

Mankayane Town Board records E1.4 mln surplus *Page 7*



▲ **FOOD FOR THE SOUL:** Gospel sensation Nothando Hlophe, Afro-soul musician Sands and vocalist Velemseni during the Mbabane Day held at the Coronation Park this past weekend.

Govt to bring 150 jobs through nearly half a billion solar project

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By Delisa Magagula

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COMGEN joins regional leaders in Zim for parole and reintegration summit

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Eswatini secures share of E3.04 Billion global food appeal

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▲ Her Royal Highness Princess Sibahle has commissioned the Tsamela project.



▲ Minister for Natural Resources and Energy HRH Prince Lonkhokhela during the launch of the project.

By Delisa Magagula

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It will see a 20 MW solar photovoltaic plant built at Ndumo, backed by a E400 million investment.

Speaking during the launch, the Minister said the project would directly benefit communities through employment and long-term development.

"Government is committed to ensuring that emaSwati benefit first. This project alone will create approximately 150 jobs during construction and continue to sustain permanent positions once operational. We are opening doors for our people, especially the youth, to be part of the country's energy transition," he said.

He added that the project aligns with national efforts to grow the renewable energy sector and reduce dependence on imported power.

"We are moving with urgency because the country needs reliable, affordable electricity. This solar plant will add much-needed capacity to support factories, hospitals,



▲ The project will take 18 months to complete.

schools and households," said the Minister.

The Anthem Tsamela Solar Project carries a capital investment of E400 million, channelled into the construction of the 20 MW facility. The plant, once fully operational, is expected to generate 48 GWh of electricity annually, accounting for roughly 4 per cent of Eswatini's current

energy demand. The project is supported by a 25-year power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC), ensuring long-term revenue flow and helping the country stabilise its energy supply. The investment also supports the government's efforts to diversify its energy mix with cleaner technologies.

Worth noting, construction is scheduled to begin in January 2026, bringing with it the first wave of job creation.

Beyond the 150 construction-phase jobs, the project will sustain 10 permanent roles over its 25-year lifespan. These roles will be filled by locally trained personnel responsible for operations, security, maintenance and general plant oversight.

The Minister highlighted that the project is not only about electricity generation but also about uplifting the surrounding communities. Part of the land earmarked for construction includes an existing soccer field, which will be replaced with a newly built facility for local youth.

Beyond this, Tsamela has committed to supporting a local food kitchen that feeds orphaned and vulnerable children. The company will also maintain the new sports facility and provide additional community support as the project advances.

These commitments, according to the Minister, reflect the government's demand for responsible investment.

"When investors come into the country, we expect them to integrate with the

communities they operate in. This project demonstrates how development can create both power and social impact," he said.

Noteworthy Eswatini imports between 65 per cent and 90 per cent of its electricity depending on regional water levels, which affect hydropower production. The government initiated a competitive tender in 2018 to reduce this dependency and strengthen energy independence.

The completion of the Anthem Tsamela project will therefore help ease pressure on the grid and shield the country from fluctuations in imported power.

The Minister stressed that the Kingdom must fast-track projects that strengthen energy security.

"We cannot delay. I have challenged the developers to shorten the construction period from 18 months to 15. If they meet that target, the plant will start feeding power into the grid by April 2027," he said.

The launch marks a milestone in the Kingdom's broader plan to expand locally produced power. With the first IPP now moving into the construction phase, the government expects more renewable investments to follow.

"This project is proof that Eswatini is ready for large-scale renewable energy investments," the Minister said.

The project is set to break ground in 2026, and communities around Motshane are already preparing for the economic activity it will bring.

Armed alleged poacher faces attempted murder charges

By Thokozani Mazibuko

TSHANENI Police have arrested and charged a 53 year old man from Manzana in connection with two counts of attempted murder following a violent confrontation at Iysis Farm on December 4 2025.

According to the Deputy Police Information and Communication Officer Assistant Superintendent Nosipho Mnguni the incident occurred at about 1500 hours when two game rangers aged 32 and 29 from Herefords and

... After shootout with rangers at Iysis Farm

Lomahasha were on routine patrol within the farm. During the patrol the rangers heard what sounded like a gunshot coming from within the protected area.

Acting swiftly the rangers moved towards the direction of the sound in an effort to investigate and prevent any illegal activity. Their response led them to a man later identified as a resident of Manzana who was allegedly caught in the act of poaching an impala.

Police say before the rangers could intervene and effect an arrest the situation quickly turned violent. The suspect who was armed

with a firearm allegedly opened fire in an attempt to escape capture. A crossfire ensued between the suspect and the rangers resulting in serious injuries.

During the exchange of gunfire both rangers sustained gunshot wounds. One ranger was shot in the arm while the other was struck on the head. Emergency services were contacted immediately and the injured officers were rushed to Manzini Clinic where they were treated and admitted. Hospital sources later indicated that both rangers remain under medical supervision and are responding to

treatment.

The suspect was also injured during the confrontation. He sustained a gunshot wound to the buttocks and was transported to Good Shepherd Hospital where he was admitted under police guard. Upon discharge he will be expected to appear before court to answer to the charges laid against him.

Following his arrest police formally charged the suspect with two counts of attempted murder. He has also been charged for contravening the Arms and Ammunition Act after investigations revealed that he was in possession of a shotgun and three live rounds of ammunition without a valid licence or permit.

Eswatini secures share of E3.04 billion global food appeal

Stories by Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI has been named as a key beneficiary in a historic emergency funding appeal issued by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), placing the Kingdom at the centre of a major international effort to combat rising food insecurity across Southern Africa.

