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Archbishop calls
for Christians to
wake up spiritually

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▲SHINING STARS?: Nothando Hlophe with the awards that she won at the National Gospel Awards. (Centre) Samuels was also honoured. (Right) Singer Shekinah smiles as she accepts her award.

Country distances itself from “Eswatini-Flagged” vessel seized in Iran

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini has firmly disassociated itself from a vessel reportedly seized by Iranian authorities for alleged fuel smuggling, stating that the ship has no legitimate connection to the country. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport issued a detailed clarification confirming that Eswatini does not operate a ship registry and has never authorised anyone to register vessels under its flag. The statement comes after international media outlets reported that a ship bearing Eswatini’s flag had been intercepted by Iranian forces in the Persian Gulf.

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Eswatini distances itself from “Eswatini-flagged” vessel seized in Iran

Stories By Thokozani Mazibuko

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According to the ministry, the Kingdom currently has no ship registered under its national flag. This means that any vessel claiming Eswatini registration is doing so fraudulently. The government described such conduct as criminal and emphasised that those responsible must be held accountable by relevant international law enforcement bodies. Authorities noted that no local or foreign person, entity or agency has been mandated or authorised to act on behalf of Eswatini in maritime registration matters.

The Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Thulani Mkhali, issued the clarification on 30 November 2025. He stressed that Eswatini has never established an operational maritime registry and that



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creating such an institution would require legislation passed by Parliament. Since no such law exists, it is impossible for any legitimate ship to sail under the Kingdom’s name.

Mkhali explained that the misuse of Eswatini’s flag appears to be part of deliberate wrongdoing by individuals or networks involved in illicit activities. The ministry expressed concern that criminals operating across international waters have adopted the name of the country to disguise fuel smuggling and other unlawful operations. The government con-

demned this practice and called it irresponsible and deeply troubling.

The incident that prompted the clarification took place when Iranian naval forces seized a vessel reportedly involved in transporting smuggled fuel. International media identified the ship as Eswatini flagged, prompting questions and confusion about how such a vessel could be registered under the flag of a small landlocked nation with no seaport infrastructure or maritime registry. The government’s statement seeks to eliminate any ambiguity that

may arise from the association created by the reports. In its clarification, the ministry said it cannot identify the owners of the vessel or verify their motives because no legitimate registry exists within Eswatini. Officials believe that the country’s name was misused without any form of authorisation. This misuse, the ministry added, is part of a major global trend where criminals adopt false flags of convenience to evade regulation, obscure a vessel’s true origin or exploit perceived loopholes in international maritime systems.

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Government reaffirms zero tolerance for illegal use of Eswatini flag

ESWATINI’S government further assured the international community that it is committed to combating this type of fraud.

The statement highlighted ongoing cooperation between the Kingdom and global maritime bodies, including the International Maritime Organization.

The ministry expressed a willingness to work closely with enforcement agencies such as Interpol to halt any further abuse of the country’s name by criminal syndicates.

The government also clarified the process through which a maritime ship registry would be created should Eswatini ever decide to pursue such an initiative. Establishing a registry would require legislative approval, policy formulation and the creation of an institutional framework. The ministry emphasised that if this process were ever undertaken, the global community would be notified through official and transparent channels. Until such time, any vessel that claims Eswatini registration is acting illegally.

The ministry’s message to the public and the international community was unequivocal. It highlights that the Kingdom of Eswatini rejects any attempt to link it to criminal maritime activities and takes serious exception to the misuse of its national identity. Officials expressed confidence that international enforcement bodies will act decisively against those who attempt to operate under a false Eswatini flag.



▲ Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Thulani Mkhali.

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Stories by Thokozani Mazibuko

- WORLD AIDS DAY COMMEMORATION -

Eswatini to roll out new Lancapir PrEP

ESWATINI will take another major step in the fight against HIV today as the Ministry of Health introduces the new Lancapir pre-exposure prophylaxis today at the national World AIDS Day commemoration at Hhukwini Inkhundla.

The announcement was made by the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health Khanya Mabuza who confirmed that members of the public will witness the first symbolic administration of the long acting prevention injection during the event.

According to the Principal Secretary, several individuals have been selected to receive the first publicly administered jabs as part of the national launch. The ministry intends to demonstrate the safety, accessibility and simplicity of the new prevention method. Mabuza described the rollout as a historic milestone for the country, noting that it brings Eswatini closer to ending new HIV infections. He said that the public demonstration is aimed at helping communities understand how the new option works and how it can protect people who are at high risk of acquiring HIV.

The introduction of Lancapir PrEP comes at a time when Eswatini continues to strengthen its national response to HIV. The country has been globally recognised for its successful efforts in expanding treatment, improving viral load suppression and reducing mother to child transmission. However, health officials believe that reducing new infections remains a critical priority. The Principal Secretary said that the new injectable PrEP adds another effective tool to the national effort and expands the range of prevention choices available to the public.

Lancapir is a long acting antiretroviral medicine developed for use as pre exposure prophylaxis. Unlike daily oral PrEP tablets, Lancapir is administered through an intramuscular injection that can provide protection for a long period depending on



▲ Ministry of Health Principal Secretary Khanya Mabuza.

the dosage schedule. The medicine works by blocking the virus from entering human cells and preventing HIV from establishing infection in the body. Studies have shown that long acting injectables can improve adherence because people do not need to

remember to take medication every day. The injectable option is also useful for those who struggle with pill fatigue, stigma, storage limitations or inconsistent access to medication.

The development of Lancapir represents

years of scientific advancement aimed at providing more convenient prevention tools. Clinical trials conducted in several regions have demonstrated its effectiveness when administered correctly. Researchers have found that the drug maintains strong antiviral activity over time and provides sustained protection when taken according to prescribed intervals. The long acting nature of the medicine allows health systems to explore new delivery models that can reach people in remote areas or those with limited access to daily medication.

Eswatini's decision to introduce Lancapir follows extensive consultations with global partners and national experts. The Ministry of Health has worked closely with implementing agencies, clinicians, community organisations and international health bodies to prepare for the rollout. Training sessions have been conducted for health workers who will administer the injection and provide counselling to clients. Guidance has also been developed to ensure that facilities offering the service adhere to the required clinical and safety standards.

Mabuza said that introducing long acting PrEP is part of a broader strategy to diversify HIV prevention methods. The Ministry hopes that expanding the available choices will help meet the needs of different age groups and social categories. The Principal Secretary emphasised that prevention must be convenient, acceptable and aligned with the realities of people's lives. He said that the government remains committed to ensuring that all citizens have access to modern and effective HIV prevention tools.

... WHO endorses Lancapir as breakthrough in HIV prevention

THE global fight against HIV has reached another significant milestone following the endorsement of Lancapir by the World Health Organization.

The long acting injectable medicine has been approved for use as pre exposure prophylaxis, offering countries a powerful new tool to prevent HIV infections. Public health experts have welcomed the decision, describing it as a major advancement that is likely to transform prevention strategies across many regions affected by the epidemic.

The endorsement follows a series of independent clinical trials that demonstrated the high effectiveness of Lancapir when administered according to recommended guidelines. The World Health Organization noted that the injectable option can dramatically reduce the risk of HIV acquisition among people who are HIV negative but at substantial risk of exposure. The organisation confirmed that the long acting medicine is safe, scientifically sound and suitable for inclusion in national HIV prevention programmes.

Lancapir is administered through an intramuscular injection that provides extended protection, depending on dosage scheduling. This feature distinguishes it from daily oral pre exposure prophylaxis tablets that require consistent adherence. Research has shown that the challenge of taking a pill every day is one of the biggest obstacles in HIV prevention, especially among young people, mobile populations and individuals who face stigma in their communities. Many users find daily adherence difficult



▲ Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

to maintain over long periods. The World Health Organization stated that Lancapir offers an alternative that is more convenient and less dependent on daily routines, making prevention more accessible and reliable. The endorsement is based on evidence gathered from clinical studies conducted in several countries. Participants who received Lancapir demonstrated extremely low levels of HIV acquisition compared with placebo groups. The medicine maintains a strong antiviral concentration in the body for extended periods, preventing the virus from entering and infecting healthy cells. The World Health Organization concluded that Lancapir performs exceptionally well when administered consistently and within clinical guidelines.

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By Siphesihle Dlamini
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NOTHANDO Hlophe reaffirmed her place as the country's most celebrated gospel musician by dominating the National Gospel Music Awards held on Saturday at the TLC Events Centre. The acclaimed singer, who performed at the function, walked away with three major awards, solidifying what has already been a groundbreaking season for her illustrious career.

The "Methodist Medley" hitmaker, whose voice has become a fixture in homes, churches, and radio stations across the region, clinched Song of the Year with her spiritually stirring hit "Sithumela Wena," as well as Best Gospel Artist and Best Live Recording for her critically lauded project "A New Dawn."

Her triumphant sweep comes hot on the heels of yet another milestone, winning the "Best of Africa" award at the prestigious Crown Gospel Awards. For an artist who has spent years building a musical ministry rooted in authenticity, worship, and vocal brilliance, these accolades represent more than trophies, they mark a new chapter of influence on both the local and continental stage.

The album "A New Dawn," which earned her the Best Live Recording award, is a product of a dynamic collaboration between Genesis Ekucaleni Media and Lokuhle Media Group. Genesis Ekucaleni Media, founded by the pioneering Senator Pholile Shakantu, known for her impactful work on the Eswatini film "BakaNgwane," brought visionary leadership to the project. Lokuhle Media Group, led by the acclaimed music producer Phindokuhle Sithole, contributed their expert production skills, creating a live recording that resonated deeply with audiences. The event was proudly sponsored by

Nothando Hlophe wins big at National Gospel Awards



▲ Nothando Hlophe receiving an award from Prime Minister's Representative Sikhumbuzo Dlamini.

Eswatini Mobile, whose support was instrumental in bringing the live recording to fruition.

In an exclusive interview, Nothando Hlophe expressed profound gratitude and humility upon receiving the awards. "Winning these three awards fills my heart with deep gratitude and humility. Every new recognition reminds me that God's grace guides this journey. I am honoured, encouraged, and inspired to continue serving with excellence. It is a beautiful affirmation that the music is reaching hearts in the way God intended," she shared. When asked about the significance of these awards for her brand,

Nothando Hlophe emphasised their role in symbolising growth and credibility. "For the brand, these awards represent growth, credibility, and the impact of consistency. They show that the dedication, sacrifice, and commitment behind the scenes are not in vain. They open new opportunities, strengthen our presence, and motivate us to keep raising the standard. Most importantly, they confirm that staying true to purpose will always bear fruit," she remarked.

Nothando Hlophe took a moment to acknowledge the support system that has been integral to her success. "To everyone who has supported me, my family, my team, my



▲ Nothando Hlophe making remarks after winning the Best Gospel Artist Award.

church, and every beautiful soul who listens, votes, shares, and prays for me, ngiyabonga kakhulu. Your love and belief keep me going," she said warmly.

She also extended heartfelt thanks to her production and sponsorship partners. "A special thank you to Genesis Ekucaleni Media, Lokuhle Media Group, and Eswatini Mobile for your unwavering support, professionalism, and partnership throughout this journey. I am truly grateful to each of you. These awards are not mine alone; they reflect what we have built together. Thank you for walking this journey with me."

Eswatini Police join global leaders at INTERPOL's 93rd General Assembly

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) has taken part in the 93rd INTERPOL General Assembly, a major gathering that brought together police chiefs and security leaders from across the world to address the complex and evolving challenges of global crime.

The conference was held at the Jardis de Menara in Marrakech, Morocco, from 24 to 27 November 2025. It attracted more than eight hundred delegates from one hundred and seventy nine countries, including eighty two police chiefs from various regions. Among them was Eswatini's National Commissioner of Police Manoma Vusie Masango, who attended alongside other senior officials from the Southern African Development Community.

The annual assembly plays a critical role in shaping global law enforcement priorities and strengthening cooperation between police agencies. This year's gathering focused strongly on enhancing international policing systems, improving cross border collaboration and equipping countries with the technological tools needed to confront transnational crime. Delegates discussed strategies to combat cybercrime, money laundering, drug trafficking, terrorism and human trafficking, which remain among the most serious threats facing members of the international community.

The meeting was officially opened by the Moroccan Director of General National Se-



▲ National Commissioner of Police Vusie Manoma Masango (l) posing with other officials during the summit.

curity, who also serves as the Director General for Territorial Surveillance, Abdellatif Hammouchi. In his remarks, he warned that contemporary crime continues to grow more sophisticated. He said that no country is immune to the dangers posed by organised criminal networks operating across borders. He emphasised the need for unity and cooperation in order to safeguard global security. He reminded delegates that criminal syndicates exploit technological advancement and weaknesses in communication systems, making coordinated policing even more essential.

A key development during the assembly was the launch of the new Privileges and Immunities framework of INTERPOL. The agreement seeks to reinforce the legal status of the organisation and to protect its operational independence. Delegates noted that a stronger legal framework would help improve the functioning of INTERPOL, enhance international cooperation and enable

the organisation to fulfil its mandate more efficiently. The agreement was welcomed by member states who felt that it would help close gaps in the global law enforcement network.

The Eswatini delegation contributed to several discussions and emphasised the importance of building better communication channels between countries. Commissioner Masango highlighted the need to improve cooperation between national law enforcement agencies, especially in areas such as information sharing, coordinated investigations and the adoption of modern policing tools. He said that tackling transnational crime requires a shared commitment from all participating countries because criminals often use borders to evade justice and exploit weak regulatory environments.

One of the concerns raised by the Eswatini delegation was the continued exclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan from INTERPOL activities. The delegation ex-

pressed that this exclusion creates a gap in the global law enforcement network. According to Commissioner Masango, effective policing depends on the widest possible participation of all jurisdictions. He said that any missing link in the chain creates opportunities for criminals to take advantage of blind spots in the system. He urged member states to consider the practical implications of excluding any region from global security efforts.

