



New UN Development Framework ...

Eswatini commits to inclusive growth

By Siphesihle Dlamini

PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini has emphatically reaffirmed Eswatini's dedication to fostering inclusive and sustainable development during the recent launch and ceremonial signing of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2026–2030.

This event marks a significant milestone in the country's ongoing development efforts, symbolising a renewed national resolve to achieve meaningful progress and long-term transformation for all emaSwati.

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▲ PM Russell Dlamini, United Nations Resident Coordinator, George Wachira and Cabinet Ministers after the launch and ceremonial signing of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2026–2030.



▲ Eswatini has committed to inclusive growth with new UN Development Framework.



E40 mln Boxer Superstore fails to open

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Entrepreneur of the Year Award winner lauds FNB's support

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Eswatini commits to inclusive growth with new UN Development Framework

... PM unveils strategic plan to accelerate SDG progress

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini has emphatically reaffirmed Eswatini's dedication to fostering inclusive and sustainable development during the recent launch and ceremonial signing of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2026–2030. This event marks a significant milestone in the country's ongoing development efforts, symbolising a renewed national resolve to achieve meaningful progress and long-term transformation for all emaSwati. The Prime Minister described the UNSDCF as far more than a formal agreement. He portrayed it as a powerful signal of Eswatini's commitment to driving tangible improvements in the lives of its citizens. "This Framework is not just a plan; it is a promise," he declared, underscoring the government's ambition to uplift every family, community, and individual across the nation. Eswatini is poised at a critical juncture in its development trajectory, with the Prime Minister highlighting the guiding role of key national strategies such as the National Development Plan, the Nkwe Programme of Action, and the Grand Plan for National Transformation. These frameworks collectively chart a bold course for the country's future, aiming to transition Eswatini into an upper-middle-income nation characterised by inclusive, sustainable, and resilient growth. The PM elaborated on the goals underpin-

ning this vision, "As a nation, we have set for ourselves a bold ambition to transition into an upper-middle-income country driven by inclusive, sustainable, and resilient growth." He emphasised that the UNSDCF embodies a commitment to this vision, serving as a roadmap for transformative change that benefits all sectors of society. To realise the ambitious 2030 Agenda, the premier stressed the necessity of accelerating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation through focused investments and increased financing in sectors with high impact potential. Strengthening governance, accountability, and institutional delivery systems also featured prominently in his remarks, alongside the enhancement of partnerships in alignment with the spirit of the Nkwe Programme. A central tenet of the Framework is the principle of leaving no one behind, with particular attention to vulnerable groups who often face systemic barriers to development. The integration of the National Grand Plan pathways into the UNSDCF was highlighted as a critical step to ensure that development efforts remain strategic, coherent, and grounded in evidence-based priorities. However, the Prime Minister cautioned that ambition alone would not suffice. "We must match it with commitment, dedication, and results-driven implementation," he asserted, calling for a collective effort from all stakeholders to translate plans into measurable outcomes. Concluding his address, Prime Minister Dlamini reiterated that the UNSDCF represents more than a policy document; it is a national promise to build a stronger and more resilient Eswatini.



▲ PM Russell Dlamini, United Nations Resident Coordinator George Wachira shaking hands after the launch and ceremonial signing of the UNSDCF for 2026–2030.

Ramaphosa says US discussing coming to G20 in SA, White House denies

SOUTH Africa's president said on Thursday the U.S. had signalled it might change its mind and participate in the G20 summit in Johannesburg after a boycott by the Trump administration, but the White House dismissed the report as "fake news." Cyril Ramaphosa was speaking at a joint news conference with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President António Costa. "We have received notice from the United States, a notice which we are still in discussions with them over, about a change of mind, about participating in one shape or form or other in the summit," he said. "This comes in the days before the summit. And so therefore we need to engage in those types of discussions to see how practical it is and what it finally really means." U.S. President Donald Trump's administration had said it will not attend the first G20 summit in Africa, alleging that the host country, previously ruled by its white minority apartheid system until 1994, discriminates against white people.

On Thursday, a White House official said an envoy would attend a ceremony for the official handover of the G20 presidency from South Africa to the U.S. but there was no question of Washington participating. "This is fake news. The chargé d'affaires in Pretoria will attend the handover ceremony as a formality, but the United States is not joining G20 discussions," they added. But South African presidential spokesperson Vincent Magwenya said "the president will not hand over to a chargé d'affaires." Trump has rejected South Africa's agenda for the November 22-23 summit of promoting solidarity and helping developing nations adapt to worse weather disasters, transition to clean energy and cut their excessive debt costs. Ramaphosa said last week of the handover of the G20 presidency to the United States: "I don't want to hand over to an empty chair, but the empty chair will be there." (Reuters)



▲ South African President Cyril Ramaphosa attends a press conference with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa at the end of a South Africa–EU leaders meeting, ahead of the G20 Summit scheduled for November 22-23, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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Eswatini launches nationwide HIV Prevention Indaba

... PM warns of 4 000 new infections annually

THE Kingdom of Eswatini has launched a bold new chapter in its fight against HIV with the official commissioning of the HIV Prevention Indaba, a nationwide dialogue aimed at intensifying efforts to curb new infections.

Prime Minister Russell Dlamini described the day as “a defining moment in our national journey to end HIV,” signalling the government’s commitment to engage directly with citizens to build a stronger, healthier nation. Eswatini’s remarkable progress in the HIV response is well documented. The country is among the first globally to achieve the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets, meaning that 95% of people living with HIV know their status, 95% of those diagnosed are on treatment, and 95% of those on treatment have suppressed viral loads. This milestone reflects “our collective determination and resilience,” the Prime Minister noted, underscoring the success of past and ongoing efforts.

Yet, despite these achievements, Eswatini faces a persistent challenge: over 4,000 new HIV infections occur annually. Prime Minister Dlamini emphasised that “while we are winning many battles, the war against new infections is far from over.” This stark reality calls for renewed focus and innovative strategies, which the HIV Prevention Indaba aims to address by fostering a participatory approach that listens to the voices of all emaSwati.

The Indaba will bring together a broad spectrum of society, including young people, women, men, key and vulnerable populations, transport operators, and people living with HIV, from every corner of the country. This inclusive forum is



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini.

designed to capture real-life experiences and identify the barriers that still impede HIV prevention. The Prime Minister described the initiative as “about listening, learning, and acting together,” highlighting the importance of community engagement in shaping effective solutions.

Central to the government’s prevention philosophy is the belief that “prevention begins with values and choices.” Dlamini reaffirmed the enduring power of abstinence, faithfulness, and responsible behaviour, especially among young people, as “powerful shields against HIV.” These

traditional principles, he said, “guided past generations and can still protect us today if we live them out with purpose.” However, he also stressed the necessity of combining these values with modern biomedical tools such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), condoms, Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC), and comprehensive education. This dual approach ensures that every individual is equipped with both the moral framework and practical means to make informed decisions about their health.

The Prime Minister called on communities nationwide to actively participate in the Indaba by cooperating with facilitators and data collectors from the National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA). He urged, “Your participation is not just about answering questions, it is about shaping the future of our nation’s HIV response.” The insights gathered will be instrumental in refining programs, strengthening support systems, and ultimately protecting future generations from HIV.

In his closing remarks, the PM delivered a unifying message: “Let this Indaba remind us that the fight against HIV belongs to all of us. Together, through honesty, dialogue, and action, we can overcome disruptions and transform Eswatini’s HIV response for the better.” He called on every liSwati, young and old, urban and rural, men and women, to stand up and take part, affirming that “the power to end HIV is in our hands, and together, we will achieve it.”

MPs orders Agriculture Minister to withdraw controversial letter on flour levy

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE House of Assembly has passed an urgent motion of public importance directing the Minister of Agriculture to withdraw a contentious letter linked to attempts to alter the seven percent flour levy without parliamentary approval.

The motion was brought by Lobamba Lomdzala MP Marwick Khumalo and seconded by Mhlume MP Bonginkhosi Dlamini. It follows concerns that the minister instructed his Principal Secretary to write to the National Agricultural Marketing Board, known as NAMBoard, in a manner that appeared to bypass legislative procedures and contravene the NAMBoard Act of 1985.

The disputed letter, dated 4 June 2025, was presented as a Cabinet strategic decision and suggested that NAMBoard should proceed with changes to the flour levy. MP Khumalo argued that the action amounted to an unlawful amendment of a regulation that is clearly defined in law. He told the House that such a move set a worrying precedent and risked eroding the constitutional responsibilities of Parliament. He said the seven percent levy is a matter of regulation and can only be altered through a transparent legal process brought before the House.

MP Khumalo said the matter could not be overlooked because it touched on the balance of power between Cabinet and Parliament. He said the attempt to adjust the levy through a letter rather than through



▲ House of Assembly Speaker Jabulani Mabuza during a House of Assembly sitting.

formal channels was an administrative overreach. Addressing MPs, he said the House must guard against Cabinet or any minister making decisions that touch on regulations without bringing the matter before legislators. He added that regulations are an extension of the law and Parliament has the duty to ensure they are not altered through shortcuts.

Interest

The House responded with strong interest, acknowledging the potential implications for legislative authority. Several MPs indicated that the issue was not merely administrative but spoke to broader governance principles. They said the NAMBoard Act is clear on how changes to levies or regulations must be handled and that the attempt to adjust the flour levy did not follow the required procedure under Section 6 of the Act.

They argued that if the House allowed the instruction to stand, it would open the door to further executive actions that bypass the legal process.

Facing mounting pressure, Minister of Agriculture Mandla Tshawuke addressed the House and asked for more time to comply with the directive. He requested that the initial 24 hour deadline to withdraw the letter be extended to 48 hours, saying the matter required careful handling within the ministry. He also urged the House to suspend debate while the ministry worked on addressing the concerns raised by MPs. The minister acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and said the ministry would cooperate with Parliament to ensure the proper legal process was followed.

After deliberations, the House agreed to amend the motion to allow the minister a 48

hour window to withdraw the instruction. The motion was then passed with the amendment. According to the resolution, the minister must furnish the office of the Speaker with a copy of the withdrawal letter within the stipulated time frame. The House also directed that any proposed amendments to the relevant regulations be brought before Parliament before the end of the current session. MP Khumalo said the decision of the House was necessary to protect the integrity of parliamentary processes. He said it was important to correct the error and ensure that all future amendments to the NAMBoard regulations follow lawful channels. He described the issue as a learning moment and urged Cabinet to respect the boundaries set out in legislation. He added that the action taken by the House would help prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

The motion’s passage reaffirmed the role of Parliament in overseeing the actions of the executive and ensuring transparency in the management of statutory bodies. MPs said the matter underscored the importance of consistent adherence to legislative procedure and the need for open engagement between ministries and the House. They noted that the flour levy touches on an important sector of the economy and therefore should not be altered without proper scrutiny.

As the House adjourned, MPs expressed confidence that the ministry would comply with the directive and that the matter would return to Parliament in the correct manner. The Speaker reminded members that the oversight function of the House remains central to maintaining accountability in government operations.



DPM urges action to protect, empower children in Eswatini

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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THE Deputy Prime Minister's Office in partnership with UNICEF Eswatini, World Vision Eswatini, various development partners, civil society organisations, and government ministries, commemorated World Children's Day. The Day is celebrated under the global theme: "My Day, My Rights: From Promises to Action."

Children from numerous schools across Eswatini took centre stage during the celebrations, sharing heartfelt and compelling messages that underscored their hopes, rights, and aspirations. Among the participants were young representatives who recently attended the Sub-Regional World Children's Day event in Botswana, where they proudly represented Eswatini, bringing back valuable insights and experiences to their peers at home.

Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla emphasised the significance of this day as a solemn reminder of the collective responsibility held by all sectors of society to protect, nurture, and empower every child within Eswatini. She stated, "We reaffirm our national mandate to translate the promises enshrined in our Constitution and ratified international instruments into lived realities."

The DPM elaborated on the government's vision, stressing that children should not be mere recipients of care but active participants in shaping the policies and programs that affect them. "Our collective focus is on protecting rights by ensuring that children are not just passive recipients of care, but that their young voices are heard, respected, and actively included in shaping policies and programmes," she said.

However, the Deputy Prime Minister did not shy away from acknowledging the persistent challenges facing children in Eswatini. These include poverty, disability, violence against children, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and child neglect. She highlighted the urgent need for strategic investments to close gaps in service delivery, particularly in health, education, and identity

documentation. "We must commit to enabling all children to own their national identities and secure universal access to quality health facilities and education to fully realise their potential," the DPM added.

Special recognition was given to the children who participated in the Sub-Regional World Children's Day event in Botswana. Their representation was praised as exemplary, showcasing the talent and dedication of Eswatini's youth on an international stage. The DPM's gratitude extended to all partners involved in the day's activities, acknowledging them as the architects of change who work tirelessly on the ground to improve children's lives.

The Deputy Prime Minister further expressed profound appreciation for the collective efforts of government bodies, development partners, civil society, and communities. "Together, we are building a more just, inclusive, and compassionate Eswatini, where every child can thrive, achieve their dreams, and enjoy the welfare and dignity they deserve," she affirmed.

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▲ Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla has called for action to protect and empower children in Eswatini.

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▲ Minister for Education Owen Nxumalo making remarks.

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Minister applauds MVA Fund

... after paying out more than E750 mln to citizens

Stories by Thokozani Mazibuko

THE House of Assembly has adopted the latest report of the Sincephetelo Motor Vehicle Accident Fund following a detailed presentation by the Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, who revealed that the fund has paid out more than E750 million to road accident victims.

The minister described the amount as one of the highest disbursements ever recorded by the institution and said it reflects the fund's growing effectiveness in supporting injured persons and bereaved families across the country.

Minister Rijkenberg told Members of Parliament that the fund has significantly improved its operations over the past few years, resulting in faster processing times and a more efficient claims system. He said the high level of payouts demonstrates not only the fund's commitment to compensating victims but also its expanded reach into rural communities. According to the minister, Sincephetelo Motor Vehicle Accident Fund officers have made deliberate efforts to ensure that even people in remote parts of Eswatini are aware of their eligibility for support after an accident.

The minister recalled that when he assumed office, the fund was grappling with a massive backlog of more than ten thousand claims. Many victims had waited years for compensation and the system was under pressure. He said the turnaround achieved in recent years is remarkable, noting that the backlog has been reduced from ten thousand to fewer than two thousand outstanding cases. This represents one of the most significant administrative recoveries in the fund's history. He attributed the progress

to improved governance, enhanced internal controls and strengthened management processes within the organisation.