The appeal totals \$179.6 million, equivalent to approximately E3.04 billion at an estimated exchange rate of E16.93 to \$1. It targets eight countries in the region that continue to face severe climatic shocks, including prolonged droughts and inconsistent rainfall.

The Minister for Agriculture, Mandla Tshawuka, attended the 179th Session of the FAO Council in Rome, Italy, held from 1 to 5 December.

The high-level meeting brought together global leaders to review progress, strengthen governance structures, and guide the implementation of decisions aimed at advancing food security and achieving a world free from hunger.

The session focused on administration, policy direction, and progress toward the FAO's strategic objectives, with particular emphasis on transforming Agri-Food Systems to accelerate delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. Tshawuka was accompanied by Henry Mndawe, Principal Economist in the Ministry of Agriculture.

The FAO's appeal identifies Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and several other nations as requiring urgent support



▲ Minister for Agriculture Mandla Tshawuka at the 179th Session of FAO.

to protect vulnerable communities and strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems.

Across the region, the funding is expected to assist an estimated 5.3 million people affected by the recurrent impacts of climate-related disasters.

According to the FAO, the appeal is not designed as a standard distribution of emergency food supplies. Instead, it prioritises medium- to long-term agricultural interventions intended to stabilise production, protect rural livelihoods, and reduce the frequency and cost of future humanitarian responses.

According to Tshawuka for Eswatini, the inclusion in the appeal comes at a time when the country's agrifood sector continues to experience repeated climatic shocks.

Smallholder farmers, who form the back-



▲ Henry Mndawe, Principal Economist in the Ministry.

bone of national agricultural production, face significant pressure as drought conditions and erratic rainfall patterns limit yields for staple crops. In recent years, the agricultural sector has also dealt with episodes of livestock disease, further complicating recovery efforts.

According to Tshawuka the E3.04 billion regional appeal outlines several priority areas for intervention. These include restoring agricultural production through the distribution of drought-tolerant seeds, farming tools, and livestock feed in communities most affected by climate impacts.

Meanwhile, the FAO also proposes support for preventive and adaptive measures such as climate-smart technologies, water-efficient irrigation systems, and protected cultivation structures designed to improve production even in challenging

weather conditions.

Other components of the appeal address emergency animal health services. Funding will support rapid response capacity for outbreaks of livestock disease, including conditions such as Foot and Mouth Disease, which pose serious risks to national herds and can disrupt domestic food supply as well as export potential.

Worth noting, Eswatini's prominence in the appeal follows a recent strengthening of the working relationship between the Kingdom and the FAO. Before the Council Session, Eswatini concluded a cooperation agreement with the organisation, establishing a framework for expanded technical support.

The agreement includes the placement of FAO experts in the country to accelerate capacity building and ensure more direct support for national agricultural programmes.

The appeal was presented by FAO Director-General QU Dongyu during the Council Session as part of the organisation's regional humanitarian and resilience strategy.

The FAO stated that the initiative aims to shift responses to food crises away from reactive measures and toward preventing losses before they deepen into emergencies.

"By placing Eswatini among the principal beneficiaries, the FAO signals a commitment to supporting the country's efforts to stabilise food production, safeguard vulnerable households, and strengthen long-term resilience within the agricultural sector," said Dongyu.

Digital fleet controls cut government fuel use by 40%

THE Government's new digital fleet management system has delivered a 40 per cent reduction in fuel use across ministries.

This is according to the Minister for Finance NNeal Rijkenberg who says the savings demonstrate how technology can curb corruption and strengthen public accountability.

Rijkenberg made the announcement during the latest Finance in Focus briefing, where he outlined a series of VAT adjustments, digital reforms and structural changes underway across government.

The Minister said the rollout of the new vehicle control system introduced alongside a new fleet procured through Standard Bank is already showing measurable impact despite still being phased in.

According to Rijkenberg, the system records driver identity, kilometres travelled, fuel consumption, and driving behaviour. Fuel allocation is

linked directly to mileage, preventing drivers from obtaining fuel without first entering updated kilometre readings.

"The digital controls have significantly tightened internal oversight, including automatic reporting on harsh braking, acceleration and tyre usage. Although full rollout is still in progress, early results confirm a 40 per cent drop in government fuel usage, attributing the reduction to strengthened monitoring and fewer opportunities for misuse," said Rijkenberg.

Rijkenberg further said the fleet management system is one example of how the government plans to use technology to close loopholes and reduce opportunities for financial misconduct in public institutions.

He added that similar efforts are underway across other departments as part of broader reforms to improve efficiency and accountability.

In addition to the fleet announcement, Rijkenberg said the government has completed a review of the VAT Act, with several changes taking effect on January 1, 2026.

The changes include removing VAT from reusable nappies, sanitary pads, sanitary towels, tampons, syringes, surgical tissues, gauze, bandages and other medical items, which the Minister said

were found to be unnecessarily taxed. The removal of VAT is expected to lower the cost of those items.

Fresh maize will also be removed from the VAT-exempt list, meaning imported fresh maize should decrease in price. However, condensed milk has been added to the VAT-chargeable list, which will result in a price increase.

The Minister said the aim of these adjustments is to ease the cost burden on low-income households by making essential health and hygiene goods more accessible. He said the review focused particularly on items used by women, infants and people with medical needs.

Rijkenberg further announced changes to the December and January salary schedules for civil servants. Due to tight cash flow, the government will not process the usual early December salary payment. Civil servants will receive their salaries on the normal pay date of December 20, while temporary staff and daily-paid workers will be paid on December 23.