The four day conference also provided an opportunity for SADC member states to meet on the sidelines. During these regional discussions, security and cooperation issues affecting southern Africa were examined in detail. Delegates from SADC countries reaffirmed their commitment to supporting each other in efforts to fight terrorism, cross border crimes, the trafficking of people and illicit goods and other forms of organised criminal activity.

Commissioner Masango highlighted the importance of regional solidarity and noted that the SADC police chiefs were united in supporting two African candidates who were vying for key INTERPOL positions. He said that if these candidates succeed, their election would represent a significant victory for the African continent because it would give the region stronger representation within the leadership structures of INTERPOL. He added that Africa continues to face unique security challenges and the presence of African experts in senior positions would help ensure that the continent's priorities are fully understood within the global policing environment.



Farmers scoop E200 000 at NMC 40th anniversary

... Top farmer bags E40 000

By Delisa Magagula

FARMERS across Eswatini walked away with a combined E292 500 in prizes at the 2025 National Maize Corporation (NMC) Farmers Awards. This was an event that also celebrated the corporation's 40th anniversary and the 10th year of the awards programme.

The ceremony recognised top performers in maize and bean production during the 2024/25 season and rewarded farmers in multiple categories, including productivity, commercial output, bean production, tractor ownership, and women's excellence in agriculture.

The highlight of the ceremony was the announcement of Sibonginkhosi Johnson, 32, from Sicunusa, as the Overall Top Farmer.

Johnson delivered 258.08 tonnes of maize to NMC this season, earning farming inputs valued at E40 000, a trophy, and a certificate. Speaking on stage, Johnson said his success was the result of discipline, strategic planning, and participation in the Hamba Ubuye Commercial Maize Project under EWADE.

"Maize farming is challenging, but perseverance pays off. Every seed planted is a commitment to feeding our communities and contributing to the nation's food security," Johnson stated.

Several other farmers collected multiple awards, increasing the total cash payout. Mfanasibili Khumalo received E35 000 for the Highest Maize Productivity award and also won the Best Private Tractor Owner category.

Thandi Nhlabatsi earned recognition as the Woman Farmer with the Highest Maize Productivity and also for third place in overall maize productivity. Mgucisi Dlamini and Mxolisi Myeni, the top bean farmer, also received multiple awards, reflecting their consistent performance and contribution to the sector.

In his keynote address, Minister for Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka emphasised the strategic importance of strengthening do-



▲ Minister for Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka making remarks.

mestic food production.

He noted that Eswatini currently spends E1.1 billion importing maize and beans while losses linked to exports cost the nation E2.2 billion.

"Supporting NMC and empowering farmers is no longer optional; it is a national imperative. Our goal is to ensure reliable, sustainable production of maize, beans, and now soybeans while reducing costly import dependency," Tshawuka said.

The Minister further announced E14 million in funding for agricultural projects to support inputs, logistics, and technical services, with an additional E26 million dedicated to enhancing production and distribution systems.

The Ministry set ambitious production targets for the 2025/26 season. Officials aim to achieve 110,000 metric tonnes of maize and 7,000 metric tonnes of beans, alongside a nationwide push for soybeans, supported by the newly commissioned processing plant in Matsapha.

Minister Tshawuka noted that the government's focus on domestic production is intended to secure livelihoods, strengthen

communities, and ensure food availability throughout the country.

Meanwhile, award-winning farmers noted that the recognition boosts both confidence and market credibility. Mgucisi Dlamini, who collected two awards, said the accolades provide financial and motivational support, allowing him to invest in more productive crops and expand operations.

Similarly, Mxolisi Myeni said recognition from NMC enhances his standing with buyers and traders, opening opportunities for improved commercial returns.

Worth noting the combined output of the top 10 farmers for the season reached 1,172.6 metric tonnes, representing a 28 per cent increase from the previous year. NMC stated that this growth reflects improved land preparation, higher adoption of quality seed varieties, better mechanisation, and expanded extension services.

Meanwhile, NMC Board Chairman Patrick Myeni reaffirmed the corporation's commitment to improving productivity, supporting farmers, and stabilising national grain supplies.

"After 40 years, our mission remains



▲ NMC Chairman of the Board Patrick Myeni.

steadfast: produce more, produce better, and strengthen food security for the Kingdom. These awards are proof that our farmers are ready for the challenges ahead," Myeni said.

NMC said that over the past decade, it has expanded outreach to both smallholder and commercial farmers, improved storage and delivery systems, and strengthened partnerships with financiers, agro-dealers, and development agencies.

The awards are seen as an incentive structure that encourages farmers to increase productivity, adopt climate-smart practices, and transition from subsistence to commercial farming.

This year's awards highlighted increasing participation from young farmers and women. Categories recognising these groups included Woman Farmer with Highest Maize Productivity, Youth Commercial Farmer, and Best Young Bean Producer.

NMC stated these categories aim to support youth empowerment, gender inclusion, and sustainable agriculture.

With government backing, expanding youth participation, and farmers like Johnson leading by example, the Ministry and NMC aim to further reduce dependence on imports, expand production, and improve market access.

NMC stated that local production of maize, beans, and soybeans is central to national food security and long-term sustainability, ensuring the Kingdom can meet its own needs while promoting commercial growth within the agricultural sector.

By Ncaba Ntshakala
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EXECUTIVE Secretary of the Incomati and Maputo Watercourse Commission (INMACOM), Sindy Mthimkhulu, has outlined the major strides the organisation has made in strengthening its institutional capacity, accelerating programme delivery and positioning the commission for long-term success across its three member states which are Eswatini, Mozambique and South Africa.

In a detailed briefing to commissioners, Mthimkhulu highlighted on the milestones achieved since she assumed leadership, emphasising that her first task was to boost the pace and efficiency of INMACOM’s programmes.

“When I came in, the first thing I had to do was ensure speed in the execution of programmes,” she said. “There has been a lot of groundwork done prior to my arrival, and my responsibility was to make sure that we move beyond excuses and begin to achieve tangible results.”

Mthimkhulu highlighted that INMACOM had benefited from support from the Dutch Government, which helped establish the institution and lay the foundation for staffing. However, she noted that as the organisation matured, it became essential to shift toward performance-driven implementation.

“By the time I arrived, it was no longer about saying we are too young or understaffed. It was about organising the environment so that programmes under the TDP5 could be executed effectively,” she said. Her early priorities included reviewing internal policies, refining systems and ensuring the organisational environment was conducive for staff performance. She also focused on filling capacity gaps,

INMACOM charts new era of coordination, strategic progress



▲ Executive Secretary of INMACOM Sindy Mthimkhulu.

acknowledging that a small team serving three countries required deliberate strategic planning.

Through the JEF project, INMACOM has been able to recruit additional technical

personnel who will serve for the next five years which is a development Mthimkhulu described as crucial to strengthening programme delivery.

Mthimkhulu also pointed to the

importance of aligning INMACOM’s technical operations with the expertise available in the member states.

“I can’t pretend to know everything as Executive Secretary,” she said. “I have had to leverage the strengths of technical experts across all three countries.”

A key part of her strategy was revitalising the commission’s task teams to ensure they take ownership of their portfolios and lead implementation. This has allowed INMACOM to enter meetings “in harmony,” as Mthimkhulu put it, with clearly defined contributions based on technical merit.

One of the most significant milestones this year was the comprehensive strategy review conducted with the participation of all task teams which is a first for the institution. Over two days, each team dissected its responsibilities, refined its strategic direction and aligned its priorities with INMACOM’s long-term objectives.

Presenting to commissioners at the year-end meeting, Mthimkhulu expressed satisfaction that the organisation is now equipped with a unified approach and a clear operational direction.

“We now have a strategy that breaks down our work, shows our direction, and aligns us with the objectives set in 2022,” she said. “We have the right processes in place to move forward and to monitor our performance against the goals we have set for ourselves.”

She also extended appreciation to the three member states for entrusting her with the leadership of the commission, noting that the progress made under her tenure is a result of collective effort, commitment and strengthened regional collaboration.

Anglican Archbishop calls for Christians to wake up spiritually

By Thokozani Mazibuko
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THE Anglican Church of Southern Africa gathered in worship, celebration and reflection on Sunday as the community held its Annual Family Day at St Michael’s High School.

The event drew hundreds of families, clergy and youth groups, all united in fellowship and prayer. The highlight of the gathering was the sermon delivered by the Archbishop and Metropolitan, Reverend Dr Thabo Cecil Makgoba, who called on Christians to awaken spiritually and renew their commitment to living out their faith with purpose.

Archbishop Makgoba spoke with conviction as he reminded the congregation that faith is not a passive experience but a daily journey that demands alertness, courage and a willingness to let go of whatever dims the presence of God. He emphasised that many believers move through life on spiritual autopilot, weighed down by distractions, habits and fears that weaken their connection to God. The Archbishop urged the faithful to recognise the importance of spiritual wakefulness in a world filled with pressures that constantly compete for the attention of the heart and mind.

He drew his message from the biblical teachings that encourage believers to remain alert and grounded in God’s love. He explained that spiritual sleepiness is not only dangerous but also robs individuals of the fullness of life that God intends for them.



▲ Archbishop and Metropolitan, Reverend Dr Thabo Cecil Makgoba (l), who called on Christians to awaken spiritually and renew their commitment to living out their faith with purpose.

According to the Archbishop, to wake up in faith is to realign one’s priorities, to reflect deeply on one’s actions and thoughts, and to recommit oneself to a life shaped by love, humility and service.

Archbishop Makgoba also highlighted the many distractions that modern society presents, including technology, materialism and the pursuit of individual success at the expense of spiritual growth. He acknowledged that while these forces are part of contemporary life, believers must remain intentional in creating space for God. True spiritual awakening, he said, begins with honesty about one’s own weaknesses

and a willingness to surrender barriers that block God’s light.

He further called on families, youth and leaders to let love guide their actions and decisions. Love, he said, is not merely a feeling but a commitment to act with kindness, to seek reconciliation, and to uplift others even in challenging circumstances. The Archbishop explained that the world is desperate for people who choose compassion over judgment, unity over division, and hope over despair.

The Archbishop also urged the congregation to cultivate communities where everyone feels valued and supported.



▲ The Archbishop greeting the clergy of the Anglican church during the event.

He reflected on the role of the Church as a family that nurtures faith, teaches children the ways of God, and provides a safe space for spiritual growth. He challenged church members to take responsibility for strengthening these

Archbishop Makgoba concluded his sermon by reminding the faithful that waking up spiritually is a lifelong process. It requires daily choices to trust God, to seek His guidance and to be courageous in living out the values of the Gospel. He encouraged everyone present to leave the gathering renewed in spirit and ready to embrace their calling as followers of Christ.

Eskom sees annual profit matching last year's

SOUTH African state power utility Eskom said on Friday that it expected this year's profit to be similar to last year's, after a strong first six months helped by higher tariffs and lower finance costs.

Eskom made 16 billion rand of profit after tax last year, its first full-year profit in eight years, after a steep reduction in the recurring electricity blackouts that have held back Africa's biggest economy for more than a decade.

The rebound in its financial results has been underpinned by a multi-year government bailout and a sharp turnaround in the performance of its coal-fired power stations.

It made profit after tax of 24.3 billion rand (\$1.4 billion) in the first half of its current financial year, which coincided with the southern hemisphere winter months when Eskom sells more power and does less plant maintenance.

Eskom said the result showed last year's profit was not a one-off achievement.

In the six months to the end of September, revenue was up 4% to 191.3 billion rand, helped by a 12.7% average tariff increase.

Net finance costs fell 14% to 15.3 billion rand due to lower interest rates and levels of debt. But the money it is owed by struggling municipalities rose to 105 billion rand from 90.1 billion rand a year before.

Eskom said power cuts were only implemented on four days of the six-month period covered by its latest results. In 2023, when power cuts reached record levels, there were outages on more than 300 days of the year.

(Reuters)

Climate-driven monetary shifts to reshape Eswatini's financial future

Stories By Delisa Magagula

THE Governor of the Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE), Dr Phil Mnisi, has returned from two major continental monetary gatherings.

The COMESA Monetary Cooperation and Integration Meetings in Kampala and the Annual Meeting of the Association of African Central Banks (AACB) in Yaoundé has a single message: stability in Africa's financial sector now depends on how well countries prepare for climate-related and global economic shocks.

Mnisi noted that Eswatini, though small, is not exempt from the shifts already underway.

During his first stop in Kampala, Dr Mnisi chaired a panel on financial-sector resilience, where he emphasised that central banks can no longer afford to merely analyse crises, they must actively harden their systems against them.

"Our goal is not simply to understand shocks, but to ensure that our financial sectors remain robust, inclusive, and capable of

supporting sustainable economic development even in times of volatility," he told fellow governors.

From Kampala, the Governor travelled to Yaoundé, Cameroon, for the Annual Meeting of the Association of African Central Banks (AACB).

The meeting opened with a symposium on November 27, under the theme 'Climate Change and Macroeconomic Stability: The Role of Central Banks'. Speakers assessed how climate-related events are influencing inflation, financial stability, and the broader macroeconomic environment.

Central bank representatives discussed regulatory responses, including integrating climate considerations into supervisory frameworks and monetary policy assessments.

During the Yaoundé meeting, Governors also considered the inaugural African Financial Stability Report, released under the African Financial Stability Board's framework.

The report provides a continent-wide assessment of systemic risks across banking sectors, financial markets and payment systems. Eswatini was among the countries



▲ CBE Governor Dr Phil Mnisi in Kampala.

participating in the technical work supporting the report's development. Governors further discussed progress toward establishing the African Monetary Institute (AMI), which is to be headquartered in Nigeria.

