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▲ The Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla officially opened three newly-constructed houses for elderly residents in the Mangcongco and Mhlambanyatsi constituencies. (Story on page 2)

Govt adjusts pay dates

... to ease
school-opening
costs for civil
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By Delisa Magagula

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The announcement forms part of government's annual cash-flow management strategy and is directly linked to the timing of Southern African Customs Union receipts, which are expected early in the new year. According to the Ministry of Finance, civil servants will receive their December salaries on the standard payroll schedule, with payments expected on December 20, followed by other related disbursements on December 23.

SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2

Ululation in Sandleni as Govt, World Vision delivers new Police Post

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Govt adjusts pay dates to ease school-opening costs for Civil Servants

By Delisa Magagula

THE Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg has confirmed the salary schedule for civil servants for December and January, outlining a temporary adjustment that government designed to ease financial pressure.

The announcement forms part of government's annual cashflow management strategy and is directly linked to the timing of Southern African Customs Union receipts, which are expected early in the new year.

According to the Ministry of Finance, civil servants will receive their December salaries on the standard payroll schedule, with payments expected on December 20, followed by other related disbursements on December 23.

"Government will not accelerate December salary payments, despite expectations from some employees based on previous precedents. The decision is intended to preserve fiscal stability during the festive period, while ensuring that the early January disbursement is adequately funded," said the Minister.

In January, salaries will be paid earlier than usual, a development Rijkenberg says will provide much-needed financial relief to households at the start of the school year.

The Ministry said the revised payment date is influenced by the timing of SACU receipts, which will provide government with



▲ The Prime Minister's and Cabinet offices.

sufficient revenue inflows to support early payroll processing without disrupting planned expenditures.

Rijkenberg said the adjustment aims to help households meet mandatory costs such as school fees, uniforms, transport and textbooks.

He said the early January salary could reduce the financial pressure associated with school re-opening, particularly for families with multiple dependants.

The Minister also noted that government recognises that the beginning of the academic year is characterised by a surge in household expenditure and said the measure represents a practical and responsible response.

Independent economist Thabo Maseko welcomed the move, describing it as a sensible fiscal decision that reflects an understanding

of seasonal financial pressures. He said the shift in timing could help civil servants avoid borrowing at the start of the year. Maseko explained that January has historically been a period of acute financial strain for many households, largely due to education-related obligations that must be settled immediately.

"Early payment does not increase salaries but shifts liquidity to a point in the year where spending cannot be postponed. This can reduce reliance on short-term credit, which often carries high interest rates," said Maseko.

He noted that households which delay school-related purchases are often forced to borrow or resort to expensive store accounts, which can trap them in a debt cycle until late in the year.

Maseko added that the timing arrangement

for December and January could also discourage excessive festive season spending.

He said that while government cannot regulate personal spending decisions, the knowledge that January salaries will come early may help families plan more responsibly. Meanwhile civil servants reacted positively to the announcement, saying it demonstrates awareness of the realities families face at the start of the year. A primary school teacher said parents are routinely confronted with a long list of compulsory costs, and early salaries would help ensure that children are not disadvantaged on the first day of school.

"School preparations often consume most of a household's monthly income before other bills are even considered," said the teacher.

A senior government employee in Mbabane said early payment could help families avoid higher retail prices. He said suppliers frequently raise prices just before schools reopen, forcing families to spend more than anticipated.

Another public sector worker said the adjustment is particularly useful for households that support extended family members.

The Ministry of Finance said the measure does not increase expenditure, but instead adjusts payment scheduling in response to seasonal economic conditions.

Minister Neal said government recognises that education-related expenses remain one of the most significant cost drivers for households in Eswatini.



▲ The Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla officially inaugurated three newly constructed houses for elderly residents in the Mangcongco and Mhlambanyatsi constituencies.



Early Christmas joy for elderly as DPM hands over three new houses

By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

The Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla officially inaugurated three newly constructed houses for elderly residents in the Mangcongco and Mhlambanyatsi constituencies.

These new homes provide safe, dignified shelter for beneficiaries who had previously endured harsh conditions in dilapidated stick-and-mud houses with collapsing walls and leaking roofs.

The urgency of this intervention was highlighted by the onset of the rainy season, which exacerbated the risks faced by elderly residents living in substandard

housing. Addressing attendees during one of the handovers, Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the importance of protecting the elderly from harsh weather conditions.

"It was imperative that these houses be handed over so that the beneficiaries are protected from harsh weather conditions. Now they are safe, and when it rains, none of their belongings will be soaked. It is essential that our elderly live comfortably," the Deputy Prime Minister emphasised.

In Mangcongco, the Sanctuary of Praise Church, under the leadership of Reverend Dambuzo Ntjalintjali, constructed a new home for 78-year-old Gogo Dorah Shabalala. The church initially attempted to renovate Gogo Shabalala's old home, but persistent structural failures made renovation

impossible. Recognising the severity of the situation, the church joined forces with the government to provide a new, sturdy house.

"When we learned of Gogo's condition, we contacted the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Social Welfare Officers confirmed she was registered as a beneficiary, but the list was long. As a church, we united to build this house," Rev. Ntjalintjali explained.

Gogo Shabalala's younger sister recounted a heartbreaking visit during a rainstorm, where she witnessed water leaking through the walls and roof of the old house, leaving her moved to tears.

In Mlindazwe, Mhlambanyatsi, two newly constructed houses were handed over to siblings Mkhulu Boy Jockonia Zwane (72) and Sipiwe Sibongile Zwane (66).

These homes were commissioned by Her Majesty Indlovukazi through Ntombi Matse, following reports of the siblings' challenging living conditions. The National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) took charge of constructing the houses, ensuring they met safety and durability standards.

The official opening ceremony was attended by prominent traditional leaders, including Chief Senzenyoni and Princesses Siphila (Mabhoko Mdlunkhulu from Mabhoko), Sandzisile, and Ncengcenge. The Zwane family also received blankets donated by Her Royal Highness Inkhosikati LaNkambule, which was said to add a personal touch of warmth and care to the elderly.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

Minister Jane strengthens online betting controls to protect children

GOVERNMENT has intensified efforts to protect children from the rising risk of online betting, with Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Simelane announcing new measures aimed at safeguarding young people in the digital space.

The minister said government is taking firm and coordinated action to regulate online gambling platforms and ensure that children are shielded from harmful exposure.

Speaking on behalf of the sector responsible for licensing and oversight of betting activities, Minister Simelane said Eswatini is tightening its systems to ensure that only verified adults can access online betting services. She said the growing use of smartphones and mobile money has made it easier for minors to attempt to register for betting accounts and that government will not allow this to continue.

She said authorities are now working closely with licensed bookmakers to strengthen online verification processes. The system will require robust identity checks before any wager can be placed. This step is designed to prevent minors from bypassing age restrictions, even when they have access to mobile phones or borrowed identification.

The minister said technology remains at the centre of both the challenge and the solution. She said the ministry is adopting stronger digital safeguards and is collaborating with mobile network operators to ensure that betting accounts linked to numbers belonging to users under the age of 18 are automatically blocked. She said any attempt by minors to create third party mobile wallets to access gambling sites will be detected and neutralised.

She said government will blow or suspend any third wallet or mobile number found to be linked to illegal underage betting activities. She said this firm action is necessary to protect children from addiction, debt and emotional distress associated with gambling. She added that early exposure to betting can derail the development of young people and expose them to harmful behaviour patterns.

The Minister stressed that enforcement



▲ Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Simelane.

alone is not enough and that collective effort is vital. She said parents, schools, community leaders and technology providers must work hand in hand to monitor online behaviour and educate minors about the dangers of gambling. She said community awareness programmes will be rolled out to help families understand how easily children can access betting platforms if not closely supervised.

Laws

The minister said the rise of online gambling across the world has forced many countries to update their laws and systems. She said Eswatini is determined to remain ahead of the curve by ensuring that its regulatory environment reflects current technological realities. She said

government's priority is to create a safe



digital space where children can access learning and entertainment without exposure to harmful content.

Simelane said the ministry will also continue to engage operators to ensure full compliance with licensing conditions.

She said operators found enabling access for minors, whether knowingly or through negligence, will face penalties and possible suspension of their licences. She said responsible gambling is a shared commitment that must be upheld by all stakeholders.

MPs push for stronger menstrual health support for underprivileged girls

By Thokozani Mazibuko

PARLIAMENT has welcomed a motion that urges government to strengthen national support for menstrual health, with Members of Parliament commending the commitment shown by the Prime Minister and his administration to improving the wellbeing of young girls across the country.

The motion, listed as 54 of 2025, calls on Prime Minister Russell Mmiso Dlamini to ensure that the National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA) receives adequate funds to introduce comprehensive menstrual health assistance for underprivileged girl children.

The motion was moved by Mtfongwaneni Member of Parliament Nathi Hlophe who said no child should be held back by a natural biological process. He stressed



▲ Members of Parliament during a sitting

that young girls miss school every month because families cannot afford basic

sanitary products. He said this has long term consequences for academic performance,

attendance and future opportunities. He added that menstrual health is an essential part of public health and an important pillar of gender equality and national development.

The motion recognises that the government has already prioritised adolescent health within various strategies. MPs said allocating resources to menstrual wellbeing would complement existing efforts and further strengthen the national HIV prevention agenda. They said this is an opportunity for government to reinforce its vision of leaving no child behind.

The proposed intervention calls on NERCHA to create and implement a Sanitary Health Support Programme that will directly assist underprivileged girls in schools and communities. The programme would provide sanitary pads and other menstrual products and ensure that girls have access to reliable information on menstrual hygiene. The motion further recommends strong collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Health and local organisations.



▲ The newly handed over police station at Esandleni.



▲ Minister S'khumbuzo Dlamini handing over the keys to the REPS top brass at eSandleni.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE was joy at Sandleni in the Shiselweni region as the Royal Eswatini Police Service expanded its service footprint with the official handover of a new police post structure.

The facility was delivered through a partnership between the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development and World Vision.

The new police post is expected to benefit residents from six communities which are Kontshingila, Ngololweni, Kaliba, Nhletjeni, Kasiba and Nkhungwini. For many, in these areas the absence of a nearby police facility has often meant delays in reporting crime, seeking urgent intervention or accessing basic policing services. The establishment of the Sandleni police post was hailed as it highlighted a significant improvement in service accessibility and is anticipated to strengthen crime prevention efforts.

During the ceremony, Minister for Tinkhundla Administration and Development S'khumbuzo Dlamini

Ululation in Sandleni as ...

Govt, World Vision delivers new police post

expressed gratitude to all partners involved in delivering the project. He reminded residents that security is a collective responsibility that requires trust and cooperation between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve. The Minister encouraged the people of Sandlane to embrace the police officers who will be stationed at the new post and to work with them in safeguarding peace and order.

The Minister further commended the police for their dedication and resilience in executing their duties under challenging circumstances. He highlighted their recent breakthrough in the investigation of the kidnapping and brutal murder of an eight year old girl in Siguduma which reinforced the importance of a capable and accessible

police service.

Senior Deputy National Commissioner Melusi Simelane who was representing the National Commissioner during the handover event, thanked the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development for continuously prioritising the operational needs of the Royal Eswatini Police Service.

Infrastructure

He noted that the provision of reliable infrastructure remains a key enabler for effective policing especially in communities that previously lacked permanent facilities.

