credit for time served, which could see him freed in months.

Lawyers representing victims told judges on Monday a seven-year sentence was too low considering the severity of the crimes and Kushayb's leading role in them.

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(Reuters)

Congo extends ban on trade in minerals from sites in war-hit east

THE Democratic Republic of Congo has extended for six months a ban on the trading of minerals from dozens of artisanal mining sites in conflict-hit North and South Kivu provinces, the mines ministry said.

The extension adds compliance pressure on global supply chains for tin, tantalum and tungsten, key inputs for the electronics, automotive and aerospace industries.

The ban, introduced in February, is being kept in place because of evidence that illegal supply from mines is financing armed groups in the east, according to an order dated November 3 and signed by the mines minister Louis Watum Kabamba.

The order, which the ministry posted to social media on Sunday, applies to 38 sites producing coltan, cassiterite and wolframite - ingredients for tin, tantalum and tungsten - in Masisi territory in North Kivu and Kalehe territory in South Kivu.

Rwanda-backed M23 rebels and other armed groups have captured significant territory in mineral-rich eastern Congo.

An offensive by M23 this year has killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands more.

Mineral wealth has long been seen as fuelling violence in the east, with combatants using coltan, cassiterite and gold sites to fund their operations, according to U.N. experts and rights groups.

A U.N. report in December 2024 said revenues from smuggled minerals were funding military operations, sustaining a war economy and prolonging violence.

The mines ministry order prohibits sourcing and export from the mining sites in question and says they may face independent audits by the ministry or international bodies, including the U.N. and OECD.

(Reuters)



▲ Miners work in a coltan mine in Birambo, Masisi territory, North Kivu Province of Democratic Republic of Congo.



▲ Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan addresses elected legislators at the Parliament

Tanzania president names new finance minister, keeps foreign and mining ministers

TANZANIA'S President Samia Suluhu Hassan on Monday named the East African country's ambassador to China, Khamis Mussa Omar, as the finance minister in her new cabinet after last month's disputed election.

In a televised address, Hassan said she had retained Anthony Mavunde as mining minister and Mahmoud Thabit Kombo as foreign affairs minister in her cabinet.

Last week Hassan chose the previous finance minister, Mwigulu Nchemba, to be prime minister.

Hassan was declared the landslide winner of the October election, but the vote was

marred by clashes with security forces over the exclusion of her main challengers.

Rights groups and opposition parties say hundreds were killed in the clashes, though the government disputes those figures as exaggerated.

Hassan has promised to investigate the election violence and on Friday offered condolences to bereaved families, her most public acknowledgement of the turmoil, which has caused the country's biggest political crisis in decades.

(Reuters)

Electric vehicle sales are booming in South America — without Tesla

WHEN Peruvian green energy entrepreneur Luis Zwiebach wanted to buy an electric vehicle in 2019, he flew 4,000 miles to California to test drive Tesla's Model 3 sedan. But Tesla lacked an official importer and he couldn't find a way around Peru's complex vehicle import procedures.

He was not deterred. "There was a gentleman who had already imported one and wanted to sell it," Zwiebach said. "So I went to see it, and I bought it."

Charging the Tesla initially proved difficult at his friend's beach house outside Lima. "The car wouldn't charge because there was no grounding device," he said. "We grabbed a fork, stuck it into the soil to make a ground — and the car charged."

Today, it's not so hard to take the plunge on an EV in Peru. Tesla still lacks a showroom but there's been an influx of Chinese models from the likes of BYD, Geely (0175.HK), opens new tab and GWM, which sell electric vehicles here at around 60% of the price of a Tesla, as well as legacy manufacturers such as Toyota, Kia and Hyundai. Tesla did not respond to a request for comment.

Chinese car makers are widening their footprint across South America with both traditional vehicles and EVs. EVs are still a small slice of the 135,394 new cars sold in Peru in the nine months to September, according to the country's automotive association, but they are on the rise. Sales of hybrid and electric vehicles hit a record 7,256 units in that period, up 44% year on year.

China has been ramping up sales since the opening last year of the Port of Chancay,



▲ Chinese electric vehicles are parked at the Chancay megaport as Chinese automakers are gaining ground against traditional brands in the South American electric vehicle market, in Chancay.

north of Lima. The Chinese-built megaport has halved trans-Pacific shipping times just as Chinese manufacturers face rising barriers to entry in the United States and greater trade restrictions in Europe.

BYD, which makes EVs, plug-in hybrids and combustion engine cars, plans to open a fourth dealership in Lima by the end of this year, while Chery and Geely have more than a dozen in total in Peru.

"The electric car is doing very well here, more than two new cars are sold every day," Zwiebach said from Lima.

He said rising demand had encouraged

him to expand his renewables business, offering EV charger installations as well as solar panels and regenerative elevators to clients in Lima and Arequipa, including real estate developers, universities and shopping centers.

"A property developer told me he'd buy the penthouse — if it came with a car charger," Zwiebach said. "So that's what we did. You just plug it in at home, like a phone."

Chinese carmakers face a profit-destroying price war at home and a growing surplus of new cars rolling out of Chinese factory lines. Much of this excess is being shipped

overseas to the Middle East, Central Asia and Latin America, according to global automotive analyst Felipe Munoz at JATO Dynamics.

The Chinese have "carved out space," across both electric and petrol-powered cars, said Martin Bresciani, president of Chile's automotive business chamber, CAVEM. "The Chinese have already demonstrated that they match global standards in quality."

Chinese brands reached 29.6% of all new passenger car sales in Chile in the first quarter of this year.

CHINESE FIRMS ON THE RISE ACROSS LATIN AMERICA

EV penetration in Latin America, including Mexico and Central America, doubled in 2024 to around 4%, and continues to grow, boosted by government incentives and an influx of affordable Chinese models, the International Energy Agency said in its Global EV Outlook 2025.

Latest figures show EV market share hit 10.6% of new cars registered in Chile in September, 9.4% in Brazil in August, and 28% in Uruguay in the third quarter of the year — all record highs, according to local car associations and consultancy firms. In Europe and China, half of new cars registered by mid-2025 were EVs 56% and 51% respectively). In Japan and the U.S. rates were lower, closer to 2% and 10% respectively.

Even in Argentina, where economic headwinds persist and trade barriers are higher, EV sales are rising from a low base. China's largest carmaker, BYD, launched in Argentina for the first time in October.

(Reuters)

Chinese astronauts return to Earth after vessel damaged by space debris



THREE Chinese astronauts whose return to Earth was delayed by space debris hitting their vessel last week landed in China on Friday afternoon, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) revealed details about the debris damage for the first time on Friday, saying "tiny cracks" were found in a small window of the Shenzhou-20 spacecraft's return capsule.

"The capsule does not meet the safety requirements for a crewed return, Shenzhou-20 will remain in orbit and conduct relevant experiments," the agency said in a

statement.

The astronauts were due to return to Earth nine days ago after completing a six-month mission on China's permanently inhabited Tiangong space station, a programme known as Shenzhou, or "Divine Vessel", when the crack was discovered.

The crew left Tiangong on another spacecraft, the Shenzhou-21, according to CMSA, touching down at the Dongfeng landing site in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 4:40 p.m. (0840 GMT).

The mission began in April and went smoothly until the debris incident forced the Shenzhou-20's return, originally sched-

uled for November 5, to be postponed, CMSA said.

The delay, while only nine days, was highly unusual for a programme that had run like clockwork and in the past year reached new milestones, with the deployment of astronauts born in the 1990s, a world-record spacewalk and plans to send the first foreign astronaut, from Pakistan, to Tiangong next year.

LOGISTICAL HEADACHE

Every Shenzhou mission on the Tiangong ends with a handover, where the departing crew welcomes the arriving crew that will take over the space station's operations. During the handover period of several days, two Shenzhou vessels are docked at the space station.

China's manned space programme now has to deal with another logistical headache - how to get the space station's newly arrived crew home in the event of an emergency. The Shenzhou-21 spacecraft and its three-person crew arrived at Tiangong two weeks ago.

But with the departure of the Shenzhou-20 crew on the Shenzhou-21 vessel, the Chinese space station is currently without a flight-worthy vessel, meaning the Shenzhou-21 crew currently living there is stuck in space until a replacement vehicle arrives.

According to China's safety protocols, when astronauts cannot be safely flown back to Earth due to a malfunction, an unmanned emergency rescue spacecraft will be launched from the ground to take the astronauts back to the ground.

CMSA said the Shenzhou-22 spacecraft would be launched at "an appropriate time in the future".

SPACE JUNK DANGER

The damage to the Chinese spacecraft highlights the growing challenge of "space junk" to space exploration.

"Due to the sharp increase in orbital debris, the likelihood of damage to spacecraft and space stations of all countries has risen significantly," Igor Marinin, a member of the Russian Academy of Cosmonautics in Moscow, told Reuters.

While this is the first known debris disruption for a Shenzhou mission, junk in space has ensnared past missions to the International Space Station, the 25-year-old science lab led by the United States and Russia.

The SpaceX capsule NASA used to transport astronauts to the ISS has had to dodge suspected pieces of space debris during flight, while the football field-sized station itself has manoeuvred several times to steer clear of junk.

The disintegration of old, defunct satellites, mishaps with active ones and anti-satellite weapon tests can create vast fields of space debris that remain in orbit for years.

The sudden breakup of an old Russian satellite last year created at least 180 pieces of trackable debris, forcing ISS astronauts to prepare for evacuation. A spent Chinese rocket stage later that year created nearly 1,000 pieces of junk after possibly colliding with debris.