The AMI is expected to coordinate the continent's monetary integration agenda and serve as a precursor to a future African central bank. Updates were presented on technical preparations, institutional structures and the timeline

for operationalisation.

Across both meetings, emphasis was placed on strengthening coordination among African central banks in response to external shocks, climate-driven pressures and regional integration commitments.

For Eswatini, the discussions align with the CBE's ongoing participation in regional financial-stability initiatives and monetary-cooperation programmes under COMESA and the AACB.



▲ Dr Phil Mnisi at the Yaoundé meeting.



▲ The Governor attended annual meeting of Governors.

Central Bank to pivot to green finance

The Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE) is advancing a major strategic shift to address the country's growing exposure to climate-related risks.

With Eswatini increasingly affected by recurrent droughts, floods and shifting weather patterns, the CBE has begun integrating climate considerations directly into its financial-stability mandate through what it calls its 'Greening Project'.

The initiative is centred on incorporating climate-related financial risks into regulatory and supervisory frameworks.

These risks fall into two categories which are physical risks, which arise from direct damage caused by extreme weather events, and transition risks, linked to the economic adjustments required as countries move toward low-carbon development.

As part of this effort, the CBE recently joined the Network for Greening the Financial System

(NGFS), a global consortium of central banks and financial regulators committed to managing climate-related financial risks.

Noteworthy membership gives the CBE access to technical guidance, analytical tools and international best practices to support the development of climate-aligned regulation.

The Bank is now working toward establishing a supervisory approach that will require domestic financial institutions to strengthen their own climate-risk assessment frameworks.

This includes conducting scenario analysis, climate stress tests and evaluating the vulnerability of their balance sheets to a range of potential climate outcomes.

Alongside regulatory measures, the CBE is prioritising efforts to mobilise capital for climate-resilient and low-carbon investment. This aligns with Eswatini's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, which set out national

commitments to address climate change.

According to CBE's annual report, the bank is exploring a set of financial instruments aimed at expanding access to climate-aligned funding.

These include, green bonds and sustainability-linked loans, designed to attract private finance into environmentally sustainable projects and a climate-risk insurance facility, intended to cushion vulnerable sectors particularly agriculture from the financial shocks associated with climate-related disasters.

Through the Greening Project, the CBE aims to strengthen the resilience of the financial system and ensure it contributes actively to the country's climate-adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The initiative positions the financial sector not only as a responder to climate shocks, but also as a driver of long-term sustainability and economic stability in Eswatini.

FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	17.9876	18.4546
G.B. Pound	22.5453	23.2168
EURO	18.6833	19.2932
Bank Rate (July 2023)		7.50%
Prime Rate (July 2023)		11%
Inflation (July 2023)		4.5%
Petrol	E19.80/Litre	
Diesel	E20.20/Litre	
Paraffin	E17.25/Litre	

Stories By Delisa Magagula

Ahead of IFMIS, Eswatini enters full digital budgeting era

ESWATINI has begun its first national budgeting cycle under the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS), which is a major shift from decades of manual processes.

The Ministry of Finance confirmed that all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) have now started entering their plans and budgets directly into the digital platform, following the release of the Budget Call Circular.

This is the first time the country's budgeting process is being captured end-to-end within a single system.

The IFMIS Project Management Unit brought MDAs together at Happy Valley last week for a working session focused on planning, data entry and alignment with national priorities.

The new approach links each ministry's budget to the National Development Plan and the Government's Plan of Action a connection government officials say was previously difficult to maintain under the old system.

The Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg said the shift to IFMIS will replace manual record-keeping and the mainframe platform introduced in 1992.

"Once fully implemented, the system will allow the government to track payments, procurement, accounting, reporting, asset management and auditing in real time. The full suite of modules is expected to go live by April 2026, after which all payments will be processed through the same platform," he said.

Worth noting, Eswatini received funding from the African Development Bank to support public financial management reforms, including the rollout of IFMIS.

Part of the financing is being used to recruit a firm that will provide quality assurance as the government prepares for the system's nationwide launch.

Rijkenberg, recently noted that the country continues to face cash-flow pressures, adding that reforms such as IFMIS are intended to strengthen financial discipline and improve how public resources are managed.

"Government's cash position has remained tight, and this demands tighter control, better forecasting and more accurate, timely information. The IFMIS rollout is a critical part of restoring stability and improving the

way we manage the public purse," he said.

Worth noting countries across Africa have adopted IFMIS over the past two decades, including Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana and Ethiopia.

In these countries, the system is used to monitor budgets, track government spending, streamline procurement and improve the accuracy of financial reporting.

Some nations introduced it in phases, beginning with budgeting and payments before expanding to assets, procurement and audits.

The experience across the region shows that once fully established, IFMIS can significantly reduce errors, standardise processes and make it easier for treasuries to follow real-time financial data.



▲ The IFMIS will be rolled out in April 2026.



▲ Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg makes his address.

IFMIS rollout turning point in public finance system– Economists

ECONOMISTS and public finance specialists say Eswatini's adoption of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) has the potential to significantly strengthen oversight, improve budget discipline and modernise the country's financial operations.

Their assessment comes as the government begins preparing for the system's full rollout by April 2026, with all ministries, departments and agencies now entering their budgets and plans directly into the platform.

They argue that the move comes at a critical moment, as the country continues to face tight liquidity conditions, rising service delivery demands and increased scrutiny of public spending.

According to regional public finance analyst Sifiso Dlamini, the introduction of IFMIS gives Eswatini an opportunity to address long-standing weaknesses in expenditure tracking.

He explains that manual systems and the 1990s mainframe limited



▲ The week training gathered Ministries.

the government's ability to monitor spending in real time, creating gaps that contributed to delays, inconsistent reporting and difficulty managing arrears.

"A modern treasury system helps

close leakages," he said, noting that other countries in the region have recorded improvements in cash management once digital systems become operational.

Development economist Dr Zanele

Motsa says the most meaningful impact will be during budget execution. She notes that while Eswatini has made progress in budget formulation, the challenge has been ensuring that approved budgets

translate into predictable spending patterns.

"Once IFMIS is functional across all ministries, it forces discipline. Procurement, payments, commitments and reporting all move through the same pathway, which reduces discretion and strengthens oversight," said Motsa.

The experts also highlighted risks that could slow progress. Motsa said capacity gaps remain a concern, as the effectiveness of IFMIS depends on whether staff across ministries are trained and able to use the system consistently.

"Infrastructure reliability including connectivity in rural departments is another factor that could affect adoption, the system is a necessary investment," said Motsa.

Regional governance researcher Thabo Mamba summarises the consensus and said IFMIS is not a silver bullet, but it is the backbone of any modern public finance environment.

"If Eswatini implements it correctly, the long-term gains in transparency and financial management will be substantial," he said.

Eswatini Mobile’ launches “win a red Christmas trolley” worth E2 000

By EDN Reporter

ESWATINI Mobile is buzzing with festive energy as it launches a new customer-focused campaign, “Win A Red Christmas Trolley”, delivering joy to homes across the country.

The campaign offers active Eswatini Mobile customers a chance to win a fully stocked trolley worth E2,000 at no extra cost, turning Christmas shopping into a celebration. This initiative aims to ease the season’s financial pressures and help families begin January with extra sparkle as Eswatini Mobile stands ready to share in the festive cheer.

The Red Christmas Trolley valued at up to E2,000 will be rolled out at Pick n Pay, Embiveni, Shoprite and SPAR outlets. The promotion will run from December 1 to December 31, 2025, with lucky winners selected randomly at the participating retail stores across all four regions of the country. To qualify, participants must be found to be 18 years or older, active on the network and have their SIM card with them at the pay point. The promotion applies only during the official Eswatini Mobile announced times.

Eswatini Mobile Head of Commercial, Nosipho Xaba, said the initiative is a deliberate effort to support emaSwati during tough economic times, particularly as families juggle festive spending and the high-pressure back-to-school season.

“This campaign is our practical response to His Majesty King Mswati III’s call to elevate poverty. As Eswatini Mobile, we recognise the real pressures faced by families during December and even more in January when school fees, uniforms, and groceries compete for space in already strained budgets,” she said.

“Our vision is to be Africa’s Leading Integrated Business Partner, and we firmly believe that this cannot be achieved without the people we serve. The Red Christmas Trolley campaign is our way of giving back and ensuring that our customers feel supported during a time that is traditionally financially demanding.”

The promotion reflects the company’s continued commitment to aligning its commercial objectives with national priorities, particularly in improving the quality of life for citizens. Throughout December, Eswatini Mobile teams will visit selected Embiveni, Pick n Pay, Shoprite and SPAR stores where shoppers will be surprised with trolley giveaways on the spot, adding a festive spirit and an element of excitement to the shopping experience. According to Xaba, with rising inflation and the cost of living continuing to place pressure on households, Eswatini Mobile’s campaign is expected to resonate with many families seeking relief. By centering the promotion around everyday essentials, the company positions itself as a partner that understands the socio-economic realities faced by consumers.

The Win a Red Xmas Trolley campaign not only enhances brand visibility but also reinforces Eswatini Mobile’s commitment to customer welfare, demonstrating that beyond connectivity, the company values the broader well-being of its subscribers.

As the festive season approaches, emaSwati can look forward to a December filled with surprises, support, and a little extra cheer courtesy of their Affordable Network.

Please refer to the calender for dates and times:



▲ Eswatini Mobile Head of Commercial Nosipho Xaba.

DECEMBER 2025 WIN A RED TROLLEY CALENDAR

DATES, TIME & LOCATIONS

MON

TUE

WED

THUR

FRI

SAT

SUN

1	2 Mbabane PnP - 1PM Embiveni Mbabane - 2PM Mahala PnP - 5PM	3 Piggs Peak Spar - 1PM Embiveni Piggs Peak - 2PM Buhleni Shoprite - 4PM	4	5 Bhunu Mall Shoprite - 1PM Mbabane Spar - 5PM	6	7
8	9 Siteki Shoprite - 1PM	10 Gables Shoprite - 5PM Crescent PnP - 4PM	11 Mbabane PnP - 5PM	12 Manzini Lifestyle Spar - 1PM Embiveni Matsapha - 3PM Matsapha Lifestyle Spar - 5PM	13	14
15	16 Matsapha Link PnP - 1PM Malkorns Link PnP - 4PM	17 Siphofaneni Shoprite - 1PM Embiveni Siphofaneni - 2PM Matata Spar - 4PM	18	19 Nhlanguano PnP - 1PM Embiveni Nhlanguano - 2PM Hlathi Shoprite - 4PM	20	21
22 Gables PnP - 12PM Manzini Lifestyle Spar - 2PM Embiveni Down Town - 4PM	23 Mbabane Spar - 12PM Mbabane Shoprite - 1PM	24 Mbabane PnP - 10AM	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

eswatini mobile

Your Affordable Network

WIN A RED CHRISTMAS TROLLEY

LET'S PAY YOUR BILL!

Win A Red Christmas Trolley!

This festive season, your shopping could be on us! Visit selected superstores **this December** and stand a chance to have your groceries paid for, up to **E2,000**.

Heres How to win:

Be at the store at the announced time.

A random till number is drawn.

Make sure you have an active SIM card with you and it's in your phone.

Shop, smile, and celebrate with us this Christmas.

Terms and Conditions Apply.

For more information dial 980 or visit any Eswatini Mobile Experience Centre.

www.eswatinimobile.co.sz

eswatini mobile

5G

washing fabric care pest c

diapers towels paper

by WeNkosi Khumalo

ENPF honours top employers for full compliance and integrity

THE Lidlelantfongeni Stakeholder Recognition Awards, organised by the Eswatini National Provident Fund (ENPF), has celebrated eight employers who have demonstrated exemplary compliance with statutory contribution obligations; setting a high standard of accountability, fairness and social responsibility in the country's private sector.

At the fourth edition of the Awards ceremony, held on Friday 28 November in Manzini, ENPF's Chief Executive Officer, Futhi Tembe, publicly honoured the firms whose consistent contributions protect the financial security of their employees and strengthen the nation's social security architecture.

"Compliance is not just a requirement; it is a commitment to fairness, sustainability, and the wellbeing of our workforce," Tembe told assembled guests, urging businesses to regard statutory contributions not as a burden, but as a core duty to their staff and the broader community.

By law, under the Swaziland National Provident Fund Order, 1974, employers are obliged to register with ENPF and make regular statutory contributions for every eligible employee.

These contributions are more than administrative obligations, they form the bedrock of a social security system that protects workers at retirement, in the event of invalidity, retrenchment, or other life events that might compromise their ability to earn.

The Awards are more than bureaucratic recognition. They send a powerful message to the corporate community that adherence to statutory obligations is a badge of honour, not a com-

pliance chore. The event seeks to encourage a culture where employers lead by example, prioritise workers' welfare, and view compliance as integral to business ethics and national development.

CEO Tembe, said the Awards reaffirm the national values of accountability, fairness, social protection, and longterm thinking.

"Your dedication to compliance sets a benchmark for others to follow," she told the awardees. "You have shown that success and responsibility go hand in hand."

Significantly, this year's Awards also spotlighted three employers who voluntarily paid 100 % of statutory contributions on behalf of their employees, foregoing the employee deduction entirely. Tembe described this practice as a shining example of corporate social responsibility.

CEO Tembe urged all employers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to draw inspiration from the winners, adopt ENPF's digital submission tools, improve internal recordkeeping, and prioritise timely and full contributions. "Let these awards inspire us to uphold the highest standards in every aspect of our operations," she said.