Simelane reflected on similar projects that have been completed across different parts of the country. He mentioned that police structures were recently handed over

in Maphalaleni, Mhlambanyatsi, Phonjwane, Sithobelweni and Mpolonjeni. He stated that each of these projects contributes towards the national decentralisation strategy which seeks to improve access to government services by bringing them closer to the people. He expressed confidence that the Sandlane community will benefit greatly from the presence of a permanent police post. He said that increased visibility of police officers will strengthen trust and reduce crime related vulnerabilities especially for women, children and elderly residents. The Senior Deputy National Commissioner also urged communities to continue reporting crime promptly and to remain active participants in community safety initiatives.

NDMA responds swiftly after 41 homes blown away by violent storm

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) moved quickly into action today, arriving at Mayiwane Inkhundla to assess damage and assist families after a violent hailstorm destroyed more than forty one homes on Tuesday.

Communities across Buhleni, Mkhuzweni, Fontotje, Gija and surrounding areas were left in shock as the storm tore through homes, swept away property and displaced dozens of families. Mayiwane Member of Parliament Sicelo Khungankhosi Dlamini confirmed that the extent of the destruction demanded urgent intervention. He expressed deep sadness as he toured the damaged communities alongside NDMA officials who were on the ground conducting assessments, recording losses and providing emergency support to victims. Speaking to this news publication, the MP described scenes of devastation that left families traumatised and unsure of their next steps. “My heart is heavy as I address you again after the devastating hailstorm that has swept through our communities. I have visited many of the affected areas



▲ Buhleni Police Station was not spared by the storm.

and witnessed pain, loss and shock.” He highlighted Buhleni as the most severely affected area, where families lost homes, businesses and property in a matter of minutes as the storm intensified. Among the most serious impacts was the destruction of Mkhuzweni Health Centre, a facility that services thousands across the constituency. Its damage has placed enormous strain on healthcare access. “The Mkhuzweni area, which is home to Mkhuzweni Health Centre, has been particularly hard hit. The health centre itself was destroyed during the storm.” He warned that the loss of

such a crucial facility exposes elderly people, pregnant women, children and the chronically ill to significant risk.

The storm battered multiple communities, leaving unprecedented damage. In Fontotje, residents reported that homes, fields and livestock were swept away. In Gija and parts of Mkhuzweni, families were left with nothing but rubble as structures they had spent years building were flattened. Schools were also struck hard. Classrooms at Herefords High, Gija High, some structures in Matfuntini and parts of Lugongodlwane Nazarene Primary School were blown away,

interrupting learning and leaving teachers and pupils without safe spaces. To respond effectively, MP Dlamini has engaged the Ministry of Health and national disaster structures to further fast track emergency interventions. He requested immediate medical attention for the injured and called for ambulances and emergency teams to be deployed to areas where roads remain blocked by debris. He also appealed for temporary medical facilities to be set up while the Mkhuzweni Health Centre is being repaired, noting that the community cannot be left without health services.



▲ The storm left a trail of havoc at Mkhuzweni Health Centre.



▲ The inside of Mkhuzweni Health Centre where there was immense damage.

By EDN Reporter

ESWATINI Mobile has wrapped up its exciting Win an iPhone 17 Pro Max competition, leaving three lucky subscribers celebrating early Christmas victories.

The competition, which ran as part of the company's commitment to digital inclusion, aimed to support His Majesty King Mswati III's vision of a First World Eswatini.

To qualify, customers simply had to load E100 or more during the campaign period. According to Eswatini Mobile Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Sichula, "the competition was a way to give back to loyal customers while ensuring that emaSwati remain connected through world-class digital devices."

Sichula said the competition was well received and achieved its desired impact. He revealed that the outcome was especially satisfying because the winners came from diverse age groups and income levels, demonstrating true nationwide accessibility.

He further highlighted that Eswatini Mobile's mission is to connect communities seamlessly and affordably, and this initiative was a step toward achieving exactly that.

Sichula congratulated the winners and reaffirmed Eswatini Mobile's ongoing commitment to rewarding its customers while driving digital transformation across the Kingdom of Eswatini, and beyond, living up to its vision to be Africa's Leading Integrated Business Partner.

Three lucky customers win big in Eswatini Mobile's iPhone 17 Pro Max giveaway



▲ The three recipients Phumlile Nkambule, Monday Simelane and Sihle Ntshalintshali expressed their delight over winning a brand new iPhone 17 pro max each.



Monday Simelane (49), Headteacher – Gija High School

Simelane could not contain his excitement after learning he had won the latest iPhone device.

He said he normally loads E200 every month, and doing so during the competition was simply routine, not a deliberate attempt to win.

"When the call came in notifying me of the win, I was in disbelief," he said with a smile. "I am truly grateful to Eswatini Mobile. This initiative has definitely upgraded my phone game."



Phindile Nkambule (38), Interior Designer – Matsapha

Nkambule described her experience as surreal, admitting that she did not believe the news at first. "Mine bengicabanga kutsi bofacata.(I thought it was a scam)" she laughed, explaining that she only believed it once she was called to collect the device. "Even then, I was still a doubting Thomas." She expressed deep appreciation to Eswatini Mobile, saying the high-end device will greatly enhance her business. "In my line of work, clear photos and short videos are everything. This phone is a massive upgrade; I was using a 2G phone before, therefore I'm grateful to Eswatini Mobile. It sure does have benefits to be a customer to Your Affordable Network!"



Sihle Ntshalintshali (29), Supervisor – RESCorp, Mhlume

Ntshalintshali said receiving such a premium smartphone has energized her daily routine, and her content creation ambitions.

"I'm ecstatic! Considering the phone's features, I know it will make my life so much easier," she said. "As a young person, content creation is part of my lifestyle, so this is such an exciting upgrade from the Samsung device I'm using. Thank you, Eswatini Mobile, for an amazing Christmas gift."

About the iPhone 17 Pro Max

THE iPhone 17 Pro Max features a 6.9-inch Super Retina XDR OLED display with a smooth 120Hz Pro-Motion experience.

It runs on Apple's powerful A19 Pro chip, offering enhanced performance and AI-driven capabilities.

The triple-lens 48MP camera system delivers professional-quality photos and videos, perfect for content creators and business users alike.

Long-lasting battery life, fast USB-C charging, and 5G connectivity make

it an ideal device for a modern digital lifestyle. The device is available in three sleek finishes: Silver, Deep Blue, and Cosmic Orange.



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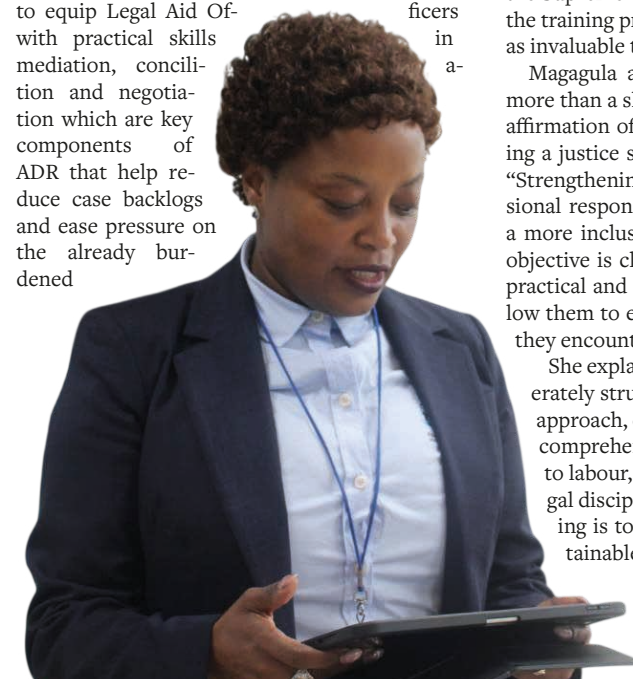
Legal Aid Eswatini Strengthens Access To Justice With Specialised ADR Training

By Noaba Ntshakala

ESWATINI Legal Aid has taken a major step toward strengthening the country's justice system after successfully hosting a specialised training programme on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

The training, facilitated by Judge Justice Osumane of Mozambique and supported by UNDP Eswatini, is part of ongoing national efforts to promote faster, more inclusive, and people-centred justice for all EmaSwati.

The capacity-building initiative is designed to equip Legal Aid Officers with practical skills in mediation, conciliation and negotiation which are key components of ADR that help reduce case backlogs and ease pressure on the already burdened



▲ Director of Legal Aid Lungile Magagula delivering her remarks during the opening.

court system. The programme, by empowering frontline legal practitioners with these tools, aims to make justice more accessible, affordable and timely, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised groups who often face the greatest barriers.

Director of Eswatini Legal Aid, Lungile Magagula, officially opened the training by acknowledging its significance and aligning it with the global commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. She emphasised that the day serves as a reminder that "justice, dignity and equality must be accessible to all."

"Our greatest appreciation goes to UNDP for their consistent support since the establishment of our office, and especially for making this training a reality," Magagula said. She further extended profound gratitude to Justice Dario Osumane of the Supreme Court of Mozambique for providing the training pro bono, describing his contribution as invaluable to Eswatini's justice reform journey.

Magagula added that the training represents more than a skills-development activity; it is a reaffirmation of a collective commitment to building a justice system where no one is left behind. "Strengthening mediation skills is both a professional responsibility and a contribution towards a more inclusive justice system," she said. "Our objective is clear, it is to equip participants with practical and theoretical mediation skills that allow them to effectively manage the diverse cases they encounter daily."

She explained that the programme was deliberately structured using a hybrid mixed-model approach, ensuring officers gain adaptable and comprehensive mediation knowledge relevant to labour, administrative, family and other legal disciplines. Another outcome of the training is to support the development of a sustainable institutional mediation framework aligned with Eswatini's justice sector priorities.

Magagula further reminded participants that mediation is "more than a technique—it is a mindset" requiring neutrality, empathy, patience, creativity and a genuine



▲ Participants following proceedings during the training.

commitment to helping disputing parties find common ground peacefully. As the justice landscape evolves, she stressed that such skills are "not optional, but essential."

The Ministry responsible for Justice expressed appreciation to Judge Osumane and UNDP for their ongoing partnership and commitment to advancing justice sector reforms. The Ministry reaffirmed its dedication to a transparent, consultative and well-coordinated approach to State-Business relations and justice service delivery, insisting that accessible justice remains a cornerstone of national development.

Meanwhile, a legal expert who recently spoke to Eswatini Daily News (EDN) highlighted the critical value of ADR in complementing traditional legal processes. "While legal aid is crucial, ADR offers a more collaborative and less adversarial way to resolve disputes. It often leads to faster and more satisfactory outcomes, especially in financial disagreements where prolonged court



▲ Judge Justice Osumane of Mozambique. battles can strain already limited resources."

The expert added that combining legal aid and ADR is essential for closing the justice gap. "Studies show that individuals with legal representation are far more likely to achieve favourable outcomes than those who navigate the system alone. By integrating mediation into its services, Legal Aid Eswatini is addressing both legal and financial pressures faced by many citizens."

His Majesty approves gold prospecting in Hhohho

By Delisa Magagula

HIS Majesty King Mswati III has granted Eswatini Ventures Company (Pty) Ltd the right to prospect for gold in Horo Emvembili, Hhohho, marking one of the most extensive mineral exploration authorisations issued in recent years.