The threat has prompted calls for rival space powers U.S. and China to work together to mitigate space debris and develop satellite traffic rules, though U.S. law largely bars NASA from working with Beijing's space programme.

(Reuters)

Zelenskiy says Ukraine will obtain 100 Rafale warplanes from France

UKRAINE signed a letter of intent with France to obtain 100 Rafale warplanes over the next 10 years, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Monday as he seeks to bolster the country's long-term military capacity to fight Russia's invasion.

Zelenskiy is visiting Paris for talks with President Emmanuel Macron at a time when heavy Russian drone and missile attacks on Ukraine have increased in recent weeks and Moscow has reported ground advances in the southeastern Zaporizhzhia region.

"It will be the greatest air defence, one of the greatest in the world," Zelenskiy told reporters after he signed the letter of intent with Macron in front of a Rafale jet and the French and Ukrainian flags at Villacoublay military airport.

The Elysee confirmed the number of Rafales and said the deal, which also includes air defence systems, bombs and drones alongside the Dassault (AM.PA), opens new tab-made jets, concerns new equipment rather than transfers from French stocks.

"We're planning Rafales, 100 Rafales — that's huge. That's what's needed for the regeneration of the Ukrainian military," Macron told LCI TV, adding that the deal was also good news for France and Dassault.

Dassault's shares soared and were up 7.4% at 1137 GMT.

The letter of intent is a political commitment, rather than a purchase deal, which

would come later, the Elysee said, adding that the aim was to finance this with EU programs and the planned use of frozen Russian assets - which the EU has not yet agreed on.

FRANCE LOOKING AT LONG-TERM STRENGTH OF UKRAINE'S MILITARY

Operating the advanced Rafale jets would take time given the rigorous training programme for pilots.

There have been talks for several weeks to see how France could provide more military support for Ukraine's air defences, although Macron's government is grappling with political and budgetary instability, raising questions over how much France can actually do.

Macron pledged last month to offer more Mirage fighter jets, after initially promising to deliver six, and a new batch of Aster 30 surface-to-air missiles, produced by European group MBDA, for the SAMP/T air-defence batteries operated by Ukraine.

France, along with Britain, has pushed for the creation of a coalition of about 30 countries willing to send troops and assets to Ukraine or along its western borders once a peace deal with Russia is agreed.

A key objective is to ensure Ukraine has sufficient long-term military and economic aid to keep its army strong enough to deter any future Russian attack.

In a media briefing ahead of Zelenskiy's visit, Macron's office said the aim was to "put French excellence in the arms industry at the service of Ukraine's defence" and "enable it to acquire the systems it needs to



▲ French President Emmanuel Macron and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy hug after signing an agreement at the Villacoublay air base near Paris, France.

respond to Russian aggression".

Zelenskiy attended a briefing by various manufacturers, including Dassault, on Monday morning before signing the letter of intent.

A separate forum in the afternoon will bring together Ukrainian and French firms working in the drone sector to see how they can combine their efforts.

(Reuters)

Japan seeks to calm escalating row with China over Taiwan

JAPAN moved on Monday to tamp down an escalating row with China over Taiwan that has prompted Beijing to urge citizens to halt travel to its East Asian neighbour.

The dispute erupted after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told Japanese lawmakers this month that a Chinese attack on Taiwan threatening Japan's survival could trigger a military response.

Her comments broke with past administrations' avoidance of public discussion of such a scenario, so as not provoke Beijing, which claims the self-ruled island.

Masaaki Kanai, the Japanese foreign ministry official in charge of Asia and Oceania affairs, arrived in the Chinese capital to meet his counterpart, Liu Jinsong, a video broadcast by the Kyodo news agency showed on Monday.

Kanai is expected to explain that Japan's security policy has not changed, and urge China to refrain from actions that damage ties, media said.

Taiwan is located just about 110 km (68 miles) from Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni, near sea lanes on which Tokyo relies for energy shipments. Japan also hosts the largest concentration of U.S. military power outside the United States.

"Various channels of communication are open," Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary told a regular press briefing, when asked about Kanai's visit.

"We have made a firm request for the Chinese side to take appropriate steps," he said, adding that the travel warning was incompatible with efforts to promote strategic, mutually beneficial ties.

China's Premier Li Qiang has no plans to meet Takaichi on the sidelines of this week's G20 summit in South Africa, however, the foreign ministry said in Beijing.

Instead, Japan should retract its "wrongful" remarks, ministry spokesperson Mao



▲ Japan's new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi delivers her first policy speech in parliament, in Tokyo, Japan.

Ning told a regular news briefing.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said China was carrying out a "multifaceted attack" on Japan, speaking to reporters in the capital's sister city of New Taipei.

"I call on the international community to continue paying close attention and I also urge China to exercise restraint and demonstrate the conduct befitting a major power, rather than becoming a troublemaker for regional peace and stability," he added.

Tension could persist for months, however, said Kenji Minemura, a senior research fellow at the Canon Institute for Global Studies.

"China knows that Takaichi can't retract her comment, so its call for one isn't to get a resolution, but to ramp up pressure on Ja-

pan," he said.

LEISURE, RETAIL TAKE A HIT

The row flared with Takaichi's comment on November 7, a week after she met Chinese President Xi Jinping and agreed to pursue stable ties.

A day later, in a now-deleted post on X, China's consul general in Osaka, Xue Jian, said "the dirty neck that sticks itself in must be cut off".

Japan summoned China's ambassador to protest his "extremely inappropriate" statement and several Japanese politicians called for Xue's expulsion.

The rift widened on Thursday, when China summoned Japan's ambassador, for the first time in more than two years, to make a "strong protest" over Takaichi's remarks.

On Friday, China said Japan would face a "crushing" military defeat if it intervened over Taiwan and voiced "serious concerns" about Japan's security direction.

This included ambiguity over its three non-nuclear principles not to develop, possess or host nuclear weapons.

In August, a Reuters investigation had found growing willingness in Japan to ease those pledges, long a taboo in the only nation to suffer atomic bombings.

On Sunday, Chinese coast guard ships sailed through waters around a group of East China Sea islands controlled by Japan but claimed by China.

Known as the Senkaku in Tokyo and the Diaoyu in Beijing, they have been a flash-point since Japan nationalised them in 2012. Japan's coast guard said it drove the Chinese ships away.

Japan said it also scrambled fighter jets on Saturday, after China flew a drone between Taiwan and Yonaguni.

George Glass, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, has also waded into the dispute, criticising Xue on X.

On Saturday, he said it was time to move on, adding, "Halloween has been and gone," after the Chinese diplomat labelled Takaichi an "evil witch".

Chinese state-linked media also targeted Takaichi on Monday.

In an editorial, the People's Daily of the ruling Communist Party said, "Takaichi's dangerous remarks, which have touched the nerves of all parties, were not only strategic recklessness, but also deliberate provocation."

If the row drags on, a drop in Chinese visitors, such as the fall of roughly 25% seen during an island dispute in 2012, could deliver a significant economic hit for Japan, said Takahide Kiuchi, executive economist at Nomura Research Institute.

(Reuters)



▲ Comedian Dr Shakes.



▲ Comedian Mdura.

Festive holiday laughter tsunami hit Mbabane

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

THE festive season in Eswatini will kick off with a loud, unapologetic burst of laughter as a powerhouse collective of local and South African comedians prepares to take over the Mbabane Theatre Club on December 13, 2025.

Scheduled to start at 6:59 pm, branded as “A Festive Holiday Comedy Show,” the event brings together some of Eswatini’s sharpest comedic talents and celebrated humourists from South Africa. The star-studded lineup features South African favourites Thando, the charismatic and clean-cut performer known for his observational wit; Ntuthuland, whose expressive face alone can collapse an audience into giggles; Dulas, a rising act blending physical comedy with sharp improvisation; and the irrepressible duo Gap & Salad, who have built a reputation for fast-paced two-man skits and thunderous stage chemistry.

Alongside them are Eswatini’s very own comedic heavy-hitters, Dr Shakes, Mdura, Cedric, and Ntsetselelo, a quartet that has steadily cultivated a loyal laughter-loving fanbase across the country. Tickets cost E120 and are available on MojaTicket. Event organiser and comedian Mdura says this December production is a continuation of a deliberate mission, one that began earlier this year and has gathered momentum with every show.

Speaking about the vision behind the event, he explained that comedy remains one of the few art forms capable of bringing communities together in pure joy. “Our job is to entertain and give emaSwati the best entertainment they deserve,” he emphasised, reflecting on the driving force behind the show’s creation.

He said that after hosting the successful Thenjiwe Unplugged performance in October, he and South African comedian Thando regrouped and began imagining



▲ South African comedian Thando.

something bigger, something that would bridge Eswatini’s comedy scene with that of KwaZulu-Natal. According to him, the idea was simple but meaningful, bring together the best of Eswatini comedy and KZN comedy to close off a great year of work. He stressed that the motivation for curating such a lineup wasn’t only to entertain, but also to celebrate how far Eswatini’s comedy industry has grown in recent years.

Quality

Mdura described the upcoming show as “a great quality comedy show of the highest level.” He noted that audiences should expect polished performances, high-calibre stage coordination, and the kind of comedic timing that only comes from deeply experienced entertainers. The partnership with South African acts, he added, elevates

the overall product and reflects the organisers’ commitment to excellence.

Despite the substantial progress made in building Eswatini’s comedy ecosystem, Mdura says the foundation of every successful show remains the unwavering support of the audience. He reiterated that the message to fans has not changed.