Members of Parliament welcomed the report and commended the fund for improving access to services for ordinary citizens. Several MPs highlighted that the fund's visibility has increased at community level, especially through outreach programmes that educate the public about their rights following road accidents. These programmes include information sessions in rural communities, collaboration with chiefs and traditional councils and public campaigns that explain how to lodge claims. MPs said these efforts are crucial for empowering the public and ensuring that victims are not left without assistance due to lack of knowledge.

Minister Rijkenberg said the E750 million figure also reflects the seriousness with which the fund treats its mandate. He emphasised that the fund does not exist as a commercial enterprise but as a vehicle for public welfare, ensuring that accident victims receive medical treatment, rehabilitation, income support and compensation. He said the heavy payout demonstrates that the Sincephetelo Motor Vehicle Accident Fund has become one of the most impactful social protection mechanisms in Eswatini.

The minister also addressed questions regarding the fund's long term sustainability. Some MPs expressed concern that rising road accidents could threaten the fund's financial stability in the future. Minister Rijkenberg assured the House that the fund is operating under a sustainable financial model supported by contributions, investment strategies and ongoing reforms. He said that while the payout amount is high, the fund continues to operate within its financial capacity. He further noted that the reduction in pending claims will help stabilise future budgets as the fund is now in a better position to forecast and allocate resources.



▲ Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg.

MPs acknowledged that improving road safety remains an essential part of reducing claims and long-term costs. Several called for enhanced collaboration between the fund, the Ministry of Transport and law enforcement agencies. They argued that improved enforcement of traffic laws, upgraded infrastructure and increased road safety campaigns would reduce the number of accidents and ease pressure on the fund. Others said more needs to be done to encourage responsible road use, particularly among young drivers and public transport operators.

Minister Rijkenberg said the decline in outstanding claims is not only a result of improved administration but also an indication that awareness about the fund has grown. Citizens now report accidents more promptly and follow the claims process more effi-

ciently. He added that healthcare facilities and police departments have strengthened coordination with the fund, ensuring that documentation is processed faster and victims receive timely assistance.

The House of Assembly formally adopted the report, praising the fund's ongoing reforms and its commitment to restoring public confidence. MPs said the Sincephetelo Motor Vehicle Accident Fund is an example of a public institution that has demonstrated transparency, accountability and dedication to service delivery. They urged the fund to continue expanding access, particularly in areas where accident victims may still face difficulties in lodging claims.

As the session concluded, minister Rijkenberg reaffirmed the government's support for the fund and its efforts to protect citizens.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE House of Assembly has called for a comprehensive Post Clearance Audit of pharmacies across the country amid growing concerns that a significant number of them may be operating illegally and contributing to persistent national drug shortages.

The motion was introduced under Private Members' Motions by Hhukwini MP Alec Lushaba and received strong support across the chamber. The Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg accepted the directive and committed to presenting a detailed report within sixty days.

MP Lushaba raised the alarm about what he described as a troubling rise in pharmacies that are allegedly operating without proper authorization or compliance with Eswatini Revenue Service guidelines. He told the House that the situation has reached a level that requires immediate government intervention. According to the MP, some of the outlets may be distributing drugs acquired through unregulated channels, which could pose serious health risks to the public. He added that the ongoing drug shortages in health facilities make it necessary to investigate whether these illegal pharmacies play a role in exacerbating the crisis.

The Hhukwini MP urged the Ministry of

MPs order investigation into illegal pharmacies



▲ Members of Parliament during a sitting following the proceedings.

Finance to use the machinery of the Eswatini Revenue Service to perform a Post Clearance Audit on selected pharmacies. He said the audit should focus on determining the source of the medicines being sold and verifying whether the pharmacies comply with customs and revenue regulations. He argued that the country cannot afford to ignore the possibility that diverted or illegally imported drugs are circulating in the market. Lushaba asked the minister to ensure that the exercise is thorough and that the responsible entities produce a report within two weeks to guide further action. However, the House later agreed on a sixty day timeline for the

final report.

Mbabane East MP Welcome Dlamini expanded on the concerns raised by MP Lushaba, saying that earlier records indicated that as many as 171 pharmacies were operating illegally in the country. He described the statistics as alarming and said they raise critical questions about the origin of drugs supplied by these outlets. During the debate, he explained that a Post Clearance Audit is a standard mechanism used to verify the legitimacy of imports after goods have been released from customs. He said applying this procedure to pharmacies would offer clarity on whether their stock is being sourced le-

gally.

MP Dlamini also expressed worry that the supply chain for medicines may be compromised. He said the country needs to know where pharmacies obtain their merchandise, especially in situations where they are not importing through approved channels. He added that if they are not sourcing their products legally, there are only two possible options. They may be smuggling drugs into the country, or worse, diverting them from the Central Medical Stores. He said both possibilities are deeply concerning and require immediate attention. He reminded the House that previous findings suggested that only ten percent of pharmacies in the country were compliant with regulations, further underscoring the need for an urgent investigation.

When called upon to respond, the Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg welcomed the motion and described it as timely and constructive. He said the Ministry of Finance and the Eswatini Revenue Service would fully cooperate with the request of the House and carry out the necessary audits. The minister indicated that the concerns raised were valid and that a clear understanding of regulatory compliance among pharmacies would benefit the country. He assured MPs that he would table a comprehensive report within sixty days of the motion's passage.

Stories by Delisa Magagula

E40 million Mbabane Boxer Superstore fails to open

● Disappointed shoppers turned away as Municipal Council of Mbabane declines to issue the required occupancy certificate



▲ Security and armed forces going about their rounds in anticipation of Mbabane Boxer Superstore’s grand opening at the Emphalwini Mall, known as the New Mall. However, the much-anticipated grand opening did not happen.

other building-code standards. Without it, a commercial property cannot be opened to the public.

Developments

Municipal officials have previously emphasised that large-scale developments around the Mbabane transport hub must demonstrate strict compliance, citing safety concerns associated with high pedestrian volumes, tight vehicle movement and the presence of multiple retailers operating large delivery vehicles.

Worth mentioning that the construction of the Boxer Superstore at the New Mall began after the mall owners extended the infrastructure to accommodate the retailer.

The expansion involved new internal layouts, loading zones and parking adjustments to support the anticipated increase in foot traffic. Throughout construction, stakeholders raised concerns regarding the project’s speed, its impact on existing tenants, and how the increase in activity would affect an already congested part of the city.

Meetings were held between the mall developers, tenants, transport operators, and community representatives, highlighting issues such as:

- ▶ Adequate parking for customers
- ▶ Safety of pedestrians crossing from the bus rank

- ▶ Infrastructure readiness
- ▶ Traffic congestion
- ▶ Delivery-truck movements
- ▶ Security controls
- ▶ Disability-friendly facilities

Stakeholders also noted that retailers such as Woolworths and Mashipisa already attract heavy vehicle activity in the area and warned that additional pressure from a new supermarket could compromise safety and disrupt operations for existing businesses.

On Wednesday, another stakeholder meeting was held in the mall parking lot, where concerns were reiterated. Many participants said the meeting felt unproductive without municipal officials present, as only the municipality could directly address the outstanding compliance requirements.

Store Manager Phelelani Simelane confirmed that Boxer had been in discussions with the municipality and that several conditions had been set for the store to become operational. He said the team had been working overnight to ensure compliance and hoped the store would be allowed to open by 11 a.m. Thursday.

“We will work overnight with the hope that by morning, we are done and ready to open the store, at least by 11 a.m.,” Simelane said at the time.

Among the requirements was the installation of a speed hump at the traffic lights in front of the New Mall, which was being constructed overnight. Contractors were still on site early this morning completing the work.

Boxer’s Regional Manager, Jeremiah Mkhonta, assured stakeholders that their concerns had been acknowledged, but emphasised that the final decision rested with the municipality.

Store was never ready – Contractors

TWO contractors working on the site confirmed that the store was not yet ready for operation and that construction was still underway.

They stated that the opening date had been rushed, with several structural and finishing tasks left incomplete.

According to the contractors, work continued throughout the night to meet the municipality’s requirements, including the construction of the speed hump and various final-touch installations inside the store.

They said certain areas of the building still required adjustments for safety and accessibility.

“We were never going to finish on time, there are certain aspects that are yet to be built and we were honestly rushing this process or the hype got to the managers,” said one contractor onsite on Thursday.

His sentiments were echoed by other constructed who were keen to speak up on condition of anonymity. Their statements align with concerns raised by stakeholders who attended yesterday’s meeting at the mall.

Tenants within the complex emphasised that opening the store before completing all outstanding work could create complications for everyone operating in the vicinity.

Existing tenants cited the following issues:

- ▶ Parking shortages due to construction equipment
- ▶ Limited space for delivery trucks entering the mall
- ▶ Ongoing noise and dust from remaining work
- ▶ Restricted customer movement

Pressure on security staff managing increased foot traffic

Meanwhile, transport operators also raised concerns that the current pedestrian flow from the bus rank toward the mall was unsafe without proper barriers and crossing systems. They urged the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting the bus rank to the store.

Stakeholders warned that opening the store prematurely could mirror the situation at Mathangeni, where a fully fitted Boxer store remained unopened for months due to unresolved compliance matters.

... Crossing hump built overnight

A new speed hump was constructed overnight in front of the New Mall as part of the municipality’s requirements for the Boxer store to receive an occupation certificate.

The hump, which sits near the traffic lights by the mall entrance, is intended to slow down vehicles and protect pedestrians crossing from the bus rank.

The construction of the hump highlighted concerns about the store’s readiness, as residents questioned why essential safety features were being installed only hours before the planned opening.

THE much-anticipated opening of the E40 million Boxer Superstore at the New Mall in Mbabane failed to take place on Thursday.

This was after the Municipal Council of Mbabane declined to issue the required occupancy certificate. This comes after weeks of public notices from Boxer management announcing that the store would officially open its doors this week

Instead, hundreds of residents were met with closed doors and construction activity still underway at the site, deepening questions surrounding the readiness of the development and the sequence of approvals leading up to launch day.

The store’s inability to open marked a significant setback for the project that has been under construction for months and has attracted strong public interest due to its size, investment value and central location near the Mbabane Bus Rank.

The development has also been the subject of extensive stakeholder discussions focused on traffic flow, parking, pedestrian safety, and infrastructure.

The Municipal Council of Mbabane’s Information and Public Relations Officer, Lucky Tsabedze, confirmed that the occupation certificate had not been issued.

He said the developer had not met the conditions attached to the building approval, and until those conditions were fulfilled, the municipality could not legally approve operations. “The council has not issued an occupation certificate for the building until the developer meets certain conditions specified in their building approval. The licensing of the operation therefore cannot be approved until an occupation is issued,” Tsabedze said.

An occupancy certificate is a legal requirement confirming that a building is safe for use. It verifies compliance with approved plans, structural integrity, fire-safety installations, accessibility features, and



▲ Consumers queue as they anticipated the opening of the new store which, unfortunately ended up on opening.

... Mbabane residents disappointed

DOZENS of Mbabane residents who arrived at the New Mall as early as 6 a.m. left disappointed after learning that Boxer would not open.

Many had travelled specifically to take advantage of the advertised opening-day promotions, while others hoped to be among the first to experience the new store.

Some residents from Manzini said they had left home before dawn after seeing promotional material announcing the opening date. They described the situation as frustrating, saying they expected clarity after the retailer advertised the launch.

Shoppers gathered around the entrance throughout the morning, waiting for an update, while others observed construction workers continuing with tasks around the building. By mid-morning, it became clear that the store would not open.

Residents said they felt misled by earlier advertisements and public notices, and some questioned why the opening date had

been announced before all approvals were in place.

Others noted that early communication from the retailer had raised expectations, particularly among low-income shoppers seeking discounted opening specials.

“Ngalimala ke, my intention was to stock up on the specials they advertised they seem like pretty good deals,” said Mcebo from Ezulwini.

Disappointment

Transport operators said the failed opening affected their morning operations, as many commuters travelled specifically for the store launch. Vendors operating near the bus rank also said they anticipated increased business that did not materialise.

Despite the disappointment, several residents said they preferred the store to open only when all safety and compliance requirements were met. They said the congestion around the mall made proper regulation essential.



ESWASA to test, reject below level products

ESWASA CEO Ncamiso Mhlanga said the standards authority is developing a national testing laboratory that will conduct independent assessments on all major construction materials. “Our laboratory will be able to test cement grades, corrugated iron sheets, steel bars, bricks, sand, aggregates and other critical materials. This will help us verify the quality of products before they reach the consumer,” said Mhlanga.

Mhlanga said there has been a surge in complaints about construction materials failing prematurely. He said they had reports of corrugated iron sheets rusting or cracking within months of installation. “Some cement bags do not meet the strength they claim. These failures affect safety and lead to high financial losses for property owners,” he said

Once the laboratory becomes operational, ESWASA will issue compliance certificates for all materials that pass testing, products that fail will be rejected.

“Any material that does not meet the standard will not be cleared for sale. This is a major shift in consumer protection. People need certainty that what they are buying will last,” said the CEO.

Mhlanga also said ESWASA will publish test results in quarterly reports to improve transparency.

CIC, ESWASA strengthen compliance through new standards

By Delisa Magagula

THE Construction Industry Council (CIC) and the Eswatini Standards Authority (ESWASA) have entered a formal partnership aimed at strengthening standards, compliance and quality assurance across the country’s construction sector.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on Thursday at the CIC Head Office in Mbabane, marking, as both institutions described, a necessary step in improving the regulation, testing, and certification of construction materials, contractors, and artisans.

CIC Chief Executive Officer Machawe Mnisi stated that the collaboration is based on strengthening compliance with mandatory standards across the entire construction value chain.

He noted that the construction industry consists of various players, including consultancy firms responsible for designing and supervising works, and contractors tasked with building to the required time, cost and quality standards.

Mnisi explained that these three indicators time, cost and quality are inseparable from standards and highlight why institutional collaboration is essential.

He emphasised that manufacturers and suppliers of construction materials must also form part of the strengthened compliance system, as construction sites depend daily on assured quality of materials and adherence to safety and technical requirements.

He said the CIC’s mandate includes ensuring that all construction sites meet MS standards relating to compliance criteria, expertise required on-site and the quality of material used during construction.

The council will intensify work to ensure that infrastructure projects, including buildings and roads, align with acceptable international standards.

“The collaboration comes at a time when climatic conditions are presenting new risks to infrastructure. Severe floods recorded in the past two years exposed vulnerabilities linked to material quality, with some infrastructure collapsing as a result. Stakeholders in the sector have raised concerns relating to both imported and locally produced construction materials,” said Mnisi.