The prospecting licence, a notarial prospecting agreement between Ingonyama in trust for Eswatini Ventures, was officially handed over by the Eswatini Mining and Minerals Board (MMB) on December 3, 2025, at Ramblas Restaurant in Mbabane.

The licence allows Eswatini Ventures to commence exploration in March 2026, pending receipt of environmental clearance and completion of community consultations.

Legal Advisor for the Minerals Management Board, Mabandla Manzini, outlined the full scale of the project and confirmed the nature of the agreement.

"This document that is being signed is a notarial prospecting licence between the Ingonyama in trust for Maswati and a company by the name of Eswatini Ventures Company Proprietary Limited," he said.

"The purpose is to grant a right to Eswatini Ventures to prospect for gold in that region. This area is about 4,377 hectares, and there are quite many privately owned properties and a couple of other properties owned by the Ingonyama which are affected by the lease," he said in addition.



▲ Minerals Mining Board Chairperson Prince Guduza giving licence to members of Eswatini Ventures Company.

Worth noting, Manzini serves as the Legal Officer for the MMB and handled the procedural aspects of the handover.

Meanwhile, the licence was issued following the formal approval of His Majesty King Mswati III, who oversees the administration of mineral rights in the Kingdom.

Prince Guduza attended the handover ceremony together with members of the Minerals Management Board, signalling high-level oversight for the project.

Noteworthy last week, His Majesty King Mswati III also approved a mining licence for the Eswatini Electricity Feedstock Company, a subsidiary of the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC).

The licence grants the company rights to mine coal in Lubhuku for a 1,500MW power generation project. Covering roughly 4,000 hectares, the licence is valid for 20 years and is expected to support the Kingdom's long-

term energy security plans.

Meanwhile, Eswatini Ventures Company Director, Musa Magagula, welcomed the issuance of the licence and outlined the next procedural steps before work begins on site.

"We can now say 15 general workers from the community will benefit from jobs, including two local geologists, and the number will grow," Magagula said.

He confirmed that exploration would begin only after the company receives an environmental compliance certificate from the Eswatini Environmental Authority and concludes formal engagements with the affected communities.

Magagula attended the ceremony with members of the company's technical team, including Chief Geologist William Levene and Senior Geologist Aina Randriamahaled, who are expected to lead the geological mapping and sampling stages once exploration

commences.

With thousands of hectares of land falling under the prospecting zone, the company is required to begin consultations with landholders, chiefs, and affected residents in the Horo-Emvembili area.

These engagements will cover access rights, movement of personnel, mitigation of disturbances, and awareness of the prospecting schedule.

Environmental compliance will require baseline studies to assess soil, water, biodiversity, and community impacts before any drilling or sampling begins.

Worth noting the Horo-Emvembili licence extends Eswatini's exploration footprint at a time when the Kingdom is positioning its mining sector for new investment.

While the licence does not guarantee mining, prospecting results often determine further exploration interest, investor attraction, and long-term mineral development.

Prince Guduza during the handover said the licence forms part of broader efforts to map the Kingdom's mineral potential in line with existing legislative frameworks.

The notarial prospecting licence, executed between the Ingonyama in trust for Maswati and Eswatini Ventures, outlines the rights and obligations of the company during the exploration period.

It also details the specific boundaries of the 4,377-hectare prospecting area and the terms under which the company may access properties, including those privately owned.



BRIEFS

Botswana holds policy rate

BOTSWANA's central bank kept its main interest rate unchanged on Thursday, citing continued weakness in the diamond sector and its expectation that inflation will be within its objective range in the medium term.

The decision to keep the rate at 3.5% was the first under the Bank of Botswana's new Governor Lesego Moseki.

Kenya, US agency to proceed with \$1 bln swap deal

THE U.S. International Development Finance Corporation has agreed to proceed with a \$1 billion debt-for-food security swap with Kenya to replace costly debt with lower-cost financing, Kenyan President William Ruto said.

The East African country, which is laden with high public debt and repayments, has been seeking new sources of financing to create room for development spending and investments in infrastructure.

Miners, smelters unite against export tax

THE Minerals Council South Africa and the Ferro Alloy Producers Association (FAPA) have united in rejecting a proposed export tax on chrome ore, calling instead for urgent government action to provide globally competitive electricity tariffs.

Several smelters, including Glencore and Samancor, plan to close plants and cut jobs due to high electricity costs. Glencore-Mer-afe employs about 3,000 people, while Samancor may cut up to 2,500 jobs.

(Reuters)

National FinTech strategy to drive innovation, inclusion

Stories By Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI has launched a National FinTech Strategy that seeks to modernise the financial sector, expand access to financial services, and position the country as a competitive player in the digital economy by 2030.

The initiative was unveiled on Wednesday and is expected to guide policy, investment, and industry collaboration over the next five years. Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg said the Strategy signals a shift toward technology-enabled growth and wider participation in the financial system.

“We want to unlock opportunities for our people and modernise the way we deliver services, making financial inclusion not just a privilege for the few, but a reality for everyone,” he said.

He described the Strategy as a coordinated framework aimed at harnessing innovation to stimulate economic activity, job creation, and resilience.

“This represents a growth path powered by technology, strengthened by innovation, and sustained through partnerships,” he said.

The initiative outlines four priority goals, innovation and competitiveness, financial inclusion, regulatory adaptability, and cybersecurity.

Government institutions, regulators, private sector stakeholders, and development partners are expected to support implementation.

The innovation pillar focuses on creating an environment that supports start-ups, product development, and investment in emerging technologies.

It proposes innovation hubs, incubation programmes, and closer collaboration between industry and academic institutions to develop locally driven solutions.

The financial inclusion pillar targets improved access to digital financial services for underserved groups, including rural communities, women, youth, and micro and small enterprises.

The Strategy promotes the expansion of mobile banking, digital payments, and alternative financing models to increase participation in the economy.

Central Bank of Eswatini Governor Dr Phil Mnisi said expanding financial access remains a central development priority.

“Whether it is the farmer in Siphofaneni, the young entrepreneur in Mbabane, or the small trader in Siteki, this strategy aims to make financial services more accessible, more affordable, and more relevant to their needs,” he noted.

The Strategy also highlights the need for a regulatory environment that keeps pace with technological change.

It encourages ongoing collaboration between regulators and industry to safeguard consumers and ensure financial system stability while enabling innovation.

This includes modernised legal frameworks for digital financial products and new business models.

Meanwhile Cybersecurity is identified as a core concern as the country digitises financial



▲ Eswatini has launched a National FinTech Strategy that seeks to modernise the financial sector, expand access to financial services, and position the country as a competitive player in the digital economy by 2030.



▲ Minister for Finance Neal Rijkenberg, UNDP Resident Coordinator Henrik Franklin and CBE Governor Dr Phil Mnisi having a moment during the launch.



▲ Head Africa Regional Office, Alliance for Financial Inclusion Nomcebo Hadebe made a presentation during the launch held in Ezulwini.

services.

The Strategy calls for the adoption of best practice standards, improved risk management, and investment in skills development to mitigate cyber risks and maintain trust in digital platforms.

Implementation will require cooperation between government, industry, and development

partners. Rijkenberg said a strategy alone will not drive progress without active participation from stakeholders.

He urged financial institutions to invest in digital transformation, innovators to scale solutions responsibly, and development partners to continue providing technical expertise.

The Strategy was developed with support from the Alliance for Financial Inclusion and the United Nations Development Programme, alongside local stakeholders.

It is positioned as a national blueprint to guide investment decisions, regulatory reforms, and capacity-building initiatives.

Rijkenberg said the Strategy reflects a shared ambition to build a modern, competitive financial sector.

“Together, we can unlock the full potential of financial technology for a future that uplifts every citizen, drives sustainable growth, and places Eswatini firmly on the regional and global FinTech map,” he said.

The Strategy will be implemented over a five-year period, with monitoring structures expected to track progress and ensure alignment with national development objectives.

EswatiniBank

FX RATES

Notes/Cash

	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	16.8802	17.1437
G.B. Pound	22.0354	22.7141
EURO	19.3989	20.0064
Bank Rate	(July 2023)	7.50%
Prime Rate	(July 2023)	11%
Inflation	(July 2023)	4.5%
Petrol	E21.60/Litre	
Diesel	E22.90/Litre	
Paraffin	E17.25/Litre	

Eswatini revises VAT exemptions

By Delisa Magagula

THE Minister for Finance has announced a set of Value Added Tax amendments set to take effect from the beginning of January 2026.

The Minister Neal Rijkenberg introduced exemptions on investment-grade precious metals, fresh maize, medical supplies, reusable nappies and sanitary products, while removing condensed milk from the zero-rated list.

The changes will be outlined in a forthcoming government gazette, and are aimed at correcting previous inconsistencies in the tax regime, supporting consumer welfare, and opening new space for financial and industrial activity.

The Minister said banks importing refined gold or silver have historically been charged VAT at the border, even when the metals were intended to be held as investment assets for clients.

“The new exemption will apply to refined gold and silver in bar, ingot or bullion form, supplied only to licensed financial institutions and subject to approval by the Central Bank of Eswatini. The metals must meet minimum purity standards and must be sourced, refined or traded in accordance with the Mines and Minerals Act of 2011,” said the Minister.

The Minister said, gold and silver brought in for manufacturing, including jewellery production, will continue to attract VAT.

Economist Mkhosi Thwala said the exemption presents an opportunity for the financial sector to expand the range of investment instruments offered to clients.

“This change introduces a regulatory basis for banks to hold physical precious metals as part of their asset base and offer services to investors who seek to diversify portfolios across tangible stores of value,” said Thwala.

A major portion of the amendments concerns medical and hygiene supplies. Previously taxable items that will now be exempt include absorbent cotton wool, gauze, bandages, surgical gloves, dressings, adhesive plasters, surgical instruments, syringes, sterile suture materials, and similar items used in medical procedures.

Government said the changes address disparities in which essential clinical products



▲ The Ministry of Finance has announced exemptions on investment-grade precious metals.

remained taxable despite long-standing efforts to reduce healthcare costs.

In addition, reusable nappies and inserts, as well as sanitary pads, sanitary towels and tampons, will be exempt from VAT.

The Minister said the decision responds to both health and affordability concerns and applies to products used in domestic settings and clinical environments.

Meanwhile, Thwala said the medical and hygiene exemptions represent targeted interventions with tangible household- and institutional-level effects.

He said cost relief in this category could influence procurement budgets in public and private healthcare facilities and reduce consumer expenditure on essential hygiene products.

He said the revenue impact is likely to be modest, but the social and operational benefits may be meaningful.

The Minister said government’s objectives are to modernise existing legislation, correct errors, and align VAT exemptions with na-



▲ Government will introduce a zero-rating on fresh mealies fit for human consumption, which had previously been subject to VAT.

tional development priorities. The gazette outlining the revisions is expected next week.

Thwala said the combined reforms reflect a gradual, policy-driven approach to tax administration. He said the effects of the chang-

es will depend on market responses, but the shift toward investment facilitation, staple affordability and healthcare cost relief represents a positive direction for economic and social policy.

Private sector backs unified dialogue as govt pledges evidence-based reforms

By Ncaba Ntshakala
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THE Business Eswatini has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening a unified and inclusive national dialogue platform that brings together large enterprises, MSMEs, cooperatives, and youth and women-led businesses.

This came during a high-level engagement session aimed at enhancing collaboration and ensuring that private sector voices remain central in shaping economic transformation.