Support

“The message is the same as before, we always appreciate the support we get,” he said. He further encouraged emaSwati to come out in their numbers, adding that ticket purchases go a long way in strengthening the industry. He explained that attending live shows not only supports comedians financially but also inspires them to deliver even better performances at each event.



▲ The Bishop.

The Bishop to minister at UTW Eswatini

THE upcoming Unleash The Wolf (UTW) event in Eswatini is set to be a landmark occasion in the country’s music scene, with The Bishop set to headline the festivities.

Scheduled for December 7, 2025, at Oryx Restaurant & Lounge, the event will kick off at 3 pm and extend late into the night, offering an immersive experience for deep house enthusiasts and partygoers alike. UTW Eswatini is gaining momentum as one of the most anticipated music events of the year, thanks in large part to the presence of The Bishop, a revered figure in the deep house community.

Known for his uplifting and soulful sets, The Bishop will be delivering what the organisers describe as an “uplifting house sermon,” inviting attendees to a musical journey that blends spiritual energy with infectious beats. This return to Eswatini was enthusiastically announced on the official Unleash The Wolf social media page, highlighting the excitement surrounding his performance.

Power

Adding to star power, the event will also feature the legendary UK producer Jimpster. Making his debut in Eswatini, Jimpster is celebrated worldwide for his groove-heavy, soulfully textured deep house productions that have influenced the genre for decades. His inclusion in the lineup elevates UTW Eswatini to an international level, promising a night filled with timeless soundtracks that will captivate the audience. The Unleash The Wolf page emphasised the significance of this appearance, urging fans not to miss the opportunity to experience Jimpster’s iconic sound live.

Ticket pricing for UTW Eswatini has been thoughtfully structured to accommodate a wide range of attendees, from early planners to last-minute decision-makers. Early bird tickets are priced at E100, offering an affordable entry point for those eager to secure their spot. Phase 1 tickets are available at E150, while a limited number of phase 2 tickets will be sold for E200. The final phase tickets, priced at E250, represent the last opportunity to attend the event.

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Zozibini empowers women outside of pageants

By Qhama Dayile

FORMER Miss Universe 2019 winner, actress, and TV host Zozibini Tunzi recently wowed guests as the MC at the 5th Annual EmpoweringHER Seminar & Business Awards 2025 hosted by the Nomzamo Mbatha Lighthouse.

The EmpoweringHER took place at the Inanda Polo Club in Johannesburg under the theme “Women: The Boldest Strokes of Colour”.

The event featured three high-impact panels designed to inspire and provoke meaningful dialogue. Dr Vumi Msweli, an award-winning global speaker and leadership coach, led a bold conversation with author and visionary African brand leader Thebe Ikalafeng. They delved into the distinctions between mentorship and sponsorship, highlighting the individuals who genuinely create opportunities and assist women in securing their legitimate seats at the table alongside other delegates.

Zozibini on leadership

Poised, graceful, and self-assured, Zozibini shifts the feeling in any room that she enters. Honoured to have been a part of the EmpoweringHER 2025 event and leading the conversations, she said hers was to always shine the light on self-love, women’s empowerment, and playing her part as a role model to young girls.

“I always hope that my presence in any room can inspire someone, especially young women,” she said.

“I always want people, and mostly young women, to know that whatever it is that they set their minds to, they can accomplish; it is absolutely attainable.

“Visibility, awareness, and tangible change are important when it comes to uplifting women. Events of this nature do exactly that.

“The more women rise and receive the necessary tools to reach their goals, the closer we are to realising the dream of a globally empowered woman.”

Women Empowerment



▲Zozibini Tunzi.

For Zozibini, being the first black South African to win the Miss Universe crown came with pressure that she has embraced, and she dedicated her life to imparting leadership skills in young women.

Today, she continues to live by the vows even outside of any beauty pageant. She is passionate about women’s empowerment and building future leaders.

“When a woman is empowered, that means everybody is empowered. The World Economic Forum reports that at the current rate, it will take approximately 123 years to achieve global gender equality.

“Therefore, I urge everyone to begin bridging that gap today. There is no time to waste; we all have a part to play, no matter the scale, and that is why I decided to be a part of the event. I want to offer my contribution to this incredible cause. “

Multi-talented

Gifted in motivational speaking and singing, she recently tried her hand at acting. Zozibini starred in the popular Netflix crime drama series Bad Influencer, portraying the role of rogue model and villain Naomi, who is highly competitive.

This antagonist presented a stark contrast

to Zozibini, compelling her to set aside her personal emotions. She took the role with a conscious mind to teach.

“I was forced to put my values aside and focus on the character without judging some of her [Naomi’s] decisions.

“I watched the character traits of other actors and personalities to help me portray the role of a person like Naomi,” said the multi-talented Zozibini, who executed the role with conviction.

She said she chose the role because it was informative, for the same reasons she chose to be part of the EmpoweringHER 2025 summit.

“I understand the significance of my platform, and I strive to utilise it to foster positive change in discussions about empowerment and leadership for young women.”

“I hope that young women are also taking responsibility in furthering these conversations and equipping themselves with the right kind of knowledge.

“When that happens, it becomes a beautiful ripple effect because they, too, can pass the baton to the next generation of young women. That is the power of influence.” (SundayWorld)



▲Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande.

Cynthia Erivo speaks out after Ariana Grande incident

CYNTHIA Erivo noted she and Ariana Grande have had to “come through some s***” in their lives and work.

The 38-year-old actress came to the aid of her Wicked: For Good co-star last week when Johnson Wen, who is known as Pyjama Man on Instagram, jumped the barrier at the movie’s Singapore premiere and rushed the Thank U, Next singer, and she’s now reflected on Thursday’s (13.11.25) scary incident and her close bond with the 32-year-old star.

Speaking at a special Screen Actors Guild screening held at the Television Academy in Los Angeles over the weekend, Entertainment Weekly reports Cynthia said: “What’s even more wonderful is the fact that there are other people who have seen themselves in this movie, in that character, and also now see themselves and feel safe.

“That, for me, is the pinnacle of what I could ever wish for from any piece of work I have ever done. And I am so glad that in order to do it, I had to look into the eyes of this person beside me.

“And we have come through some s***. We have come through some stuff in our lives, in our daily workings.

“I mean, f***, even this last week. Let’s be honest, for f***’s sakes, we’ve had to really deal with some stuff, and this movie has allowed us to really grow as people, as friends, as sisters, as artists, as actresses.”

As Cynthia spoke, Ariana nodded her head, but when she started talking about the incident in Singapore, the singer stared straight ahead before eventually growing tearful.

Cynthia added: “That is the thing that is special about this piece.

“And I’ll miss being in this group of people this constantly. Because you don’t get a group of people this close often on a set. You don’t earn family like this often, and we have. F***** lucky thing to be a part of.”

Red carpet crasher Wen has become known for disrupting concerts, after he did so at a Katy Perry gig in June, and The Weeknd’s show in August, as well as the Paris Olympics last year.

Before the Wicked: For Good premiere in Singapore, he said: “I feel like I’m in a dream.

“That’s my best friend Ariana Grande and I’m going to meet her. I’ve been dreaming about that.”

He was arrested but later freed, and took to Instagram to “thank” Ariana.

Sharing a video of the incident, he wrote: “@arianagrande @wickedmovie Dear Ariana Grande Thank You for letting me Jump on the Yellow Carpet with You [heart emoji]”

Following the incident, he wrote on his Instagram Stories: “I’m free after being arrested.” (BangShowbiz)

Pierce Brosnan teases ‘exciting’ potential return to James Bond franchise

PIERCE Brosnan would love to return to the James Bond franchise - admitting it will be “exciting to see what happens”.

The 72-year-old actor is still best known for playing the suave spy in four movies, GoldenEye, Tomorrow Never Dies, The World Is Not Enough, and Die Another Day from 1995 to 2002, and he admits it would be “entertaining” if he was to revisit 007’s world one day.

Speaking to GQ Magazine about whether he would want to head back to Bond, he said: “Of course, people ask about Bond - ‘would you?’ and whatever - but that’s another man’s job.

“But the possibilities of working within that film, entertaining... so it’s going to be exciting to see what happens.

“I think everything changes, everything falls apart, so you just sit back and enjoy it

all.”

Amazon MGM Studios recently took over creative control of the Bond franchise, and Brosnan hasn’t ruled out an appearance as a retired agent in a future 007 movie.

Quizzed on whether he could appear as an agent in a Bond film, he said: “Sometimes you entertain it and sometimes you just move on.”

Brosnan also insisted he won’t retire from acting, because he wants to “be an artist ‘til the last breath”, and he is pleased to have been busy working on cosy crime film The Thursday Murder Club, and gangland series Mob Land recently.

He said: “It’s just been a delight for two years of working back to back.

“In this time and place in age, it allows me to play characters.

“It allows me to enjoy the process of acting and of playing within the image, playing



▲Pierce Brosnan.

within the symbol, playing within the icon of that person that you’ve created.”

Pierce Brosnan will be honoured at the GQ Men of the Year event on the 18th of November in London. (BangShowbiz)



How Are Plastic Bottles Made?

PLASTICS are made from oil or natural gas, which are made of molecules called hydrocarbons.

When you heat hydrocarbons to very high temperatures, they break down into smaller molecules called monomers. There are many types of hydrocarbon monomers, such as methane, ethane, propane, and butane.

To make plastic, monomers are joined together to make a larger molecule called a polymer. The different types of plastic polymers are made of different combinations of monomers. These polymers are formed into pellets, powders, flakes, or liquids, which are the raw plastic material.

At the bottling factory, the raw plastic is put into a machine that heats it to a high temperature so that it becomes a liquid. The liquid is then injected into a bottle-shaped mold where it hardens.