He said the CIC intends to play a proactive role by expanding its oversight over construction materials entering the country. This includes strengthening control mechanisms, improving monitoring processes and helping address gaps within the current regulatory framework.

As part of this effort, the CIC is reviewing its Act, which is currently in draft form. The revised legislation will be taken through the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, then to the relevant authorities, including Cabinet and Parliament, for adoption.

“The council aims to be integrated into the regulation of construction materials to ensure that all products used in the industry meet required standards,” Mnisi stated. He said this approach will support compliance, improve safety and safeguard infrastructure from in-



▲ The CEOs signing the MoU.

creased environmental risks,” said Mnisi.

Another focus area for the CIC is the grading and testing of individual artisans. Mnisi said it is the council’s responsibility to ensure that curricula and testing standards align with internationally recognised benchmarks.

Through the partnership with ESWASA, the CIC anticipates enhanced support in ensuring that training programmes and assessments reflect global standards.

ESWASA Chief Executive Officer Ncamiso Mhlanga said the collaboration will focus on developing and implementing joint standards for the construction industry.

He noted that while some standards already exist, others still need to be developed, and both institutions will ensure that the standards are not only written but also applied across the sector. Mhlanga stated that ESWASA does not regulate industries directly but works with regulatory bodies to ensure that their work follows approved standards. He said the MOU outlines joint responsibilities for standards development, implementation and support.

A key component of the agreement is the introduction of measures to strengthen quality assurance and consumer protection. Mhlanga said property owners must have confidence that their buildings meet appropriate quality benchmarks. “To support this, the collaboration will introduce certification programmes for builders, electricians and other operators. These certifications will complement CIC registration requirements and ensure that workers are certified to perform the tasks they undertake,” said Mhlanga.

He said the certification process is meant to confirm competence, adherence to quality standards and the ability to perform work safely and correctly. ESWASA will work with CIC to guide contractors and artisans through the required training and capacity-building initiatives.

Mhlanga said the partnership will not be punitive but will focus on increasing support for contractors and artisans, ensuring that they understand and consistently apply standards.

He noted that capacity building will be a major component of the rollout, with training programmes designed to support all industry players so that no one is left behind.

Another major area addressed in the MOU is the testing and verification of products used in the construction industry. ESWASA is in the

process of establishing laboratories that will test both imported and locally produced products.

Mhlanga said the organisation has received numerous complaints relating to construction materials, including disputes among manufacturers regarding the quality of cement grades.

“ESWASA aims to resolve these disputes through independent testing and verification. The laboratory facilities will test critical products, including cement, corrugated iron sheets and other materials used across the construction sector. There has been a major outcry over the poor performance of some corrugated iron sheets, which show signs of damage soon after installation,” he said.

He said the new testing regime will help protect consumers by rejecting substandard products before they reach the market.

Mhlanga explained that quality assurance must begin with the material entering the market, not only during construction. The laboratory testing process will be used to confirm compliance with standards and ensure that only certified products are allowed for use. He said this collaboration gives CIC the necessary support to strengthen regulation and enforcement within the sector.

The agreement includes a structured implementation plan that will introduce capacity-building workshops, joint development of new standards, enforcement of existing standards and a testing system for critical materials.

Both institutions will also work with stakeholders, including manufacturers, contractors and artisans, to support the transition.

“The council aims to be integrated into the regulation of construction materials to ensure that all products used in the industry meet required standards.”

EswatiniBank		
FX RATES		
Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.8341	17.2996
G.B. Pound	22.1027	22.7768
EURO	19.5259	20.1340
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	



EYA winner lauds FNB's support

... envisions export-ready national abattoir

Stories By Delisa Magagula

ENTREPRENEUR of the Year Awards (EYA) 2025 overall national winner Duncan Dlamini has credited FNB Eswatini for playing a significant role in stabilising and expanding his piggery and butchery enterprise, DJD Investments, based at Matsetsa in the Lubombo region.

Dlamini was announced as the national winner on 7 November during a ceremony officiated by His Majesty King Mswati III.

Speaking during a recent interview he said FNB's intervention had been crucial, particularly after his former delivery vehicle had become too costly to maintain. According to Dlamini, repairs on the bakkie had exceeded E200 000 before he sought support from the bank.

He recalled approaching the FNB Lifestyle Manzini Branch feeling overwhelmed.

"I will never forget Mrs Bhembe at the FNB Lifestyle Manzini Branch. I came to FNB stressed and confused; with her assistance I managed to sort out my penalty and secured a brand-new truck through FNB Vehicle Finance. That truck changed everything. It improved our deliveries and FNB further helped us complete our waste management system," he explained.

He said the company's strengthened operational capacity has allowed him to widen his community-focused business model, which includes hiring local builders, sourcing services from nearby residents and offering mentorship to aspiring pig farmers.

Dlamini noted that keeping economic value within communities remained a key principle of his work. "We must be



▲ Duncan Dlamini, the EYA 2025 winner.

intentional about creating a local economy so that money circulates within our communities," he said.

Looking ahead, Dlamini said he hopes the country will invest in an export-ready national abattoir to enable local farmers to penetrate international markets.

He pointed to opportunities already available in neighbouring Mozambique, adding that Eswatini could achieve similar gains. His long-term vision includes opening a second farm, introducing modern production units and supporting local pig farmers to establish an integrated value chain modelled on the sugarcane sector.

He encouraged local business owners to use platforms such as the EYA programme as benchmarks for measuring progress.

"Entrepreneurs should use opportunities like EYA as evaluation tools," he said.

Meanwhile, FNB Eswatini's Executive Head of Commercial Banking, Chantell Littler, said the bank remained dedicated to backing local entrepreneurs and strengthening the national business landscape. She noted that the commitment aligned with the ongoing Global Entrepreneurship Week.

"Entrepreneurs are the heartbeat of our economy. This week, as we celebrate Global



▲ FNB Executive Head of Commercial Banking Chantell Littler.

Entrepreneurship Week, we are reminded that every great business starts with a single brave step. At FNB Eswatini, we are committed to walking that journey with entrepreneurs, helping them turn growth ideas into real businesses and challenges into opportunities," she said.

Littler said they remain committed to giving them the support and tools they need to expand, innovate and create lasting impact in our economy.

Worth mentioning the national winner of EYA 2025, Dlamini received a brand-new Toyota Hilux single cab valued at E600 000, sponsored by FNB Eswatini.

Ministry calls for strengthened action against Antimicrobial Resistance

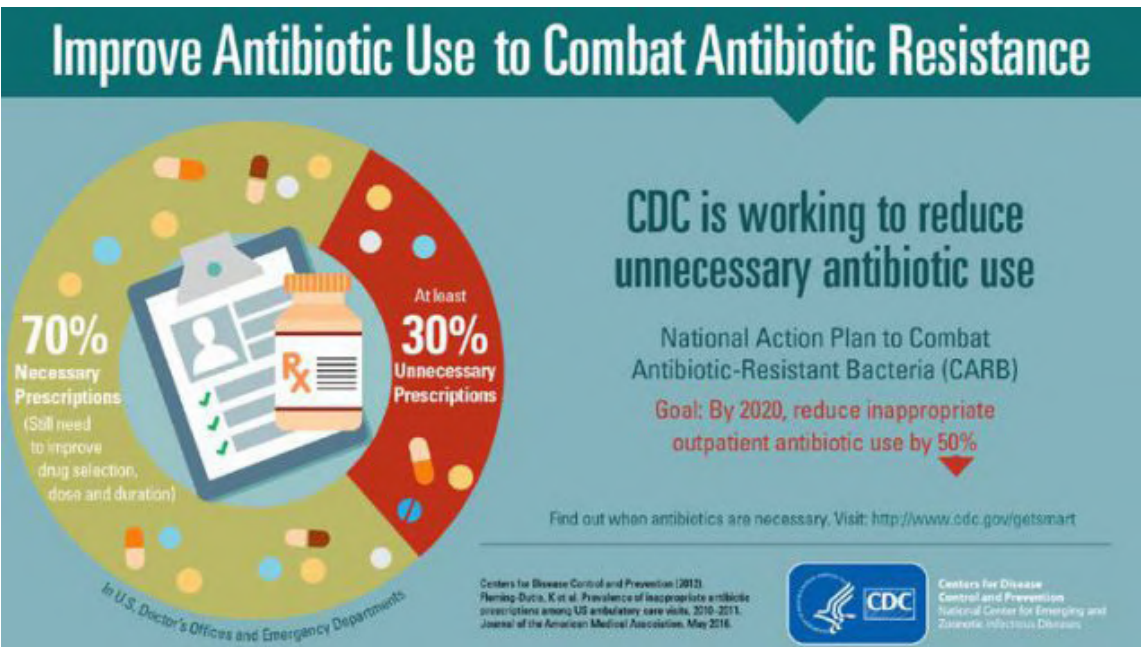
THE Ministry of Agriculture has issued a renewed national call for responsible antimicrobial use as Eswatini joins the global campaign to curb antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which continues to threaten animal health, human health and the environment.

According to the Minister for Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka, there remains a growing concern due to the misuse and overuse of antibiotics, particularly when medicines are administered for growth promotion or to treat conditions that do not require them.

This misuse allows resistant microbes to emerge and spread, placing entire livestock populations at risk, reducing productivity and undermining food security.

In a statement, the Minister noted that preventing AMR requires coordinated action across all agricultural and veterinary sectors.

"Resistant microbes emerge and spread when antibiotics are misused or overused, especially for growth promotion or to treat illnesses that do not require them, putting entire herds and flocks at risk, and reducing productivity and our food security," Tshawuka said.



▲ Farmers and veterinary professionals are urged to adopt stricter hygiene practices, strengthen biosecurity measures and ensure proper disposal of expired medicines.

Furthermore, farmers and veterinary professionals are urged to adopt stricter hygiene practices, strengthen biosecurity measures and ensure proper disposal of expired medicines. These steps, the minister said, are essential to limiting infections and reducing the spread of resistant pathogens.

"Vaccination is also emphasised

as one of the most effective tools to prevent diseases that commonly lead to antibiotic use. By reducing infection rates, vaccinations help lower the overall need for antimicrobials in both small- and large-scale farming systems," said Tshawuka.

Tshawuka reaffirmed the government's commitment to ad-

ressing AMR through a collaborative One Health approach. The approach recognises that the health of people, animals and the environment is closely linked.

Tshawuka said the ministry will continue strengthening veterinary services, promoting responsible medicine use and supporting long-term measures that protect na-

tional food systems.

"This week, we reaffirm our national commitment to protecting animal health by promoting responsible use of veterinary medicines, strengthening veterinary services, and advancing the One Health approach, recognising that the well-being of people, animals, and the environment are deeply interconnected," he stated.

The Ministry further encouraged stakeholders to work together in safeguarding the effectiveness of antimicrobials. Maintaining the usefulness of antibiotics and other treatments is viewed as critical to securing a productive agricultural sector and ensuring stable food supplies for the population.

As part of this year's awareness activities, the Ministry aligned with international partners under the theme 'Act Now: Protect Our Present, Secure Our Future' reinforcing the shared responsibility to combat AMR and preserve the potency of essential medicines.

The initiative is supported by partners including the Fleming Fund, UK Aid, ICAP Global Health and others active in strengthening veterinary and public health systems.



▲ Mr Price, which also sells home ware and sports equipment, reported HEPS, a key profit measure, of 513 cents for the 26 weeks ended September 30 compared to 481.1 cents a year earlier.

Mr Price posts 6.5% rise in interim profit

SOUTH African fashion retailer Mr Price reported a 6.5% rise in half-year earnings on Thursday, helped by strong retail sales growth.

Mr Price, which also sells home ware and sports equipment, reported HEPS, a key profit measure, of 513 cents for the 26 weeks ended September 30 compared to 481.1 cents a year earlier.

The group’s total revenue climbed 5.4% to 18.6 billion rand (\$1.08 billion) with group retail sales

growth of 5.5% to R17.8 billion rand, slightly ahead of the comparable market’s 5.3% growth, the company said in a statement.

The first quarter was characterised by shifting school holiday periods, which supported retail sales growth of 6.3% and helped the group gain market share.

Discounts in June however compressed group profit margins by 20 basis points. The group and the broader sector recorded a negative sales growth that month.

Mr Price, which has over 3100 stores, said store sales increased by 5.4% and online sales were up 9.7%.

Despite delivering strong earnings growth, the company warned that macroeconomic pressures continued to strain consumers.

Negative wage growth has compromised household disposable income which has resulted in “weak levels of consumer expenditure”, it said.

The group declared an interim dividend of 323.2 cents per share, up 6.5%.

(Reuters)

Rand weakens ahead of interest rate decision

THE South African rand slipped in early trade on Thursday, as investors looked ahead to the central bank’s interest rate decision, the first meeting since the finance minister officially confirmed that the central bank’s inflation target is now 3%.

At 0728 GMT the rand traded at 17.2225 against the dollar, about 0.2% weaker than its previous close. The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) is scheduled to announce later in the day whether it will adjust its main lending rate.

Fourteen economists polled by Reuters predicted that the central bank would keep its repo rate at 7.00% and 15 forecast a 25-basis-point cut.

Headline inflation in Africa’s most industrialised economy quickened to 3.6% year-on-year in October from 3.4% in September, staying within the 1 percentage point tolerance band of the central bank’s new 3% target announced last week. The bank previously had a target range of 3-6%.

“Yesterday’s inflation figures do not necessarily make things



▲ South African Rand notes.

any easier today. With growth of around 1% and a real inflation rate currently above 3%, calls for relief on the interest rate side are quickly becoming louder,” said analyst Volkmar Baur in a research note.

Some analysts believe Thursday’s decision could be a close call as conservatism from the SARB in holding the interest rate steady would send a clear market signal that they are serious about defending the new 3.0% target, even if technically it is being ‘phased in’.

(Reuters)

Three-quarters of \$5 bln East Africa crude pipeline built – Uganda

ABOUT three-quarters of a \$5 billion pipeline crucial for exporting crude oil from Ugandan fields through neighbouring Tanzania has been built, Uganda’s state-run sector regulator said on Wednesday.

After nearly two decades of delay, Uganda has now set the second half of next year as the target for starting production from oilfields in its Albertine rift basin in the west of the country.

The 1,443-kilometer (897-mile) East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) must be finished before production at the \$15 billion oil project owned by France’s Total Energies (TTEF. PA), opens new tab and China’s CNOOC kicks off.

Report Ad

EACOP will connect the Ugandan oilfields to Tanzania’s Indian Ocean Tanga port and has been described as the world’s longest electrically heated crude pipeline.