The Minister said the government expects to resume early payments in January, assisted by incoming SACU revenue, to help families manage back-to-school expenses.

During the briefing, Rijkenberg launched the National FinTech Strategy, which aims to expand financial inclusion, especially for individuals who have digital accounts but limited access to credit, insurance and other services. The strategy is intended to support micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and increase accessibility to financial products across the country.

Rijkenberg said the strategy forms part

of government efforts to mainstream digital solutions into public service delivery. He detailed plans to adopt the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMAS), a fully digital and paperless system that will be used across all ministries for budgeting, procurement, approvals and payment processing.

He said IFMAS is being introduced to address longstanding concerns about delays and possible illicit payments associated with the movement of physical documents between government offices.

The system generates real-time alerts and tracks the status of every document, automatically escalating outstanding approvals when they exceed allocated time periods.

According to Rijkenberg, IFMAS will bring transparency to government transactions from the budgeting phase to final payment. The Minister said the system is designed to minimise human interference and reduce administrative bottlenecks.

Rijkenberg also provided an update on reforms in the health sector, including upcoming legislation to establish the Central Medical Stores (CMS) as a stand-alone entity equipped with a unified digital tracking system for medicines. He said the changes aim to address gaps in the medical supply chain where current systems do not communicate with each other.

The Minister said the combined reforms, particularly the technological upgrades, are intended to reduce opportunities for corruption and improve service delivery. He said the government will continue implementing the systems despite resistance in some areas.



By Thokozani Mazibuko

Police issue festive-season water safety warning

THE Royal Eswatini Police Service has urged parents and communities to exercise extreme vigilance around rivers and streams this festive season, following the heartbreaking drowning of two young boys at Emadvwaleni stream in Mankayane. The warning comes as water-related incidents continue to rise nationwide during the holiday period.

Deputy Police Information and Communication Officer Assistant Superintendent Nosipho Mnguni said drowning cases often spike during the summer heat, when children spend more time outdoors and frequently swim in unsafe, unsupervised areas.

She emphasised that water conditions can shift suddenly, especially in rivers and streams where undercurrents and surges occur without warning.

Against this backdrop, the Ngcakane

... After tragic drowning of two boys in Mankayane

community is mourning the tragic loss of two boys, aged 14 and seven, who drowned on December 5 while swimming at Emadvwaleni stream. According to police, the boys were enjoying the water when a sudden heavy current swept them away from the shallow area where they had been playing. Assistant Superintendent Mnguni explained that the flow of the stream intensified rapidly, overpowering the children and dragging them downstream. Alarmed community members alerted emergency services when the boys did not return. Police and residents launched an urgent search, and the children's bodies were later found near a waterfall further down the stream. Investigations are ongoing, though police

have described the incident as a tragic accident, pointing to the unpredictable behaviour of natural water bodies, especially after rainfall. No foul play is suspected.

Police are urging parents and guardians to take extra precautions by ensuring that children are never allowed near water without adult supervision. Mnguni said many accidents happen when adults assume familiar areas are safe, or when children quietly slip away to play near streams.

She warned that drowning can occur silently and within seconds:

"People expect splashing or shouting, but most drownings happen quietly. By the time anyone notices, it is often too late."



▲ Deputy Police Information and Communication Officer Assistant Superintendent Nosipho Mnguni.



▲ Commissioner General LaMakhosini Phindile Dlamini joined other high level ranking officials including Zimbabwe's Vice President General (Rtd) Dr. Constantino Chiwenga (seated centre) for a pic.

By Ncaba Ntshakala
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COMGEN joins regional leaders in Zim for parole and reintegration summit

HIS Majesty's Correctional Services (HMCS) Commissioner General LaMakhosini Phindile Dlamini was in Harare, Zimbabwe, where she was attending the inaugural Regional Parole and Reintegration Conference, an event already being hailed as a turning point for Africa's correctional systems.

The four-day high-level gathering, officially opened on December 1 by Zimbabwe's Vice President General (Rtd) Dr. Constantino Chiwenga, and it brought together heads of Prisons and Correctional Services from across SADC, cabinet ministers, legal scholars, rehabilitation experts and senior correctional strategists.

The Eswatini delegation, comprising Commissioner General Dlamini, Superintendent Wakhe Masilela and Chief Officer Sebentile Shabalala-Radebe, joined regional partners under the theme "Advancing Restorative Justice: Strengthening Parole Systems for Safer and Rehabilitated Societies – An African Perspective with Global Collaboration." The conference aimed to create a continental blueprint for stronger parole mechanisms, reduced repeat offending and more effective community reintegration.

Commissioner General Dlamini described the gathering as a decisive step toward modern, humane and technologically driven correctional practices. She noted that the conference signals Africa's readiness to embrace approaches that not only protect communities but also prioritise rehabilitation, dignity and long-term social stability.

The summit also drew influential Zimbabwean leaders, including Dr. Jenfan Muswere, Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, and Ziyambi Ziyambi, Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. Their participation was hailed as it highlighted Zimbabwe's push to position itself at the forefront of correctional innovation at a time when African nations face rising crime rates and the heavy financial burden associated with incarceration.

According to HMCS, for Eswatini, the benefits of participating in this regional forum are substantial. Insights shared during the conference will assist the country in strengthening its parole framework in line with emerging African and global standards. The discussions on rehabilitation and reintegration models are expected to strengthen His Majesty's Correctional Services' efforts to prepare offenders for productive, crime-free lives after release.