There are two groups of polymers: thermoset and thermoplastics. Thermoset plastics are made of polymers made with chemical bonds that can't be reversed. Once these plastics are molded, they can't be broken down. Bakelite is an example of thermoset plastic. Because they can't be broken down, thermoset plastics aren't recyclable.

Thermoplastics, on the other hand, can be melted and remolded into newer materials. Items made from thermoplastics can potentially be recycled. There are several types of thermoplastics, such as polypropylene (PP), polyethylene (PE), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), and polycarbonate. Water bottles are generally made of thermoplastics.

Most water bottle makers intend for their products to be single-use. But if you're concerned about the environment or need a container in a pinch, you've probably wondered if you can refill them. Whether or not this is safe depends on the type of plastic your water bottle is made of.

Types of Plastic Bottles

Plastics are labeled with a Resin Identifying Code (RIC), usually molded or printed in raised type on the bottom of the item. RIC labels are usually a number from "1" to "7" printed inside either a solid triangle or one made from arrows. Below the triangle, you will also see the abbreviation for the plastic resin type. Unfortunately, these RIC labels only tell you what plastic the package is made from and not whether or not the bottle can be recycled or reused. However, water bottles are usually made from three types of thermoplastics that can be recycled:

► **Polyethylene terephthalate (PET).** Bottles made from PET are labeled with an RIC of "1." PET is a strong, light plastic often used for water, food, and carbonated beverages, like soda. Unlike other plastics, PET is fully recyclable, although only about 30% of it is actually recycled.

► **High-density polyethylene (HDPE).** Bottles made from HDPE are labeled with a "2." HDPE is a sturdy, durable plastic, which makes it a good material for detergent bottles, soap bottles, and gallon-sized liquid containers. Milk jugs are often made from HDPE, and most centers can recycle this type of plastic.

► **Other.** Plastics with an RIC of "7"

don't fit under any other category and they're generally not recyclable. Examples include polycarbonate sports bottles, such as Nalgene.

Which water bottles are recyclable?

Water bottles labeled with an RIC of "1" or "2" are generally recyclable. To make sure your plastic is actually recycled, don't put plastics in your bin unless they're labeled with a "1" or "2." Also, make sure you empty and rinse your bottles before you put them in the bin. While some recycling centers clean plastic before recycling it, most will toss batches that include dirty plastic in the garbage. This is because they need to avoid introducing contaminants into their recycled plastic and it may be too expensive to sort and clean them once they reach the recycling center.

Chemical Leaching

A common concern for people who reuse water bottles is chemical leaching. This is when chemicals from the plastic are dissolved into and mix with whatever liquid is inside the bottle. Chemical leaching may happen because of exposure to high temperatures or sunlight or long storage times. Some of the chemicals that have been reported to leach from water

bottles include antimony, bisphenol A, and phthalates.

Antimony is a chemical that's often used when PET plastic is made. Agencies for several governments, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), regulate antimony as a contaminant in drinking water. For instance, the EPA says municipal drinking water (tap water) is safe if the amount of antimony it contains is less than 6 parts per billion (6 micrograms/liter). This amount is called the maximum contaminant level (MCL). In the short term, antimony exposure greater than this can lead to nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. And long-term exposure can lead to increased cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

When PET plastics are kept in high temperatures, there is a risk of antimony leaching, but the risk of chemical leaching is low when you store PET bottles at room temperature indoors. It's best to keep these bottles out of the sun to minimize any chance of leaching.

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a chemical that's used when polycarbonate plastic (RIC of "7" and sometimes "3") is made. Polycarbonate plastic is used to make water bottles (like Nalgene), shatterproof windows, eyeglasses, and epoxy resins that coat some metal food cans and water supply pipes. BPA may leach into foods and liquids in polycarbonate containers. This is worrying to some people because studies suggest a

link between BPA exposure and increased blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. It may also have possible health effects on the brains and prostate glands of fetuses, infants, and children. About 10 years ago, the FDA said that BPA cannot be used in baby bottles, sippy cups, or epoxy resins used in packaging for infant formula.

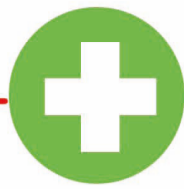
Phthalates (pronounced THAL-ates) are chemicals that are used to make soft, flexible plastics such as PVC (vinyl) food packaging, shower curtains, toys, IV tubes, and fragrances that are used in beauty and skin care products. Studies show that phthalates may interfere with normal growth and brain development in kids and increase allergies.

If you're concerned about BPA and phthalates exposure, you can:

- Use products that are labeled BPA-free and avoid vinyl products.
- Avoid plastics labeled with an RIC of "3," "6," or "7."
- Avoid putting plastic containers in the microwave or dishwasher because the heat may break them down and release BPA into your foods or liquids.
- Use glass, porcelain, or stainless-steel containers instead of plastic for hot foods and liquids.
- Avoid canned foods that may have BPA in the epoxy resin that coats the can.
- Use beauty and skin care products that are phthalate and fragrance-free.



Is it safe to reuse plastic water bottles?



Plastic Bottles and Bacteria Growth

Plastic bottles can harbor harmful bacteria, which is why most manufacturers recommend you use them only once. In truth, bacterial growth in water bottles is a much bigger concern than chemical leaching. If you need to reuse a plastic water bottle, make sure to wash it properly first. Most plastic water bottles don't make for easy cleaning, so it can be tricky. But if you must reuse one, it's best not to skip this step.

Bacterial growth can happen quickly just from the ordinary use of drinking out of the bottle. Even unfinished beverages left at room temperature can have a lot of bacteria growth throughout the day. It's best to reuse plastic water bottles sparingly and wash them thoroughly because germs spread so quickly.

Additionally, wear and tear on the bottle from reuse can create cracks and scratches in the surface where more bacteria can grow. With that in mind, you might even want to skip plastic bottles and buy a reusable glass or stainless-steel bottle instead.

How to Recycle Water Bottles

If you want to recycle your plastic bottles, first make sure they are clean. Then, put them in your designated blue recycling bin, which holds all your plastic materials, including water bottles. Place the bin curbside before the scheduled pick-up time in your area.

You can also drop off water bottles at specific locations. Check with your municipal office about designated drop-off locations in your area. Some states will have additional conditions before accepting water bottles for recycling. For example:

- ▶ While some states accept bottle caps only when they're screwed on tightly to bottles, others ask you to place the bottles and caps separately in the blue bin.

- ▶ Certain states don't accept bottles that were used to store automotive products and dangerous materials like motor oil and pesticides.

- ▶ If some of the items in your waste lot are biodegradable, certain states ask that you not include them in the blue bin and instead choose other forms of recycling.

Plastic Bottles Recycling Ideas

If you have plastic bottles that you can't recycle, you don't have to just toss them in the trash. You can also reuse them.

Here are a few creative ideas for reusing plastic bottles:

- ▶ Cut the top off plastic water bottles to make cups for pens, pencils, and craft supplies.

- ▶ Use coffee creamer bottles to store snacks, sugar, and salt.

- ▶ Cut the top off 2-liter bottles and paint them to make planters for houseplants or herbs.

- ▶ Punch holes in the top of laundry detergent bottles to make a watering can.

- ▶ Cut the handle and side off a milk jug to make a pet pooper scooper or garden trowel.

- ▶ Make a piggy bank out of old plastic bottles.

WebMD

All about Aloe vera

Wounds

ALOE vera is a time-honored treatment. Alexander the Great used the clear gel-like sap in the middle of its leaves to heal their wounded soldiers' wounds.

And while there's some evidence it can help some types of wounds, it may delay healing in others. Talk to your doctor about whether aloe products are right for your injury.

Burns

Here's an area where aloe really seems to shine. A number of studies show that aloe ointments and creams can help burns, including sunburns, heal more quickly. Some substances in the aloe ease swelling and speed up healing, and others help your body repair the skin. But you need to see a doctor for:

- ▶ A serious burn
- ▶ A widespread burn
- ▶ A burn on the hands, feet, face, groin, or buttocks
- ▶ Any burn that looks infected
- ▶ A burn that affects the airways
- ▶ A burn that takes a long time to heal
- ▶ A burn caused by chemicals or electricity

Psoriasis

Aloe extract cream seems to help some people with the dry, scaly, itchy, or painful skin it that comes with psoriasis. But aloe vera gel doesn't seem to have the same effect, so ask your doctor if aloe cream could help you manage your psoriasis.

Cold Sores

The research is still early on this, but some of it shows aloe might help slow the growth of the virus that cause cold sores. Aloe extract cream may also help cold sores heal faster.

Genital Herpes

The same family of viruses (herpes simplex) that causes cold sores around your mouth can cause blistering sores on your private parts. In two research studies, men who used aloe cream on these sores healed faster than those who used aloe gel or a placebo cream. Part of the reason for this may be that aloe appears to slow the reproduction of the virus.

Acne

Research suggests that aloe gel may help clear up acne if you use it twice daily along with the prescription acne cream tretinoin (sold as Atralin, Retin-A, and others). In a



separate study, doctors applied a standard 2-day wound-healing cream to a group of people after full-face dermabrasion, an acne treatment that sands the skin. When they added aloe to the cream on one side of the face, it healed much more quickly.

Dermatitis

This reaction causes swollen, red, itchy skin when you come in contact with something like detergents, soaps, poison oak, poison ivy, copper, grass, or nickel (in some jewelry). Aloe may help ease these symptoms along with those of seborrheic dermatitis, which often affects oily areas like your face, back, and chest.