Ernest Rubondo, chief executive of the Uganda Petroleum Authority which oversees the country’s hydrocarbons sector, said in a statement that all the pipes for the project had been delivered to various stations along the EACOP route.

So far, at least \$3.3 billion has been invested in the project, which is 62% owned by TotalEnergies, Rubondo said. Other shareholders include state-owned petroleum firms in Uganda and Tanzania, and CNOOC.

Over \$4 billion is being invested in Uganda’s petroleum sector including on activities in the Kingfisher and Tilenga discoveries between 2025-2027 in “preparation for production”, Rubondo said.

Drilling and associated development activity at Tilenga and Kingfisher projects ahead of start of crude production is 60% and 74% complete, respectively, Rubondo said.

(Reuters)



▲ After nearly two decades of delay, Uganda has now set the second half of next year as the target for starting production from oilfields in its Albertine rift basin in the west of the country.

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You have read the rest, now read the best

Bring the Taste of Quality to Your Braai with SMI Braai Wors

For many Emaswati, nothing beats the aroma of a sizzling braai on a sunny afternoon. But the secret to a perfect braai isn't just in the fire; it's in the meat you choose. That's where SMI Braai Wors from Embiveni Meat Market takes center stage.

Crafted with precision and quality in mind, SMI Braai Wors is more than just meat; it's an experience. Made from the finest cuts, tested rigorously for safety and quality, and seasoned to perfection, every sausage promises a taste that will delight your plate.

How to cook SMI Braai Wors

- Grill them over hot coals
- Turn occasionally, until they are golden brown on the outside and irresistibly

juicy on the inside.

- Pair them with fresh sides like chakalaka, pap, or a crisp salad for a traditional Eswatini-style feast
- If you feel adventurous, SMI Braai Wors can also be incorporated into stews or casseroles

In every bite, SMI Braai Wors brings reliability, freshness, and that authentic taste Emaswati have trusted for years. It's more than just wors; it's a celebration of good food and good moments.

Make your next braai unforgettable with the taste of SMI Braai Wors.

Embiveni - Making Meal Times Special



NOT JUST WORS, IT'S SMI WORS

From our factory to your braai — made with pride, packed with flavour, and loved by every Liswati.



E95⁰⁰

SMI Wors
BULK P/KG



Hurry in Store! Available in all Embiveni Meat Markets
Call us on 79839783 to place your order

Making Meal Times Special





NOT JUST WORS, IT'S SMI WORS

From our factory to your braai — made with pride, packed with flavour, and loved by every Liswati.



E95⁰⁰

SMI Wors
BULK P/KG



Hurry in Store! Available in all Embiveni Meat Markets
Call us on 79839783 to place your order

Making Meal Times Special



Nvidia CEO sees AI transformation while skeptics count the risks



▲ Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, attends the U.S.-Saudi Investment Forum in Washington, D.C., U.S.

NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang says he does not see an AI bubble, but rather a tipping point.

In his view, the kind of computing his company specializes in will come to suffuse everything from writing code to running legions of robots in the everyday world, stoking investor optimism and sending Nvidia shares up over 5% in early trading on Thursday.

But a growing band of market skeptics are concerned the only way off a tipping point is down.

The chip giant on Wednesday produced results and forecasts that beat expectations, allaying immediate fears. But there are longer-term worries that Nvidia's growth could be crimped by factors beyond the control of even the most valuable listed company in human history, now worth more than \$4.5 trillion.

In a regulatory filing, Nvidia disclosed the majority of its booming business rests on four unnamed customers.

In the third quarter, 61% of its \$57 billion in revenue came from those customers, up from a 56% concentration among four customers in the previous quarter. Past announcements suggest they could include Microsoft (, Meta and Oracle.

Nvidia also doubled the money it spends renting back its own chips from cloud customers to \$26 billion, up from \$12.6 billion in the second quarter, with those contracts stretching to at least 2031. The company in the past quarter said it would invest up to \$100 billion in OpenAI and \$10 billion in Anthropic, two major customers.

Its high reliance on just a few customers it is entangled with and the circular nature of some of its deals have raised concerns, particularly as none of the entities have reported massive profits from AI yet.

"A lot of this growth is coming from

loss-making startups or loss-making projects, so most likely the cycle ends badly unless all these companies agree to stop spending together and let profits shine through, which is a near impossibility," said Chaim Siegel, an analyst at research firm Elazar Advisors.

HUANG BRUSHES OFF BUBBLE TALK

During an earnings call, Huang said Nvidia sees something "very different" from the

market talk of an AI bubble.

He outlined three transitions as part of a vision where Nvidia could reign supreme for years to come.

First, there is the shift of non-AI software such as engineering simulations and data science away from traditional central processors to Nvidia's high-powered chipsets.

Then there is the invention of entirely new categories of software such as coding assistants. And later, he sees AI jumping

from virtual applications such as chatbots to the physical world of cars, robots and more.

"These three fundamental dynamics each will contribute to infrastructure growth in the coming years. Nvidia is chosen because our singular architecture enables all three transitions," Huang said.

But building all of the required data centers to meet that vision will require an enormous amount of land and power, concerning even Nvidia bulls such as Ivana Delevska, chief investment officer of Spear Invest, which holds the company's shares in an actively managed exchange-traded fund.

Huang addressed those concerns on the conference call, saying Nvidia was working diligently to make sure factors beyond the chip supply chain would not stand in its way.

"We've now established partnerships with so many players in land and power and (data center buildings), and of course, financing these things," he said. "None of these things are easy, but they're all tractable, and they're all solvable things."

But as companies like Google parent Alphabet and Amazon design their own AI chips and begin to sell them to a similar customer base, some analysts said a looming era of Nvidia maintaining its dominance is far from certain.

"They have said they are sold out for the year and probably next, which leads me to wonder what possible upside surprises they could offer," said Jay Goldberg, senior analyst at Seaport Research Partners, which has a "sell" rating on Nvidia. (Reuters)

Verizon cutting more than 13,000 jobs as it restructures

U.S. wireless carrier Verizon said Thursday it will cut more than 13,000 jobs in its largest single layoff as it works to shrink costs and restructure operations.

Verizon also said it plans to convert 179 corporate-owned retail stores into franchised operations and close one store.

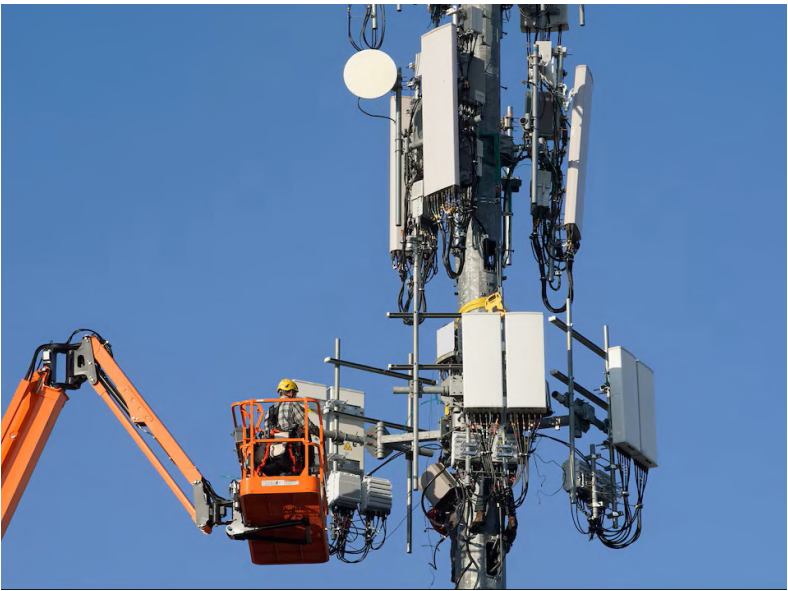
Verizon's new CEO, Dan Schulman, said in a note to employees the company would reduce its workforce by more than 13,000 employees across the organization, and significantly reduce outsourced and other outside labor expenses.

"Our current cost structure limits our ability to invest significantly in our customer value proposition," Schulman wrote in a note to employees seen by Reuters. "We must simplify our operations to address the complexity and friction that slow us down and frustrate our customers."

A company spokesperson confirmed the job cuts, saying "this is an opportunity for Verizon to reset, restructure and realign our priorities on ways that will help us regain our leadership as a communications provider."

Reuters and other outlets reported last week Verizon was planning to cut around 15,000 jobs. Most of the cuts are to its U.S. workforce.

Schulman said Verizon was establishing a \$20 million career transition fund for laid-off employees to focus on the "opportunities and



▲ A crew from Verizon installs 5G telecommunications equipment on a tower in Orem, Utah, U.S.

necessary skill sets as we enter the age of AI."

Verizon said the job cuts were not the result of the company's use of AI.

The wireless carrier faces mounting market pressure amid concerns over a shrinking pool of new customers as older rivals offer cheaper plans and cable operators jump into the fray.

Schulman, a Verizon board member since 2018, was named CEO in October, arriving from the helm at PayPal and facing promotions by rivals AT&T and T-Mobile around the launch of new iPhone models, with aggressive discounts and trade-in

deals.

Verizon added just 44,000 monthly bill-paying wireless subscribers in the third quarter, lagging AT&T. T-Mobile led with more than 1 million net subscriber additions.

Verizon had about 100,000 U.S. employees at the end of 2024 including about 70,000 non-union employees. The telecommunications company cut almost 20,000 jobs over the prior three years.

Verizon spent \$52 billion to acquire key wireless midband spectrum in a 2021 auction to boost its 5G network.

(Reuters)

Ocado robotic future threatened as Kroger shifts toward Instacart

U.S. retailer Kroger's decision to close three of the eight automated warehouses it built with Ocado and expand its ties with the likes of Instacart and DoorDash highlights the challenge the British firm faces from rapid delivery firms.

Ocado sells its cutting-edge technology to retailers like Kroger, allowing them to pick and dispatch online food orders from vast robotic warehouses.

But Kroger said on Tuesday that three of the warehouses had not met financial expectations, and that it would look to expand tie-ups with companies that not only offer faster deliveries but can be supplied from existing stores, thereby reducing costs.

"Consumers really want items that they're ordering online to be delivered same day, and if possible, they would like to get them in an hour or two, if not sooner," said Evercore analyst Michael Montani.

SAME-DAY CONVENIENCE

Ocado has seen its market value and revenues overtaken by DoorDash and Instacart operator Maplebear Inc in recent years, despite having had a head start on both.

While the British firm's

shares slumped this week, Instacart's rose 5% on the back of last week's better-than-expected third quarter results, and are up over a third since its 2023 listing. DoorDash shares are up 21% this year.

Montani noted that some of Ocado's automated U.S. plants were in areas where Kroger didn't have a big store presence, making it harder to get a foothold. Others in states like Ohio had done better. "Retailers are going to be doing more automation. It's just that they're trying to strike the right balance of speed of delivery so they can give that same day convenience, but then also get the efficiency gains of doing automation."

Britain's largest food retailers Tesco and Sainsbury's have largely eschewed automated warehouses for their e-commerce services, preferring a store-pick model that has still allowed them to offer rapid deliveries.

OCADO'S RISE AND FALL

In 2018, Ocado targeted 20 automated sites with Kroger, which helped to propel its market value during the home-shopping boom of the COVID pandemic briefly above that of UK industry leader Tesco. Since then, its shares have lost 90% of their value and are down over a third this year.

(Reuters)

Europeans push back at US plan that would force concessions from Ukraine

EUROPEAN countries pushed back on Thursday against a U.S.-backed peace plan for Ukraine that sources said would require Kyiv to give up more land and partially disarm, conditions long seen by Ukraine's allies as tantamount to capitulation.

Two sources said Washington had signalled to President Volodymyr Zelenskiy that Kyiv must accept a U.S.-drafted framework to end the war, which includes territorial concessions and curbs to Ukraine's armed forces.

The sources spoke to Reuters on condition they were not identified because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The acceleration in U.S. diplomacy comes at an awkward time for Kyiv, with its troops on the back foot on the battlefield and Zelenskiy's government undermined by a corruption scandal. Parliament fired two cabinet ministers on Wednesday.

Moscow played down any new U.S. initiative.

"Consultations are not currently underway. There are contacts, of course, but there is no process that could be called consultations," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

He said Russia had nothing to add beyond the position President Vladimir Putin laid out at a summit with U.S. President Donald Trump in August, adding that any peace deal must address the "root causes of the conflict", a phrase Moscow has long used to refer to its demands.



▲ Electric candles glow at a makeshift memorial in front of an apartment building that was hit yesterday by a Russian missile, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Ternopil, Ukraine.

'PEACE CANNOT BE CAPITULATION,' SAYS FRANCE

European Union foreign ministers meeting in Brussels did not comment in much detail about a U.S. plan that has not been made public, but indicated they would not accept demands for Kyiv to make punishing concessions.

"Ukrainians want peace - a just peace that respects everyone's sovereignty, a durable peace that can't be called into question by future aggression," said French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot. "But peace cannot be a capitulation."

The White House has not commented on the reported proposals. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on X that Washington would "continue to develop a list of potential ideas for ending this war based on input from both sides of this conflict".

"...Achieving a durable peace will require both sides to agree to difficult but necessary concessions," Rubio said.

A U.S. Army delegation, led by Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and the Army's Chief of Staff Randy George, was in Kyiv and expected to meet Zelenskiy late on Thursday.

They met Ukraine's top military com-

mander Oleksandr Syrskyi late on Wednesday. Syrskyi said the best way to secure a just peace was to defend Ukraine's airspace, extend its ability to strike deep into Russia and stabilise the front line.

WINTER APPROACHING

Russia has been pounding Ukrainian cities and infrastructure with nightly bombardments, killing civilians and causing power cuts as winter sets in. Authorities said 22 people were missing and 26 dead from air-strikes that destroyed an apartment block on Wednesday, one of the worst attacks in months.

In Ternopil in western Ukraine, far from the front, smoke was still rising from smouldering masonry as crews on cranes tried to make nearby buildings safe and uncover bodies. Toys, flowers and clothes were left in a small pile as a memorial to victims.

Ihor Cherepanskyi was searching for the body of his great-grandmother who lived on the sixth floor. He had run into the building to try to rescue her, but made it only as far as the fifth floor before the ceiling caved in.