During the meeting, Business Eswatini representatives emphasised the importance of coordinated engagement across all sectors, noting that a harmonised approach is essential for aligning national priorities with private sector participation. They stressed that such collaboration is key to boosting Eswatini’s competitiveness and creating a



▲ Some of the attendees during a high-level engagement session aimed at enhancing collaboration and ensuring that private sector voices remain central in shaping economic transformation.

more enabling economic environment.

Government, through the Ministry responsible for State-Business Relations, reiterated its dedication to implementing

evidence-based reforms under the State-Business Relations (SBR) Framework. The reforms support the National Development Plan (2024-2028) and include strategic

focus areas such as digital transformation, critical skills development, sustainable energy, MSME empowerment, and enhanced market intelligence.

Officials highlighted that these reforms are designed to strengthen the foundations of economic growth and promote long-term resilience.

The Ministry further highlighted its ongoing role in championing a transparent, well-coordinated, and fully consultative approach to State-Business relations, noting that this collaborative model is essential for unlocking investment, driving economic expansion, and creating employment opportunities.

The meeting also acknowledged the strong partnership with the European Union and the International Trade Centre, whose technical and financial support continues to play a critical role in advancing the SBR Framework and supporting Eswatini’s broader development agenda.

Botswana holds policy rate at first meeting under new governor

BOTSWANA’s central bank kept its main interest rate unchanged on Thursday, citing continued weakness in the diamond sector and its expectation that inflation will be within its objective range in the medium term.

The decision to keep the rate at 3.5% was the first under the Bank of Botswana’s new Governor Lesego Moseki.

“The economy is expected to continue to operate below full capacity. ... This outlook supports maintaining a broadly accommodative monetary policy stance,” Moseki told a press

conference.

The Southern African country’s economy has been under pressure for more than a year because of a prolonged downturn in the global market for diamonds, its key export.

Real gross domestic product contracted 3% in the year to June 2025, a sharper decline than the 0.6% contraction in the previous 12 months.

Inflation is still within the central bank’s 3%-6% objective range but has been rising, reaching 3.9% year-on-year in October compared to 3.7% in September.

The Bank of Botswana forecasts

inflation will average 5.3% next year, up from an average of 2.7% this year, and believes it is more likely it will overshoot than undershoot that forecast.

At its last monetary policy meeting in October the bank hiked its key rate by 160 basis points to try to narrow the gap with market lending rates, which had been driven higher by a liquidity squeeze linked to the country’s economic slump.

It said on Thursday that liquidity conditions had improved.

(Reuters)



▲ The Minerals Council South Africa and the Ferro Alloy Producers Association have united in rejecting a proposed export tax.

Miners, smelters unite against export tax

THE Minerals Council South Africa and the Ferro Alloy Producers Association (FAPA) have united in rejecting a proposed export tax on chrome ore, calling instead for urgent government action to provide globally competitive electricity tariffs.

Several smelters, including Glencore and Samancor, plan to close plants and cut jobs due to high electricity costs. Glencore-Merafe employs about 3,000 people, while Samancor may cut up to 2,500 jobs.

In a joint statement to the media, the industry warned that high electricity costs, not ore supply or prices, are the main cause of idled smelters and stressed that trade measures alone would not revive the sector.

“Any interventions in addition to an electricity tariff adjustment must be balanced, equitable and supportive of the competitiveness of both chrome mining and ferrochrome beneficiation”.

“Both groups are clear that the price and availability of chrome ore is not the cause of South Africa’s ferrochrome smelter closures or suspensions. Instead, the more than 900% increase in electricity tariffs since 2008 has rendered domestic smelters uncompetitive and unprofitable”

They added that without a direct intervention to address the electricity cost burden, no trade measures, including a chrome ore export tax or quotas, will restore meaningful viability to the country’s ferroalloy smelters.

“Without an intervention that directly addresses the electricity cost burden, no trade measures, including a chrome ore export tax or quotas, will restore meaningful viability to the country’s ferroalloy smelters”.

“Both miners and smelters, therefore, reject recently mooted calls for an export tax or restrictions, as these would harm chrome ore producers without materially assisting smelter recovery”. (The Citizen)



▲ The decision to keep the rate at 3.5% was the first under the Bank of Botswana’s new Governor Lesego Moseki.

Kenya, US agency to proceed with \$1 billion debt-for-food swap

THE U.S. International Development Finance Corporation has agreed to proceed with a \$1 billion debt-for-food security swap with Kenya to replace costly debt with lower-cost financing, Kenyan President William Ruto said.

The East African country, which is laden with high public debt and repayments, has been seeking new sources of financing to create room for development spending and investments in infrastructure.

Ruto, who is in Washington to witness the signing of a U.S.-brokered accord between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, said the DFC will increase its engagement with Nairobi, including sending a representative to be based in the country from next year.

“We also appreciate DFC for agreeing to proceed with the \$1 billion debt-for-food security swap,”

the president said in a post on X late on Wednesday.

The DFC is the United States’ flagship development agency.

The plan is expected to work in a similar way as so-called debt-for-nature swaps carried out by several countries in recent years that offered lower interest rates in exchange for nature protection.

A debt-for-food swap would allow Kenya to replace costly existing debt with lower-cost financing on condition it channelled the savings towards programmes to boost food security.

Debt swap agreements with a focus on social or environmental benefits are becoming an increasingly popular financing tool in poorer parts of the world. Countries including Ecuador, Belize and Gabon have undertaken debt-for-nature deals in recent years.

(Reuters)



▲ William Ruto, President of Kenya.

EU launches antitrust probe into Meta over use of AI in WhatsApp

BRUSSELS has opened a new antitrust investigation into Meta Platforms (META.O), opens new tab over its rollout of artificial intelligence features in WhatsApp, the European Commission said on Thursday, reflecting rising scrutiny of Big Tech's use of generative AI.

The move, reported earlier by Reuters and the Financial Times, marks the latest action by European regulators against large technology firms as the bloc seeks to balance support for the sector with efforts to curb its expanding influence.

The European Commission opened the investigation into "Meta's new policy regarding AI providers' access to WhatsApp" after the California-based company integrated its Meta AI system into the messaging service earlier this year.

A WhatsApp spokesperson said that "the claims are baseless", adding that the emergence of chatbots on its platforms "puts a strain on our systems that they were not designed to support".

"Even still, the AI space is highly competitive and people have access to the services of their choice in any number of ways, including app stores, search engines, email services, partnership integrations, and operating systems."

Meta AI, a chatbot and virtu-



▲ The WhatsApp app icon is seen on a smartphone in this illustration.

al assistant, has been built into WhatsApp's interface since March 2025 across European markets.

Italy's antitrust watchdog opened a parallel investigation in July into allegations that Meta leveraged its market power by integrating an AI tool into WhatsApp. The probe was expanded in November to examine whether Meta further abused its

dominance by blocking rival AI chatbots from the messaging platform.

The FT, citing officials, said that the EU probe will be conducted under traditional antitrust rules rather than the EU's Digital Markets Act, the bloc's landmark legislation currently used to scrutinize Amazon and Microsoft's cloud services for potential curbs. (Reuters)



Amazon gives techies a whiff of software-driven perfume

AMAZON.COM on Wednesday touted new capabilities for its SageMaker AI service that it says will help customers expedite customizing their artificial intelligence software models.

For Peter Nikoloff, a different type of sage-making took precedence.

He was sure to be first in line Wednesday morning at the most popular booth at Amazon's annual AWS cloud computing confab in Las Vegas that attracts some 60,000 attendees, paying up to \$2,100 each for tickets.

Nikoloff, 37, waited nearly two hours to be first in line to make a custom fragrance for his wife using Amazon's Nova generative AI software. The voice-powered service spun a fragrance with hints of mint, sandalwood and, yes, sage.

"Oh it was totally worth it,"

said Nikoloff, who was attending the weeklong conference, put on by Amazon Web Services, to pick up tips to help with his information technology job with the federal government. "There's quite a lot of perfume here, for free."

Sessions dispensing advice on arcane fields such as cloud modernization, data lakes and container migrations are popular among software engineers at the conference, but none has drawn a crowd like the AI perfumery. On the third day of the event, the line for the Fragrance Lab had not abated, drawing upwards of six dozen hopefuls at a time and waits of one hour or more.

The scent lab is a gimmick, but meant to demonstrate the broad applications for AI software, Amazon said.

(Reuters)

NASA study shows how satellite 'light pollution' hinders space telescopes

AN exponential increase in the number of satellites placed in low-Earth orbit has brought advances in telecommunications including broadband access in rural and remote areas worldwide. It also has caused a surge in light pollution in space that imperils the work done by orbiting astronomical observatories.

A new NASA-led study focusing on four space telescopes - two currently operational and two planned - estimates that a large percentage of images obtained by these observatories over the next decade could be tainted by light emitted or reflected by satellites sharing their low-Earth orbit.

The researchers calculated that about 40% of images taken by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope and about 96% of those taken by the U.S. space agency's SPHEREx observatory could be contaminated by light from satellites. They also calculated that about 96% of images from the European Space Agency's planned ARRAKIS observatory and China's planned Xuntian telescope could be similarly affected.

Hubble would be less affected due to its narrow field of view, the researchers said.

Orbiting telescopes are a vital part of space exploration. They can observe a wider range of the electromagnetic spectrum than ground-based telescopes, and the lack of atmospheric interference lets them get sharper images of the cosmos, enabling direct imaging of distant galaxies or of planets beyond our solar system.



▲ This photo taken May 13, 2009 shows the Hubble Space Telescope prior to its grapple by the space shuttle Atlantis's robot arm.

"While until now most light pollution came from cities and vehicles, the rise of telecommunication satellite constellations is rapidly starting to affect astronomical observatories worldwide," said astronomer Alejandro Borlaff of NASA's Ames Research Center in California, lead author of the study

published in the journal Nature, opens new tab.

"As telescopes stare at the universe attempting to unveil distant galaxies, planets and asteroids, satellites sometimes cross in front of their cameras, leaving bright traces of light that erase the dim signal that we

receive from the cosmos. This was a known problem for ground-based telescopes. But until now, space telescopes - much more expensive and placed in apparently pristine vantage points of view in space - were thought to be almost free of human-made light pollution," Borlaff said.

In 2019, there were roughly 2,000 satellites in low-Earth orbit. The number now is around 15,000. Borlaff said that proposals from industry foresee around 560,000 satellites in low-Earth orbit in the coming decade.

"To give an idea of how much this number increased recently, we have launched more satellites to low-Earth orbit in the last four years - 2021 to 2025 - than in the previous seven decades of space flight combined," Borlaff said.

The researchers used information from satellite operators to simulate the orbital layers of each satellite constellation - from SpaceX's Starlink, China's Guowang and Amazon (AMZN.O), opens new tab, among others. They then considered specific properties of the telescopes such as orbiting altitude, trajectory, field of view and other factors.

"Once we had the simulated telescopes observing our simulated universe, we only needed to count the number of times that the satellites crossed - or 'photo-bombed' - our observatories, and how bright they were at the moment of the event," Borlaff said.

Satellites reflect and emit multiple types of light.

(Reuters)

U.S. President Donald Trump will bring leaders of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda together in Washington on Thursday to sign new deals aimed at stabilizing a war-scarred region and attracting Western mining investment.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi are expected to pledge their commitment to an economic integration compact already agreed to last month, as well as a U.S.-brokered peace deal reached in June but still not implemented.