Constipation

Aloe works as a laxative if you swallow it. That is, it may make you poop if you haven't been able to go. But it can cause serious stomach cramps, diarrhea, and other unpleasant symptoms, and the FDA says there isn't enough research to be sure it's safe. So it's best to stick with more tried and true options at your drugstore. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you aren't sure which laxative is right for you.

Oral Lichen Planus

Aloe gel seems to safely help get rid of these white, spidery, patches on the tongue or inside of your mouth that may become blistered or painful. Studies suggest it works as well as standard treatments like topical steroids.

Diabetes

There's evidence that aloe taken by mouth might help lower both blood sugar and cholesterol in some people with the condition. But it might interfere with medications like insulin, and it could make your blood sugar too low. Other studies, using different forms and doses of aloe, had different results. The bottom line: It isn't clear if oral aloe is safe to use for diabetes. Scientists need more studies to sort these things out.

Aloe Effects to Avoid

Taken orally, just a gram a day could shut down your kidneys. You might have a bad reaction to aloe if you're allergic to garlic, onions, tulips, or other members of the Liliaceae family. As a laxative, aloe could cause you to lose electrolyte minerals like potassium, which is a problem if you have kidney or heart disease. It may also harm your unborn baby if you're pregnant.

Drug Interactions

The creams and gels are mostly OK, but the oral form can change how some of your medication works, especially diuretics, digoxin (Lanoxin) for heart issues, blood thinners like warfarin (Coumadin), and diabetes meds. And remember that aloe vera is a dietary supplement, not a regulated drug. That means it's hard to know exactly what's in any aloe product. Tell your doctor about all supplements and medications you take, including aloe.

WebMD

Around the world in pictures



▲ KOID a Unitree Robotics G1 Humanoid Robot walks on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange.



▲ Iranian women pray for rain amid a worsening drought crisis at Imamzadeh Saleh shrine in Tehran, Iran.



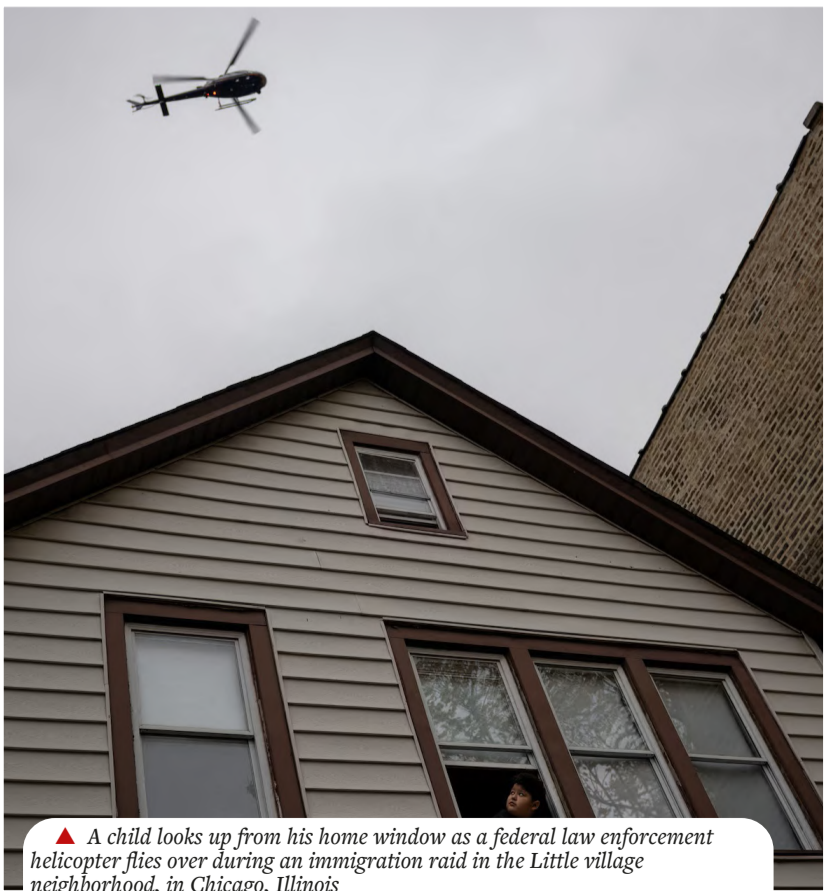
▲ Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales attends the annual Armistice Day Service of Remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire, Britain



▲ Kosim Uddin, 50, looks toward the site of his vanished home as he poses for a picture on an island in the Brahmaputra River, where he recently relocated due to erosion, in Kurigram, Bangladesh. Every year, hundreds of families in the Kurigram district face losing not only their homes but also their land, crops, and livestock as riverbanks collapse.



▲ A drone explodes during a Russian missile and drone strike in Kyiv, Ukraine.



▲ A child looks up from his home window as a federal law enforcement helicopter flies over during an immigration raid in the Little village neighborhood, in Chicago, Illinois

Boks to kick off Nations Championship with showdown with England

ENGLAND'S boast after their win over the All Blacks that they wish they were taking on South Africa will happen sooner than many think - as they bagged the biggest opening fixture of the newly announced Nations Championship next year.

The 12 team tournament starts in earnest in July where the Springboks will face England, Scotland and Wales in the regular Incoming Tours window and then head off for the second part in November to face Italy, France and Ireland to complete their sweep of Six Nations opposition next year.

The Nations Championship - which will exclude World Cup darlings like Portugal, Georgia and others, will pit the top six Southern Hemisphere nations against the top Six Northern Hemisphere nations in a yearly contest that will rotate opposition home and away.

But while those involved see it as a groundbreaking venture, the partnership between Sanzaar and Six Nations has raised concerns about travel and carbon footprints, as well as a new competition in an already crowded calendar while cutting off any hope of competition for those outside the 12 nations represented.

Following the six rounds, the Nations Championship will culminate in a first-of-its-kind Finals Weekend, which will be hosted at the Allianz Stadium, Twickenham in London next November.

England (4 July), Scotland (11 July) and Wales (18 July) will head to South Africa for the midyear tests, while it was also confirmed that the Boks will face Italy (weekend of 6-8 November), France (weekend of 13-



▲ Rian Oberholzer

15 November) and Ireland (21 November) in Europe next year to complete fixtures against all Six Nations teams.

The Finals Weekend, scheduled for 27-29 November 2026, will deliver world-class sporting entertainment to fans, with three days of double headers taking centre stage at the Allianz Stadium in London. A totally new concept for rugby union, the Finals Weekend adds a dramatic climax to the tournament, where every fixture matters to every team, and creates an unmissable experience for players and fans alike.

The top-ranked teams in the Southern and Northern Hemisphere will battle it out to be named the first ever Champion of the new

tournament. Adding to the competitive jeopardy of the Finals Weekend, teams will also be competing to earn points for their group to decide the dominant Hemisphere in the sport that year.

By the conclusion of the Nations Championship Finals Weekend, players and fans will know the best nation in the sport, and where the balance of power lies between the two hemispheres, outside a Rugby World Cup. The Finals weekend will be played like Golf's Ryder Cup with points on offer for each hemisphere in a power battle that determines who is the stronger hemisphere.

The Nations Championship will not take place in 2027 as it's a Rugby World Cup

year, with a full Castle Lager Rugby Championship also on the schedule. In 2028, the Nations Championship schedule will be reversed, with France, Ireland and Italy coming to South Africa, while the Boks will face England, Scotland and Wales in the UK.

Rian Oberholzer, CEO of SA Rugby, said: "The Nations Championship will transform the existing international windows in July and November, which means every test will now count for more than just bragging rights and world ranking points.

"This new competition changes the global game as we know it, and from SA Rugby and the Springboks' side, we are very excited about what the future holds.

"Kicking off with tests against England, Scotland and Wales will provide the Boks with three tough tests and just the right preparation for Rugby's Greatest Rivalry against the All Blacks, which follows in August.

"Scotland's last visit to South Africa was in 2014, England haven't been here since 2018, and Wales last came to us in 2022, so we can't wait to welcome them back."

Venues and kick-off times for the Boks' three home tests next July will be confirmed by SA Rugby in due course.

All 12 nations will compete for points - four for a win, two for a draw, zero for a loss, and bonus points for scoring four or more tries and losing by seven points or fewer - to determine the standings in their respective groups. These points earned during the July and November rounds will ultimately decide the schedule of fixtures for the Finals Weekend.

(Supersport)

Hakimi deserves CAF crown after historic season

IF Achraf Hakimi hailed from Brazil or one of Europe's traditional football powerhouses, there is little doubt he would already be universally recognised as the best wing-back on the planet.

Hakimi soars

In truth, only two footballers delivered a more complete season than the Moroccan star. Beyond his Paris Saint-Germain teammates Ousmane Dembélé and Vitinha, it is hard to find anyone who performed at a consistently higher level across all competitions.

Dembélé ended up claiming the 2025 Ballon d'Or, but for the CAF Player of the Year award, Hakimi should be the undisputed frontrunner when the ceremony takes place in his home country on Wednesday night.

Rabat, the capital of Morocco, will host the continent's most prestigious award function, where Hakimi will compete with Liverpool talisman Mohamed Salah and Galatasaray striker Victor Osimhen for the crown of Africa's finest.

CAF's judging criteria emphasise a player's influence on both the African and global game between 6 January and 15 October 2025. By that measure, Hakimi's case is overwhelming.



▲ Ousmane Dembélé (R) and Achraf Hakimi (L) of PSG celebrate with the trophy after winning the UEFA Champions League final.