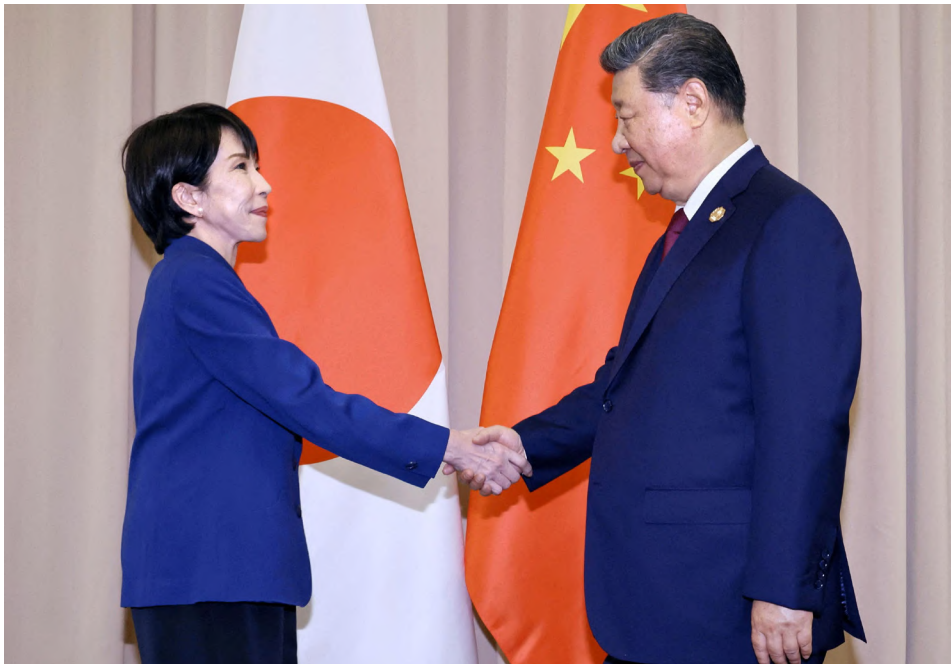
"What kind of 'strategic target' is this?" he said.

Another Russian attack knocked out power for 400,000 Ukrainians. Ukraine said it had struck two Russian oil refineries.

With another winter approaching in Europe's deadliest war in eight decades, Russian troops are poised to capture their first substantial city in nearly two years, the ruined eastern railway hub of Pokrovsk.

(Reuters)

Offhand remark, symbolic suit signal long winter Japan-China ties



▲ Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping ahead of their talks in Gyeongju, South Korea.

AN off-the-cuff remark by new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi that triggered Japan's biggest bust-up in years with powerful neighbour China was not meant to signal a new hardline stance. But after openly stating how Japan might react to a hypothetical Chinese attack on Taiwan, she will struggle to defuse a dispute that could hammer the economy, two government officials with knowledge of the matter said.

China has shown its displeasure with steps designed to inflict pain on the world's fourth largest economy after Takaichi's response, which officials said was unscripted, to an opposition lawmaker's query in her first parliamentary grilling.

These range from a boycott on travel to a

halt on imports of its seafood and cancellations of meetings and cultural events.

But Takaichi cannot satisfy Beijing's core demand to retract her comment that an attack on Taiwan, the democratically-governed island claimed by Beijing, could bring a military response from Tokyo, the officials said.

"It would have been better not to say it, but it's not incorrect," said one of the officials, who both sought anonymity as the matter is a sensitive one.

"We can't retract it."

Opinion polls suggest the comments have not damaged Takaichi's robust popularity at home, however.

Her "remarks do not change the government's existing position," a spokesperson

for her office said, adding, "Japan remains open to various forms of dialogue between the two countries."

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

LONG WINTER AHEAD

Until now, Japanese leaders had avoided mention of Taiwan in public discussion of such scenarios, hewing to a strategic ambiguity also favoured by Tokyo's main security ally, the United States.

"Takaichi inadvertently boxed herself in and there really is no immediate off-ramp," said Jeremy Chan, a senior analyst for Northeast Asia with political risk consultancy Eurasia Group.

A former U.S. diplomat who worked in both China and Japan, Chan said there could be a "long winter" in ties between Asia's top two economies lasting through Takaichi's premiership.

Beijing has already ruled out a potential icebreaker meeting between Takaichi and China's Premier Li Qiang on the sidelines this weekend of a meeting of the G20 grouping in South Africa.

Some analysts liken the rift to one triggered by Tokyo's 2012 decision to nationalise disputed islands that unleashed mass anti-Japan protests across China. Leaders did not meet for 2-1/2 years during that dispute.

"If the current downturn in relations drags on as it did then, the economic damage to Japan would be substantial," said Takahide Kiuchi, executive economist at Nomura Research Institute.

China's travel boycott alone could cost Japan more than \$14 billion in losses each year, he estimated.

The bigger fear is that China throttles the supply of critical minerals used in items from electronics to cars, the Japanese government official said.

Despite Japan's efforts to diversify, China still supplies around 60% of its imports of rare earths, macroeconomic research firm Capital Economics estimates.

A broader boycott of Japanese goods in China, as seen in 2012, could bring a loss in sales equivalent to about 1% of Japan's GDP and hammer its key automotive industry, said Marcel Thieliant, the firm's Asia head.

FROSTY MEET IN BEIJING

Tokyo's efforts to tamp down the current tensions have served only to illustrate the deep divide.

Liu Jinsong, a senior Chinese official who received his Japanese counterpart in Beijing on Tuesday, described their talks as "solemn". Both sides reiterated their grievances, official summaries of the meeting show.

Even Liu's choice of clothing was a symbol of defiance, state media said.

The five-buttoned, collarless style of his suit is associated with an uprising of Chinese students in 1919 against Japanese imperialism that was also a turning point in China's path to modernity.

Video images broadcast on Chinese television after the meeting showed Liu standing apart from his Japanese counterpart with hands in his pockets, an act typically viewed as disrespectful in formal settings.

"The Chinese obviously do most diplomacy behind closed doors," said Chan, of Eurasia Group. "They're masters at it. So the fact that they did this in front of the cameras suggests that they want the whole world to witness this."

Both Japanese government officials said there was no clear way to try and break the impasse. "Right now, there's not even a starting point for improvement," said the second official.

Meanwhile, China is ratcheting up its vitriolic attacks on Takaichi. (Reuters)



The weekend starts here

Stories by **Siphesihle Dlamini**
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SEEKING the perfect way to unwind and enjoy your weekend?

Your favourite local hangouts have everything you need! Eswatini Daily News brings you the latest gig guide featuring the top events happening around town. Grab a drink, gather your friends, and prepare for a weekend filled with fun and unforgettable moments!

▶▶ NHLIZIYO NGISE TOUR

When: Friday
Where: Ehawini Lifestyle
Fee: E50

South African singer-songwriter Mduduzi Ncube is gearing up to headline the much-anticipated 'Nhliziyo Ngise' tour. The 'Isginci' hitmaker is set to bring his unique sound to the vibrant stage of Ehawini Lifestyle in Ngculwini on November 21, 2025. This event promises to be a landmark moment in the region's music calendar, celebrating not only Ncube's artistry but also the rich cultural tapestry of Southern African music. The 'Nhliziyo Ngise' tour has already generated significant buzz, with venues like Espinho Lounge confirming their participation, signalling a well-curated series of concerts that will showcase a blend of talent and energy. Ehawini Lifestyle, known for its dynamic atmosphere and commitment to promoting local music, provides the perfect backdrop for this event. Doors will open at 3 pm, allowing attendees to settle in and prepare for an evening that will extend late into the night, filled with music, dance, and communal celebration. Supporting Mduduzi Ncube on this tour are a trio of acclaimed DJs, Layla, DJ Fats, and DJ Prince, each bringing their distinct style and expertise to keep the crowd energised and engaged throughout the night.

ULTIMATE SHUTDOWN

When: Friday
Where: Mdzimba View Shisanyama
Fee: E150

South Africa's acclaimed production duo, Jazzworx and Thukuthela, and a local lineup are set for the Ultimate Shutdown event. Scheduled for November 21, 2025, at Mdzimba View Shisanyama, this concert promises to be a vibrant celebration of African dance music, featuring an electrifying lineup that includes some of Eswatini's finest local talents. The local artists set to grace the stage alongside Jazzworx and Thukuthela are Obsession, Bongiswa, MaWillies, Sbuda, Castle, Slim Deep, Sade, and MaTenTen. This diverse roster showcases the rich musical talent thriving within Eswatini, reflecting a broad spectrum of styles and sounds that will complement the headline act's energetic vibe.

The Ultimate Shutdown event was officially announced via the venue's social media platforms, instantly sparking excitement among fans. A post from the Mdzimba View Shisanyama page boldly declared, "The Ultimate Shutdown is loading. Jazzworx and Thukuthela are taking over Mdzimba View Shisanyama, November 21, mark the date, it's about to get crazy lit!" This enthusiastic message captured the anticipation building around the event, promising an evening of high-energy music and dance.

▶▶ PENS DOWN

When: Saturday
Where: Yolo Lounge
Fee: E50

The end of the academic grind will be marked spectacularly this November as South African music sensation Mduduzi Ncube headlines the much-anticipated

'Pens Down' celebration at Yolo Lounge in Malkerns. The event, slated for Saturday, November 22, 2025, is set to merge youthful excitement, soulful melodies, and energetic performances into one unforgettable night. Organised by Blue Print and Ultrasound Entertainment, the event is set to attract students, graduates, and music lovers from across Eswatini and beyond. It will officially signal the start of the festive season, giving those who have spent months buried in books a chance to put their pens down and let their spirits soar. The supporting lineup features some of Eswatini's most energetic and talented DJs and performers. The roll call includes DJ Wawa, Yukiboy, No Stress, Ntuntu, M98, and Charlie B, each bringing their unique blend of genres ranging from amapiano to hip-hop and dance tunes.

▶▶ KWASUKASUKELA

LOLONGA PROJECT
When: Saturday
Where: Mbabane Theatre Club
Fee: Free

The Kwasukasukela Lolonga Project is making significant strides in nurturing Eswatini's film industry with the announcement of upcoming auditions for actors in its latest series of short films. Set to take place on November 22, 2025, in Mbabane, this casting call represents a pivotal moment for local talent eager to break into professional acting within the country's growing cinematic landscape. Supervising producer Welile Masuku shared insights into the initiative, explaining that the auditions are a critical component of a comprehensive film development programme funded by the Eswatini Communications Commission.

Launched in September, the project is designed not only to discover acting talent but also to provide extensive training that blends classroom learning with practical

production experience.

This holistic approach aims to elevate the skills of participants and foster a sustainable film ecosystem in Eswatini. The 2025 edition of the Kwasukasukela Lolonga Project features four short films, each requiring a diverse cast for leading and supporting roles.

▶▶ GOOD VIBES ONLY

When: Sunday
Where: IF's Lounge, Mbabane
Fee: Free

Eswatini's rising music sensations Nelly Noll, Celumusa, Samton and DJ Expo are set to captivate audiences with live performances at IF's Lounge. Eswatini's vibrant music scene is set to shine brighter with the upcoming "Good Vibes Only" Jam session, scheduled for November 23, 2025, at the popular IF's Lounge in Mbabane.

The jam session will also feature a band including Taribo, Phile, Majaha, Cage, and Joseph, each bringing their unique sound and flair to the stage. Attendees are encouraged to embrace the event's smart casual dress code, perfectly complementing the lounge's chic and inviting ambience. The "Good Vibes Only" Jam is the result of a creative collaboration between IF's Lounge Mbabane and the Good Vibes Band, a partnership born out of a shared vision to breathe new life into Eswatini's live music scene. Mistosoul, the entertainment manager at IF's Lounge, shed light on the motivation behind this initiative. He explained, "This event is about bridging gaps in our entertainment industry and bringing live music performances closer to our community.

We want to revitalise the local music scene by showcasing homegrown talent and creating memorable experiences that foster cultural pride and inspire further artistic collaborations."

Young Zesh for epic Ezulwini Homecoming

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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ESWATINI music star Young Zesh is preparing to host a highly anticipated Homecoming event, which will celebrate his hometown.

Scheduled for December 6, 2025, at Mdzimba View Shisanyama in Ezulwini, this event marks a significant milestone in Young Zesh's career. It is set to bring together fans, artists, and the community for an unforgettable night.

From humble beginnings, Young Zesh has emerged as a powerful voice in Eswatini's music industry. His journey from a dreamer with nothing to his name to sharing the stage with some of the country's biggest names is a testament to his talent and determination. Announcing the event on social media, he expressed his excitement and connection to his roots, stating, "Ezulwini, I'm coming home. From the boy who started with nothing but a dream, to standing on this poster with giants."

The Homecoming event is designed not only as a concert but as a cultural celebration that highlights growth, unity, and the power of dreams. Young Zesh emphasised the event's deeper purpose, saying, "I want this show to create a moment that reminds my hometown that dreams are real when you bring them back home. I want to celebrate growth, unite the community, give young talent a platform, and set a new standard for what a Homecoming event should feel like in Eswatini."

The lineup for the evening is impressive, featuring a mix of established and emerging



▲ Young Zesh.

artists who reflect the vibrant music scene of Eswatini. Performers such as Culolam, Sgitha, Bandora, Sean Cast, Obsession, and Gifted Kosie will share the stage, promising a diverse and dynamic musical experience. Additionally, attendees can look forward to a surprise act.

Accessibility

Tickets for the event are priced affordably to ensure accessibility for a wide audience, with general admission costing E50 and VIP tickets available at E100. Young Zesh encouraged everyone to attend, highlighting the communal spirit of the event: "This is

our moment as a community. Don't hear about it, be part of it. Let's make history together."

Beyond the music, Young Zesh promises a show that will be powerful, emotional, and high-energy, featuring live performances, special guest artists, and a production quality that reflects the journey and progress made by the artist and his community. "It's going to be a celebration of culture, music, family, and the journey that brought us here," he said. For those planning to attend, tickets will be available at the gate on the day of the event.

Phila Koshin advises artists to research more

PHILA Koshin, founder of Icon PB Multimedia, urged musicians and entertainers to invest more time in research and professional development to enhance their craft and unlock broader career opportunities.

Speaking during an interview on South Africa's influential Ukhozi FM on Monday, Koshin emphasised that success in the entertainment industry requires much more than just performing on stage. Ukhozi FM, renowned for nurturing talent and shaping musical careers throughout Southern Africa, hosted Koshin in a conversation led by presenters King Sfiso and Zim Dollar. During the interview, he highlighted the complexities of the music industry and the necessity for artists to understand its many layers to truly progress.

"Music is far beyond just performing," Koshin stated. "The industry involves detailed processes that artists must grasp, from production to distribution to performance. Treating music as a business is essential because money is exchanged at every stage." He stressed that artists who approach their careers with a professional mindset and commit to continuous learning are better positioned to succeed.

Koshin pointed out a common pitfall among artists: relying solely on live bookings as their primary source of income.