The conference was said to also offer Eswati-



▲ HMCS Commissioner General LaMakhosini Phindile Dlamini sharing a light moment during the summit.

ni exposure to new technologies used internationally to monitor parolees, streamline systems and improve accountability, paving the way for potential digital upgrades within the country's correctional operations. Regional collaboration

remains a central theme, and Eswatini stands to benefit from deeper ties with neighbouring services; supporting staff development, intelligence-sharing and harmonised crime-prevention strategies.

Govt, UNICEF hail 2025 annual review as a major step forward for Eswatini's children

By Ncaba Ntshakala

THE Government of Eswatini and UNICEF Eswatini have concluded a highly successful 2025 Annual Review Meeting, held at the Hilton Hotel, where partners reflected on key achievements, emerging challenges and shared priorities for the year ahead. The gathering brought together government officials, development partners, youth representatives and civil society.

The meeting showcased a series of impactful sessions, including youth-led discussions on adolescent empowerment and the fight against rising teen pregnancies, a segment on community-driven WASH collaborations, and presentations on delivering measurable, results-based initiatives.

A heartfelt "Youth Voices" feature added urgency to the proceedings, highlighting the lived experiences of adolescents and the realities still facing children in the Kingdom.

Voices from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and UNICEF, including contributions from Phumzile Dlamini and UNICEF's Nonhlonko Dlamini, shaped a programme focused on evidence, accountability and the need for greater investment in children.



▲ UNICEF Representative Amina Mohammed with Director of the National Population Unit Nombulelo Dlamini.

Delivering the opening remarks on behalf of Principal Secretary Thabsile Mlangeni, Director of the National Population Unit Nombulelo Dlamini emphasized government's appreciation for UNICEF's long-standing

partnership. She noted that the evaluation of UNICEF's Country Programme Document (CPD) confirmed strong alignment with national priorities which is a sign of the robust collaboration driving progress in

key sectors.

"The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development welcomes you to this important meeting to review progress of the Government of Eswatini and UNICEF workplan for 2025," she said. "This review meeting provides a platform to understand progress made towards achieving planned results for children and to establish priorities for key interventions in 2026."

She emphasised government's recognition of UNICEF's "remarkable efforts" in strengthening health, nutrition, education, child protection and HIV prevention among adolescents. She also highlighted the organisation's role in driving digital transformation, capacity-building for governance structures, and promoting integrated service delivery.

"UNICEF's support for supply chain management, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, has ensured zero stockouts of vaccines," she said which is a milestone widely celebrated during the review.

Dlamini further noted that UNICEF's commitment to children in hard-to-reach communities continues to bridge gaps in equity, with rapid assessments and targeted programmes helping the country respond to evolving needs. These efforts, she added, have made national institutions more data-driven, accountable and resilient

REPS continues search for man who drowned in Nkomazi River

By Thokozani Mazibuko

MLIBA Police have launched an intensive search operation following a tragic drowning incident involving a 32 year old man from Boane in Mozambique who drowned in the Nkomazi River on Friday afternoon.

Confirming the incident, Deputy Police Information and Communication Officer Assistant Superintendent Nosipho Mnguni said the drowning occurred on 05 December 2025 at about 13:00 hours. The deceased was in the company of friends at the riverbank where they were carrying out laundry activities when the incident occurred.

According to police reports, the group had gone to the Nkomazi River for domestic chores when the victim attempted to move deeper into the river to fetch water using a container. During the process, the strong current swept the container away. In an attempt to retrieve it, the man followed into deeper waters, where he was suddenly overwhelmed by the powerful water pressure.

Assistant Superintendent Mnguni explained that the victim struggled to regain control as the current intensified. Despite efforts to pull back toward safety, he was unable to overcome the force of the water and was swept away, disappearing beneath the surface.

Friends who were present at the scene raised the alarm immediately after realizing that the man was no longer visible. Mliba Police were promptly notified of the incident and mobilized emergency response teams to the area.

A police scuba diving unit was deployed and initiated a search and rescue operation along the river. However, the operation proved difficult due to the strength of the current and fading visibility. Despite several



▲ Police scuba divers seen at work in search of the 32 year old Mozambican man.

hours of searching, the victim could not be located before nightfall.

As a result, the search was temporarily suspended in the interest of safety, with authorities planning to resume operations at first light. Police maintained a presence at the scene and coordinated further efforts with other emergency stakeholders.

On Saturday morning, search efforts resumed along the Nkomazi River. The Royal

Eswatini Police Service scuba diving unit, working closely with the Fire Department, returned to the river determined to locate the missing man. Search teams conducted systematic sweeps of the water and surrounding areas as part of the ongoing operation.

Police have confirmed that the search is continuing and all necessary resources have been deployed to ensure every possible ef-

fort is made to recover the body.

Assistant Superintendent Mnguni has urged the public to exercise extreme caution when using rivers, particularly during periods of high-water levels. She warned that rivers can be unpredictable, with strong undercurrents that pose serious risks even to experienced swimmers.

Week 1: Eswatini Mobile Red Christmas Trolley



▲ The Red Team posing for a group picture with some of the winners at SuperSpar Mbabane.



▲ Eswatini Mobile CEO Sydney Sichula leading his team in packing groceries for a customer at Pick n Pay Mahhala

eswatini MOBILE



▲ Mkhulu Philips Nkambule from Msunduzi walked away with a trolley packed with meat at Embiveni Mbabane.



▲ Thulisile Maziya of Mliba could not hold back after having her bill settled by the Red network at Shoprite Manzini.



▲ Gogo Thuli Nhlengetfwa expressed her delight after walking out with a settled Christmas trolley.