Not only did the 27-year-old produce decisive performances for PSG in the UEFA Champions League quarter-finals and semi-finals, but he also opened the scoring in the final, paving the way for a dominant 5-0 win over Inter Milan. That goal set PSG en route to their first-ever Champions League triumph, a historic moment in the club's history.

Hakimi also struck in the Coupe de France final as PSG defeated Stade de Reims on 24 May, less than a

week before lifting the Champions League trophy. In total, he collected four major titles as PSG also secured Ligue 1 and the UEFA Super Cup.

Flawless Morocco

His influence extended to the international stage, where he played a central role in Morocco's flawless qualification campaign for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, winning all eight of their matches.

(The Citizen)

Mokoena's youth coach backs Bafana star for a move abroad

TEBOHO Mokoena's former youth coach, Pitso Mokoena of Harmony Sports Academy, believes the Bafana Bafana star still has the potential to secure a move abroad after reaching a significant international milestone.

Mokoena turns 50 The Mamelodi Sundowns midfielder earned his 50th cap during South Africa's convincing 3-1 victory over Zambia at the Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium on Saturday.

Reflecting on his progress, Mokoena's mentor insisted the 27-year-old still has much more to achieve.

"He still has a long way to go, he still needs to work hard and remain humble. He still needs to remain focused and everything will fall into place," he said.

"I'm thinking the boy is still looking forward to going overseas. That's everyone's dream and I wish for the boy to go outside South Africa and see how far he can go." (The Citizen)



▲ Teboho Mokoena awarded for 50 caps.

Mbappe, PSG in counterclaims worth hundreds of millions

FRANCE captain Kylian Mbappe on Monday claimed 240 million euros (\$278m) in damages from Paris Saint-Germain in an escalating dispute over the status of his contract and how his former club treated him.

PSG countersued Mbappe, who moved to Real Madrid last year, for 180m euros in Paris' labour court, basing that figure on a botched 300m-euro transfer to Saudi club Al Hilal which the player refused.

Mbappe, 26, initially filed a complaint in June over the way he was treated by PSG at the start of the 2023-24 season.

He believes he was sidelined by the Qatari-owned club and made to train with players the club were trying to offload after refusing to agree a new contract.

It is a practice which has also affected other footballers and prompted the French players' union to lodge a complaint last year.

Mbappe was not invited to take part in PSG's 2023 pre-season tour of Asia and missed the first game of



▲ France captain Kylian Mbappe.

that season but was later restored to the team after holding talks with the club.

After seven seasons with PSG, he joined Real Madrid on a free transfer last summer where he earns a repor-

ted annual salary of 30m euros.

He scored 256 goals in 308 games for PSG but the club won the Champions League for the first time last season following the striker's departure. (Supersport)

Sweden's Grant captures LPGA Annika title

SWEDEN'S Linn Grant fired a five-under par 65 on Sunday to win the LPGA Annika at Pelican title by three strokes over American Jennifer Kupcho.

Grant finished 72 holes at the Belleair, Florida, resort on 19-under 261 to become the first Swede to win the event named for Swedish LPGA legend Annika Sorenstam.

"Very satisfying," Grant said. "I mean, we were talking about what a full circle it is, just to win anything, but to stand here and win her tournament."

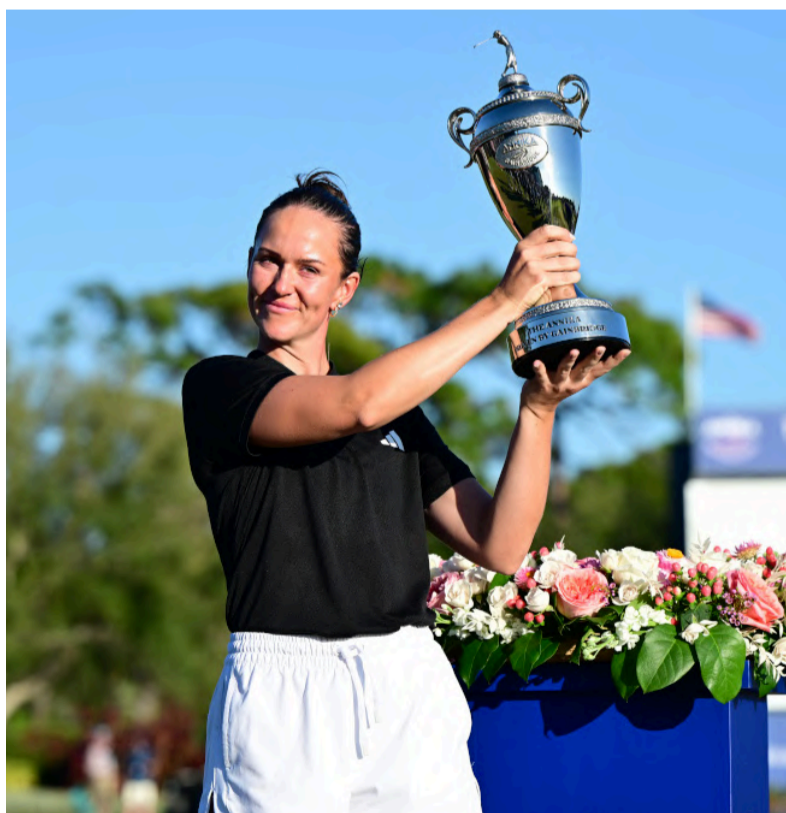
Grant, 26, captured her only prior LPGA title in 2023 at Toledo but has taken six triumphs on the Ladies European Tour.

She became the 29th different winner of an LPGA event this season and the fourth Swede.

Grant led Kupcho by a stroke entering the final round and birdied the second, fifth, par-five seventh and par-three ninth holes to make the turn with a three-stroke lead over Kupcho, who made four birdies and two bogeys on the front nine.

"Especially on the first nine, we were going back and forth," Grant said. "I'm glad she was playing well because that really pushed me to play better."

World number 53 Grant birdied the par-five 14th and 40th-ranked Kupcho answered with a birdie at the par-three 15th, pulling within



▲ Linn Grant.

three with three to play.

Grant birdied the par-four 17th and had a comfortable enough margin to bogey 18, her first bogey since her opening hole on Friday, and still make a relaxed tap-in for the title.

Mexico's Gaby Lopez was third on 265 after a closing 65.

England's Charley Hull fired a 63 to share fourth on 266 with Ameri-

cans Auston Kim and Lucy Li.

American Brooke Matthews made a hole-in-one at the 140-yard par-three 12th hole with a nine-iron. She shot 65 to finish on 268 for the first ace of her life.

"That was wild," she said. "I just saw it bounce and disappear. I still can't believe it. I blacked out."

(Supersport)

Haaland's Norway thump Italy to qualify for first World Cup since 1998

NORWAY qualified for their first World Cup since 1998 after Erling Haaland struck again in a 4-1 thumping of Italy on Sunday which sealed a spot in next summer's finals in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Haaland scored the decisive brace in the space of seconds at a soaking San Siro for Norway, who completed Group I with a perfect 24 points from their eight qualifying matches.

Norway would have had to lose by nine goals or more in order to be overtaken by Italy for the group's only automatic place for next summer's finals in North America.

Haaland's father Alf-Inge was still an international player when Norway last competed in the World Cup 27 years ago, a tournament won by Zinedine

Zidane-inspired France.

And the Manchester City striker will be one of the players to watch in North America after smashing in 16 goals during qualifying.

The 25-year-old is averaging more than a goal a game for club and country this season and was typically ruthless when presented with his opportunities to both put Norway ahead and then double their lead in the 78th and 79th minutes.

Pio Esposito opened the scoring for Italy in the 11th minute, but once Antonio Nusa levelled with a thumping strike in the 63rd minute, there was only one team who looked like winning, and Jorgen Strand Larsen's brilliant individual goal completed the rout in stoppage time.

(Supersport)



▲ Erling Haaland.

Gauff-led holders USA to face Spain, Argentina at United Cup

TOP seeds and two-time champions the United States, spearheaded by Coco Gauff and Taylor Fritz, were drawn on Monday alongside Spain and Argentina for their defence of the mixed-teams United Cup in Australia.

Gauff and Fritz, ranked three and six in the world respectively, begin their 2026 season in Perth at the fourth edition of the tournament from January 2-11 ahead of the Australian Open at Melbourne Park later in the month.

Spain are led by Juane Munar and Jessica Bouzas Maneiro.

World No 1 Carlos Alcaraz has opted instead to play an exhibition match in South Korea against Jannik Sinner in preparation for the season-opening Grand Slam.

Four-time major winner Naomi Osaka will also start her campaign in Perth, lining up for Japan with 2019 junior Wimbledon champion Shin-taro Mochizuki.

They were drawn in a tough

group alongside Britain, headlined by Jack Draper and Emma Raducanu, and a Greek team featuring Stefanos Tsitsipas and Maria Sakkari.

Italy, France, and Switzerland round out the Perth groupings.

World No 2 Iga Swiatek and Hubert Hurkacz lead Poland's quest for revenge after being beaten by Team USA in the final in 2025 and Germany a year earlier.

They start in Sydney, pitted against Alexander Zverev's Germany and the Netherlands.

Alex de Minaur and Australia are in Group D with Casper Ruud's Norway and a Czech Republic team boasting the fast-rising Jakub Mensik.

Canada, Belgium and China round out the Sydney action.

Each team – with three men and three women – will play in a round-robin group stage.

Ties comprise one men's and one women's singles and a mixed-doubles.

(Supersport)

By Chris Dlamini

BUILD IT U13 CHAMPIONSHIPS

Lob. National, Kobe get sports equipment boost



▲Runners up Mbabane pick team after the finals.



▲Coaches also received goody bags on the day.