▲ Phila Koshin.

"Many artists limit their earning potential by focusing only on bookings," he explained. "The industry offers multiple streams of income, including production, broadcasting, licensing, and corporate collaborations, for those willing to explore beyond the stage."

Expanding on this, Koshin shared insights into the services provided by Icon PB Multimedia, the company he founded. Specialising in radio broadcasting and music production, Icon PB Multimedia works with major platforms and produces content for

popular television shows such as 'Uzalo' and 'Amalanga Awafani.' The company also supports corporate clients with audio-related projects. Koshin used these examples to illustrate the vast scope of the creative industry and how artists could tap into these diverse fields by dedicating time to research and skill development.

He encouraged artists to leverage everyday tools, such as their mobile phones, to educate themselves about the industry. "Use your phone to research television productions, media companies, and available opportunities," Koshin advised. "Opportunities will not come to you if you are relaxed. Take initiative, reach out to companies, inquire about openings, and actively shape your career path."

Koshin warned against passivity in career development, highlighting that waiting for success to come naturally often results in stagnation. Instead, he advocated for proactive engagement and continuous learning as key drivers of growth and sustainability in the music business. He concluded by emphasising that artists who invest time in researching the industry not only improve their artistic skills but also increase their chances of financial stability. "Taking responsibility for your career is crucial," Koshin said. "The more you understand the business side of music, the better you can navigate it and create lasting success."



▲ Thaifo Son.

Thaifo Son collaborates with Aubrey Qwana

TALENTED Eswatini star Thaifo Son, is poised to make a significant impact on the Southern African music landscape with the upcoming release of new tracks created in collaboration with renowned South African Afro-pop artist Aubrey Qwana.

This exciting partnership, which includes the much-anticipated single "Overload," marks a pivotal moment in Thaifo Son's career, highlighting his expanding influence beyond national borders. Thaifo Son first captured attention with his breakout hit "Badede," a dynamic collaboration that featured Aubrey Qwana alongside other notable artists such as Cool Drop, Mr Kangaroo, and Dream King.

The success of "Badede" not only dominated digital platforms but also introduced Thaifo Son to a broader audience, setting the stage for further artistic growth. Building on this momentum, his renewed collaboration with Qwana signals a deepening professional relationship and a shared vision for innovative Afro-pop music.

Collaboration

The genesis of this collaboration was a personal invitation from Aubrey Qwana himself, who reached out to Thaifo Son to join him in Midrand, South Africa, for studio sessions. "Aubrey is my brother, so working with him is the most fun and educational experience," Thaifo Son shared, underscoring the camaraderie and creative synergy that fuels their partnership. He assured fans that the new music would showcase fresh sounds and artistic evolution, emphasising that being part of Qwana's creative circle opens invaluable doors for growth.

Thando Motsa, a key figure in Thaifo Son's management team, emphasised the significance of this collaboration as a testament to the artist's dedication and perseverance. "Seeing him collaborate with such prominent names speaks volumes about his craft," Motsa stated. "Thaifo Son's growth in the industry is a direct result of his tireless work and commitment. This opportunity is well-deserved and reflects the respect he has earned within the music community."

Motsa further noted that these ventures are instrumental in expanding Thaifo Son's professional network and setting the foundation for future projects that transcend geographical boundaries. "Through collaborations like this, Thaifo Son is not only improving his music but also broadening his reach," Motsa explained. "His work with Aubrey Qwana is a steppingstone toward more cross-border collaborations, solidifying his status as a rising force in Southern African music."



Travel & Leisure



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AS of November 2025, some healthcare organizations conclude that Covid-19 vaccines have no impact on fertility.

But some researchers agree that more studies are needed to understand potential long-term effects.

Fertility refers to your ability to naturally conceive or induce a pregnancy. For females, fertility is the natural ability to conceive a baby, while for males, it's when their sperm can fertilize a female's ovarian egg.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), infertility is when two people are unable to conceive after having frequent sex without a condom or other barrier method for over 1 year.

Many people are concerned about the potential risks of Covid-19 vaccines. In particular, some worry about its impacts on reproductive health, fertility, and infertility treatments. Several researchers and healthcare organizations, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), have reported that no studies have found any impact of the Covid-19 vaccines on male or female fertility.

However, other researchers believe that more detailed studies are needed to understand the potential long-term effects of the vaccines on fertility and reproductive health.

Keep reading to learn more about how the Covid-19 vaccines may affect female and male fertility.



Covid-19 vaccine and fertility

Interpreting the data

A significant portion of the research examining potential changes in fertility rates resulting from the Covid-19 vaccines is based on ecological studies.

This type of observational research method assesses the relationship between a health outcome and exposure at the population level. Ecological studies may provide insight into how the Covid-19 vaccines affect fertility rates, but they don't provide information on individual characteristics, such as whether the vaccines can biologically impact fertility.

Speak with a healthcare professional if you're trying to conceive and are concerned about the potential effects of Covid-19. They can provide you with the information, guidance, and support you need.

Can the Covid-19 vaccines affect female fertility?

Female fertility refers to an individual's natural ability to become pregnant. Several biological, hormonal, and environmental factors contribute to natural conception and fertility. Since Covid-19 vaccines were introduced to the public in 2020, people have been concerned about their effects on female fertility, and some public authorities and influential figures have claimed that they do, in fact, affect female fertility.

As of November 2025, five Covid-19 vaccines have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These include:

- COMINARTY Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine
- Pfizer Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine
- Moderna Covid-19 vaccine
- SPIKEVAX Covid-19 vaccine
- NUVAXOVID Covid-19 vaccine

The manufacturers of each vaccine claim that it has no effect on female fertility. However, these conclusions were based on

a single animal study for each vaccine, which lasted up to 1 month. No studies assessed the possible effects on male fertility, nor were any conducted in humans.

That said, healthcare organizations like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the ACOG suggest that Covid-19 vaccines don't affect female fertility.

Some studies have found similar results. For instance:

- A 2024 study found that Covid-19 vaccines had no significant impact on female fertility between 2019 and 2022 in individuals in over 100 countries.
- A 2024 review suggests that Covid-19 vaccines have no impact on female fertility and don't increase the risk of a stillborn fetus or pregnancy loss.
- A 2025 study in 80 female participants concluded that Covid-19 vaccines didn't affect female fertility.
- A 2022 survey in 2,126 self-identified female participants found that Covid-19 vaccines had no negative effects on female fertility.

Despite these findings, some researchers suggest that more detailed studies are needed to better understand how the vaccines can affect human fertility long term, especially in relation to embryo toxicity, genotoxicity, and sperm health.

Can the Covid-19 vaccines affect male fertility?

Male fertility refers to the sperm's ability to naturally fertilize an egg from an ovary to induce pregnancy. Three sperm parameters play key roles in male fertility:

- Count:** This is the number of sperm cells found in a sample.
- Motility:** This refers to how fast, efficiently, and effectively a sperm cell can move.

► **Quality:** This refers to a sperm cell's viability, or ability to survive and work successfully.

The CDC suggests that the Covid-19 vaccine has no impact on male fertility. Several studies have found similar results. For instance:

- A 2024 review of 24 studies found that Covid-19 vaccines had no negative effects on male fertility, reproductive health, or sperm parameters.
- A 2022 review of 29 studies found that Covid-19 vaccines had no negative effects on sperm count, motility, or quality.
- A 2022 review of 7 studies also found that Covid-19 vaccines didn't impact sperm parameters.

While the Covid-19 vaccine seems to have no effect on male fertility, it's important to note that a Covid-19 infection may have short-term impacts.

The 2022 study listed above found that males with Covid-19 had lower fertility rates for up to 60 days after infection compared to those who had never tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 or who had tested positive more than 60 days prior.

Similarly, according to the 2024 review, some studies found that Covid-19 infection impacted key sperm parameters involved in fertility, including sperm count, quality, and motility.

This may be due to the inflammatory effects of Covid-19 on blood vessels and tissues in the testes, as they contain host cells commonly targeted by SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The effects of Covid-19 on male fertility are most likely short term, but consider speaking with a doctor if you continue to experience difficulty inducing conception after 60 days of infection.

Can the Covid-19 vaccines impact fertility treatments?

Fertility treatments, known as assisted reproductive technology (ART), are types of medical treatments that handle the sperm and egg outside of the body.

A 2024 study found no significant difference in sperm or egg quality between vaccinated and non-vaccinated people who were undergoing a type of ART called in vitro fertilization (IVF).

A 2025 study in females undergoing IVF-frozen embryo transfer (IVF-FET) found that receiving the Covid-19 vaccine before ovarian stimulation was associated with a slight decrease in IVF-FET success.

However, the researchers concluded that receiving a vaccine more than 90 days before ovarian stimulation may reduce these potential effects.

Overall, more research is needed to better understand the relationship between Covid-19 vaccines and fertilization treatments.

When to connect with a doctor

Consider speaking with a healthcare professional if you're unsure about whether you should get the Covid-19 vaccine or if you want to know more about its possible effects on fertility.

You may also wish to talk with a doctor if you and another person have been trying to conceive for over 12 months. A doctor will perform a physical examination and may order specific tests to assess for infertility.

For males, this will include a semen analysis. For females, this may include:

- at-home ovulation testing kit
- ultrasound
- hysterosalpingography
- laparoscopy
- follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) test

Healthline



A recent study reports that exposure to light during sleep is associated with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease.

During sleep, ambient light contributes to brain stress that can cause arterial inflammation, which may lead to a heart attack or stroke.

For an optimal sleeping environment, darker is better — but complete darkness is best.

A new study builds on existing evidence that sleeping in less than complete darkness can be detrimental to health, specifically damaging the cardiovascular system.

Sleeping while exposed to higher levels of light was associated with stress-related brain activity known to cause arterial inflammation throughout the body. Such inflammation raises the likelihood of a heart attack and stroke.

After 10 years, 17% of the study participants had developed major cardiovascular issues.

The authors found that as the amount of artificial light at night (LAN) exposure increased, so did the risk of eventual heart disease.

Each standard deviation upward in light was associated with a 35% increased likelihood of a heart attack over the following five years and a 22% increased risk over the next 10 years.

People who lived in areas characterized by elevated environmental or social stressors — including noise from traffic and lower neighborhood income levels — were at an even greater risk from LAN.

The study was presented at the American Heart Association (AHA) Scientific Sessions 2025, held from November 7 to 10 in New Orleans, LA. The findings have not yet been published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Artificial light drives inflammation, cardiovascular disease

The study involved 466 adults who had received PET/CT brain imaging scans at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston between 2005 and 2008.

Participants' median age was 55, and 43% were male. Nearly 90% of the participants were white, and just over 10% were non-white.

The scans were performed as routine imaging at the hospital. The CT scans revealed the anatomical details of the participants' brains, while the PET scans recorded metabolic activity in their tissues.

None of the participants had heart disease or cancer at the time of their scans.

To measure the lighting conditions in each of the homes where participants had been sleeping, the study authors used data from the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite Day/Night Band aboard the Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership satellite.

Radiative transfer modeling provided highly localized estimates of ground-level sky brightness based on the satellite data. (The modeling did not include natural starlight and moonlight.)

The new study adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that sleeping in a dark environment is the healthiest way to sleep, said Jonathan Cedernaes, PhD, a sleep expert at Uppsala Universitet in Sweden, who wasn't involved in the study.

"Both animal and human intervention studies have demonstrated that LAN can disrupt multiple neurophysiological systems, disrupting both metabolism and inflammation," he told Healthline.

Why sleeping in total darkness is good for your heart

... sleeping in less than complete darkness can be detrimental to health, specifically damaging the cardiovascular system.



For instance, a 2022 study in which one group of participants slept in a typical room with light at around 100 lux (lx) — considered to be at the low end of average bedroom lighting — while another group slept in an even dimmer light of less than 3 lux.

The first group exhibited an increased heart rate, reduced deep sleep, and impaired insulin sensitivity, Cedernaes noted.

In a recent cohort study, he said, the same typical level of room light "was prospectively linked to a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, such as myocardial infarction, underscoring the real-world relevance of such adverse exposures."

How sleep quality affects heart health

Blue light from mobile screens is a well-known obstacle to sound sleep, but ambient light is also a contributor.

A 2022 meta-analysis of seven cross-sectional studies found that those with greater levels of LAN exposure — especially indoor — had a 22% greater risk of sleep problems.

Additionally, a 2014 study of 700 older individuals found a direct association

between LAN and atherosclerosis, specifically increased intima-media thickness of the common carotid artery.

"Inflammation is a result of stress, and inflammation is a primary driver of atherosclerosis, and therefore heart disease and stroke," said Jayne Morgan, MD, cardiologist and vice president of Medical Affairs for Hello Heart. Morgan wasn't involved in the study.

"The heart and brain are interconnected, as what happens to the arteries of the heart is also occurring in the vessels of the brain," she told Healthline.

"Those with brighter bedrooms (meaning more lights on at night) have shown higher rates of heart disease," she said.

"Darkness signals the body to produce melatonin and decreases the body's processes, including lowering blood pressure. The longer the lights are on at night, the more delayed is this healthy nighttime drop in blood pressure," she said. "Additionally, your morning hormones spike later (cortisol, etc.)," Morgan continued.

Sleep quality duration is important for heart health. "Less than six hours of sleep has demonstrated a higher risk of heart disease," Morgan said.

Tips for creating an optimal sleep environment

Here are a few ideas for creating an optimal darker sleeping environment:

► **Cover your windows** — If you have curtains or shades, close them tightly. If they do not block out external light, consider acquiring blackout curtains. A lower-cost alternative is to cover windows with aluminum foil to block light.

► **Close the gap** — The gap between your bedroom door and the rest of your home can leak considerable light into your sleeping area. Try turning out other lights beyond the door, or push a rolled-up towel against the gap to block unwanted light.

► **Wear a sleep mask** — Some people find sleeping with an eye mask comfortable, and, if the mask fits well, this can be an effective way to keep out light.

Lastly, since always-on nightlights increase unwanted light exposure, consider motion-sensing nightlights that turn on only as needed in your dark home.

Healthline

Around the world in pictures



▲ Local residents drive on a motorbike as Mount Semeru volcano spews volcanic ash during an eruption as seen in the background, in Supiturang village in Lumajang, East Java province, Indonesia.



▲ A worker cleans the floor near an art work ahead of the inauguration ceremony of the light festival “Noor Riyadh”, under the theme “In the Blink of an Eye”, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



▲ German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, State Secretary in the Norwegian Defence Ministry Marte Gerhardsen and Bavarian State Premier Markus Soeder attend a roll-out of the new Leopard 2A8 tank and new mobile howitzer PZH 2000 at KNDS in Munich, Germany.