▲ The team posing for a group picture with some of the winners at Embiveni Pigg's Peak.



▲ Eswatini Mobile had a blast settling their loyal customers' bills at Buhleni Shoprite.



▲ Mduzuzi Dlamini reacting after qualifying to have his bill settled at Pigg's Peak Spar.



▲ Settling meat carts was the order of the day at Embiveni Pigg's Peak.



▲ Sbonelo Matsenjwa was in awe when her till number was chosen at Shoprite Manzini.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Musk denies \$800 billion SpaceX valuation reports

WASHINGTON - Elon Musk on Saturday dismissed media reports that SpaceX is raising funds at an \$800 billion valuation, calling them inaccurate. "SpaceX has been cash flow positive for many years and does periodic stock buybacks twice a year to provide liquidity for employees and investors," Musk said in a post on X. **Reuters**

EU could announce package to support auto industry

BRUSSELS - The European Commission could announce a package to support the local automotive sector, including a possible watered down version of its 2035 combustion engine phase-out, on December 16, an industry source briefed on the matter said. Brussels is so far planning to announce the package on December 10, but EU transport commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas said earlier this week that the package could be delayed until January. **Reuters**

Oil climbs to 2-week high on Fed rate-cut signals

NEW YORK - Oil prices edged up nearly 1% to a two-week high on Friday on increasing expectations the U.S. Federal Reserve will cut interest rates next week, which could boost economic growth and energy demand, as well as geopolitical uncertainty that could limit supplies from Russia and Venezuela. Brent futures rose 49 cents, or 0.8%, to settle at \$63.75 per barrel, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose 41 cents, or 0.7%, to settle at \$60.08. **Reuters**



▲ Mankayane Town Board offices.

Mankayane Town Board records E1.4 million surplus

... A major portion of income is driven by government funding

By Delisa Magagula

THE Mankayane Town Board has closed the 2024/2025 financial year with a net budget surplus of E1,443,868, according to its latest Annual Report.

The report was presented on Saturday during the town's 2025 Annual General Meeting. According to the report, the figures show a financially disciplined year, marked by near-total budget utilisation and revenue collections that exceeded expectations.

For the period from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, the Board recorded total income of E15,429,908. This surpassed the revised income budget of E14,096,543 by E1.33 million, putting the overall income performance at 109 per cent.

"A major portion of this income was driven by government funding. The Recurrent Grant brought in E8,186,419, outperforming its revised target of E6,305,000 by 30 per cent. Rates income contributed E4,500,030, achieving 111 per cent of its target. Local government revenue also played a role, reaching E1,443,868 against a budget of E1,123,000, marking a 128 per cent performance rate," reads the financial report in part.

Meanwhile, on the expenditure side, the Board used E13,986,040 out of its revised budget of E14,096,543, translating to an overall expenditure rate of 99 per cent.

According to the report, recurrent expenditure amounted to E7,263,587, essentially matching the budgeted E7,291,950. Spending on the Urban Development Project reached E3,066,160, while E3,656,293 went towards Capital Works both categories also reporting 99 per cent performance.

Worth noting the surplus of E1.44 million reflects a year in which the Board spent almost exactly what it planned to, while bringing in more revenue than anticipated.

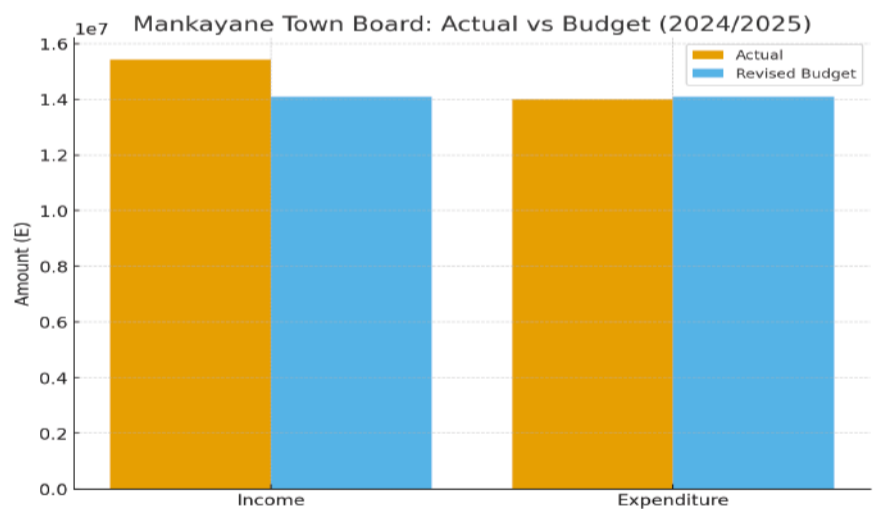
Alongside the financial outcomes, the Annual Report outlines several service-delivery achievements and infrastructure improvements across the town.

Road upkeep formed a significant part of the Board's technical services for the year. A total of 5.43km of open channel side drains were cleared, including concrete drains and culverts. The work included chemical spraying of roadside verges, clearing blocked drainage points, and installing damaged road signs.

Gravel and earth roads within the



▲ Mankayane community members came all out for the annual general meeting (AGM).



▲ A graph showing Mankayane Town Boards' actual vs expenditure.

Mankayane Urban Area also underwent pre-shaping to improve driveability, especially after weather-related deterioration.

Maintenance work was carried out at several facilities, including the Mabobini Social Centre, the flea market, and the dumpsite. Tasks completed included repainting external walls, repairing leaking roofs, sealing ablution facilities, and fixing broken locks, doors, and window panes.