Inside Eswatini's new era of employer excellence

... How companies are redefining responsibility, worker dignity, and corporate leadership

WHEN the ENPF introduced the CEO's weekly Lidlelantfongeni Stakeholder Recognition Awards, the goal was to spotlight employers, members and tenants who go beyond statutory requirements to safeguard workers' financial futures.

The fourth edition of the awards, held on 28 December 2025 at ENPF Headquarters in Manzini, honoured companies demonstrating exceptional compliance, including those that voluntarily pay 100% of statutory contributions on behalf of their employees.

Among the standout performers were eight enterprises recognised not only for meeting the rules, but for treating compliance as a moral compass, a strategic investment and a mark of national responsibility. Representatives from three of these organisations shared candid reflections, blending human experience, corporate insight and a deep sense of duty to Eswatini's workforce.

Sifiso Dlamini – Africa Link Logistics (45 employees)

"Drivers give their lives to this industry — the least we can do is secure their future."

For Africa Link Logistics, a company employing 45 long-distance truck drivers, ENPF compliance is not an administrative footnote; it is a declaration of gratitude to the people who spend their lives on the road.

Speaking at the function, Sifiso Dlamini said the company's decision to contribute 100% of ENPF statutory contributions, though not required by law, was driven by a deep respect for the men behind the wheel. He noted that the average driver's prime years fade by age 40, often without savings to cushion retirement.

"Long-distance drivers give everything. Their strength, their time, their family life. When those years are gone, what remains? The owners of Africa Link decided their future should not be left to chance."

"The company's decision to pay 100% contribution was driven by a deep respect for the men and women who keep the business moving. It is unfortunate that many in this sector reach the end of their careers with little or no retirement savings."

Dlamini praised the CEO of Lidlelantfongeni Muthi Tembe and the ENPF team for making compliance clear and accessible, saying their support turns a tough sector into a humane one.

He added that many transport companies still need to put a lot of effort on retirement savings and insurance issues so that their staff is not neglected when the time to stop working comes and that their families are not left vulnerable.

"We will continue to set a benchmark. If our drivers dedicate their lives to growing the business, the least we can do is ensure they have something meaningful at the end."

TemaSwati Dlamini – Alternative Energy (63 employees)

"SMEs can lead from the front, and compliance is the foundation of growth."

Alternative Energy, an SME employing 63 staff in renewable solutions and rural electrification, views ENPF compliance as integral to nation-building.

After receiving the award, TemaSwati Dlamini said the recognition served as a powerful reminder that small companies can be just as influential as large corporations when it comes to setting national standards in corporate behaviour. She described the moment as deeply affirming, especially for an SME that employs 63 people across renewable energy and rural electrification projects.

"We may be small, but we want to set a big example," she said. "Compliance is who we are and it tells our employees that their future matters, and it tells the country that SMEs can lead responsibly."



Dlamini said the award goes beyond trophies and certificates; it signals trust and maturity in a sector that is often dismissed as too young or too stretched to implement strong governance systems. She added that the recognition validates the company's belief that ethical practices should be embedded from day one.

"A lot of SMEs think compliance is something you do when you're bigger or when you have more resources," she explained. "But we've proven that responsible practices can start small, and grow with the business."

She praised ENPF for making compliance seamless and accessible, noting how the Fund's systems help young companies establish solid foundations.

"ENPF brings stability, structure and confidence," she said. "It assures employees that even in a young company, their effort becomes long-term security. That motivates them — and it motivates us to do better every single year."

Dlamini said the award also strengthens Alternative Energy's credibility with partners and the communities it serves, especially as renewable energy becomes central to Eswatini's development agenda.

"Compliance is not a burden. It's an investment," she added. "If you want your business to grow, to be respected, and to attract good people, start with ENPF. It's one of the smartest decisions any SME can make."

She emphasised that Alternative Energy will continue raising the bar, not just for internal governance but for what responsible small businesses can contribute to the country.

"We're proud to show that SMEs can lead from the front," she said. "This award is encouragement, but it's also a challenge, a challenge to keep doing better for our employees and for Eswatini."

Sikelela Qwabe – Umbane (Pty) Ltd (73 employees)



"Corporate governance starts with how you treat your people."

Umbane, a longstanding sugarcane farming operation in Malkerns employing 73 workers, entered a new chapter in April 2024 when it became a direct employer after years under RES Corporation. For Board Member Sikelela Qwabe, the shift was more than administrative — it marked the beginning of a more transparent, accountable and worker-centred era for the company.

He said the ENPF recognition affirms Umbane's renewed commitment to good governance and responsible stewardship, especially during a period of structural change.

"For us, compliance is not a box to tick. It is good stewardship — managing shareholder value responsibly while safeguarding the workers who create that value."

Qwabe said the transition came with challenges, but ENPF's guidance made the process smooth and confidence-building.

"The ENPF team walked with us, step by step. Their systems make it possible for new employers like us to comply confidently."

He added that the award is more than a corporate accolade; it is a message to the workforce.

"This award tells our employees that they matter. We're not just running a business — we're protecting futures."

Qwabe described the recognition as a springboard for responsible growth, reaffirming Umbane's commitment to fairness and good governance.

"This is only the beginning. As we grow, we will continue to comply. Our workers deserve nothing less."

He encouraged other companies undergoing transitions to embrace compliance early.

"If you want stability, trust and long-term success, start with compliance. It is not an expense — it's an investment in your company's future."



US officials expect more progress during US-Ukraine talks in Florida

HALLANDALE BEACH, Florida, - U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Sunday he expected talks with Ukrainian officials to yield “more progress” toward a deal to end the war in Ukraine.

“This is not just about peace deals. It’s about creating a pathway forward that leaves Ukraine sovereign, independent and prosperous and so we expect to make even more progress today,” Rubio said in Hallandale Beach, Florida, where talks were taking place. Ukraine’s delegation was led by a new chief negotiator, national security council secretary Rustem Umerov, after the

resignation on Friday of previous team leader Andriy Yermak, chief of staff to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, amid a corruption scandal at home.

As the meeting began, Umerov thanked the United States and its officials. “U.S. is hearing us, U.S. is supporting us, U.S. is walking besides us,” Umerov said in English.

Special envoy Steve Witkoff and U.S. President Donald Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, were also present to represent the U.S. side. The talks took place near Miami at a private club, Shell Bay, developed by Witkoff’s real estate business.

Zelenskiy has said he expects the results of previous meetings in Geneva would be “hammered out” on Sunday. In Geneva, Ukraine presented a counter-offer to proposals laid out by U.S. Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll to leaders in Kyiv some two weeks ago.

“As a weatherman would say, there’s the inherent difficulty in forecasting because the atmosphere is a chaotic system where small changes can lead to large outcomes,” Kyiv’s first deputy foreign minister Sergiy Kyslytsya, also part of the delegation, wrote on X from Miami on Sunday. (Reuters)

Ramaphosa invites those ‘spreading misinformation’ to contribute to National Dialogue

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa has extended an olive branch to the United States and those at home who may be concerned about the treatment of minority groups.

Ramaphosa on Sunday addressed the nation on matters relating to the G20, where he thanked all South Africans for their participation.

While praising the efforts that contributed to the hosting of the summit last weekend, the president relayed a list of positive messages he had received from dignitaries.

Noting the absence of the United States (US), Ramaphosa said that South Africans offered the US “nothing but goodwill and friendship”.

He reiterated that the stance taken by the US was formed on “baseless and false allegations”, but turned his attention to the groups at home who he stated were propagating the message across the Atlantic. Ramaphosa noted that the next item on government’s agenda was the next phase of the National Dialogue, and urged all South Africans to have their say, especially those who feel aggrieved.

“As we invite people to participate, we



also invite those who are spreading misinformation about our country to bring their concerns and solutions to the National Dialogue.

“We must never allow others to try to redefine our country and cause divisions among us or dictate who we are as a nation,” said the president. (The citizen)

Netanyahu seeks pardon in years-long corruption trial

JERUSALEM, - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked the country’s president on Sunday for a pardon in his long-running corruption trial, arguing that criminal proceedings were hindering his ability to govern and a pardon would be good for Israel.

Netanyahu, the country’s longest-serving prime minister, denies the bribery, fraud, and breach of trust charges. His lawyers said in a letter to the president’s office that the prime minister still believes the legal proceedings would result in a complete acquittal.

“My lawyers sent a request for pardon to the president of the country today. I expect that anyone who wishes for the good of the country support this step,” Netanyahu said in a brief video statement released by his political party, the Likud.

Neither the prime minister, who has been on trial for five years, nor his lawyers made any admission of guilt.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid said Netanyahu should not be pardoned without admitting guilt, expressing remorse, and immediately retiring from political life.

Pardons in Israel have typically been granted only after legal proceedings have concluded and the accused has been convicted. Netanyahu’s lawyers argued that the president can intervene when public interest is at stake, as in this case, with a view to healing divisions and strength-



ening national unity. President Isaac Herzog’s office described the request as “extraordinary” with “significant implications”. The president “will responsibly and sincerely consider the request” after receiving relevant opinions, his office said.

U.S. President Donald Trump wrote to Herzog this month, urging him to consider granting the prime minister a pardon, saying the case against him was “a political, unjustified prosecution”.

Herzog’s office said the request would be forwarded to the pardons department in the justice ministry, as is standard practice, to collect opinions, which would be submitted to the president’s legal adviser, who will formulate a recommendation for the president.

Israel’s Justice Minister, Yariv Levin, is a member of Netanyahu’s Likud party and a close ally of the prime minister. (Reuters)

Zambia’s currency is enjoying its best run in nearly two years

THE kwacha of Zambia has soared to the highest point in almost two years on the hope that the copper industry will recover and investor confidence in the second-largest producer of the metal will be restored in Africa.

Early October saw the currency gain 0.7% to approximately 22.76 to every US dollar, increasing its year-to-date earnings to approximately 23, as per Bloomberg figures on October 10.

“It has climbed the most among African currencies so far this year,” according to a Bloomberg report. According to the World Bank’s Africa’s Pulse report for October 2025, the Zambian kwacha is Africa’s second highest earning currency, appreciating 16 percent year-to-date. The report links this to debt restructuring progress, lower oil import costs, and a temporary rise in U.S. dollar supply from higher domestic currency demand during tax season. Other expert analyses show that behind the rise is a convergence of forces: recovering copper production, stronger world prices and Bank of Zambia reforms that have reintroduced liquidity and confidence to the foreign exchange market.

“The combination of stronger mining output, disciplined monetary policy, and improved FX transparency has convinced the market that Zambia’s fundamentals are finally stabilising,” said Dennis Mumba, an economist at the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR). The Bank of Zambia had tightened the money conditions and increased the forex market transparency over the last year. It kept the policy rate at 12.5% throughout 2024, an indication that it was determined to maintain inflation in check, which dropped above 12% in 2023 to about 8% at mid-2025, and progressively restored international reserves. Simultaneously, the central bank has overhauled foreign-exchange activities to enhance predictability and liquidity. It proposed a weekly FX auction calendar system, increased reporting on export retention requirements by mining companies, and increased monitoring of the foreign position of the banks to prevent speculative trading. These, along with the 2025 Currency Market Directives that require exporters to repatriate proceeds within a specific timeframe, have strengthened the interbank market and enhanced FX availability. (Sunday World)



▲ Prime Minister's Representative Sikhumbuzo Dlamini making his remarks at the National Gospel Awards.



▲ Minister for Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Bongani Nzima upon arrival.



▲ Canaan Nyathi performing during the awards.



▲ Saxophonist Fakazi Samuel won Best Male Award.

NATIONAL GOSPEL AWARDS '25

Govt hails arts as future economic powerhouse

By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini says His Majesty's Government views the arts and culture sector as a major economic pillar capable of transforming the country's GDP.

Speaking during the prestigious National Gospel Awards, the Prime Minister, represented by Acting Deputy Prime Minister Sikhumbuzo Dlamini, reaffirmed the government's commitment to professionalising the creative industries and elevating local talent to global heights.

The Prime Minister said the government is placing deliberate focus on strengthening the sector through new strategies and targeted policies. "His Majesty's Government believes that the arts and culture sector can and is the biggest performer in the GDP of this country," he stated. He noted that this vision is the driving force behind ongoing reforms, adding that the government is working tirelessly to ensure the sector becomes "a vibrant player in the country's economic pillars."

The Prime Minister described the National Gospel Music Awards ceremony as a celebration of national pride, creativity, and Eswatini's unique heritage. The PM also commended the nation for its overwhelming participation during the nomination and voting stages. He said the inclusive approach, from regional selections to the national level, demonstrated the growing public interest in the gospel sector and highlighted the importance of grassroots involvement in cultural development.

According to him, the robust turnout proved that ordinary citizens are invested in nurturing and celebrating local talent. The premier highlighted that Eswatini's artistic influence continues to expand beyond its borders. He noted that local performers have become respected forces across Africa, earning recognition in prestigious continental and international spaces.

"Our artists continue to excel in global and continental spaces, and the region fears the presence of our artists," he said. Despite the country's small size, he emphasised that Eswatini boasts "big and respected names



▲ Eswatini National Council of Arts and Culture CEO Stanley Dlamini making remarks during the event while other dignitaries watch on.



▲ A section of the audience following proceedings.

in the region and beyond." He added that the trend of international accolades is a sign of a thriving sector poised for even greater achievements. The Prime Minister declared, "Tonight, we are unleashing several winners ready to conquer the world; the nation will definitely win, the arts sector will definitely win, our sponsors and partners will win."

Moment

The PM also highlighted a moment of national pride that had unfolded just days before the ceremony. On November 23, 2025,

gospel sensation Nothando Hlophe made history by winning the Crown Gospel Awards' "Best of Africa" category, an achievement described as a new milestone in Eswatini's cultural narrative. He said the victory was a clear demonstration of the country's ability to produce world-class talent capable of standing tall among Africa's finest. The Prime Minister regarded Nothando Hlophe's accomplishment as further proof that Eswatini's creative sector is rising, strong, and ready for global competitiveness.