Analysts say U.S. diplomacy has paused escalation of fighting in eastern Congo but has failed to resolve core issues. The M23 rebel group, supported by Rwanda, seized the two largest cities in eastern Congo earlier this year in a lightning advance that raised fears of a wider war.

Trump has been eager to burnish his diplomatic credentials. Since taking office in January, his administration has intervened in conflicts from the Middle East to Ukraine and beyond. Those efforts have generated mixed results, including a deal in Gaza and criticism that the president should focus on rising discontent domestically with his handling of cost-of-living issues.

Ahead of the meeting, the president's name was added to a sign outside the United States Institute of Peace, a government-founded nonprofit his administration tried to seize control of earlier this year. The deal is expected to be signed at the institute.

The agreement, however, may not immediately change the humanitarian crisis on the ground.

In dueling statements on Tuesday, Congo's army and M23 rebels accused each other

Trump hosts Congo, Rwanda leaders in latest push for peace

of violating existing ceasefire agreements that were renewed last month. At a news conference in Washington on Wednesday, Congolese official Patrick Muyaya blamed M23 for recent fighting and said it was "proof that Rwanda doesn't want peace."

M23 is not expected to attend the Washington meeting. It is also not bound by the terms of any Congo-Rwanda agreement.

"The U.S., in particular, has been successful in at least putting a pin in the conflict so it doesn't continue to escalate," said Jason Stearns, a regional expert and associate professor at Canada's Simon Fraser University. "All they've done, really, is put a pin in it, and the core issues have not been resolved. And it doesn't look like they're getting much closer to being resolved."

Rwanda denies backing M23. Kigali has said its own forces have acted in self-defense against ethnic Hutu militiamen linked to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. A group of United Nations experts said in a July report that Rwanda exercises command and control over the rebels.

M23 says it's fighting to protect ethnic Tutsi communities in eastern Congo. The rebel group's advances mark the latest episode in an ethnic rivalry in Congo's eastern borderlands with Rwanda, the source of conflict for three decades.

Two devastating wars in the African Great Lakes region between 1996 and 2003 cost millions of lives. The latest cycle of fighting has killed thousands of people and displaced



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump will bring leaders of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda together in Washington.

hundreds of thousands more.

A REGION RICH IN MINERALS

The Trump administration has discussed facilitating billions of dollars of Western investment in a region rich in tantalum, tin, tungsten, gold, cobalt, copper, lithium and other minerals. Washington is scrambling globally to secure its access to critical minerals controlled by its rival, China.

Under the Trump-backed agreement, Congo would need to crack down on an

armed group opposed to M23, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Rwanda would need to withdraw its forces from Congo. Little apparent progress has been made toward either pledge since the agreement was signed in June.

"We hope that, after the signing, we will see improvement on the ground," said Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe, in an interview with Reuters on Wednesday. (Reuters)

South Africa will take a 'break' from G20 under Trump

SOUTH Africa's presidency joked on Thursday that the country would "take a commercial break" from the G20 while U.S. President Donald Trump leads the forum, after Trump's administration confirmed it will not invite South Africa to participate.

The U.S. took over the rotating presidency of the Group of 20 last week, after boycotting the summit that President Cyril Ramaphosa hosted in Johannesburg.

"About this time next year, the UK will be taking over the G20 presidency. We will be able to engage meaningfully and substantively over what really matters to the rest of the world," said Ramaphosa's spokesperson Vincent Magwenya.

"For now, we will take a commercial break until we resume normal programming," he wrote on social media.

Relations between Washington and Pretoria have reached a low this year as Trump

has repeatedly made false claims about a "white genocide" in South Africa and criticized the country for its policies aimed at addressing racial inequality.

Trump's administration also opposed the theme of South Africa's G20 presidency, which was "solidarity, equality and sustainability".

Trump had already said that South Africa would not be invited to the G20 leaders' summit he hosts next year in Florida, but it was unclear whether Pretoria would also be excluded from the many meetings leading up to it.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio seemed to confirm on Wednesday that South Africa would not be able to take part in any G20 engagements next year.

"President Trump and the United States will not be extending an invitation to the South African government to participate in the G20 during our presidency," he said in a statement. (Reuters)



▲ Presidential Spokesperson Vincent Magwenya updates the media at the parliament in Cape Town, South Africa.



▲ Chinese President Xi Jinping walks with French President Macron during an official welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing as part of a three-day visit to China.

Macron urges Xi to step up efforts on Ukraine, rebalancing global trade

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron urged Chinese leader Xi Jinping to boost cooperation on geopolitics, trade and the environment, as the European Union seeks China's help in ending the war in Ukraine and Beijing looks for diplomatic wins from the U.S. tariffs.

A large business delegation is accompanying Macron on his fourth state visit to the world's second-largest economy, as he seeks to bolster his foreign policy credentials and secure commercial deals for French industry in a bid to revitalise his political legacy in the final years of his term after a tumultuous summer, and ahead of the 2027 presidential election.

China, for its part, wants to ease trade frictions with the 27-strong EU over its heavily subsidised electric vehicle industry, while presenting itself as a reliable trading partner and an alternative market to the U.S. as global economies face recession risks resulting from President Donald

Trump's tariffs.

"Now, more than ever, dialogue between China and France is vital," Macron told his host during their Thursday meeting at Beijing's Great Hall of the People. "I propose a positive threefold agenda for our relations, one of geopolitical stability, of economic rebalancing, and of environmental sustainability."

"We have to continue to rally in favour of peace and stability in the world," he added, referring to the conflict in Ukraine. "Our ability to work together is decisive."

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FACE POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

Xi on Friday will accompany Macron to southwestern China's Sichuan province, lavish treatment considering Xi seldom joins visiting world leaders once they leave Beijing.

But despite the apparent bonhomie between the two men, analysts say significant political constraints weigh on their partnership. (Reuters)

Mnqobi Tsabedze to host in ‘Spirit and In Truth’

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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ESWATINI programme director Mnqobi Tsabedze has been appointed as the MC for Bongekile Nxumalo’s 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 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.

Attendees of the live recording can anticipate an atmosphere charged with spirit-filled worship and praise, creating



▲ Mnqobi Tsabedze.

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.

Sancheziey joins Young Zesh’s Homecoming Celebration

YOUNG Zesh’s Homecoming event is rapidly gaining momentum with the exciting addition of Eswatini music sensation Sancheziey to the lineup.

Scheduled for October 6, 2025, at Mdzimba View Shisanyama in Ezulwini, this event marks a significant milestone in Young Zesh’s career and is set to bring together fans, artists, and the community for an unforgettable night. From humble beginnings, Young Zesh has emerged as a powerful voice in Eswatini’s music industry.

His journey from a dreamer with nothing to his name to sharing the stage with some of the country’s biggest names is a testament to his talent and determination. Announcing the event on social media, he expressed his excitement and connection to his roots, stating, “Ezulwini, I’m coming home. From the boy who started with nothing but a dream, to standing on this poster with giants.” The Homecoming event is designed not only as a concert but as a

cultural celebration that highlights growth, unity, and the power of dreams. Young Zesh emphasised the event’s deeper purpose, saying, “I want this show to create a moment that reminds my hometown that dreams are real when you bring them back home. I want to celebrate growth, unite the community, give young talent a platform, and set a new standard for what a Homecoming event should feel like in Eswatini.”

Impressive

The lineup for the evening is impressive, featuring a mix of established and emerging artists who reflect the vibrant music scene of Eswatini. Performers such as Culolam, Sgitha, Bandora, Sean Cast, Obsession, and Gifted Kosie will share the stage, promising a diverse and dynamic musical experience. Additionally, attendees can look forward to a surprise act. Tickets for the event are priced affordably to ensure accessibility for a wide audience, with general admission costing E50 and VIP tickets available at E100. Young



▲ Sancheziey

Zesh encouraged everyone to attend, highlighting the communal spirit of the event: “This is our moment as a community. Don’t hear about it, be part of it. Let’s make history together.” Beyond the music, Young Zesh promises a show that will be powerful, emotional, and high-energy, featuring live performances, special guest artists, and a production quality that reflects the journey and progress made by the artist and his community. “It’s going to be a celebration of culture, music, family, and the journey that brought us here,” he said. For those planning to attend, tickets will be available at the gate on the day of the event.



▲ S.P.A.K

S.P.A.K. to drop new single ‘Ngivulele’

ESWATINI’S dynamic artist S.P.A.K. is gearing up to release his latest single titled ‘Ngivulele,’ a song that captures the essence of faith, perseverance, and the relentless pursuit of purpose.

In an exclusive conversation, S.P.A.K. shared profound insights into the inspiration behind ‘Ngivulele.’ He explained that the song was born out of personal experiences marked by patience, prayer, and persistence during times when opportunities seemed out of reach. Reflecting on his journey, he said, “Ngivulele was inspired by moments of waiting, praying, and pushing when doors feel closed. It’s a reflection of my journey as S.P.A.K, trusting God, trusting the process and believing that alignment comes at the right time.” He further expressed that the song captures the quiet hunger for growth that many experience, a time when one grinds in silence, but faith remains loud and unwavering.

Opportunities

At its core, Ngivulele is a heartfelt prayer. S.P.A.K. described the song as more than just a plea for opportunities; it’s a call for purpose, clarity, and elevation. “The message is faith-driven,” he noted, “when you stay focused, disciplined, and consistent, the right doors will open.” The song speaks directly to dreamers and hustlers who refuse to give up, even when tangible progress is not yet visible. It’s an anthem for those who believe that persistence and faith will eventually lead to a breakthrough.

The creative process behind ‘Ngivulele’ was both natural and intentional. S.P.A.K emphasised the harmonious collaboration among everyone involved, all sharing a spiritual and hustler mindset that made the production flow effortlessly. Musically, the track blends new trap vibes with a chilled yet powerful soundscape. Produced by Sean Cast, with recording, mixing, and mastering expertly handled by Mancoba Dlamini, the song balances emotional depth with strength.

S.P.A.K. also gave a special shoutout to Mysterious X Photography for their contribution to the project’s visual elements. Featuring talented artists Amarii, M. Seth, and Qayke Hills, ‘Ngivulele’ is poised to become an anthem for anyone manifesting breakthroughs and alignment in their lives. S.P.A.K. urged fans and listeners to stream the song, emphasising its role as a soundtrack for those praying for doors to open and dreams to align in the coming year.



By Siphesihle Dlamini
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IF you're seeking weekend relaxation and entertainment, your favourite hangout spots have you covered!

Eswatini Daily News presents the latest gig guide featuring the top events in town. Grab a drink, invite your friends, and prepare for a weekend packed with fun and excitement!

► **CAMPUS CONNECT ESWATINI**
When: Friday
Where: De Lounge Bar and Restaurant
Fee: E100

Campus Connect Eswatini has officially announced the lineup of artists set to perform at this year's highly anticipated event. The 2025 edition will showcase a diverse roster of talent including Zulu D, Young Zesh, Obsession, Sgitha, Lord F, BK, Lady Zee, Sbu De Drum DJ, Castle, and Leano, among others. Scheduled for Friday, December 5, 2025, at the De Lounge Bar and Restaurant, Campus Connect Eswatini 2025 aims to be a landmark event, drawing over 1,000 university students, young professionals, and community members. Beyond entertainment, the event carries a strong social mission: to support disadvantaged high school and self-sponsored university students across the country by raising funds for essential toiletries and hygiene products. Ticket pricing has been structured to maximise accessibility. Pre-sale tickets are available for E100, VIP tickets for E450, and tickets at the gate will cost E150.