Electrical work also advanced, with progress reported on the installation of a circuit breaker and daylight switch at the meter separation for the main market stalls.

Streetlight maintenance was done throughout the town, with repairs to damaged fixtures and clearing of overgrown vegetation around high-mast lights.

The report also highlighted that, two major capital projects reached 100 per cent completion during the financial year.

The D3 Bridge project involved the construction of a box-culvert bridge, complete with concrete finishes and a pedestrian walkway. The Board reports that the project is fully complete.

Construction of Tikhundzi Road, the extension of Tikhundzi Road near Highway Covenant Church also reached full completion. The project included an asphalt finish, a pedestrian walkway, and trapezoidal drains. The Annual Report contains photographic evidence showing the road before construction and after completion.

According to the report's preamble, the annual report highlights a year defined by stable financial performance and progress in infrastructure development. With income collections exceeding projections and expenditure maintained within budgeted limits, the Board ends the year with a strong financial position and a confirmed surplus.



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	



By Delisa Magagula



▲ An aerial view Malkerns Town. Towns like Malkerns stand to benefit from the E20 million boost as this is a move expected to accelerate infrastructure upgrades in six Town Boards and strengthen service delivery where support is most urgently needed.

E20 mln boost to strengthen infrastructure in 6 town boards

“With limited funds, a focused approach reduces fragmentation and enables towns to complete projects that would otherwise remain stalled due to insufficient allocations,” said Maphalala.

Meanwhile, despite earlier concerns about the reduction of the CIP budget from E40 million to E20 million several years ago, the Ministry believes the programme continues to play a vital role in supporting urban development.

Infrastructure improvements completed under the CIP in recent years have strengthened road access, improved drainage systems, and enhanced public spaces in many areas demonstrating that even with tighter budgets, strategic investments can still deliver value.

The Ministry adds that several towns previously reliant on the CIP have since explored new financing models, including borrowing and partnerships, to sustain their development plans.

This shift has encouraged innovation



▲ Minister of Housing and Urban Development Appollo Maphalala.

and financial independence, with some municipalities successfully implementing phased projects using a combination of loans, internal revenue, and external partnerships.

Maphalala said the current allocation will allow the six benefiting Town Boards to continue upgrading essential infrastructure, helping them attract investment and improve the quality of life for residents.

The Ministry also emphasised that

ongoing discussions about future funding models aim to eventually restore broader support for all 13 urban local authorities as economic conditions improve.

“For now, government sees the current allocation as an opportunity for the six Town Boards to strengthen their infrastructure foundation, enhance service delivery, and set examples of efficient project implementation that can be replicated nationwide,” said Maphalala.



▲ According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, this year’s budget will fund a series of projects aimed at improving road networks.

THE Government has maintained its E20 million allocation for capital improvement projects in the 2024/2025 financial year.

This is a move expected to accelerate infrastructure upgrades in six Town Boards and strengthen service delivery where support is most urgently needed.

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, this year’s budget will fund a series of projects aimed at improving road networks, public facilities, and other essential infrastructure across the benefiting towns.

The Minister for Housing and Urban Development Appollo Maphalala in his report said the focus on the six Town Boards will allow for more targeted investment and faster project completion, especially in areas experiencing rapid population growth and increased demand for services.

“The allocation comes through the Capital Improvement Programme (CIP), which supports local authorities in developing infrastructure that contributes to economic activity and improved living standards. Although the budget remains at E20 million for the second year running, we believe the programme will continue to yield meaningful results by concentrating resources where they can make the most visible impact,” said the Minister.

Meanwhile, access to the grant will depend on each town receiving a positive grading in the annual organisational performance assessment.

The minister says this requirement ensures accountability, encourages high administrative standards, and rewards local authorities that consistently deliver strong performance. The grading system has become a motivating factor for many towns to strengthen their planning, financial management, and project execution.

Maphalala noted that while the programme once catered to all 13 urban local authorities, the current structure has allowed the six Town Boards to benefit more directly.

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Volkswagen to invest \$186 billion through 2030

VOLKSWAGEN Group plans to invest 160 billion euros (\$186 billion) through 2030, its CEO Oliver Blume said, reflecting belt-tightening as Europe's top automaker faces a major crisis in its two key markets, China and the United States.

Total spending, updated annually as part of Volkswagen's rolling five-year investment plan, compares with 165 billion euros for the 2025-2029 period and 180 billion for 2024-2028, with 2024 marking a peak.

Since then, Volkswagen, which includes the Porsche and Audi brands, has been squeezed by tariffs on U.S. imports and fierce competition in China.

This has hurt profits most notably at Porsche, which sells around half its cars in just these two markets and unveiled a major roll-back on its electric vehicle strategy.

Blume told the weekly Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung that the focus in the latest spending plan was "on Germany and Europe," including in products, technology and infrastructure. He said

talks about an extended savings programme at Porsche would run into 2026.

Blume, who will step down as Porsche CEO in January to focus on the Volkswagen CEO role, said considerations around a potential U.S. plant for Audi depended on possible substantial financial support by Washington.

While Porsche was not expected to grow in China, he said localising production in the wider Volkswagen group was possible and a tailor-made Porsche model for China could make sense one day.

Blume said a recent contract extension as Volkswagen CEO until 2030 was a clear signal of support by the shareholding Porsche and Piech families, as well as the German state of Lower Saxony, Volkswagen's two biggest investors.

"But it is true, of course, that shareholders have suffered losses since Porsche went public three years ago. I, too, must face up to this criticism."