FULL LIST OF WINNERS:

- Best Aux:**
▶ Tallman
- Soprano:**
▶ Nontsikelo Magongo
- Best Tenor:**
▶ Khanya Dlamini
- Best Alto:**
▶ Silo Khumalo
- Best Bassist:**
▶ Daniel Chulu
- Sound Engineer:**
▶ Sizwe Mabuza
- Lead Guitarist:**
▶ Mluleki
- Producer:**
▶ Wakhile Dlodlu
- Best Drummer:**
▶ Vuyo
- Music Director:**
▶ Mphumelelo Mdluli
- Best Worship Song:**
▶ Endleleni yonke by Mzayoni
- Best Praise Song:**
▶ Ngowe by Shekinah Motsa
- Best Siswati Writer:**
▶ Ndoni
- Best Zion:**
▶ Soara Maziya
- Live Recording:**
▶ The New Dawn by Nothando Hlophe
- Best Gospel Group/Choir:**
▶ Big Bend
- Best Male:**
▶ Fakazi Samuel
- Best Female:**
▶ Nelly Siwela
- Best Album:**
▶ Umusi Wendvumiso by Nothando Dlamini
- Best Newcomer:**
▶ Hlobie Shongwe
- Best Gospel Radio/TV Program:**
▶ Livesi Lemandla VOC
- Best Africa:**
▶ Evarton Malazi
- Best of Africa Mass Choir:**
▶ Spirit Quest
- Best Gospel Artist:**
▶ Nothando Hlophe
- Honorary Disability Artist:**
▶ Msweli
- Lifetime Achievement Award:**
▶ Sipho Makhabane
- Song of the Year:**
▶ Sithumela Wena by Nothando Hlophe

Mdura shines at Zed Laugh Festival in Zambia

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

RENOWNED Eswatini comedian Mdura delivered a standout performance at Zambia's prestigious Zed Laugh Festival, elevating the Kingdom's presence on the regional comedy stage.

The event, held at M'kango Golf View on Friday, was a celebration of humour that brought together top comedic talents from across Africa, including Uganda, South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, and the host nation, Zambia. The lineup featured an impressive roster of comedians such as Chingliz, Ba Emma, Smoke, Juss, Rhema, Bob Nkosha, Thenjiwe, Thapelo, Napoleon, and Mdura himself. The festival was a sell-out, drawing a lively and enthusiastic crowd eager to enjoy an evening of laughter and cultural exchange.

Mdura, speaking exclusively to Eswatini Daily News, described the experience as both exhilarating and rewarding. He praised the audience's energy and the excellent weather, which combined to create an ideal atmosphere for comedy. "It was an incredible show, we had a really amazing comedy audience, perfect weather for comedy, and all the comedians brought their A game," he said. Mdura acknowledged the challenge of performing after such a strong lineup but noted that it pushed him to elevate his craft to new heights.

Having performed at the Zed Laugh Festival for the second time, Mdura emphasised the significance of the event for his personal and professional growth. "For me, it's growth not only as a brand but as a comedian. This kind of exposure opens a whole different world of experiences and opportunities," he explained. He cited a



▲ Mdura.

previous performance at the festival that was recorded and aired on Zambezi Magic, a popular regional TV channel, as a concrete example of how the festival can serve as a springboard for wider recognition.

Opportunities

Beyond the stage, Mdura highlighted the valuable networking opportunities the festival provided. "As we speak, I am shooting something for TV now for an international audience, and we already have plans for other projects here in Zambia and other countries. Some of these networks

extend beyond comedy," he revealed, underscoring the festival's role as a platform for cross-border collaboration and career advancement.

Mdura extended his gratitude to South African comedian Thenjiwe, whose acclaimed show "Thenjiwe Unplugged" played a pivotal role in connecting him with the Zed Laugh Festival opportunity. He also thanked the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (South Africa) and Mzansi Golden Economy for their support in facilitating his participation.



▲ Makoti Festival Director Thembinkosi Mthethwa.

Makoti Festival reveals date for the 5th edition

THE Makoti Festival has officially announced its return for the grand fifth edition, scheduled for 25 April 2026 at Malkerns Country Club.

Festival Director Thembinkosi Mthethwa shared that ticket sales will commence this Friday, 28 November 2025, across all major platforms including Howler, Instacash, Computicket, Mojaticket, and the festival's official website. He urged festivalgoers to secure their tickets early, hinting at a series of thrilling announcements in the weeks ahead. These will include the unveiling of headline artists, DJs, and special guests set to grace the 2026 stage. "Next year's build-up officially kicks off, and people must watch this space for more updates," Mthethwa remarked. Reflecting on the previous year's success, the fourth edition of the Makoti Festival was held on 26 April 2025 at the same venue, the Malkerns Country Club. The event showcased a rich tapestry of talent from Eswatini and neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Botswana.

Vibrant

The festival's vibrant atmosphere was amplified by the presence of main MCs Mzwakhe "Tjovitjo" Khumalo and Siphesihle Nkwanyana, supported by guest MCs Buhle (Nobuhle Glennette Ndlovu) from Ligwalagwala FM and Moska Saeed Mositi from Lesotho, who helped engage and entertain the diverse crowd.

Since its inception in April 2022, the Makoti Festival has rapidly evolved into a major cultural fixture in the region. Its influence has expanded beyond Eswatini's borders, as evidenced by media launches earlier this year in Mbombela (South Africa), Lesotho, and Maputo (Mozambique). These strategic moves highlight the festival's growing footprint and its role in fostering regional cultural exchange. The Makoti Festival stands out not only as a celebration of music and entertainment but also as a family-oriented cultural event deeply rooted in Eswatini traditions. It honours women of all ages, married, unmarried, and young girls preparing to embrace their future roles as makotis (brides). The festival's mission is to celebrate and empower these women while preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

Eswatini Air official airline partner for 'In Spirit and In Truth'

ESWATINI Air has proudly announced its role as the official airline partner for the highly anticipated live recording event, 'Kingdom Live: In Spirit and In Truth.'

The event is scheduled for December 6, 2025, at the TLC Events Centre. At the heart of the event is Bongekile Nxumalo, a celebrated gospel musician whose inspiring hit song 'Uthando' has touched many lives. Nxumalo is set to make a profound impact with this live recording, which represents not just a musical milestone but a deeply spiritual journey.

In a recent interview, Nxumalo opened about the motivation behind the album and the live recording, emphasising a profound sense of responsibility and gratitude for the ministry God has entrusted to her. "The main aim is appreciating the ministry God has placed in my life," she explained. Drawing inspiration from the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Nxumalo highlighted the importance of faithfulness and obedience in fulfilling one's divine calling. "I pray that when Christ comes back, He says, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' for being obedient to His call," she said.

The album's title, 'In Spirit and In Truth,' directly references Jesus' words in John 4:23 about worshipping God authentically and sincerely. Nxumalo described the album



▲ Eswatini Air official airline are official partners for Kingdom Live: 'In Spirit and In Truth' event.

as "a cry for living purely even when no one sees us," a reflection on the challenge of maintaining holiness in the often demanding and competitive music industry. "It's encouraging that we live a holy life even in the music industry where holiness matters more than talent," she remarked.

Worship

Attendees of the live recording can anticipate an atmosphere charged with spirit-filled worship and praise, creating a communal space where truth and unity are paramount. Nxumalo assured that the songs will uplift hearts and glorify God, inviting everyone to come with expectant

hearts ready to receive spiritual renewal. "I encourage that they come expectant from God," she said.

The event welcomes all, regardless of faith background, reflecting Nxumalo's inclusive vision for the gathering. Tickets are currently available, with general admission priced at E200 and VIP tickets at E400. Given the expected high demand, Nxumalo urged fans and supporters to secure their tickets promptly. "Everyone is invited, saved or not, and tickets are already available. I must emphasise that they are very limited, so run while you still can get them," she encouraged.

Advancing Maternal and Neonatal Health in Eswatini:

PREMATURITY is a leading cause of newborn mortality worldwide and a pressing public-health priority in many low- and middle-income countries. In Eswatini, The Clinic Group is advancing a model of integrated maternal and neonatal care designed to prevent avoidable preterm births and to ensure that the smallest patients not only survive but thrive.

The institution's work is anchored in His Majesty the King's vision for Eswatini to achieve First World healthcare standards and aligns with The Clinic Group's mission to provide exceptional and innovative healthcare solutions.

During the commemoration of Prematurity Awareness Day, The Clinic Group showcased its comprehensive approach: early antenatal education, coordinated multidisciplinary care, and neonatal innovation. The commemoration brought together clinicians, mothers, families, and community partners to discuss prevention, early detection, and long-term developmental support.

Antenatal prevention and education: the foundation

Preventing prematurity begins long before labour. The Clinic Group's Magical Maternity Program provides weekly antenatal classes that educate expecting mothers about normal pregnancy changes, danger signs, and when to seek urgent care from their gynecologist/ Obstetrician. These regular sessions create opportunities for close monitoring, early identification of risk factors, and timely clinical intervention, reducing panic and enabling planned, safer deliveries.

Common risk factors identified through antenatal screening include maternal hypertension, diabetes, and previous preterm delivery. When detected early, these conditions are managed through individualized care plans developed collaboratively by gynecology, maternity, pediatrics and neonatal teams. This team-based approach shortens the window between problem detection and treatment, which is critical for improving perinatal outcomes.

Integrated services under one roof

The Clinic Group provides a wide range of services that form a continuous care pathway for mothers and babies, including Magic Maternity (comprehensive maternity care), pediatrics, laboratory services, pharmacy and 24-hour clinics in Mbabane and Manzini. These services enable rapid diagnostics, timely clinical decisions, and straightforward referrals where needed. The Clinic Group identifies itself as a leading, first-world private healthcare provider in Eswatini and states a mission to deliver exceptional, innovative healthcare solutions, principles that underpin its perinatal work.

Where specialist allied support is required after discharge, such as speech and feeding assessment, families can access referrals and follow-up services to ensure continuity of developmental care.

Clinical collaboration: how the teams work together

A defining feature of the Clinic Group's model is the early and ongoing collaboration among gynecologists, midwives, pedi-

The Clinic Group's integrated approach to preventing prematurity



▲ During the commemoration of Prematurity Awareness Day, The Clinic Group showcased its comprehensive approach: early antenatal education, coordinated multidisciplinary care, and neonatal innovation.

atricians and neonatal specialists. By engaging mothers through the Magical Maternity Groups, clinicians develop an individualized understanding of each pregnancy and can plan delivery strategies proactively. This continuity, from antenatal education to delivery and neonatal follow-up, reduces fragmentation of care and improves clinical outcomes.

Neonatal care and innovations in the NICU

In the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Sr Lobesutfu Nkambule, the clinic group's NICU Nurse, and the neonatal team manage the immediate, high-risk needs of preterm infants, most notably respiratory distress. Surfactant therapy has been a game-changer for many preterm infants, improving lung function and survival in the early hours and days after birth. The Clinic Group is also investing in mechanical respiratory support and other technologies to further strengthen outcomes.

Beyond acute care, the NICU emphasizes family-centred practice: parents are oriented to every device and procedure, involved in daily care planning, and educated about potential complications and follow-up needs. This inclusive approach helps families feel capable and involved, which supports recovery and reduces parental anxiety.

From survival to thriving: follow-up and rehabilitation

The Clinic Group ensures that survival is only the start. Premature infants receive scheduled pediatric follow-ups and developmental monitoring. Where feeding, speech or swallowing concerns arise, children are referred for ongoing assessment and therapy so developmental milestones can be met. The institution's integrated pathway, clinical specialists, diagnostics and allied referrals—helps bridge the gap between hospital discharge and long-term wellbeing.

Impact, challenges and the path ahead

A recent case that illustrates the model's effectiveness involved a baby born at 30 weeks and under 1.4 kg who, through early maternal risk identification, surfactant therapy and coordinated NICU care, recovered



▲ The Clinic Group provides a wide range of services that form a continuous care pathway for mothers and babies.



▲ A defining feature of the Clinic Group's model is the early and ongoing collaboration among gynecologists, midwives, pediatricians and neonatal specialists. By engaging mothers through the Magical Maternity Group.



and is meeting normal developmental milestones today. These outcomes underscore the value of early detection, rapid response and multidisciplinary follow-up.

Nonetheless, challenges remain expanding access to the most advanced neonatal technologies, widening public awareness about early antenatal care, and strengthening partnerships for capacity building. Continued investment in screening tools, mechanical ventilatory support, and specialist training will further improve outcomes.

Mission, Vision and Core Values

The Clinic Group articulates its Vision as "Africa's Leading Integrated Business Partner." Its Mission is "to provide exceptional and innovative healthcare solutions." The organisation's Core Values which are Agility, Accountability, Commitment, Teamwork,

and Embracing Change, serve as the foundation for its patient-centred and collaborative model of care. These principles guide the Group's commitment to strengthening maternity and neonatal services, driving continuous investment in high quality, innovative, and compassionate healthcare for mothers, babies, and families.

By combining early antenatal education, multidisciplinary clinical coordination, advanced neonatal interventions and strong follow-up pathways, The Clinic Group is shaping a robust model for prematurity prevention and newborn survival that aligns with national aspirations for First World healthcare. During the commemoration of Prematurity Awareness Day, clinicians, families and community partners reaffirmed that preventing prematurity is not only a clinical mission but a national priority, one that demands coordinated care, public education and sustained investment.

Coffee and Medications: Why to
Take Care

MOST of us don't think twice before having a cup of coffee in the morning.