► **KINGDOM LIVE: IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**
When: Saturday
Where: TLO Events Centre
Fee: E200

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.

► **YOUNG ZESH HOMECOMING EVENT**
When: Saturday
Where: Mdzimba View Shisanyama
Fee: E50

Eswatini music sensation Young Zesh is gearing up to host a much-anticipated Homecoming event celebrating his roots. Set for October 6, 2025, at Mdzimba View Shisanyama in Ezulwini, this occasion marks a major milestone in Young Zesh's career. It promises to unite fans, fellow artists, and the local community for an unforgettable evening. Rising from modest beginnings, Young Zesh has become a prominent figure in Eswatini's music scene. Tickets are priced to be accessible, with general admission at E50 and VIP tickets available for E100. His journey, from starting with nothing to performing alongside some of



the nation's top artists, reflects his remarkable talent and unwavering determination.

► **POETRY IN COMFORT**
When: Saturday
Where: Liberty Centre, Manzini
Fee: E150

Poetry In Comfort, one of the premier poetry shows in the kingdom, is poised to make a grand return on December 6, 2025. The show has also announced acts Anthonimass, Christian Maz, Poet Amandla, M Age, Gcayi, and Siya Imbongi. This event promises to be a celebration of both established and emerging poets, offering a unique blend of art and luxury in an outdoor setting. In an exclusive interview, Project Manager Mnqobi Tsabedze shared insights into the vision behind this year's show. "We are presenting the art space with a poetry in comfort outdoor concept," he explained. "We take it this is a self-explanatory concept; we want to provide an exclusive, luxurious experience to poetry lovers and art enthusiasts. Our goal is to create lasting memories for attendees, rather than just having them attend an event and leave." The event will feature distinct segments designed to enhance the overall experience for participants and attendees alike. The first segment focuses on Talent Search/Talent Appreciation, where young and undiscovered poets will be given a platform to showcase their skills on a significant stage.

The second sector will be the performance side.

► **UNLEASH THE WOLF (UTW)**
When: Sunday
Where: Oryx Restaurant & Lounge
Fee: E100

UK producer Jimpster is set to headline the highly anticipated Unleash The Wolf (UTW) event in Eswatini. Scheduled for December 7, 2025, the event will take place at the stylish Oryx Restaurant & Lounge, kicking off at 3 pm and continuing late into the night. Hosted by the charismatic !Sooks, UTW Eswatini is poised to become one of the most talked-about music events of the year. "For the first time in eSwatini, we bring you legendary UK producer, Jimpster. The iconic deep house craftsman is set to light up #UTWEswatini with his timeless, groove-heavy and soulfully textured soundtracks on the 7th of December Oryx Restaurant & Lounge.

You don't want to make the mistake of missing this one Wolf Pack," posted the Unleash The Wolf page. Ticket prices are structured to accommodate early planners and last-minute attendees alike. Early bird tickets are available for E100, followed by phase 1 tickets at E150.

A limited number of phase 2 tickets will be sold at E200, with the final phase tickets priced at E250. This tiered pricing strategy aims to ensure broad access while rewarding early commitment.



YOUR body needs vitamins and other essential nutrients in order to work properly.

Eating a variety of foods can help you get the nutrients you need. This also has the added benefit of adding fiber and antioxidants to your diet.

People with HIV need to be cautious when using supplements to help obtain some of these vitamins because too much of almost anything can be dangerous.

Here's what you need to know.

Multivitamins

Multivitamins don't have the same benefits among people taking antiretroviral therapy (ART) or other similar drugs, as in people who are HIV-negative

Still, some studies show that Multivitamin supplementation appears to be a simple, effective, safe, and scalable program to improve survival, reduce the incidence of TB, and improve treatment outcomes for adult HIV patients.

Vitamin D

Some people call vitamin D "the sunshine vitamin." That's because your body can make it using sunlight absorbed into your skin.

Some foods naturally contain vitamin D. Those include fatty fish like salmon as well as eggs and some dairy products. Some foods also include added vitamin D. Examples are milk, alternative milks, orange juice, and breakfast cereals.

If you eat a lot of these foods, or if you spend time outdoors in the sun, you may get all the vitamin D your body needs.

But many people with HIV have low vitamin D levels. Because of this, it is standard practice to measure vitamin D levels by a blood test.

There's also some evidence that ART therapy may suppress the body's ability to produce vitamin D. This is a problem because vitamin D is important for bone health, and it also supports the immune system. Some research has found that adults and kids who are deficient in Vitamin D and take vitamin D supplements improve their body's levels of the vitamin. This is done routinely in HIV-infected persons to help with their bone health, although whether this provides health benefits for people with HIV is not clear.

Vitamin D supplements may turn out to be helpful for people with HIV. It is standard practice to offer vitamin D supplementation to HIV-infected persons who have low vitamin D levels.

Because of the potential impact on bone health, a study to measure bone density (called a DEXA scan) is frequently ordered for patients with vitamin D deficiency.

DHEA

DHEA helps support healthy hormone levels in the body. There's some evidence it can boost mood, energy levels, and quality of life in those who use it.

But some research shows there's no reason for people with HIV to take it. And taking too much DHEA may also raise hormones to unhealthy levels.

Other Supplements That May Help

Other vitamins and nutrients also play a role in immune health. Some also help repair damaged cells. Supplements that contain these nutrients may be helpful for



HIV: What to know about taking vitamins and supplements



those who have HIV.

These include:

- ▶ Vitamin C
- ▶ Vitamin E
- ▶ Selenium
- ▶ Several B vitamins (including B1, B2, B6, B12, and folate)
- ▶ Ginkgo biloba
- ▶ Milk thistle

▶ Valerian

But again, the benefits are uncertain. It's also not clear how much someone with HIV needs to take in order to see these benefits. In some cases, these vitamins or supplements may interfere with medications for HIV.

Be sure you talk to your doctor before you start on any supplement.

Supplements to Avoid

Certain supplements may be risky for people with HIV. Some of these supplements can interfere with HIV medications. Research has linked others to risks that have nothing to do with HIV. Be sure to talk with your doctor before taking a supplement that contains vitamin A or iron. Vitamin A can be toxic in high doses. Iron may increase the activity of certain types of bacteria in your body. Both can be problematic for people with HIV.

Calcium and magnesium supplements, or drugs that contain them (like antacids), may interfere with integrase inhibitors (a frequently used type of ART).

Taking them is a common cause of incomplete viral suppression (that is, low but detectable viral load). There are also countless supplement products that claim to strengthen or boost the immune system. Many contain complex combinations of ingredients that could be risky.

While it's possible that some of these could help people with HIV, the evidence is shaky, even when it comes to very well-researched and common vitamins.

Some supplements (like St John's wort) specifically interfere with some HIV medications. If you have HIV, let your health providers know about the supplements you are taking.

Try to Get Your Nutrients From a Healthy Diet

Some vitamin or nutrient supplements may be helpful. But medical professionals usually recommend people try to get all the vitamins and nutrients they need from food. Try to eat a range of foods, especially a variety of colored vegetables. If you decide to also take a supplement, be sure to discuss it with your doctor first. **WebMD**

Mbappe Chasing Ronaldo Record as Madrid Host Celta

REAL Madrid's Kylian Mbappe will have Cristiano Ronaldo's club record for goals in a calendar year in his sights when Los Blancos face Celta Vigo in LaLiga at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

Mbappe, who has scored 55 goals in all competitions in as many matches in 2025, is four goals shy of the 59-goal calendar-year record set by Ronaldo in 2013.

With five matches still to play this year, the French forward could surpass the Portuguese great and set a new benchmark.

The World Cup winner's magnificent form continued midweek with two fabulous goals and one assist against Athletic Bilbao in a 3-0 triumph at San Mames, taking his tally for the LaLiga season to 16 goals and four assists in 15 games, double the eight goals scored by Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski, who is in second place in LaLiga's scoring chart.

After a challenging start to his Real Madrid career following his summer move from Paris St Germain in 2024, Mbappe has been unstoppable since the turn of the year.

The 26-year-old will have the opportunity to add to his tally in December, with Real also facing Manchester City in the Champions League and domestic rivals Sevilla and Alaves in LaLiga, with a Copa del Rey fixture against an as yet unknown opponent in between.

Yet he will get his first chance to find the net in Sunday's clash against mid-table Celta Vigo. Ronaldo's 2013 record seemed untouchable for



▲ Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe.

more than a decade, but Mbappe's meteoric year has brought him within striking distance of the mark.

While the Frenchman chases individual milestones, Real remain in pursuit of LaLiga leaders Barcelona, who are a point clear of their old rivals at the summit following a crucial 3-1 victory over Atletico Madrid on Tuesday.

After handing Diego Simeone's side their first LaLiga defeat since August, Hansi Flick's Barcelona face a tough test against fifth-placed Real Betis on Saturday, as Betis look to build on last weekend's derby win against Sevilla.

Barcelona's win marked the return of key players Raphinha and Pedri from injury to the starting team - a boost that could prove decisive in the title race.

Sitting third in the standings, five points behind Barcelona with a game in hand, Marcelino's Villarreal have not lost a match in LaLiga for two months. They will play at Getafe on Saturday, while fourth-placed Atletico, one point behind Villarreal, will try to bounce back from their Camp Nou defeat when they visit Athletic Bilbao.

(Superpsort)

Toyota to become title sponsor of Haas F1 team

TOYOTA Gazoo Racing, the Japanese car maker's motorsport division, will become title sponsor of the Haas Formula One team next season in a deal that strengthens an existing technical partnership.

The US-owned team, who use Ferrari engines and also have close ties with Maranello, said they would be rebranded as TGR Haas F1 from 2026.

"Our working relationship to date has been everything we hoped it would be," said Haas's Japanese principal Ayao Komatsu.

"The cultivation of personnel, all working collaboratively between Haas F1 Team and TGR, has benefited us greatly and that's something that will only increase as our partnership matures."

Haas, the smallest of what will be 11 teams on the start-

ing grid next season, are eighth in the standings ahead of this weekend's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

They announced a multi-year technical partnership with Toyota in October last year, a move that brought Japan's biggest carmaker back to grand prix racing for the first time since 2009.

Toyota has provided design, technical and manufacturing services and used the partnership to develop young drivers, engineers and mechanics through a testing of previous car programmes.

"Throughout our challenges in the 2025 season, I witnessed young TGR drivers and engineers begin to believe in their own potential and set their sights on even greater dreams," said Toyota chairman Akio Toyoda in a statement.

(Superpsort)



▲ Haas team principal Ayao Komatsu ahead of Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

Struggling McIlroy Draws Crowds as Three Share Lead

PGA Tour winner Ryan Fox, Australian Elvis Smylie and LIV golfer Carlos Ortiz upstaged Rory McIlroy to share the lead at the Australian Open Thursday as the Masters champion struggled with his putter on Royal Melbourne's tricky greens.

Thousands of fans queued early in order to secure a view of McIlroy and his crack-of-dawn tee time with fellow Masters winner Adam Scott and the popular Min Woo Lee, both Australians.

But Northern Irishman McIlroy struggled with a gusting northerly wind and sloped greens, ending seven off the pace after a rollercoaster one-over-par 72 containing five birdies and six bogeys.