(Reuters)



▲ Volkswagen T-Roc vehicle is loaded into a delivery tower at the German carmaker's plant in Wolfsburg, Germany.

US signs \$228 mln deal with Rwanda for health in new aid model

The United States and Rwanda have signed a five-year deal for the provision of \$228 million for the health sector in the East African nation, the State Department said, the second such pact under the Trump administration's new approach to overseas aid.

Kenya became the first country this week to strike a deal with Washington under "America First Global Health Strategy", which was unveiled in September by the administration and seeks to improve target countries' self-reliance in managing their health sectors.

The \$228 million will be provided by both governments.

The Rwanda deal lays out "a comprehensive vision to save

lives, strengthen Rwanda's health system," the State Department said late on Friday, while helping to make America "safer".

The health funding agreement comes a day after Rwanda's President Paul Kagame and his Democratic Republic of the Congo counterpart Felix Tshisekedi affirmed their commitment to a U.S.-brokered deal to end conflict in eastern Congo.

Under the health deal, the U.S. will provide up to \$158 million to Rwanda to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other infectious diseases, the State Department said. The cash will also strengthen disease surveillance and outbreak response.

"In turn, the government of Rwanda plans to increase its own

domestic health investment by \$70 million, taking on greater financial responsibility as U.S. support is gradually reduced over the years," the department said.

The agreement will also build on an initiative that sees drone-delivery startup Zipline taking life-saving medical products where they are needed, in cooperation with Rwanda, the Department said.

"The agreement underscores Rwanda's ambition to build a self-reliant, adaptive, and technology-enabled health system," said Oliver Nduhungerehe, Rwanda's foreign minister, after signing the deal with U.S. officials in Washington.



Meta strikes multiple AI deals with news publishers

META has struck several commercial AI data agreements with news publishers including USA Today, People Inc, CNN, Fox News, The Daily Caller, Washington Examiner and Le Monde, the company said on Friday.

The tie-ups will allow the Facebook-parent to provide "real-time" news and updates through its artificial intelligence chatbot by linking to articles and websites from the publishers.

The move comes as the social media giant looks to attract more users to its AI services amid increasing competition in the market, with rivals also investing heavily and signing content licensing agreements to bolster their offerings.

"When you ask Meta AI

news-related questions, you will now receive information and links that draw from more diverse content sources to help you discover timely and relevant content tailored to your interests," the company said.

Meta has been scrambling to stay relevant in the AI race after its Llama 4 model met with poor reception, while committing billions to AI efforts, and reportedly looking to make budget cuts in its metaverse initiative.

The company said it will continue to add new partnerships and explore new features. Terms of the deal have not been publicly disclosed, People Inc. and USA Today said separately on Friday.

(Reuters)



▲ Donald Trump gestures as he hosts the signing ceremony of a peace deal with Rwandan president Paul Kagame (left) and the president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Felix Tshisekedi at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC.

Europe forges ahead with Big Tech crackdown with X fine, defying Trump

EUROPE is forging ahead with its crackdown on Big Tech, levying fines on Alphabet's Google and Elon Musk's X and opening new investigations, asserting its sovereign right to enforce its laws in defiance of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Three months after hitting Google with an unexpectedly high 2.95 billion euro (\$3.44 billion) fine, the European Commission on Friday imposed a 120 million euro penalty on Elon Musk's X for breaching European Union online content rules.

The U.S. government has pushed back, linking reductions in U.S. steel import tariffs to weaker EU digital rules and ordering its diplomats to launch a lobbying blitz against the laws.

At issue are the EU's Digital Markets Act, which seeks to rein in the power of Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta Platforms and Microsoft as well as Booking.com and ByteDance, and the Digital Services Act, which forces big online platforms to do more to tackle illegal and harmful content.

EU antitrust chief Teresa Ribera has flatly rejected U.S. criticism.

SpaceX pioneered commercial rocket reusability about a decade ago with its workhorse Falcon 9, disrupting an established U.S. launch industry that relied primarily on expendable boosters that are discarded in the ocean or remain in space after their mission.

The reusable Falcon 9 core stage allowed SpaceX to start launching its Starlink satellites in 2019 far faster than its rivals, becoming the world's largest operator the follow-



▲ The X app icon on a smartphone in this illustration.

ing year and disrupting the global satellite communications industry.

In October, Musk praised Zhuque-3's design, saying on X that the Chinese rocket could even beat Falcon 9. LandSpace said on Wednesday that once mature, Zhuque-3 can be reused at least 20 times and carry a payload of multiple satellites weighing 18 tonnes.

But the gap is still wide and there is no guarantee that LandSpace will catch up. SpaceX had its first successful Falcon booster landing in 2015 after two failed attempts. Much of the global rocket industry has since

gradually sought to mimic the company's reusability model.

"It is our duty to remind others that we deserve respect. I don't enter into how they regulate the health standards in the U.S. market. But I am in charge of defending the well-functioning digital markets in Europe and it is not related at all with any type of joint conversation," she told one event.

At another, she rebuffed those who see competition law as a tool for controlling markets or advancing narrow economic interests.

"It is an essential pillar of open, fair, and

sustainable markets. It should never be a bargaining chip in trade negotiations or a tool for protectionism," Ribera said.

HARDER TO BACK DOWN

The effect of the U.S. threats, while a shock initially, may be wearing off, said Daniel Mandrescu, a lawyer at Geradin Partners and an associate law professor at Leiden University.

"The EU Commission's announcement of an official investigation into Meta indicates that the threat of political pressure is rapidly losing its strength - the rule of law is simply not a negotiable matter," he wrote in a LinkedIn post.