SURPRISE, surprise! Two schools were left stunned on Saturday at Somhlolo National Stadium, Lobamba, during the Build it Under-13 Soccer Tournament National Championship Finals 2025.

The schools are Lobamba National High School and Kobe High School. They all brought their pupils to watch the National Championship Finals, and for that, they went home rewarded.

Both schools received Build-it-branded sports equipment.

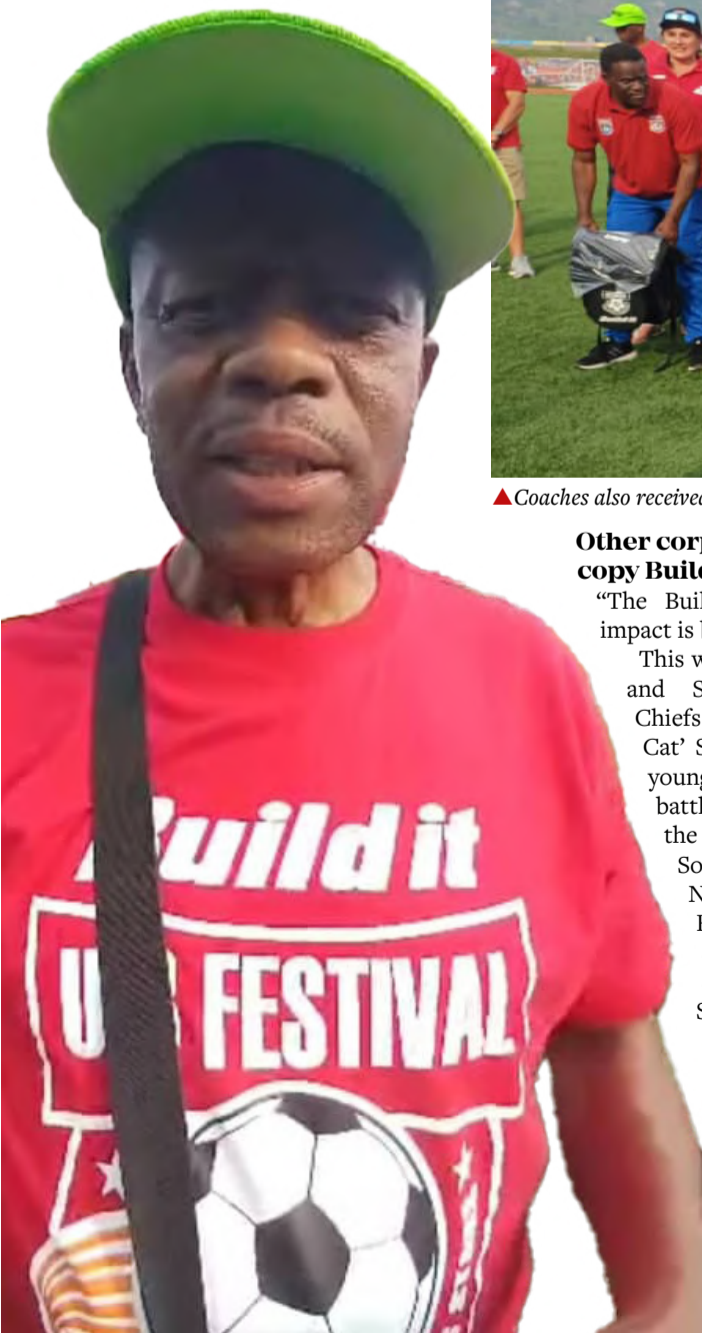
Lobamba got the most for having more numbers and making the most noise on the stands, receiving 14 soccer balls and three sets of netball bibs. Second-placed Kobe Ramokgadi School received nine soccer balls and two sets of netball bibs.

“The beauty of the Build it Under-13 Soccer Tournament National Championship goes beyond the field of play to the stands,” said Eswatini Football Association (EFA) official Sibonangaye ‘Komphele’ Dlamini, who was programme director on the day.

He congratulated the two schools on the sports equipment and encouraged other schools to always support sports development. Worth noting is that Build it, as a longstanding EFA partner, has recognised fans even at the top level.

It is not so long ago when Build it handed a voucher worth E2 000 to senior national team Sihlangu Semnikati and Mbabane Highlanders super fan Mpapane Ndlovu for being the best-dressed supporter during the World Cup Qualifier game against Angola at Somhlolo National Stadium.

▼Kaizer Chiefs legend William ‘Cool Cat’ Shongwe.



Other corporates must copy Build it — ‘Cool Cat’
“The Build It Under-13 Soccer impact is beyond measure.”

This was the view of Eswatini and South Africa’s Kaizer Chiefs legend William ‘Cool Cat’ Shongwe after watching young football talent do battle for the national title in the 2025 Build it Under-13 Soccer Tournament National Championship Finals. This was at Somhlolo National Stadium, Lobamba, last Saturday.

Shongwe was among the dignitaries at the stadium. “It’s a wonderful project by Build it. It is speaking to the future of the youth as the youngsters get their talents exposed, and

the best of it further gets selected to the Under-13 national team, and so on until they reach the senior level.

“Given that such development projects also offer the children’s life skills and unforgettable moments, I can only encourage other corporate companies to emulate Build it, forge such partnerships with football and other sports associations,” he said.

He said sports in the country needed well-structured and richly financially supported development programmes that take the youngsters through the basics to the elite level.

“I can tell you, this is so big for these youngsters. One just wishes we could develop Build it into consistent Zonal leagues covering all the communities with their stores.

“In fact, I just learned Mbabane and Manzini are already discussing that,” said Shongwe. He also applauded the Eswatini Football Association (EFA) for this programme, saying it laid a good foundation for the future of the sport. It must be noted that the Build it Tournament also promotes

young referees as not everyone can play the game.

Student paramedics get practicals chance

Build it is not only about the young football players but empowerment to all.

Through the Build it Under-13 Soccer Tournament National Championship Finals, even learners in higher institutions of learning were given the platform to test their knowledge and skills through practice.

“We have students from a paramedic school based in Sidwashini in Mbabane. They are doing their practicals here, and we’re proud to have them assist the children medically,” said the day’s programme director Sibonangaye ‘Komphele’ Dlamini.

“We are enjoying ourselves, and yeah, it’s been a busy day, but we’re loving it,” said one of the students with her colleagues giving their approval. They also shared that they were from the Emergency Medical Rescue College (EMRC). Their names are Thandazile Ngcobo, Khethokuhle Nxumalo, Mlandvo Ndlovu, and Malwandle Khoza.

By Chris Dlamini

WHAT a league season it’s turning out to be! One just keeps hearing the usual talk that ‘the league is a marathon’ as the reaction from the faltering so-called big guns, but the question is, will their shambles stop in time for the marathon statement to even mean anything?

As is, matchweek seven is approaching, which is almost midway through the first round, and there is the E110 000 first round incentive to battle for. Speaking of the E110 000 ‘carrot’, who is at the summit right now? Let’s get to our review.

AT THE SUMMIT:
Manzini Sea Birds (1st - 13 points)
- They just kept their winning run intact, making it three of the last three - they now have 13 points, two clear of Rangers and Green Mamba after six games. They are nine games away from the first-round incentive of E110 000.

CLOSER TO SEA BIRDS:
Green Mamba (2nd - 11 points)
- The Correctional Services side missed a penalty through seasoned forward Sabelo ‘Sikhali’ Ndzinisa, who, however, still scored for his team in the 2-2 draw with Ezulwini United. This was Sikhali’s second goal in six games.

Rangers (3rd - 11 points) - They are onto something good and big this season - they could be staring at their best elite league finish under coach Mthunzi ‘Lomphofu’ Ginindza. Their man talent, Hleliso Gamedze, just cannot stop scoring and got them the win again over Mbabane Swallows, netting a brace as they won 2-0.

THE NEW COACHES
Gcina Dlamini (Manzini Wanderers 14th - 5 points)
After three games in charge, he finally got a win, albeit against the team he quit to join Manzini Wanderers, Ubombo Sugar FC. It is now about consistency to get off the bottom four.

THE UPSETS:
Mbabane Highlanders (9th - 8 points)
- The capital city giants were left stunned by bottomloggers Sisonkhe with a 1-0 defeat. This was third win for the hub minnows against Inkunz’emnyama since last season. It was also Sisonkhe’s first win and points in six matches.

Mbabane Swallows (7th - 9 points)
Since beating Royal Leopard 3-2, Swallows have had it tough. They just fell 2-0 to Rangers when, prior to that, their hoodoo team, Ezulwini United, edged them 1-0.

AT ROCK BOTTOM
Sisonkhe FC (16th - 4 points)
- After one defeat after the other for Sisonkhe, they decided enough was enough and shocked giants Mbabane Highlanders 1-0, earning their first points and win in six games.

THE GOALBANGERS:
Hleliso Gamedze (Rangers - 7 goals)
- The Rangers’ attacking midfielder is in blazing form. He just keeps scoring for his team and could even go on to win his second Player of the Month Award after the October gong. Out of his seven goals, three have come this month. Call it consistency, and you will be right on point.

Mlungisi Dlamini (Tabankulu Celtics - 5 goals)
- The first hat-trick of the season and the

MTN PREMIER LEAGUE 2025/26 REVIEW

Dynamite for big guns!

... As smaller teams take giants to the cleaners



▲ Action between Tambankulu Celtics and Nsingizini Hotspurs.



▲ Manzini Sea Birds and Moneni Pirates supporters.



▲ MRangers striker Hleliso Gamedze celebrating one of his two goals against Mbabane Swallows.