▲ Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan walk to attend a joint press conference in Ankara, Turkey.



▲ Rescuers clear debris at the site of an apartment building that was hit yesterday by a Russian missile, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Ternopil, Ukraine.



▲ Keith Urban performs at the 59th Annual Country Music Association Awards in Nashville, Tennessee.

Jose Riveiro predicts ‘Vertical Final’ between Pirates and Gallants

FORMER Orlando Pirates coach Jose Riveiro expects an open, attacking contest when his former club meets Marumo Gallants in the Carling Knockout Final at Peter Mokaba Stadium on 6 December .

Riveiro, back in South Africa as an ambassador for Carling Black Label tournaments, shared his thoughts during a media briefing on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Sandton.

“Finals are rarely the most entertaining games, but this one could be different,” said Riveiro.

“Looking at the nature of both teams and their coaches, I expect them to go for the win from the first minute. They’ll aim to play fast, vertical football, create chances, and both sides share a similar philosophy.

I believe and hope that Pirates will make it one more time.” added the former Pirates mentor.

Riveiro’s Return and Carling Connection

The Spaniard, one of the most successful coaches in South African football history, is back to mentor Champion Coaches ahead of the Carling All-Star match on December 13 at Moses Mabhid Stadium, where the All-Star team will face the Carling Knockout champions.

Riveiro knows the stage well after he led the All-Star side to back-



▲ Former Orlando Pirates coach Jose Riveiro.

to-back Carling Cup wins in 2023 (vs Stellenbosch FC) and 2024 (vs Magesi FC). He described those moments as “among the most memorable” of his career.

Champion Coach Initiative
The 2025 edition revives the iconic Carling Cup element: giving one lucky fan the chance to coach an All-Star team featuring the best PSL talent. The Champion Coach concept, introduced in 2011, remains a fan favourite.

Riveiro offered advice to those vy-

ing for the role:

“Whoever is selected has earned it through a tough vetting process. They must believe in themselves, not try to emulate anyone. Be yourself. The stage is for the players, the fans pay to see them. Our job is to give them the tools to shine.”

The search for the 2025 Champion Coach is heating up. From millions of entries, 15 fans have been short-listed. That number will be trimmed to 10 for the Champion Coach Selection Weekend. (Supersport)

Hamilton denies Ferrari friction after Elkann criticism

LEWIS Hamilton has dismissed suggestions of friction within Ferrari after team chairman John Elkann’s recent comments that he and teammate Charles Leclerc should “focus on driving and talk less”.

Speaking to reporters ahead of this weekend’s Las Vegas Grand Prix, the seven-times world champion said he had not taken Elkann’s comments personally and remained in regular contact with the Ferrari chief.

“John and I, we speak almost every week, so we have a great relationship,” Hamilton said when asked about Elkann’s remarks.

“I didn’t have a reaction to it. We look into those things too much.”

Leclerc echoed Hamilton’s comments, saying he viewed the remarks as a reflection of Elkann’s desire to win.

“I know John is a very ambitious person and wants to push everyone to the maximum to get the maximum results,” he said.

“He loves Ferrari, I love Ferrari, we all love Ferrari and we try to do the best in every situation.”

Ferrari suffered a double retirement in Sao Paulo on Sunday, their third race of the season without either driver in the points.

Close runners-up to McLaren last season, they have slipped to fourth in the constructors’ standings - behind champions McLaren, Mercedes and Red Bull.



▲ Former Orlando Pirates coach Jose Riveiro.

Hamilton, in his first season with Ferrari, said responsibility for their struggles was shared across the organisation. But despite their ups and downs this season, the Briton said there were no problems with team harmony.

“I joined this team knowing full well that it takes time to steer a ship in a different direction,” he said.

“This is a huge team. There are so many little parts and we can’t fix it quickly. It takes real time.”

The setbacks had only underlined his and Ferrari’s resilience, he added.

“It’s like we’re climbing up a mountain and then you arrive at the weekend and you slip a few steps back or 10 steps back and you have to then get back up and try again,” he said.

“I back this team 100 per cent and I back myself 100 per cent. I know that when we get things right, it’s going to be amazing. I truly believe that’s going to happen.”

(Supersport)

No 11 golfer hints PGA seasons starting post-Super Bowl

VETERAN Harris English is following a “whatever it takes is what it takes” philosophy when it comes to rumored changes for the betterment of the PGA Tour.

That includes his hint on Wednesday at possibly moving the annual start of the season to after the Super Bowl so customary tournaments in Hawaii and on the West Coast will not have to vie with the NFL playoffs for attention.

“Sometimes change is good,” English said on Wednesday at a news conference for this week’s RSM Classic on St. Simons Island, Georgia.

“I get that they want all the best players playing together more often, and the talk of the tour potentially starting after the Super Bowl I think is a pretty good thing because we can’t really compete with football. So we’ll see, we’ll see where it goes.

“I know it’s going to get tougher and tougher and the goal posts are moving a little bit,” he continued. “I know it’s going to get harder for me. I’m 36 years old, I’m not getting any younger, but we’ll see where it goes. Everybody’s in for the good of the PGA Tour and to make our product the best it can be. Whatever that takes is what it takes.”

HAS FAITH IN ‘GUYS AT THE HELM’

English, a massive fan of the NFL’s Jacksonville Jaguars, joined the PGA Tour in 2012 and has five victories, including the Farmers Insurance Open in January at Torrey Pines in San Diego.

He acknowledged his history of early-season success and his enjoyment for the events in Hawaii, so he “wouldn’t like that at all” if they were off the schedule.

“So it would kind of stink if those tournaments go away and it would change up that West Coast Swing,” English said.

“Torrey Pines has been one of

my favourites, I’ve had a lot of success there and I would hate to see some of those tournaments go away. But we’ll see.”

Ranked No 11 in the world and coming off his second stint competing for the US Ryder Cup team, English might not seem a likely supporter for disruption of the status quo.

Yet he has faith in new PGA Tour CEO Brian Rolapp – a former NFL executive vice president who spent 22 years with the league – and tour leadership.

“The tour has changed a lot since I first came on back in 2012,” English said. “It’s going to keep evolving. We’ve got some smart guys at the helm. Now with Brian Rolapp coming in, he’s seeing the PGA Tour in a different light.

“I think that’s what they’re going to change down the road, maybe in 2027, is have all the tournaments be equal and not have the eight elevated events and the regular events,” he said.

“They’ll have 20, 22 events that are all the same. I think that’s a good model to have. That’s where you’ll see all the top players play every single event because you can’t really afford to take one off.”

English also supports smaller tournaments like fall events such as the RSM Classic in his native Georgia.

“I’m putting my faith in the guys at the helm and having the direction of this tour to make it the best it can be,” English said.

“Tournaments like this, I don’t want to see them go away because I know how much they mean to this community. A lot of these fall events, we go to a lot of places in the country that they don’t get a whole lot of golf tournaments and you can tap into a different fan base. I don’t really want to see them go away, but I think they’ll find a time and a place for some of those.”

(Supersport)



▲ Harris English.

Andre Arendse lands new job after Siwelele FC exit

SEKHUKHUNE United have strengthened their technical bench with the appointment of Andre Arendse as the club's assistant coach.

Arendse, who left Siwelele FC in September together with CEO Stan Matthews, reunites with fellow 1996 AFCON-winning Bafana Bafana teammate Eric Tinkler, who is Babina Noko's head coach.

Sekhukhune confirmed Arendse's appointment through a statement on Friday afternoon.

"Sekhukhune United Football Club (SKUFC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Andre Arendse – a highly respected figure in South African football and alumnus of the 1996 AFCON-winning

"Arendse joins fellow 96 gold medalist, Head Coach Eric Tinkler, on the bench, as Babina Noko look to finish strong in this season's Betway Premiership campaign.

"The 58-year-old Arendse brings 15 years of coaching experience at Premiership level, having served in various capacities, including goalkeeper coach, assistant coach and interim head coach.

"His most recent feat was guiding SuperSport United to safety in the 2024/25 season, preserving their Premiership status.

"He holds both the FIFA goalk-keeping certificate and a CAF B coaching licence, reflecting his dedication to technical development."

'Arendse and Tinkle know each other'

Sekhukhune United Chairman



▲ Andre Arendse.

Mr Simon Malatji welcomed the appointment of Arendse, stating: "Coaches Eric Tinkler and Andre Arendse know each other from their playing days and have not only crossed paths as coaching rivals, but lifted the 2017 MTN8 trophy together at 'Matsantsantsa'. They share a strong rapport, and we are confident that it'll translate positively in the team's performance and results."

As a player, Arendse enjoyed a long and illustrious career, highlighted by 67 caps for Bafana Bafana and back-to-back League Championship titles with SuperSport United FC. He was also part of the squad that earned Fulham FC promotion to the English Premier League.

(Supersport)

Spain fight back to reach Davis Cup semis

SPAIN reached the semifinals of the Davis Cup on Thursday after coming back from one match down to beat the Czech Republic 2-1 in Bologna.

Marcel Granollers and Pedro Martinez beat Tomas Machac and Jakub Mensik 7-6 (10-8), 7-6 (10-8) to seal Spain's passage to the last four, where David Ferrer's team will face either Argentina or Germany in the last four on Saturday.

Jaume Munar set Spain up to win the tie by beating Jiri Lehecka 6-3, 6-4 and levelling up the match after Pablo Carreno Busta was beaten by world number 19 Mensik 7-5, 6-4.

Spain's biggest star Carlos Alcaraz pulled out of the tournament on Tuesday with a hamstring injury suffered during his defeat to Jannik Sinner

in the title-match of the ATP Finals on Sunday.

The six-time Grand Slam champion said in the aftermath of that defeat that his hamstring hadn't affected him, even though it was strapped up during a medical time out.

World No 1 Alcaraz is one of three top-10 players to have dropped out of the Davis Cup finals in northern Italy, where fans have also been denied the chance to see Sinner and Lorenzo Musetti play for the Azzurri.

The highest ranked player at the Davis Cup finals is former Olympic champion and world No 3 Alexander Zverev, who will play for Germany against Argentina later on Thursday.

(Supersport)



▲ Jaume Munar.

Rassie relies on his experienced core for Boks' big day in Dublin

SPRINGBOK coach Rassie Erasmus has returned to his most experienced combinations for Saturday's final big test match of the year against Ireland at AVIVA Stadium in Dublin.

Erasmus mixed and matched last week for the game against Ireland, making 11 changes to the side that beat France in Paris the week before. He has effectively now gone back to the group that won 32-17 at the Stade de France, with the obvious caveat that Lood de Jager, who was red carded in that game, is unavailable.

There are some other minor switches from the game against France, however, and one of them is Canan Moodie playing on the right wing instead of Kurt-Lee Arendse. The Bulls wing has returned to South Africa after a minor concussion suffered last week but the change won't hugely hurt the team.

Moodie was at outside centre for last week's game in Turin so there are effectively 12 changes from that game if you factor in that positional switch. Moodie was good in countering Italy's aerial kicking assault last week and that may have in any case become a factor in his selection in the position where he has played most of his games for the Boks so far. Ireland were really good at their contestable kicking game when they beat Australia 46-19 in Dublin last weekend.

CHANGE OF FORMULA TO FORWARD BENCH BACK-UP

Although Franco Mostert was cleared and his red card received early in last week's game rescinded in a disciplinary hearing this week, he is not playing any part in the AVIVA Stadium clash. That may be an indicati-



▲ Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus.

on that Erasmus has stuck with his policy of only considering players who are available for the whole week of training, which would mean there was some cost to Mostert for the poor decision made by referee James Doleman in the Italy game.

However, while the Boks did go in with two locks in their six/two bench split between forwards and backs in the Paris game, thus making it a proper 'Bomb Squad', meaning he has an entire tight five backing up, this week he has only RG Snyman as a lock and Kwagga Smith, excellent as a replacement against Italy, on the bench.

With Andre Esterhuizen again fulfilling his hybrid role, meaning he can play both centre and flank, this might be an indication that Erasmus' selection is more around tactics, with Ireland's proficiency at the breakdown and their reliance on quickly recycled ball coming into his thinking.

LANDMARK FOR RG

Talking of Snyman, the double World Cup winner will be playing his 50th test for his country in Dublin at a stadium he knows well as he is currently a Leinster player. He will no doubt see it as fitting that he plays his landmark game for the Boks in the city

where he currently resides.

Erasmus' selection means that the same halfback pairing that has fronted for all the big Bok games since the win over New Zealand in Wellington in September will be starting, with Cobus Reinach and Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu again being backed up by Grant Williams and Manie Libbok.

With most of the players being rested last week against Italy to ensure that Erasmus could field a fresh team to match the hosts' energy, he reverted to his tried and tested combinations for their clash against Ireland, who they last defeated on home soil in 2012.

Snyman will become the third squad member to achieve a significant milestone on the Castle Lager Outgoing Tour, following Siya Kolisi and Erasmus sharing the special occasion of earning their 100th test caps as a player and 50th as the head coach against France.

The two personnel changes apart from Moodie playing in Arendse's place from the Paris game to Erasmus' squad sees Ruan Nortje being promoted from the replacements bench to the starting line-up in place of De Jager, while Kwagga Smith returns to the team on the bench in his place.

Cheslin Kolbe (wing) and Reinach will both feature in their 49th test matches, leaving them only one game short of joining Snyman and several other teammates on 50 caps.

(Supersport)

MTN PREMIER LEAGUE BUILD-UP



It's a 'David versus Goliath' Sunday!

By Chris Dlamini

THE Biblical story of the smaller David defying all odds to bring down the giant Goliath is just playing itself out in the MTN Premier League this season. There is not one match week without shocking results - the latest being the sting taken by police ensemble Royal Leopard when Ezulwini United, also affectionately called The Stingers, edged the star-studded outfit 1-0 on Wednesday.

As is, the top four is without the big teams you would expect up there, but Manzini Sea Birds at the summit, defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs in second after the 3-0 win over Malanti Chiefs, Ezulwini, and then Green Mamba.

As match week Seven gets underway this weekend, we highlight some of the ties to watch, with particular focus at Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini on Sunday.

Manzini Wanderers vs. Tabankulu Celtics
Date: Sunday, November 22, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 2pm

Five points out of a possible 18 is not good a stat for a big team as the Manzini Wanderers, but it is what it is. The maroon and white hub giants are currently looking like the same team as in the 2023/24 season when they finished in the relegation zone. However, they challenged their relegation in court, which cost them the whole of last season. LiWeseli went missing in action, but they are back this season.