But if you're taking certain medications, that caffeine boost may do more harm than good. Some drugs don't mix well with coffee or caffeine – they can work less effectively or cause unwanted side effects. Here's a look at which ones to watch out for – and when it might be worth switching to tea.

Ibuprofen and Acetaminophen

Caffeine can actually make common pain relievers like ibuprofen, paracetamol, or acetaminophen work better. One review found that people who took an over-the-counter painkiller along with 100 milligrams of caffeine – roughly what's in a strong cup of coffee – got roughly 10% more pain relief. Researchers aren't exactly sure why this happens, but they think caffeine may help your body absorb medication and keep it in your system longer. Ibuprofen isn't sold with caffeine added, but you can try taking a 200-milligram dose alongside your morning coffee.

Cold and Allergy Medications

Many over-the-counter cold and allergy medications contain pseudoephedrine, a decongestant that also acts as a stimulant. Taking it with coffee can make you feel jittery, restless, or unable to sleep, so it's best not to have them at the same time. This combo can also raise blood sugar levels, so be especially careful if you have diabetes. If your allergy medication doesn't contain pseudoephedrine, like Benadryl, it can make you drowsy, which means it won't interact with caffeine in the same way. To keep side effects in check, try adjusting the timing of your medication, stick to a regular sleep schedule, and limit how much alcohol you drink.

Blood Pressure Medications

Some blood pressure medications work by slowing down your heart rate so your heart doesn't have to work as hard to pump blood. Caffeine can have the opposite effect, raising your heart rate and making these medications less effective. Other drugs, like Verelan, lower blood pressure by relaxing your blood vessels, and caffeine can interfere with that, too. Over the long term, higher blood pressure raises your chances of health problems like heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes. If you need a natural pick-me-up, try snacks with healthy carbs, fats, and protein instead.

Anticoagulants (Blood Thinners)

Medications like warfarin help prevent clots by keeping your blood thin enough to flow easily through your arteries and veins. Since caffeine can also slow down your blood's ability to clot, drinking coffee while taking these medications could make you bruise or bleed more easily. You may not have to give up coffee completely, but it's best to stick to small amounts and check with your doctor to find out what's safe for you.

Thyroid Medication

If you take levothyroxine for an underactive thyroid, coffee can interfere with how your body absorbs the medication. That means it may not work as well against

Medications you shouldn't mix with your coffee



symptoms like fatigue, weight gain, constipation, and sensitivity to cold. The good news is that you don't have to give up coffee altogether – just wait 30 minutes to an hour after taking your medication before having your first cup.

Antidepressants

Caffeine affects different types of antidepressants in different ways. Some research suggests that it may help SSRIs like fluoxetine or fluvoxamine stay in your system longer, which could make them work better. On the other hand, coffee can make some people feel anxious or interfere with sleep, which may worsen some depression symptoms. Taking high doses of caffeine combined with MAOIs, like phenelzine and tranylcypromine, may also raise your chances of having high blood pressure. Because the effects can vary, it's a good idea to check with your doctor about how much caffeine is safe if you're taking antidepressants.

Antipsychotics

Caffeine on its own can make anxiety, hostility, sleep problems, and other symptoms of psychotic disorders worse. It can also affect how your body processes antipsychotic medications, which might make them less effective. This happens because caffeine and many antipsychotics are broken down by the same enzyme, meaning your body may struggle to handle both at the same time. Make sure to talk to your doctor about how to adjust your caffeine intake so your medication works as well as it should.

Diabetes Medications

If you have diabetes, caffeine can affect how your body uses insulin, which may cause an unwanted drop or spike in blood sugar. Some research suggests it takes about 200 milligrams of caffeine – roughly two strong cups of coffee – to trigger this effect, and people with type 2 diabetes may be more sensitive. Everyone reacts differently, but if you have a hard time controlling your blood sugar, try cutting back on caffeine to see if it helps.

Asthma Medications

Asthma drugs like theophylline work by relaxing the muscles around your airways, making it easier for you to breathe. Caffeine is chemically similar to theophylline and can cause a milder version of the same effect, so some research suggests it might offer a small benefit for people with asthma. But because both caffeine and asthma medication can cause side effects like restlessness and crankiness, having both in your system at the same time may make those symptoms worse.

Quinolone Antibiotics

Antibiotics from the quinolone family slow down the enzymes that normally help you break down the caffeine in a cup of coffee, meaning it can stay in your system for longer. As a result, you might feel jittery or have trouble sleeping. These effects can vary, depending on the antibiotic. Research shows that enoxacin has the strongest reaction to caffeine, while ofloxacin may have a milder one. If you're taking quinolone antibiotics and need a morning boost, try going for a walk or getting some fresh air – both have been shown to increase energy naturally.

Methotrexate

Methotrexate helps treat autoimmune conditions, like arthritis and psoriasis, by lowering inflammation. Research on how caffeine affects the drug is mixed. Some studies suggest it might make methotrexate less effective, while others show little to no impact. Since the evidence isn't clear, it's best to keep your caffeine intake moderate. That includes coffee, tea, energy drinks, and chocolate.

Cholinesterase Inhibitors (for
Alzheimer's)

Drinking coffee and other types of caffeinated beverages can tighten the blood-brain barrier – a protective layer around your brain's blood vessels that controls what gets in and out. When it's tighter, some drugs have a harder time reaching your brain. These include Alzheimer's medications like donepezil, galantamine, and rivastigmine. Simple alternatives like breathing exercises, staying hydrated, or taking a short nap if you get tired can help boost energy without affecting your medication.

Medications and Dairy

If you drink your coffee with a lot of milk, some medications might not mix well with it. Certain antibiotics, thyroid medications, osteoporosis drugs, and iron supplements can bind with the calcium in dairy, which can keep your body from absorbing them properly. That means they might not work as well. To stay on the safe side, take these medications a few hours before or after having dairy and always talk to your doctor about potential interactions.

WebMD



What Causes Obesity?

MANY things lead to the complex health condition called clinical obesity.

Although the exact cause remains unknown, many factors can contribute to it. It's not just excess adiposity (too much body fat). In fact, you need your body fat for many reasons. Your adipose organ stores your body fat. Adipose controls your hunger and satiety (feeling full). It also plays a metabolic role in insulin sensitivity and inflammation. You need body fat to keep your body warm and supply energy, too. Just like any organ in your body, if your adipose stores too much fat, it can become out of control. And too much visceral fat (body fat around your organs) may cause health problems. When this happens, i.e., when your excess fat leads to health problems or impairment, it is called clinical obesity. In other words, obesity is not just an elevated BMI — it impairs your health, too. Along with your eating and activity patterns, your genes and the environment can impact your body's metabolism. Your emotions, hormones, and other medical conditions can also play a role. Even the medications you take can change how your body grows or metabolizes energy.

Diet and Activity

Researchers think that clinical obesity is more complex than simply taking in more calories than the body burns. What and how much you eat is controlled by signals in your brain (neuroendocrine signals).

Attempts to lose weight can cause a shift in these brain signals. Your body will try to slow down, get hungry, or make other changes to gain weight again. Everyone's body is unique. But some studies may link weight gain with certain foods and lower physical activity.

Food and diet

Studies point out that certain foods may be linked to higher weight gain. These ultra-processed foods may contain corn or soy by-products. These foods or drinks are often calorie-dense.

You burn calories for basic body functions such as breathing, blinking, and digestion. You also burn them for movements such as walking. Your body stores any extra calories for later, as fat. But obesity goes beyond simple calorie math.

The type of food you regularly include in your diet matters. A diet rich in whole grains, fruits, and veggies is good for your overall health.

Physical activity

Lack of physical activity may contribute to weight gain. Some studies show it can also lower your metabolism.

Your activity level doesn't include just your exercise routine but all the ways you move your body every day. Across the world, people drive more and use more labor-saving devices. You may be less likely to have a job that involves physical activity, compared to a few decades ago. In fact, 1 in 3 people worldwide get little or no exercise.

Medical Causes for Obesity

Several medical conditions can alter how your body stores fat. These conditions can cause your body to store extra calories. You may have a harder time reaching your weight goal if you have medical conditions like:

Hypothyroidism. This condition causes your thyroid gland in your neck to produce too little thyroid hormone. Thyroid hormone controls your metabolism. Too little of it slows your metabolism and can cause weight

Causes of Obesity



gain. If your doctor suspects thyroid disease, they may do blood tests to check your hormone levels.

► **Cushing's syndrome.** This happens when your adrenal glands (that sits on top of each kidney) make too much of a steroid hormone called cortisol. Among other things, this leads to higher insulin levels. These changes can make your body store fat in areas such as your face, upper back, and belly.

► **Polycystic ovary syndrome.** If your ovaries make too many androgens (male sex hormones), you may have problems with your period. This hormonal imbalance can also cause you to gain weight.

► **Hypothalamic obesity.** Certain brain problems can also cause excess weight gain. These are called hypothalamic obesity. They're a group of issues caused by brain injury, tumors, or infection. These conditions impact your hypothalamus in your brain. This part of your brain controls your appetite and how your body burns calories and stores fat. If your hypothalamus isn't working, you can gain weight. You can also be hungry all the time or not be able to stop eating. You can also be born with hypothalamic obesity, which can occur in conditions like Prader-Willi syndrome.

Medications. Some medications can also cause increased body weight. These medicines may hinder your attempts at weight loss, such as:

- Steroids
- Certain antidepressants
- Antipsychotics
- High blood pressure drugs called beta-blockers
- Some seizure medications
- Some medications for diabetes
- Some hormonal birth control medications, such as pills

If you gain weight after you start one of these medications, tell your doctor. They

may be able to suggest another option.

► **Getting older.** Aging is another factor in weight gain and obesity. As you grow older, you lose muscle. This slows down the rate at which you burn calories. Many people also become less physically active as they age. Hormonal changes, such as menopause and lowered testosterone, may add to weight gain, too.

Genetic Causes for Obesity

Sometimes, genes are directly linked to obesity or at least a condition that leads to it. There are three genetic types you can have:

- Monogenic, change in one gene
- Polygenic, change in more than one gene
- Syndromic, often linked with another medical condition

The rarest is monogenic obesity. It's often caused by a change in your leptin gene. Leptin is a hormone that controls your appetite. Certain gene changes can cause weight gain, uncontrolled hunger, and clinical obesity.

Polygenic gene changes involve more than one gene. They add up to alter how and where your body stores fat. The gene changes can influence your metabolism. It can also change how your body controls your appetite or how well you burn calories when you exercise.

Syndromic obesity is usually linked to other medical conditions. This is the case with Bardet-Biedl syndrome (BBS). It's a genetic condition in which your body stores fat around your trunk. But it often causes problems with your eyes and heart, too.

In most cases, heredity by itself doesn't cause clinical obesity. Many things, such as your environment, medications, and genetics, work together to influence your weight. Healthy lifestyle habits can sometimes help lower the effects. But talk to your doctor to find out what's best for your health.

Hormones, Stress, and Sleep

Among the other things, experts think various hormones, stress, and sleep also affect your weight.

Hormones

Certain hormone problems, such as hypothyroidism, may cause weight gain. Beyond that, several hormones help your body control hunger, regulate calorie burning, and manage how you store fat. They include:

- Leptin, a hormone made by fat cells to control your appetite and fat storage.
- Insulin, made by your pancreas to regulate blood sugar and fat burning.
- Ghrelin, also known as the "hunger hormone," made by your stomach to control appetite.
- The sex hormones, estrogen and androgens, help decide where your body stores fat.

Everyone's body is different. But clinical obesity can cause your body and brain to make different amounts of hormones. These differences may lead to weight gain and hormonal changes, too.

Stress and other emotions

When you're bored, stressed, angry, or sad, you may tend to eat more. It depends on how your body reacts to stress.

You also may be more likely to choose high-calorie foods, such as sugary treats and drinks. If you have a mood issue, like depression, you might not feel like exercising.

Issues that often go along with obesity, like discrimination and physical pain, tend to affect your moods. This can create a cycle of emotional distress and may lead to weight gain.

Sleep

Research has found if you don't get enough good sleep, you're at a higher risk for clinical obesity. The hormones your body releases during sleep can help control your appetite and metabolism.

And when you're overtired, you may be less likely to exercise and more likely to choose unhealthy foods. So, getting enough exercise can help you sleep deeper. This will also release good, restful hormones at night to better control your appetite in the daytime.

Environmental Causes for Obesity

You might not realize it, but your environment has a big effect on your weight. If your neighborhood has lots of fast-food restaurants and few markets selling healthy foods, it may be harder for you to eat well.

If you don't have easy access to parks, it can be harder to play sports. It may also be tougher to exercise if you don't have sidewalks. Without them, perhaps walking isn't safe and you may not get enough activity.

Other things in the world around you that can contribute to obesity include:

- Marketing of high-calorie foods
- High prices for quality food
- Harsh weather limiting outdoor exercise
- Larger restaurant portions
- Easy access to unhealthy foods by delivery apps

Social Determinants for Obesity

The conditions in which you were born, work, and live influence your odds of getting clinical obesity. Experts call these "social determinants of health." Along with your environment, they include things like your income, education, access to health care, and social relationships. **WebMD**



Travel & Leisure



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▲ Imagine waking up to rolling hills, crisp air, and the gentle sounds of nature. That's life at Umushi weNkosazane



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Tactical duel delights Cardoso as Sundowns fire blanks in Algeria

MAMELODI Sundowns coach Miguel Cardoso described Friday night's goalless draw against MC Alger in the CAF Champions League as "a beautiful match", despite the fixture failing to live up to its pre-match hype at a packed Ali La Pointe Stadium.

The highly-anticipated clash developed into a tight tactical contest, with neither side willing to take significant risks.

The match unfolded at a measured tempo, producing few clear chances, but Cardoso was satisfied with the discipline and structure his side displayed away from home.