"Some crowds for seven o'clock in the morning," McIlroy said of the huge galleries that followed his signature three-ball.

"Yeah, it was great. It was a wonderful atmosphere with Adam and Min Woo too.

"It was unbelievable to see how many people were lining the fairways and framing the greens."

Asked how he could claw his way back into contention at the DP World Tour event, the 2013 Australian Open champion McIlroy said: "I need to putt better.

"I holed some good ones, I think I was better from outside 25 feet than I was from inside five, so work on that a little bit.

"I made enough birdies, but I just need to

limit the mistakes."

Smylie, last year's Australian PGA Championship winner, was also among the early starters and sank an impressive seven birdies against a lone bogey for a six-under-par 65.

The son of former tennis star Liz Smylie said his rookie season on the European-based tour this year had helped prepare him for the crowds at such a big event.

"It just goes to show how much I've learnt over on the DP World Tour," Smylie said.

"Week-in, week-out, you're always adjusting and adapting as the courses and climates are so different, so you're constantly adding tools to your toolbox.

"I embrace days like today, I think I belong. I'm just happy that I'm able to showcase that on a stage like this."

Among the afternoon starters, Fox, the son of All Blacks rugby legend Grant Fox, matched Smylie's 65 with a round containing eight birdies against two dropped shots.

Fox was a four-time winner on the European tour before moving to the PGA Tour where he recorded his first two victories in the United States earlier this year.

Mexico's Ortiz, who tied for fourth at this year's US Open for his best major finish, finished late in the day with his own 65 containing an eagle, five birdies and two bogeys.

England's Eddie Pepperell, who won his DP World Tour card back through qualifying school recently, was among the players at



▲ PGA Tour winner Ryan Fox.

three-under after a 68.

Lee and Scott shot two-under 69s playing alongside McIlroy while the 2022 British

Open champion Cameron Smith, who also now plies his trade on the LIV circuit, was one under after a 70. (Superpsort)

ENZO Maresca slammed lacklustre Chelsea after their Premier League title challenge suffered a huge setback in a shock 3-1 defeat at lowly Leeds on Wednesday.

Maresca's side paid the price for a woeful first-half performance at Elland Road featuring Leeds goals from Jaka Bijol and Ao Tanaka.

Pedro Neto reduced the deficit after the interval but Chelsea conceded a farcical third goal to Dominic Calvert-Lewin in the closing stages.

Losing to a fourth-bottom Leeds side beaten in their previous four games was a major setback to Chelsea's hopes of competing with leaders Arsenal for the title.

The Blues' first defeat in eight games in all competitions left them nine points behind Arsenal in fourth place.

"There was nobody at their best level," Maresca said. "They were better than us in all aspects, they deserved to win."

"A very poor night. We performed so well against Arsenal and Barcelona, but it doesn't mean we are going to always perform the same way because of the situation you have to manage, the players you have to rotate."

"The only thing we can do is to try and understand what we did and then reset."

Chelsea were without influential midfielder Moises Caicedo after the Ecuador star was sent off in Sunday's stormy 1-1 draw against Arsenal.

The Blues had recovered from Caicedo's dismissal to take the lead through Trevoh Chalobah, but couldn't hold on as Mikel Merino snatched Arsenal's equaliser.

Maresca rested Neto, Reece James, and Wesley Pofana in a bid to freshen up his side.

But Chelsea still looked drained from facing Arsenal with 10 men for so long and Leeds took full advantage of their mental

Maresca blasts 'very poor' Chelsea after damaging Leeds defeat



▲ Enzo Maresca.

and physical fatigue.

"I hope we just had a bad night because it's a game where you struggle to take anything from. They were much better in the duels," Maresca said.

"It's the Premier League, you need to perform every game, no matter if you are at home or away."

"We missed Moises tonight and will miss him in the next games. He is an important player for any team in the world."

Leeds struck after just six minutes when Anton Stach's corner picked out Bijol and he

rose above Liam Delap to power his header past Robert Sanchez.

– Rude awakening –

Chelsea had won just 29 percent of their league matches when Caicedo was out of the starting line-up and they struggled again without their driving force.

Pascal Struijk glanced a header narrowly wide from another corner to underline Chelsea's lethargy at the back.

Leeds' sublime second goal in the 43rd minute was a rude awakening for Chelsea's title prospects.

Japan midfielder Tanaka took possession just outside the Chelsea area and unleashed a ferocious shot that arrowed past Sanchez.

Chelsea have never come back to win a Premier League away game when trailing by two or more goals at half-time.

Neto came off the bench to give them hope of ending that dismal streak in the 50th minute.

Jamie Gittens clipped a cross into the six-yard box and Neto took a touch before drilling home for his fifth league goal this season.

Maresca sent on Cole Palmer for the England forward's first appearance in two months after an injury-plagued spell that included fracturing his toe after stubbing it on a door.

Palmer's introduction alongside Argentine winger Alejandro Garnacho almost conjured an immediate equaliser.

Garnacho's run and cross teed up Palmer for a low strike that fizzed just wide from 10 yards.

But Chelsea shot themselves in the foot to gift Leeds the decisive third goal in the 72nd minute.

It was a shambolic moment as Malo Gusto's pass inside his own area put Tosin Adarabioyo under pressure.

Adarabioyo's panicked pass towards Sanchez was intercepted by Noah Okafor and when the Chelsea keeper blocked the shot, Calvert-Lewin was on hand to tap into the empty net as Maresca looked on in disbelief. (Supersport)

Cardoso defends Williams after costly error in Sundowns draw

MAMELODI Sundowns coach Miguel Cardoso has come out strongly in defence of Ronwen Williams after the goalkeeper's costly blunder handed Siwelele FC the opening goal in Wednesday's Betway Premiership clash at Dr Petrus Molemela Stadium.

Williams received a pass from Kegan Johannes deep inside his own area but was caught out by Tebogo Potsane, who dispossessed him before gifting Vincent Pule with a simple finish into an empty net.

The error drew widespread criticism from Sundowns supporters on social media, particularly as it contributed to the champions dropping points in a 1-1 draw, salvaged only by a second-half equaliser from substitute Lebo Mothiba.

"We have a goalkeeper that last year was the best in Africa and this season he was nominated for the best goalkeeper in Africa," Cardoso said.

"He has been the (number one) national team goalkeeper for several years and he doesn't need any comment or negative appreciation. He just needs respect and that's what I give to him."

Sundowns' fightback was curtailed when they were reduced to 10 men, with Teboho Mokoena dismissed for a second bookable offence with nine minutes remaining. Reflecting on the overall display, Cardoso admitted his side struggled to recover from the early setback despite a lively start.

(Supersport)



▲ Liverpool boss Arne Slot.

Liverpool fear factor gone, admits Slot

LIVERPOOL boss Arne Slot conceded his side have lost their fear factor during a miserable run as Sunderland emerged with a 1-1 draw at Anfield on Wednesday.

The Premier League champions have now failed to win in three consecutive home games and needed a Nordi Mukiele own goal to rescue a point against the Black Cats.

Sunderland were on course for their first win at Anfield since 1983 when Chemsidine Talbi's deflected strike opened the scoring.

Even after Mukiele deflected Florian Wirtz's effort into his own net for the equaliser, Wilson Isidor wasted a huge chance to snatch all three points for the visitors when his shot was cleared off the line by Federico Chiesa in stoppage time.

Since winning their opening five league games of the season, Liverpool have won

just two of their last nine.

"Teams that play us now think they can get a result," said Slot. "Not only think because that has been shown this season."

"Even the games we have won, we have fuelled the confidence for other teams that something is possible because the wins we had weren't easy ones as well."

Any hope that a corner had been turned in Sunday's 2-0 victory at West Ham was quickly dispelled for Slot.

Mohamed Salah was left on the bench for the second consecutive game, but Wirtz and Alexander Isak again failed to deliver on their price tags of over £100 million.

Salah was introduced at the start of the second period, but also struggled to make an impact against Sunderland's well-organised defence.

(Supersport)



▲ Mamelodi Sundowns coach Miguel Cardoso.

A star-studded, guaranteed E138k war

... As some of the Southern Africa's finest blackball stars converge in Eswatini

By Chris Dlamini

The big billiards weekend in Eswatini has arrived - over E0.1 million is at stake. This is in the E138 000 Guaranteed Pool Tournament hosted by the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) Pool Team.

It is the second edition after last year's edition at Sibebe Resort, just outside Mbabane. This time, it is even bigger with the cash, and more international stars

from various countries in the Southern Africa region have pitched.

The purse has grown from E90 000 to E138 000, and ladies have their own category this time around.

The tournament also has teams and singles divisions, with the ultimate prize at E30 000 for the singles and teams divisions, respectively. For the ladies, the champion will walk away with E7 000. Here are some of the top stars in this year's edition.



1

**Jeremiah
'Gandaganda' Naidoo
(SA)**

He was part of the Eswatini Pool Festival and the first edition of this tournament last year.

He just came from a Zambia tournament where he lost in the finals. Gandaganda is renowned for his back-to-back national titles in South Africa (SA) and remains a highly ranked star.

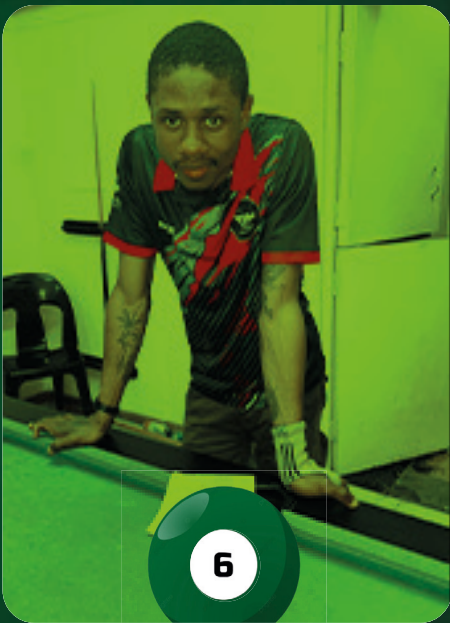
He is also known as 'The Green Machine' due to his prowess in cue sports like heyball and blackball.



5

**Ncobile 'S'ncobesh'
Dlamini (Eswatini)**

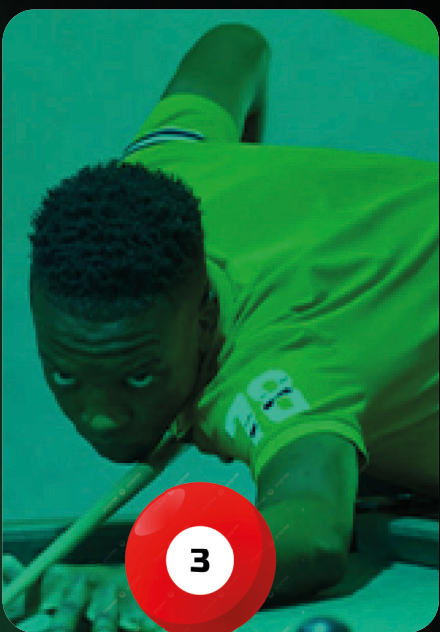
She is the number one ranked ladies player in Eswatini. Dlamini also captains the senior ladies national team. She has beaten stars like former world champion Beatrice Monyake before and as recently a quarterfinalist in the inaugural Commonwealth Blackball Championship Qualifiers in Mauritius.