They take on a completely unpredictable and resilient Tabankulu Celtics. The elite rookies have made a big impression to the extent they already wear the giant-killers' tag. Celtics has stunned Royal Leopard and Nsingizini Hotspurs, both from the CAF inter-club competitions, being the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup, and TotalEnergies CAF Champions League, respectively. In the games they have lost, it has been very close, the last one being the 1-0 defeat to army team Young Buffaloes on Wednesday.

As is, the Batoze Bavume (Celtics) outfit is four points ahead, and the standings are quite a difference - Celtics is at number seven but dropped from fourth, and they have nine points, then the giant teams, Wanderers at number 14. Can the Weslians (Wanderers) survive their visitors? The hub giants recorded their first win in six games last week against struggling Ubombo Sugar. A 1-0 margin was enough for the Gcina Dlamini-coached side, but they may need more than just one goal against Celtics.

The 12th man factor will come in handy for LiWeseli, who are also plagued by internal troubles. They are going against a side

with three good wins amid the mid-week defeat. Quite a good test of character for Wanderers as a big team, only a dishevelled start to the season. It is one game to watch, especially with Celtics proving they got what it takes to stand their own.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

- Mlamuli 'Mlaba' Nkam-bule (M. Wanderers midfielder, captain)
- Malangeni Dlamini (T. Celtics forward)

LOG STANDINGS:
M. Wanderers - 14th (5 points)
T. Celtics - 7th (9 points)
PERFORMANCE GUIDE:
T. Celtics
L L W W L
M. Wanderers
D L D L W
HEAD-TO-HEAD:
1st official meeting

Wounded 'Bull' in Stingers' hive

Ezulwini United vs. Mbabane Highlanders
Date: Sunday, November 22, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 4.30pm

The only unbeaten team in the league to date is none other than Ezulwini United. The minnows, affectionately known as The Stingers, may be small in statue, but in the field of play, they are winning big battles.

They have stung giants Mbabane Swallows, Moneni Pirates, and Royal Leopard already in their three wins, accumulating 12 points in the process in six games. Ezulwini got the better of Leopard on Wednesday with a 1-0 margin, and they have edged Mbabane before.

It was Ezulwini who knocked Inkunz'emnyama out of the second edition of the 8Bet Trade Fair Cup with a 2-0 margin. As the two sides clash, Highlanders will be under pressure after dropping some crucial points against Malanti Chiefs and Sisonkhe.



The black and gold outfit, Highlanders is desperate for the points as they must not fall too far behind the leading pack. At the moment, Highlanders is currently five points away from the leaders Manzini Sea Birds, who have 13 points to their eight. Ezulwini is on 12 points after edging the faltering Leopard 1-0 on Wednesday.

It is players like former Highlanders winger Mphucuko 'Smoothies' Dlamini, ex-nsingizini Hotspurs Ghanaian defensive midfielder Alvin Shabashie and Kwenzokuhle 'Ndoye' Khumalo among others who are causing the damage to rivals. Highlanders has beaten Ezulwini more than once and will look to do the same again here.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

- Kwenzokuhle 'Ndoye' Khumalo (Ezulwini forward)



malo Unit-mid-fielder) Scelo Hopewell Cele (M. Highlanders winger)
LOG STANDINGS:
Ez. United - 4th (12 points)
M. Highlanders - 10th (8 points)
PERFORMANCE GUIDE:



MANCE GUIDE:
Ez. United
W D W D W
M. Highlanders
W W D D L
HEAD-TO-HEAD:
24/05/25
Ez. United 1-0 M. Highlanders
12/01/24
M. Highlanders 2-1 Ez. United

Old rivalry set for revival

Mbabane Swallows vs. Malanti Chiefs
Date: Sunday, November 22, 2025
Venue: Mayaluka Stadium, Big Bend
Kick-off: 3pm

These are two old foes. The rivalry between them was so electric, and all their head-to-head clashes were so action-filled and exciting for the fans. Goals were one of the many characteristics of this fixture that Malanti Chiefs struggled to cope with in their last elite season before they were promoted back at the end of last season.

Malanti suffered their first defeat to defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs on Wednesday, and that makes it for an interesting tie as Swallows also crashed in the past weekend. The red and white outfit lost 2-0 away to in form Rangers.

The Beautiful Birds, as Swallows is also affectionately known, currently occupies the 8th spot with nine points, five short of leaders Manzini Sea Birds, while their rivals are ninth on nine points as well.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

- Njongo Mazibuko (M. Swallows forward)
- Isaac Yeboah (M. Chiefs forward)

LOG STANDINGS:
M. Swallows - 8th (9 points)
M. Chiefs - 9th (9 points)
PERFORMANCE GUIDE:
M. Swallows
W W W L L

Thabiso leads boxing national team to the world

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
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TOP local boxer Thabiso Dlamini will lead the national team in the 2025 World Boxing championships.

The former Russian-based pugilist is part of a six-member squad to represent the country in the global showpiece between December 2-14, 2025, at the United Arab Emirates.

Other boxers include Sibonelo Ndzimandze, Khaya Shongwe, Khayelihle Mkhabela, Chawe Gamedze, and Mukelo Dlamini.

Khaya Shongwe and Mukelo Dlamini previously represented the country in the 2024 Mandela Cup, which was held in Durban.

The Dubai bound national team will be led by Douglas Simelane, while Muzi Shongwe is the squad manager.

Eswatini Boxing Association (EBA) Secretary Nkosinathi Dlamini confirmed the

team when reached for comment.

“We are pleased to announce the national team and confident that the team will make us proud during the assignment. The team has already started preparations for the competition under the guidance of the technical bench,” he said.

Meanwhile, IBA president Umar Kremlev thanked gulf nation for hosting the tournament.

“Throughout its history, the IBA Men’s World Boxing Championships has delivered countless moments of triumph, passion, and inspiration. For many athletes, it serves as a life-defining experience, shaping their futures both inside and outside the ring. Our mission remains steadfast: to empower every boxer to flourish, earn a living, grow professionally, and etch their names into the annals of history for themselves and their nations. Boxing knows no boundaries; it is a universal language that unites people across continents, and we are dedicated to bringing the spirit of boxing to every corner of the

world,” he said.

Kremlev further promised to deliver a successful event through collaboration with the various stakeholders in a press statement.

“I am committed to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and integrity throughout the competition. We are honoured to collaborate with the UAE Boxing Federation, the Local Organising Committee, and the authorities of Dubai to deliver an extraordinary experience for all participants and spectators at this flagship event. I have the utmost confidence in our partners in Dubai,” he said.

The full squad

1. Khaya Shongwe - Under 54 kg
2. Mukelo Dlamini - Under 57 kg
3. Chawe Gamedze - Under 60 kg
4. Thabiso Dlamini - Under 63.5 kg
5. Khayelihle Mkhabela -Under 67 kg
6. Sibonelo Ndzimandze - Under 71 kg



▲ Top local boxer Thabiso Dlamini.

Three countries in Mulasport Kusekhaya Cycling Challenge

A tri-nation cycling spectacle is lined up in the country on Saturday in the MulaSport Kusekhaya Lowveld Challenge. Cyclists from Eswatini, South Africa and Mozambique in the annual road race under the auspices of the Eswatini Cycling Association (ECA).

Several local clubs, such as 4eva cycling club, Team G, Darkton cycling club, Newcomm Wheels, Kusekhaya and MTN Khemani, among others are set to attend the race sponsored by local betting company MulaSport by E60 000.

The race director, Mduduzi Kaudi, said preparations for the race are at an advanced stage.

“We are looking forward to another exciting edition, which will be attended by over 100 local and international riders. We believe the race will create a premier event that brings every cyclist together for a day of competition and camaraderie,” he said.

The veteran rider also appreci-



▲ Riders in action during the 2024 Kusekhaya Lowveld Challenge.

ated stakeholders and partners for their support of the race.

“We sincerely value your sup-

port and believe this change will enhance the visibility and impact.

We hope that this adjustment does

not affect your commitments to the event in any way,” he said.

The race offers a spectrum of dis-

stances to challenge athletes of all levels, from a family-friendly 5km to a demanding 120km course.

... Three B division teams vying for premier division slots

A fierce battle is on the cards in the Sandza Construction B Division league.

Three teams will be vying for the two premier division slots during the grand closing of the Sandza Construction grand closing scheduled for Saturday at Mavuso Sports Centre. The promotion candidates Luve, Royal Eswatini Corporation and Ncabaneni .

Luve are one hand into the elite league as they are leading the chasing pack with 35 points, and they must win their last match against the Dragons.

Sugar belt side RES are praying for the slip of the placed Ncabaneni, who will wrap up the campaign with two fixtures against Dragons and Sithobela.

Luve is currently perched at position three with 33 points. Eswatini National Volleyball Association (ENVA) Vice Secretary Philile

Lokotfwako confirmed the fixtures. “We invite fans to attend the grand closing in numbers to witness what has been an exciting season in the second-tier league. The games will kick off at 9am,” she said.

Lokotfwako also thanked the sponsor for continued support.

“We are grateful for the support of the sponsor, which contributes immensely to the development of the sport in the country,” she said.

The full fixture

Zakhele	vs	Villa Park
Villa Park	vs	Sidwashini
Fire Flames	vs	Luve
Dragons	vs	Ncabaneni

Mshinande	vs	Eagles
Ncabaneni	vs	Sithobela
Mshinande	vs	Sithobela
		Tigers.



▲ Local teams in action under the Sandza Construction Volleyball League.

Tricky test for Emajukujuku

By Sibusiso Masilela
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IT’S GAME ON
REIGNING Ingwenyama Cup regional champions Emajukujuku will begin their mission to defend their title with a tricky test against newcomers Gobholo Green Sea on Sunday at the Prince of Wales Ground.

The two sides will face off on Sunday at Prince of Wales Ground following the Hhohho Regional Football Association draw held on Wednesday.

The Lobamba based side rose to stardom last year when they won the regional crown against Nsenga Comrades during the finals, which took place at Manzini Club.

The Hhohho and Manzini regions will kick off their eliminations over the weekend, with last year’s runner-up Nsenga Comrades taking on Nsuka United on Saturday at TB Sports Ground under the auspices of the Manzini Regional Football Association (MRFA).

The Lubombo region eliminations will kick off on the weekend of November 29-30, 2025, while the Shiselweni Regional Football Association will conduct its draw on Sunday (November 23, 2025).

The tournament’s patron, His Majesty King Mswati III, recently commissioned the kick-off of the richest knockout tournament through board of Trustees Chairman, Prince Hlangabeza on Tuesday.

The annual tournament is bankrolled with



▲ Ingwenyama Cup regional champions Emajukujuku

E5 million, which is part of the E15 million three-year sponsorship.

The tournament that blends football with culture carries a ticket to the CAF Confederation cup and include the Women’s cup.

Royal Leopard are the defending champions of the main tournament after beating Moneni Pirates by 1-0 at Somhlolo National Stadium.

The inaugural winners of the Ingwenyama Cup women’s cup are the Young Buffaloes ladies.

The full Hhohho Regional fixture

Sunday 23/11/2025			
Northern Zone			
Mkhuzweni Technical Centre			
Imbumbi Celtic	vs M.Hotspurs		
9am			
Young Professionals	vs Russian		
Bombors11am			
Mhlatane United	vs Kapa Kapa		
1pm			
Mawombe Arsenal	vs Roman		
United	3pm		
Southern Zone			
Motshane Crocodiles	vs Sitseni		
Young Chiefs	9am		

Gobholo Green Sea	vs	Emajukujuku	
11am.			
Young Lovers	vs		
Burning Spear	1pm		
Billy Ocean	vs		
Umbelebele	3pm		
Manzini			
Saturday 22/11/2025			
TB Centre			
Maliyaduma	vs		Y.
International	1pm		
Nsuka United	vs		
Nsenga Comrades	3pm		
Ludzeludze Sports Ground			
Kwaluseni Rebels	vs		
Fairview Chiefs	1pm		
Giant Clock Work	vs		
Supersport			3pm
Sunday 23/11/2025			
Ludzeludze Sports Ground			
Ntontozi Celtics	vs		Milling
Hotspurs	1pm		
Uche XI	vs		
Jubela			3pm
Louis XIV	vs		
Moyeni United	1pm		
Ngodini	vs		RFG
United	3pm		
Lubombo			
Malahleni United	vs	Richmond	
Juventus	vs Angels		
Brave Lions	vs CPL		
Rail United	vs Sundowns		
Phumula mcashi	vs Khubutha		
Sikhalo Se Africa	vs Motivators		
Samampela	vs U.Flyers		
Siphofaneni City	vs Home Sparrow		



▲ Sihlangu players before kickoff.

Sihlangu remains unmoved in 159th position in FIFA rankings

By Sibusiso Masilela
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Stale.

The average performance from Sihlangu in the last two 2025 FIFA World cup qualifiers has caused no movement for the nation’s pride in the latest world rankings.

The senior national team is ranked

at position 159 in the latest statistics released by the World governing body on Wednesday.

Sihlangu finished the qualifiers at the bottom of Group D with three points following the 3-0 away loss to the group winners Cape Verde and a 2-2 draw against Angola.

The senior national side also secured draws against Angola, Mauritius, and Cape Verde in the race for the next World Cup to be jointly hosted by the United States of Amer-

ica (USA), Mexico, and Canada.

This led to the sacking of Croatian mentor Zdravko Logarusic, who was replaced by his former assistant Sifiso ‘Nuro’Ntibane.

No immediate comment could be obtained from Eswatini Football Association Marketing and Communications Manager Muzi Radebe when compiling this report.

The EFA executive committee is yet to decide on the fate of Ntibane and his assistant, Ernest Mavuso.

‘Nyama’ to appear before Downs DC

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE marriage between Manzini Sundowns and head coach Mduduzi ‘Nyama’ Shongwe is on the rocks.

Shongwe is currently suspended over alleged misconduct at the MulaSport National First Division side.

The ex-Tambankulu Celtics coach is expected to appear before the club’s Disciplinary Com-

mittee on November 24,2025.

Shongwe declined to comment on the matter and referred queries to the club’s Chief Executive Officer, Sibusiso Bartjies.

Bartjies confirmed the latest when contacted.

“The coach will soon appear before the club DC over misconduct and will issue a statement once we have concluded the entire process,” he said.

Shongwe joined the team at the beginning of the current campaign. He is a legend for the hub outfit where he played as a defender in the late 90s.



▲ Manzini Sundowns players celebrate a goal in thi undated match.



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denies Ferrari
friction**

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in FIFA rankings,
remains 159th**

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Sport



**Tricky test for
Emajukujuku**

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