▲ Green Mamba players Sabelo ‘Sikhali’Ndzinisa and Banele ‘Pupu’ Sikhondze celebrating of their goals during the 2-all draw against Ezulwini United. (Above) A Sea Rangers fan in a jovial mood.

only one so far helped him jump to five goals, but he did not score in their last match, won 2-0 against defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs.

Philani Mkhonto (M. Sea Birds - 5 goals)
- He scored four goals and was not among the scorers in the 2-0 win over hub rivals Moneni Pirates.

Isaac Yeboah (Malanti Chiefs)
- His team had no engagement but will play their pending fixture ag home on Wednesday (tomorrow) against defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs. He has four goals as well.

THE FANS CORNER:
Rangers and Manzini Wanderers supporters are our choice. They showed up,

cheered, and celebrated wins in the end.

COACH (ES) OF THE WEEK:
Mthunzi ‘Lomphofu’ Ginindza (Rangers)
Ncamiso Nxumalo (Tabankulu Celtics)
Mbongiseni Mamba (Sisonkhe)

MATCHWEEK 6 RESULTS:
T. Celtics 2-0 Ns. Hotspurs
Ub. Sugar 0-1 M. Wanderers
Rangers 2-0 Mb. Swallows
M. Highlanders 0-1 Sisonkhe
R. Leopard 0-0 Amawele
M. Pirates 1-2 M. Sea Birds
G. Mamba 2-2 Ez. United

PENDING FIXTURES:
Wednesday, November 19, 2025
Tambankulu Stadium:

T. Celtics vs. Y. Buffaloes 3pm
Killarney Stadium:
M. Chiefs vs. Ns. Hotspurs 3pm

FIXTURES UPCOMING (MATCHDAY 7):
Sisonkhe vs. Rangers
Amawele vs. Ub. Sugar
Ns. Hotspurs vs. M. Pirates
M. Sea Birds vs. R. Leopard
Mb. Swallows vs. M. Chiefs
M. Wanderers vs. T. Celtics
Y. Buffaloes vs. G. Mamba
Ez. United vs. Mb. Highlanders

Three-game ultimatum for Moneni’s Mwase

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE marriage between Moneni Pirates and coach Meck Mwase is on the rocks. This follows the club’s decision to hand the Malawian mentor a three-game ultimatum.

The ‘Sea Robbers’ recently suffered a 2-1 loss during the mini hub derby against Manzini Sea Birds at Mavuso Sports Centre.

A source close to the matter revealed that the coach has been informed about the news. “The Coach has been given a three-game ultimatum to save his job. The ultimatum will start in the next league match against Nsingizini Hotspurs on Saturday at King Sobhuza II Stadium,” the source said.

Pirates Public Relations Officer (PRO) Meluleki ‘Sluga’ Simelane said he was yet to learn about the news. “I haven’t heard anything official from the office of the CEO concerning the matter which you are talking about,” he said.

Mwase joined the ‘Sea Robbers’ at the beginning of the season from Mbabane Highlanders AM with his countryman and assistant coach Charles Manda. Pirates are currently sitting at position 11 with seven points after six matches in the MTN Premier League log standings.



▲ Moneni Pirates coach Meck Mwase.

High Court joy for Swallows FC

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE dust has settled in the Mbabane Swallows camp. This follows a ruling by High Judge Zonkhe Magagula in favour of the Swallows FC regime.

Judge Magagula dismissed the application of the applicant (Wonder ‘Samba Jive’ Nhleko) as they wanted to seize power from the FC faction, headed by former Elders Chairman Absalom Ngwenya.

Judge Magagula said the Wonder ‘Samba Jive’ Nhleko Pty faction didn’t have enough proof to claim ownership of the capital city giants following the two-month court battle.

The ruling was issued during a hearing held on November 17, 2025, at the High Court. The applicant wanted to repossess the team from the FC faction by claiming that incumbent president Absalom Ngwenya was illegally in office through their lawyer John Hlophe.

Meanwhile, Ngwenya, through his lawyer Thabiso Fakudze, accused the applicant of trying to seize power through the back door. He further prayed that his client was legally in office. The Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) and the Eswatini Football Association (EFA) were part of the respondents in the matter.

E110 000 league 1st round ‘carrot’ race on!

By Chris Dlamini

ONE league, two paychecks for the teams on top at the end of the first and second rounds.

The first-round table-toppers stand to take home E110 000, and currently leading is Manzini Sea Birds. Izinyoni Zolwandle, as Sea Birds also affectionately goes, sits at the summit of the MTN Premier League standings with 13 points and a two-point advantage over second and third-placed Rangers and Green Mamba.

The latter two are level at 11 points after Matchweek six. It is onto Matchweek 7, just halfway through the first round, and this week’s fixtures will come in crucial as they may go a long way in the E110 000 first round leaders’ incentive.

Defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs have some amends to make domestically. They need to bring their international unbeaten three-game run home after going down 2-0 to elite rookies, Tabankulu Celtics, who also stunned Royal Leopard 3-0. Celtics shocked Nsingizini before the latter travelled to Ulundi in South Africa (SA) to edge Richards Bay on penalties, then got declared as joint champions with Amazulu in the annual Mangosuthu Legacy Cup 2025.

The joint championship was decided after the final between Nsingizini and Amazulu could not be played to the end due to a waterlogged pitch. The green and white outfit must face off with an unbeaten and sixth-placed Malanti Chiefs in a pending matchweek 6 fixture on Wednesday at Killarney. From there, it does not get any better with the hub side Moneni Pirates, their next opponent. However, Moneni is currently inconsistent and lost 2-1 to Sea Birds last Friday. Nsingizini have lost twice



▲ Defending league champs Nsingizini Hotspurs players.

already amid a good away goalless draw against Tanzania giants Simba SC in the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League 2025/26.

Meanwhile, last season’s runners-up Royal Leopard have also had their upset since returning from the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2025/26. They got beaten 3-2 by Mbabane Swallows, and then Tabankulu Celtics gave them 3-0. The star-studded police outfit further dropped more points last week when they played 0-0 with Ezulwini United. They find themselves in position 12 with just five points from five games, eight behind Sea Birds, who have played a game more than them, while Nsingizini is in seventh with nine points in five games.

Possible

Leopard and Sea Birds have always been interesting ones, and any result is possible. Leopard has the onus to not let Sea Birds win this one. If anything, it is Leopard who are in a must-win situation if they are to

challenge for the first-round prize.

Elsewhere, eighth-placed and wounded Mbabane Swallows can make a lot of use of the money and will certainly need to push for a return to their winning ways after losing 2-0 to impressive Shiselweni minnows Rangers over the weekend. The red and white capital city giants had all their financial strain publicised, and losing to Malanti Chiefs will be the last thing they want. Swallows are home in this fixture.

The two sides are two places apart in the standings but level on nine points. Malanti is fifth after five games, and Swallows eighth after six matches. Fans will be spoilt for choice with a security forces derby between second-placed Green Mamba and an unpredictable Young Buffaloes on the cards. The latter has dropped points when least expected and currently has seven at number 10 after six games. Their rivals have picked up form after an inconsistent start and are two points off the summit. Buffaloes will go into this game quite distracted as they must

first deal with the giant-killing Tabankulu Celtics on Wednesday at Tambankulu Stadium. The match is a pending fixture and kicks off at 3pm.

Moving on to the country’s biggest teams, Mbabane Highlanders and Manzini Wanderers, they both must win or fall further behind. Wanderers got their first win, and a 1-0 margin was enough against Ubombo Sugar. Highlanders was shocked by bottomloggers Sisonkhe with a 1-0 defeat and now take on a resilient Ezulwini United in an away fixture.

Will Wanderers earn their second win against Celtics, or will it be yet another blow? Can Highlanders rise from the Sisonkhe blow and record their third win, and hit 11 points? All these questions will be answered after the final whistle blows in all the playing venues. Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) confirmed the matchweek 7 games through its master fixture. The detailed fixture is included just at the end of this article.

MTN PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURE (MATCHWEEK 7):			
Saturday, November 22, 2025			
Mayaluka Stadium:			
Y. Buffaloes	vs	G. Mamba	3pm
King Sobhuza II Stadium:			
Ns. Hotspurs	vs	M. Pirates	3pm
M. Sea Birds	vs	R. Leopard	3pm
Killarney Stadium:			
Amawele	vs	Ub. Sugar	3pm
Sunday, November 23, 2025			
Mavuso Sports Centre:			
M. Wanderers	vs	T. Celtics	2pm
Mavuso Sports Centre:			
Ez. United	vs	Highlanders	4.30pm
KaLanga Technical Centre:			
Sisonkhe	vs	Rangers	3.30pm
Mayaluka Stadium:			
Mb. Swallows	vs	M. Chiefs	3.30pm



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*Tuesday 18
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NO	TEAM	MP	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	WAZIRI SEA BIRDS	6	4	1	1	5	13
2	SAIGON FC	6	3	2	1	4	8
3	GREEN MANGA	6	3	2	1	2	11
4	TAI NAIKUN OLYMPIKS	6	3	0	3	6	9
5	MOA M PHATIES	6	3	1	2	0	8
6	ROYAL LEONARD	6	1	3	2	-2	5
7	WAVES FC	6	1	2	3	-2	5
8	MANUNG VANGHANG	6	1	2	3	-6	5
9	LEONARD SUMER	6	1	1	4	-5	5
10	BLOOMING FC	6	1	0	5	-10	4

Three-game ultimatum for Mwase

...After losing to Manzini Sea Birds in an inconsistent start to the season, Malawian gaffer Meck Mwase is under pressure to shape up or ship out.

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