6

**Eddie 'Bharuka'
Mondlane (Eswatini)**

He is a talented player who has developed through the ranks in the sport, having started at a very tender age in Mbabane. Mondlane has won games outside the country and titles domestically to the extent he is a decorated cue star.



3

**Blessing 'Bhibhido'
Muzarurwi (ZIM)**

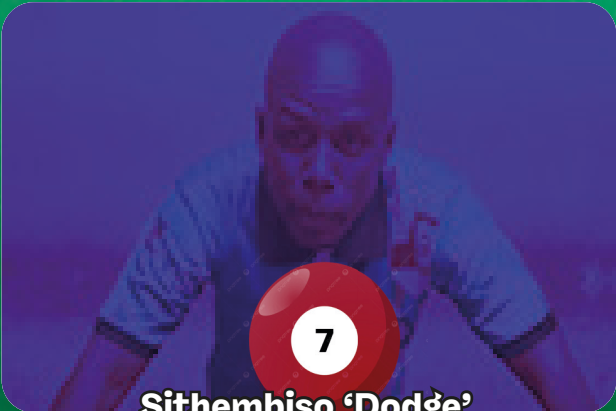
He opened his visit to the country with a money pot battle between himself and one of Eswatini's best in Nathi 'Bhubesi' Sihlongonyane - a E30 000 pot match at Manzini Sports Lounge on Friday ahead of the tournament kick-off. He is a respected national team player who has won various titles including the inaugural NevSun Select Pool Tournament last year. He was beaten by Bhubesi in his own backyard last year, and now here to make amends.



2

Wetsi Morake (SA)

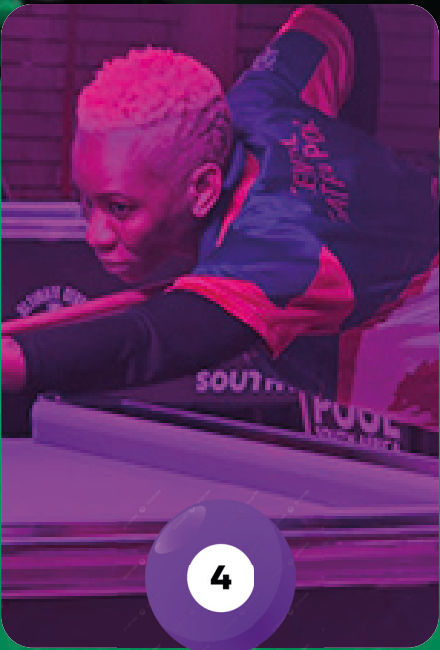
Morake is a former world champion, having won it in 2008, and followed it up with three African titles in 2009, 2015, and 2016. He also won six South African titles (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2007, and 2010). He started playing pool at age 11 years as his mother had a Pool table in their family restaurant. He is also head of operations for Soweto Pool Association and founder of Morake Group Holdings.



7

**Sithembiso 'Dodge'
Matsebula (Eswatini)**

A veteran of the game. Matsebula long earned his high ranking in the game, at national, club and individual level. He is another local name to watch as he continues to shine.



4

Beatrice Monyake (SA)

She has met Eswatini's finest before like national team Captain Ncobile 'S'ncobesh' Dlamini. She is the first black woman to win a medal at the Blackball World Cup Championship 2022 in Morocco.

She won the gold and brought home the world title. She was 41 at the time and only made the SA national team in the last minute following a late player withdrawal. She is fondly known as 'The Queen B'.

MTN PREMIER LEAGUE PREVIEW

Sea Birds aim to reclaim top spot

By Chris Dlamini

MANZINI SEA BIRDS VS. UBOMBO SUGAR

DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2025

VENUE: NSUKU-WANSUKU STADIUM, MHLUME

KICK-OFF: 3PM

MANZINI Sea Birds could steamroll Ubombo Sugar when the two sides clash on a Friday afternoon fixture.

It is what Izinyoni Zolwandle (Sea Birds) need to do to reclaim the top spot from defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs hardly a week after dropping to second. Nsingizini edged Sea Birds 1-0 in a top-of-the-table MTN Premier League clash at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium in

Nhlangano.

They will be looking to get the full points against a struggling Ubombo Sugar, who will be coming to this match with a new coach in Milton Dlamini.

The former Mbabane Highlanders head coach who has also worked with various teams in South Africa (SA) has the task to overturn Bafana Bashukela's bitter moments to sweet ones. Sea are only two points behind Nsingizini, so a win takes them a points better at 19 from the current 16. Coming from a 5-1 baptism of fire at the hands of Royal Leopard last Saturday, Ubombo Sugar visits a red-hot Sea Birds and It feels like jumping out of the pot right into the fire - that's just the situation for Bafana Bashukela, as Ubombo fondly goes.

However, they have in the space of just over two weeks brought in two technical experts, first Percy Shongwe from Red Rhinos and now Dlamini, as the new head coach to replace Gcina Dlamini who joined struggling Manzini Wanderers a month ago. Dlamini comes in when Ubombo Sugar must move out of the relegation quagmire and also put up a good challenge in the lucrative Ingwenyama Cup. He must overturn a misfortune of results gripped by four consecutive defeats, a win, and another defeat last weekend in their last six matches.

These statistics bring little or no hope at all when put up against those of Izinyoni Zolwandle (Sea Birds). The latter, amid having the squad to challenge for honours, had been on a five-match winning spree before they crashed 1-0 to Nsingizini Hotspurs last Saturday in a top-of-the-table clash. Interestingly, Ubombo Sugar beat Sea Birds 2-1 and then played a goalless draw last season,

which could be one thing they look up to for boosting their morale.

Tough outing for Gcimimuza in world junior championships

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

LOCAL taekwondo youngster Gcinimuza Mkhathshwa has suffered a heart break in the 2025 World Under 21 championships in Kenya. This follows his early exit in the international junior championships following his 2-0 defeat to French opponent. The two youngsters are under the guidance of female Kenyan coach Gladys Njoroge after the association failed to raise funds to send a local coach to the assignment. His local compatriot Sihlelewe Matsebula was due to compete on Thursday afternoon and his result could not be ascertained when compiling this report. The two artists were both part of the national team that recently competed in the finals of the inaugural African taekwondo series finals held in Ivory Coast. Eswatini Taekwondo Federation(ETF) Vice Secretary Mbongeni 'Ndo' Sibandze confirmed the latest updates when contact-

ed. "We commend the effort of the youngster despite his early exit in the competition. We urge him to continue working hard in future competition and will continue guiding him until he reach his full potential," he said. Taekwondo is a Korean martial art and combat sport involving primarily kicking techniques and punching. Depending on the style, Hyeong, Pumsae, or Teul are patterns that demonstrate a range of kicking, punching, and blocking techniques, gyeokpa is the art of breaking wooden boards, and in the combat sport kyorugi involves the kind of sparring seen in the Olympics. Taekwondo also sometimes involves the use of weapons such as swords and nunchucks (nunchaku). Taekwondo practitioners wear a uniform known as a dobok. Taekwondo is originally a martial art that was developed during the 1940s and 1950s by Korean martial artists with experience in martial arts such as karate and Chinese martial arts. In the early 1970s, a new style of Taekwondo was developed to promote it as a competitive sport, alongside its traditional martial arts form.



▲ Taekwondo youngsters Gcinimuza Nxumalo and Sihlelewe Matsebula with their unnamed Kenyan counterpart during the ongoing world Taekwondo Championships.

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

MBABANE Highlanders head coach Ernest Mavuso has pleaded with the team’s supporters to stop the factional wars within the team.

This follows the escalating team tension among the capital city giants’ supporters, which sparked fights and tension during recent MTN premier league matches.

Mavuso said this during a pre-match meeting held at Sigwaca House on Thursday.

The division has been caused by the uproar among the factions, who are supporting current Shauwn Mkhize and former Bheki ‘Rubber’ Simelane.

The other factions have been seen supporting opposition teams during Highlanders fans clad in last season’s merchandise.

The current leadership recently sought assistance from the Premier League of Eswatini over the escalating tension through a letter submitted to the topflight football entity.

“We appeal to the team supporters to stop the tension since it is causing tension in the team. This makes it difficult to work as we no longer trust one another as the Highlanders family. We need to work together towards the betterment of the team,” he said.

The former Green Mamba mentor further said they were looking forward to their next MTN Premier League clash against Young Buffaloes on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

Stop the factional wars – Ernest appeals to ‘Bull’ fans



▲ Mbabane Highlanders fans watching as the team plays.

“We have done all the necessary preparations for the Buffaloes match and are confident that we will get positive results. We haven’t got good results in the league during our league matches and will do our level best to turn the tables around,” he said.

Meanwhile, his Buffaloes counterpart Dominic Kunene said they won’t underesti-

mate the opposition.

“We won’t underestimate Highlanders based on the previous result by approaching the match cautiously. The mood is high in the game, and the boys are ready to fight, and we are working on a master plan to plot the downfall of our opponent with our technical bench,” he said.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders coach Ernest Mavuso during the prematch conference.

Highlanders completed a double last season over the army side during league meetings.

Highlanders is currently sitting at position 10 with nine points after eight matches, while ‘Amathole ezinyathi’ is seventh with 13 points with the same number of matches.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders South African player and director Andile Mpisane.

Ernest waiting for Andile Mpisane update

By Sibusiso Masilela
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MBABANE Highlanders head coach Ernest Mavuso says they are still waiting for feedback from South African crowd pleaser Andile Mpisane.

Mpisane has been conspicuously missing from the club matches due to other business commitments leaving uncertainty over his future as a player.

“We are still waiting for a formal update from Andile over his future as the player and will decide in the next transfer window once he gives us a formal update,” he said.

Mpisane is also the club director serving under his mother, Shauwn Mkhize, who is the club president since the start of the current campaign.

He was part of the two-member board, which comprised local businessman Fortune Nxumalo, who recently stepped down.

By Sibusiso Masilela
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MBABANE Swallows head coach Caleb Ngwenya has called for patience from the team’s supporters.

The veteran mentor said this during the pre match meeting held on Thursday at Sigwaca House ahead of their crunch MTN premier league clash against Moneni Pirates scheduled on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

“We are working around the clock to change the fortunes of the club and are appealing for patience from our supporters. We are doing our level best to make our supporters happy on Sunday, and we won’t underestimate our opposition,” he said.

Moneni Pirates interim head coach Zenzile Mpofu appealed for support from the team’s supporters.

“We promise a good game and banking our hopes on our loyal supporters. We will do our level best

Caleb calls for patience



▲ Moneni Pirates interim head coach Zenzile Mpofu shaking hands with Mbabane Swallows coach Caleb Ngwenya.

not to disappoint them by delivering positive results on the day. I have faith in my players, and we have what it takes to win the match on Sunday,” he said.

The female Zimbabwe-born mentor is currently steering the ‘Buccaneers’ ship following the resignation

of Malawian mentor Meck Mwase.

‘The Beautiful Birds’ is sitting at position nine with 11 points after eight matches.

The ‘Sea Robbers’ are languishing at position 12 with eight points after the same number of matches.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders coach Ernest Mavuso with his Buffaloes counterpart Dominic Kunene.

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Sport

Stop the factional wars – Ernest to ‘Bull’ fans

... Mbabane Highlanders coach Ernest Mavuso says the supporters warring factions among is causing tension within the team.

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