"It was a beautiful match played by two very good teams. We as Sundowns have to be proud of the match that we played," he said.

"We had the intention to control the match and I think we had absolute control of the match but it was a good strategy by MC Alger to close the middle and to close the inside very well and the spaces that we're strong in using. "We knew that the space [middle] would be a big fighting site because both teams have big quality to play inside because it was also important that we have numbers to play on the inside. That blocks a little bit of the offensive side in the last third for both teams." With former Sundowns coach Rulani Mokwena now leading Alger, his familiarity with the visitors was evident in the way his side nullified Sundowns' threat. Although Sundowns fired blanks on



▲ Mamelodi Sundowns coach Miguel Cardoso described Friday night's goalless draw against MC Alger in the CAF Champions League as "a beautiful match"

the road, Cardoso praised the composure shown by his players in front of a hostile but ultimately frustrated home crowd.

"For people that like the tactical approach of the match, it was a beautiful match and I have a big respect for what happened on the pitch," the Portuguese coach added.

"It was played in front of a fantastic ambience where it is sometimes difficult to play

and manage emotions. I think both teams showed maturity and my team showed a lot of maturity by managing the different moments. "We had fantastic organisation, putting good pressure on the opponent and not allowing them too many entries in the box. We would have liked to have taken three points but we'll take one and prepare for the future." (The Citizen)

Pirates coach admits to first half woes against City

DESPITE his team's victory, Orlando Pirates head coach Abdeslam Ouaddou was far from satisfied with his side's performance in the first half against Durban City on Saturday.

Goals from Evidence Makgopa and Patrick Maswanganyi earned the Buccaneers a 2-0 win over the Citizens at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban. The win saw Pirates move three points clear of Mamelodi Sundowns after 12 matches each.

After the game, Ouaddou revealed that he had to show his players some tough love during the half-time talk in order for them to improve their game and was happy with the second half display from his team.

"When you know your players well and you understand their qualities, you also know they cannot just lose those qualities in 45 minutes. The most important thing is to choose the right words to awaken those qualities again," said Ouaddou.

"We made some tactical adjustments in the positions of the players, how they have to move, the connection between the lines and between the sectors of the team. But we also had to change their attitude. I was not so happy about their attitude, and I told them that. It's very important to be honest with these players. "I think the words were strong at half-time, and the players managed to shut my mouth in the second half because they gave me the right answer. I was happy about the performance after the break," he added. (The Citizen)

Rassie praises 'controlled performance' by Springboks against Wales

SPRINGBOK head coach Rassie Erasmus said he was very proud of his team for delivering such a controlled performance over the full 80 minutes against Wales in Cardiff on Saturday.

The Springboks thrashed Wales 73-0 in an 11-try thriller at Principality Stadium – the most points ever scored against Wales in Cardiff. Ten Springboks crossed the try line as the new-look side controlled all aspects of the game, and fought until the very end to win a turnover and seal the win.

Only Eben Etzebeth's red card, for gouging Alex Mann's eye during a scuffle, put a small damper on the otherwise incredible display. And Erasmus said it appeared to be a justified red card – the incident acted against how the Springboks wished to play.

"We are very proud of the way we played," Erasmus said, noting that Wales were still a formidable side that fought for everything despite their poor year, winning just two out of 11 games and lying 11th in the world rankings. He reflected on when he played in the 1998 team that beat Wales 96-13 in London, saying his team "didn't have much of a game plan". This time was different.

"I felt we've been building up and building up, and I thought today was a controlled performance, because the Welsh are not guys who roll over and take the shots. They fight until the end.

"It was one of the more really clinical performances, us putting our soul out on the [field] and not trying to stop the other team's soul because Wales are between what they really want to do – they have a great



▲ The Springboks thrashed Wales 73-0 in an 11-try thriller at Principality Stadium.

coach and will come back. But this was a really good controlled performance."

He said he wanted to reassure Welsh players that situations change quickly, and just as Wales came back to beat the Springboks after their 1998 hiding, they would come back this time. He also noted that they were without 13 star players because the match fell outside World Rugby's official Test window – just as the Boks were. Springboks 5/5 on tour, 13/15 this season

It was another clean sweep for the Springboks on their end-of-year tour, after they beat Japan, France, Italy and Ireland before

Wales. They finish the season with 13 wins out of 15 matches, including a non-Test against the Barbarians.

The Boks only lost to the All Blacks and Wallabies during their triumphant Rugby Championship – the first time South Africa ever successfully defended the title.

Erasmus said he was glad to blood new players this year, Ethan Hooker being one of them. The 22-year-old was nominated for World Rugby's Breakthrough Player of the Year, while Malcolm Marx won 15s Player of the Year. Two-time winner Pieter-Steph du Toit was nominated for the award again,



▲ Springbok head coach Rassie Erasmus.

while Ox Nché was the first prop to ever be nominated.

Six Springboks were included in World Rugby's 2025 Dream Team.

Memorable wins include:

- Their 43-10 victory over the All Blacks in Wellington – New Zealand's heaviest defeat in history,
- Their 67-30 demolition of Argentina in Durban where Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu scored the most points by a Springbok in a Test,
- Their 32-17 victory over France despite a red card in Siya Kolisi's 100th Test, and Erasmus' 50th as a coach
- Their 24-13 win over Ireland in Dublin (The Citizen)

LIVERPOOL’S marquee signing Alexander Isak scored his first Premier League goal for the champions as they beat 10-man West Ham United 2-0 on Sunday following a dire run of nine defeats in 12 games.

Manchester United ended Crystal Palace’s nine-month unbeaten home run with a 2-1 comeback victory, Aston Villa climbed to third with a 1-0 victory over lowly Wolverhampton Wanderers, and Brighton & Hove Albion won 2-0 at Nottingham Forest to go fifth. Leaders Arsenal visit fourth-placed Chelsea later on Sunday with a chance to extend their advantage at the top.

Liverpool had endured their worst spell in over 70 years, and manager Arne Slot took drastic measures, leaving Mohamed Salah out of his starting line-up for the first time in the Premier League.

Isak, who had looked short of form and fitness, spurned two opportunities before the break before slotting home a Cody Gakpo pull-back on the hour mark.

“I’ve been waiting for it and chasing it (his first Premier League goal for Liverpool) and sometimes it takes longer than you expect but happy to score a goal and help towards the win today,” Isak told the BBC. “It’s never easy, as a striker you need momentum. We defended really well and scored twice so happy days.”

Liverpool’s cause was helped by Lucas Paqueta’s double booking for dissent with less than 10 minutes to play, before Gakpo added a second in the 92nd minute. Zirkzee levelled in the 54th minute when he chested down a free kick before firing into the far corner and Mount struck the winner when a free kick was touched into his path and he unleashed a low shot through a sea of Palace legs.

Isak scores as Liverpool halt woeful run

“We have not found it easy away from home this season,” Mount told TNT Sports. “It was all about reacting in the second half and I feel we did that well.”

A superb strike from Boubacar Kamara earned Aston Villa a victory over bottom side Wolves.

Kamara gave the home crowd something to shout about, arrowing a thunderous shot into the top corner in the 67th minute as Villa climbed to third on 24 points. Wolves remained bottom on two points.

Maxim De Cuyper and Stefano Tzimas scored to lift Brighton to victory at Forest and the visitors climbed to fifth in the table on 22 points. Forest are 16th on 12.

Liverpool’s victory, only their second in eight league games, moved them up to eighth with 21 points, while West Ham, whose players and fans paid tribute to former captain and manager Billy Bonds who died aged 79 on Sunday, are 17th with 11.

ZIRKZEE AND MOUNT LEAD MAN UNITED FIGHTBACK

At Selhurst Park, Joshua Zirkzee and Mason Mount struck in the second half to erase as Manchester United battled back for only their second away victory in 12 games.

United climbed above Palace into seventh on 21 points, while Oliver Glasner’s team are ninth on 20.

Jean-Philippe Mateta struck from the penalty spot in the 36th minute after Leny Yoro’s reckless tackle. (Reuters)



▲ Liverpool’s marquee signing Alexander Isak scored his first Premier League goal for the champions as they beat 10-man West Ham United 2-0 on Sunday following a dire run of nine defeats in 12 games.

Verstappen wins in Qatar

DOHA, - Red Bull’s Max Verstappen won the Qatar Grand Prix, while McLaren blew it, to take the Formula One title battle with Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri to a season-ending showdown in Abu Dhabi next weekend.

Championship leader Norris finished fourth, behind the Williams of Spaniard Carlos Sainz, with the Briton’s advantage slashed to 12 points as McLaren paid a heavy price for a strategy blunder when the safety car was deployed early on. Verstappen’s third win in a row in the night race moved the four-times world champion up to second in the standings, now four points clear of Norris’s Australian teammate Piastri who started on pole but finished second.

The top three drivers each have seven wins for the season.

“We stay in the fight until the end,” said Verstappen, who has been champion since a controversial 2021 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix duel with Lewis Hamilton.

“It’s still possible now,” added the Dutchman, who has staged an astonishing comeback from 104 points off the lead at the end of August when his hopes of remaining in the reckoning right down to the wire looked over.

McLaren stayed out while everyone else except Haas’s Esteban Ocon pitted after Sauber’s Nico Hulkenberg tangled with Alpine’s Pierre Gasly on lap seven and trig-



▲ Red Bull’s Max Verstappen won the Qatar Grand Prix.

gered the safety car.

“I think in hindsight it’s pretty obvious what we could have done,” said Piastri of the strategy blunder.

“We lost the victory with Oscar and we lost the podium with Lando,” was the verdict of team boss Andrea Stella.

Verstappen, third on the grid, passed Norris at the start to slot into second behind Piastri while Mercedes’ George Russell plunged from fourth to seventh.

The pitstop dropped the Red Bull to fourth but that became third when Ocon was given a five-second penalty for a false start and pitted to serve it.

Norris had already questioned McLaren’s strategy over the radio.

“We should have just followed him (Verstappen) in, no? If we knew the car ahead was staying out,” he asked,

with race engineer Will Joseph assuring him that “they have lost all flexibility for the remainder of the race.” It looked to others, however, that McLaren had paid a price for a determination not to favour either driver in the title battle by having to stack them in the pits.

Piastri pitted on lap 24, coming back out in fifth and moving up to fourth when Norris came in a lap later and slotted back in behind.

The rest of the field had to pit on lap 32, due to Pirelli putting restrictions on how long cars could run on a set of tyres for safety reasons -- a move forcing a minimum two-stop strategy.

That gave the stewards several unsafe releases to consider, with Haas’s Oliver Bearman handed a 10-second stop-and-go penalty.

(Reuters)

Rory McIlroy: Merger unlikely with LIV Golf spending ‘irrationally’

RORY McIlroy said it will be difficult for the PGA Tour and LIV Golf to reach an agreement so long as the Saudi-backed league continues to spend “irrationally.”

Speaking at the CNBC CEO Council Forum, the world’s No. 2-ranked golfer doesn’t see a pathway for the reunification of the professional golf world any time soon.

“You see some of these other sports that have been fractured for so long,” McIlroy said, per ESPN. “You look at boxing for example, or you look at what’s happened in motor racing in the United States with Indy and NASCAR and everything else, I think for golf in general it would be better if there was unification.”

“But I just think with what’s happened over the last few years, it’s just going to be very difficult to be able to do that.”

LIV Golf has totaled more than \$1.4 billion in losses over its first four years of existence, according to a report from The Athletic last month.

However, that hasn’t deterred the league, whose prize money expenditure for 2024 was roughly \$400 mil-

lion alone. With several of the league’s early big-money signings approaching the end of their initial contracts, Dustin Johnson has reportedly already agreed to a new deal while Bryson DeChambeau is also expected to recommit to the league early. LIV is also expanding its format to 72 holes in 2026 as it seeks to earn Official World Golf Ranking points for its events.

A little less than \$1.4 billion has been distributed to players thus far, with The Athletic estimating that outside funding has invested over \$4.89 billion into the league. That is more than three and a half times the recorded prize money.

“As someone who supports the traditional structure of men’s professional golf, we have to realize we were trying to deal with people that were acting, in some ways, irrationally, just in terms of the capital they were allocating and the money they were spending,” McIlroy said.

“It’s been four or five years and there hasn’t been a return yet, but they’re going to have to keep spending that money to even just maintain what they have right now.”

(Reuters)

E250 000 govt carrot awaits boxers

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
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MEMBERS of the Boxing team could earn E250 000 if they could deliver a medal in the 2025 World Championships. This was revealed by Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council(EOCGA) Chief Executive Officer Darius Dlomo during the squad farewell function held on November 29, 2025, at the EOCGA offices.

The global showpiece will take place between December 2-14, 2025, in the United Arab Emirates.

“Go and make the nation proud. You will certainly be rewarded with a lucrative incentive if you can win a gold medal at the world championships. The incentive is part of the Government’s effort to empower local talent. I have faith in the head coach Douglas Simelane, that he is the right man for the job due to his experience in the sport,”he said.

Simelane is assisted by Muzi Shongwe.

Dlomo further urged two senior boxers, Sibonelo Nzimandze and Thabiso Dlamini, to be exemplary to the entire squad by delivering gold medals.

“We are expecting Sibonelo and Thabiso to inspire the entire team with good performances. You should also by example by upholding good behaviour throughout the tournament,”he said.



▲ ESRC CEO Darius Dlomo and EBA President Webster Lukhele and the Boxing national team.



▲ National team coaches Douglas Simelane and Muzi Shongwe during the farewell function.

We are ready for World Championships – Sibonelo

BOXING national team captain Sibonelo Ndzimandze says they are ready for the 2025 World championships. Ndzimandze said this during the squad farewell function to the global showpiece held on November 29,2025.

“We are looking forward to the World championships and ready to deliver the best performance for the nation. We have done necessary preparations for the games,”he said.

Other members of the national team include

Thabiso Dlamini,Khaya Shongwe,Khayelihle Mkhabela and Qhawe Gamedze.

Boxers:

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)

Coaches:

1. Douglas Simelane
2. Muzi Shongwe

We are under attack – ‘Webster’

ESWATINI Boxing Association President Webster Lukhele cried foul over the attack on the sport by certain individuals.

Lukhele said this during the squad farewell function to the United Arab Emirates to attend the 2025 World championships held on November 29,2025.

“We are facing a serious attack from individuals who are busy tainting the image of the sport in local companies. This makes our work difficult as an Association to mobilise resources for the sport. We are a transparent organisation which is working towards developing the sport,” he said.

Lukhele also thanked the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council and EOCGA for continued support.

“We are grateful for the support of the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council and the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association, which plays a key role in the development of the sport,” he said.



▲ EBA President Webster Lukhele stressing a point.



Oyama duo reaches Japan semis

By Sibusiso Masilela
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ESWATINI's flag has been hoisted in Japan.

This was over the weekend when two Oyama Kyokushin Karate stars, Nelly Gama and Mpendulo Maxonga, fought gallantly to reach the semi-finals. The pair is in Japan for an annual Japan IKO International Karate Tournament. Both fighters won their fights in their weight divisions on Saturday.

"We are through to semi-finals set for later today. Both our players made it after kicking their rivals out on Saturday," affirmed Oyama Kyokushin Karate Eswatini (OKKE) Secretary Sensei Musa Ginindza on Sunday.

He said they were excited about the duo's display and were positive about making it to the finals. Meanwhile, Gama is fighting in the open weight female division while Maxonga is in the Under-60kg.

Both athletes are national champions in their respective categories.

They also could not compete in this year's STANLIB Oyama Champ of Champs early last month due to this international task. They could not be risked for injuries.



▲ Local Oyama stars Nelly Gama and Mpendulo Maxonga.

E138k guaranteed pool tourney next up

Stories By Chris Dlamini

IT is raining cash in Pool these days.

From a E25 000 teams tournament at the Manzini Pool Club (MPC) over the weekend, clubs and individual players are now looking forward to the lucrative REPS E138 000 Guaranteed Pool Tournament.

This is billed for December 5-7 at the Police Academy in Matsapha.

"The stage is almost set and we are looking forward to welcoming our visiting guests from Southern Africa. We have top names from SA, Botswana, Mozambique and even Tanzania," said the tournament coordinator Dumisani 'Dinho' Malindzisa.

He said they were expecting at least over 30 South African (SA) stars, including the feared Jeremiah 'Gandaganda' Green Naidoo and former ladies world champion Beatrice Monyake have confirmed their participation in the upcoming tournament. SA also has over eight teams. Outside of SA, there is currently one entry from Tanzania in the name of Omari, and then Botswana,

Mozambique, and Zimbabwe also have more than one representative. Botswana has three lady players coming in Katlego Letlhang, Kamo, aka Tsetse, and Kizza.

A number of locals have already registered to compete for the enticing E30 000 champion's prize in the singles division. There is also a E30 000 prize for the best team in the teams division.

The total prize package is E138 000. Last year's edition, played at the luxurious Sibebe Resort, was at E90 000.

Each joining player will be expected to part with E500 while it is E3 000 per team. Interestingly, the singles give each player a double life, meaning a double chance which allows one to play and they lose one life, they still have another to try but you can easily get eliminated in the first round with both lives.

Malindzisa also affirmed this was the second edition and that the prize package was up at E138 000.

"We have included ladies from local and beyond our borders, and only 16 players will be eligible. So, it's first come, first served even for teams, but we will be flexible to accommodate more teams if it calls for it," he explained.

He also added that it was open in the singles category without any specific number of players. He also encouraged teams and players to start registration.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TOURNAMENT:

Registration -
- E3 000 per team
- E500 per individual (ladies inclusive)

Prizes for teams

1. E30 000+Trophy+10 Gold Medals
2. E15 000+10 Silver Medals
3. E7 000
4. E7 000

Prizes for singles

1. E30 000+Trophy+Gold Medal
2. E15 000+Silver Medal
3. E5 000
4. E5 000
5. E2 000
6. E2 000
7. E2 000
8. E2 000

Prizes for ladies

1. E7 000
 2. E3 000
 3. E1 500
 4. E1 500
- Double life for singles category.
- Tournament kick-off: 7pm



▲ Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) Pool Team.

'Give Thanks' to REPS for MPC Tourney title

A great comeback it was!

Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) Pool Team staged a stellar display over the weekend to emerge the champions of the Manzini Pool Club (MPC) E25 000 All Night Teams Tournament.

The action started on Saturday and went through the night to Sunday afternoon when the champions were crowned. REPS won it with a convincing 13-7 margin over their bitter rivals Give Thanks.

It was all sweet revenge for REPS after the previous weekend's Sphana League Investments League failure against leaders MPC. REPS dusted their cue sticks to bounce back in the knockout with a bang.

On their path to the title, they eliminated MPC in what was definitely the game of the tournament.

The two clashed in the semi-finals.

It was a replica of the league clash as both sets of stars tested the other. The match was decided by the last frame after a 12-12 tie, just like in the previous week.

This time around, it turned out to be REPS' turn as they sealed it and won 13-12, going to outclassed Give Thanks in the final to lift the title ahead of the host and home team.

For this, REPS took home E6 000, while Give Thanks pocketed E3 500. Semi-finalists MPC and Sugarbelt got E2 000 and E1 500 respectively.

The winners and prizes:

1. REPS - E6 000 +Trophy
2. Give Thanks - E3 500
3. MPC - E2 000
4. Sugarbelt - E1 500



▲ Female pool star Ncobile Dlamini.

- MTN PREMIER LEAGUE ACTION -

The bigger they come, the harder they fall

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE bigger they come, the harder they fall.

This was the scenario during the game eight MTN Premier league matches following upsets for Mbabane Highlanders and Young Buffaloes.

The two giants were stunned by giant slayers Rangers and Ezulwini United during the last batch of the weekend fixtures played on Sunday. Rangers had to wait until the 89th minute to stun Mbabane Highlanders through a Nduduzo Mvakali in a match played at Goshe Szokolay Memorial Stadium in Simunye.

This was a third win for the Shiselweni-based against crowd pullers following their previous wins over Mbabane Swallows and Manzini Wanderers.

The result moved the Mthunzi Ginindza-led side to the third position 15 points in the log table after eight matches. Ezulwini United were also the surprise package of the weekend after they stung the army side by a solitary goal netted by former Royal Leopards striker Senzelwe Dlamini at Nsukuwansuku Stadium.

The victory took the gallant Musa Manyatsi charges to the third position with 15 points after eight matches.

Moneni Pirates began life after Malawian mentor Meck Mwase with a goalless draw against Malanti Chiefs at Mavuso Sports



▲ Mbabane Highlanders coach Ernest Mavuso congratulates Rangers counterpart Mthunzi Ginindza after the match. Rangers won 1-0.

Centre. The black and white ensemble was under the guidance of interim technical bench headed by female coach Zenzile Mpofu.

THE MTN PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS					
Saturday					
T. Celtics	0-2	Green Mamba.			
Sunday					
Sisonkhe	2-2	Mb. Swallows.			
Mb. Highlanders	0-1	Rangers.			
Ezulwini United	1-0	Young Buffaloes.			
Moneni Pirates	0-0	Malanti Chiefs			

Rangers nets last-gasp winner, stun ‘Bull’

By Chris Dlamini

M. Highlanders 0
Rangers 1
Nduduzo Mvakali 89th minute
(At Goshe Szokolay Memorial Stadium)

FOOTBALL is about goals, but Mbabane Highlanders wasted their chances and got punished.

After a positive start to the game and complete dominance in the second half, Highlanders found themselves behind three minutes from regulation time. Goalkeeper Innocent Adja committed himself, leaving his area but could not recover on time after a failed clearance. His defence tried to win the ball, but substitute Nduduzo Mvakali was also too quick to take his shot into the empty net, and 1-0 it was.

There was no way back into it as time ran out and the sound of the final whistle was only good for Rangers, and bad for Highlanders who created good scoring opportunities, particularly in the second half but could not beat Bafana Ngwenya between the Rangers sticks. The latter's defence also did a great job to protect him as Highlanders threw everything at them for over 35 minutes in the second half.

Troublesome South African winger Siphwe Hopewell Cele was a menace throughout and set up his teammates a goal more than four times. Poor finishing was another letdown for Highlanders as some of their efforts were unnecessarily put wide due to lack of technique. Cele picked winger



▲ Mbabane Highlanders midfielder Siyabonga Mkhonto dashes away while Rangers players close in.

Siyabonga Mkhonto inside the box with just the perfect ball from the right wing but he took a bit longer to take his shot, and the goalkeeper closed in on him to make a block inside the opening 20 minutes. Cele was back again with yet another fine run on the left wing, locating Mkhonto again, but the latter was fouled just outside the box.

Effort

One of the game's best players, midfielder Siwakhile Shongwe, took the set piece, but his well curled effort was acrobatically parried out for a corner by Ngwenya.

A few minutes after the half-hour mark, Cele brilliantly set up Siphamandla '24 Reasons' Maseko but unbelievably shot well wide with the goal beckoning. Rangers absolved the pressure well and also had a couple of half chances that forced saves from Adja. After the break, both coaches introduced fresh legs midway through. It was

Rangers' Mthunzi 'Lomphofu' Ginindza who got the win from super substitute, Mvakali whose goal was the difference. It handed his team their first win against Highlanders since their elite promotion over four seasons ago. Furthermore, the goal marked a bittersweet reunion for Highlanders and Rangers head coach who started last season at the capital city giants.

The win took Rangers to 15 points, seven ahead of Inkunz'emnyama as Highlanders is fondly known. The latter is stagnant on nine points and out of the top eight.

The win also took Bolova up the ladder to the top four after eight games. At the summit is defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs with 18 points.

Meanwhile, Highlanders have not won a match in the last five. Against Rangers, they had no luck at all as they still created as many scoring opportunities as possible but in vain.



▲ Mbabane Swallows' Nhlanhla Ngwenya fighting for the ball with Sisonkhe Celumusa Zwane. The match ended in a 2-2 all draw.

... Birds falter again

By Sibusiso Masilela
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Sisonkhe 2
Njabulo Gama (16th minutes, 52nd minutes)

Mbabane Swallows 2
Sizolwethu Shabalala (38th minutes, Noomo Gina 41st minutes)

CAPITAL city giant Mbabane Swallows have faltered against stubborn minnows Sisonkhe FC following the 2 all draw at Mavuso Sports Centre.

This was the second consecutive draw for the crowd pullers following the recent 1 all draw against Ubombo Sugar away.

The Caleb Ngwenya charges were given a run for their money by the stubborn basement side in front of over 500 fans.

The red and white glamour side surrender a two-goal lead following the early first half scare from the home side. Sisonkhe drew first blood with the match only 16 minutes through, a Njabulo Gama effort from a solo run. The burly forward sliced his way past the opposition defence to beat the opposition goalkeeper, Bongiswa Dlamini.

Scramble

The opener woke Swallows from the slumbers as seasoned attacking midfielder Sizolwethu 'Nunu' Shabalala levelled matters after the half hour mark with a close-range effort inside the box following a goal-mouth scramble.

The Swallows grandstand went into a frenzy three minutes later when Ncomo Gina doubled the advantage with a sublime finish from a Bonginkhosi 'Karas' Magagula pass. The goal gave the Caleb Ngwenya side a two-goal cushion heading to the break.

Sisonkhe came back recharged during the second half as Gama restored parity seven minutes into the resumption of play with a clinical finish after meeting a Thando Gule pass. The equaliser forced Swallows coach Caleb Ngwenya to make changes upfront by bringing in Lizwe Dlamini and Eric Tshamangwa for Sibongakonkhe Ndlovu and 'Karas' Magagula.

Tshamangwa nearly gave Swallows the lead in the 70th minute when his effort was saved by the opposition goalkeeper, Lungelo Maziya. The result saw Swallows remain at position 10 with 11 points while Sisonkhe are still rooted at the bottom of the table with five points after eight matches.



Isak powers
Liverpool to
victory

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Oyama duo
reaches Japan
semis

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Eswatini
Daily News

Monday 1
December, 2025

Sport



MTN PREMIER LEAGUE

Rangers castrate ‘Black Bull’

NO	TEAM	MP	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	NSINGIZINI HOTSPURS	8	6	0	2	6	18
2	MANZINI SEA BIRDS	8	5	1	2	6	16
3	EZULWINI UNITED	8	4	4	0	4	16
4	RANGERS FC	8	4	3	1	5	15
5	GREEN MAMBA	8	4	2	2	3	14
6	YOUNG BUFFALOES	8	4	1	3	5	13
7	TABANKULU CELTICS	8	4	0	4	6	12
8	MALANTI CHIEFS	8	2	5	1	-1	11
9	MBABANE SWALLOWS	8	3	2	3	-1	11
10	MBABANE HIGHLANDERS	8	2	3	3	0	9
11	ROYAL LEOPARD	8	2	2	4	-1	8
12	MONENI PIRATES	8	2	2	4	-1	8
13	AMAWELE FC	8	2	2	4	-2	8
14	UBOMBO SUGAR	8	2	1	5	-7	7
15	MANZINI WANDERERS	8	1	2	5	-10	5
16	SISONKHE FC	8	1	2	5	-12	5

... Ezulwini stings Young Buffaloes, Sisonkhe hold Mbabane Swallows as Moneni, Malanti draw. *Page 23*