Supporters of European values have the upper hand for now, but the real test still lies ahead, said Rupprecht Podszun, a professor at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf and a director at the Institute for Competition Law.

"I was amazed to see this new vigour in EU enforcement. Now, this also comes as an obligation: It becomes harder now to back down. The commitments in the Google Ad-Tech case will provide the litmus test as well as the fate of the Meta AI probe," he said.

Last month, Google offered to make it easier for publishers and advertisers to use its online advertising technology, defying EU antitrust regulators' call for it to sell part of the business to address conflicts of interest.

An EU decision on the proposal will likely come early next year. EU regulators on Thursday started an investigation into Meta and could order it to pause its rollout of AI features in its WhatsApp messenger that would block rivals.

(Reuters)

How LandSpace became SpaceX's biggest Chinese challenger

LANDSPACE has become China's most advanced private rocket company and the country's closest equivalent to Elon Musk's SpaceX, following U.S. rivals in betting its future on rockets that can fly more than once.

WHAT IS LANDSPACE?

Founded in 2015 and based in Beijing, LandSpace was one of the first startups to enter the industry after China opened parts of its space sector to private money in 2014. It has raised billions of yuan from investors including venture capital firm HongShan, at the time known as Sequoia Capital China, the investment arm of property developer Country Garden and the state-backed China SME Development Fund.

In 2020, it raised 1.2 billion yuan (\$170 million) and last December it secured another 900 million yuan from a state-owned fund that supports advanced manufacturing, according to Chinese corporate records. Local governments in Huzhou and Jiaying have also backed the firm.

In July 2023, LandSpace became the first company in the world to launch a rocket, called Zhuque-2, powered by methane and liquid oxygen, ahead of U.S. rivals including SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin.

WHAT IS LANDSPACE'S REUSABLE ROCKET ZHUQUE-3?

LandSpace is now focused on a much bigger rocket called Zhuque-3. It is made of stainless steel and designed to carry about 20 to 25 tonnes to low-Earth orbit, several times more than Zhuque-2.

If Zhuque-3 can take off, return and land in one piece, LandSpace would become the first private Chinese company - and only the third company in the world after SpaceX and

Blue Origin - to land a large booster that has flown to space with the goal of using it again.

That ambition puts LandSpace at the forefront of China's private efforts to make rockets cheaper and reusable, while big state-owned space companies move more slowly in that direction.

Zhuque-3 is China's first serious attempt at a large reusable rocket at a time when Beijing wants private firms to win more global launch contracts and help put up its own large fleets of communications and Earth-watching satellites.

WHAT HAS ELON MUSK SAID ABOUT LANDSPACE'S ZHUQUE-3?

Around the world, rockets that can launch and then land for reuse have drawn huge interest and investment because they could make it far cheaper to send satellites into space. But the engineering is extremely complex and so far only SpaceX has been able to do this regularly with its Falcon 9 rocket.

With Zhuque-3's development and first flight, LandSpace has come closer to that goal than any other non-U.S. rival.

Musk has noticed. In October, he replied to a post on X about Zhuque-3's design by saying the Chinese rocket could eventually beat the Falcon 9. SpaceX currently depends on the Falcon 9 to keep building out its Starlink internet network, which has far more satellites than any competitor in the U.S. or China.

WHY DO REUSABLE ROCKETS MATTER IN CHINA'S SPACE STRATEGY?

For Beijing, companies like LandSpace are a way to combine the experience of long-established state space firms with the speed and risk-taking of startups as it seeks to



▲ The Zhuque-2 Y-3 carrier rocket, a methane-liquid oxygen rocket by Chinese company LandSpace, carrying satellites takes off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, in Gansu province, China.

build its own version of Starlink in the years ahead.

"As low-orbit constellation deployment accelerates, Zhuque-3 will ... progress from recovery demonstrations to routine reuse and toward airline-style operational cadence, aiming to ... contribute to China's space power objectives and advanced indus-

trial capacity," LandSpace said in a statement after Zhuque-3's maiden launch.

A successful Zhuque-3 program - and the company's push to become second only to SpaceX in reusable rockets - is expected to support its fundraising, including a planned listing on Shanghai's tech-focused Star (Reuters)

RESIDENTS in a rural Honduran town cast their ballots on Sunday in a delayed vote that could help decide the closest presidential contest in the nation's history and whether U.S. President Donald Trump's preferred candidate can hold onto his razor-thin lead.

At dawn on Sunday, hundreds of soldiers patrolled the streets and residents of San Antonio de Flores lined up at the polls – a full week after the rest of the country voted – in this farming region about a three-hour drive on dirt roads from the capital Tegucigalpa.

The delayed election is the result of local officials shutting down the polls on Nov. 30 amid accusations of sabotage and fraud. But in an extraordinary twist, that decision has now turned San Antonio de Flores and its 4,996 registered voters into the epicenter of Honduran politics, as nationwide results show the two front-runners separated by the slimmest of margins.

"Every vote, no matter how insignificant they seem, matters," said presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla of the center-right Liberal Party, who touched down in San Antonio de Flores by helicopter on Saturday for a last-minute campaign push.

Nasralla is trailing Nasry Asfura of the conservative National Party by fewer than 20,000 votes, with some 88% of the ballots tallied as counting stretches into its second week.

This town could also play a major role in what is shaping up as a litmus test of President Donald Trump's influence as he seeks to consolidate a bloc of conservative allies across Latin America.

The U.S. president publicly has thrown his weight behind Asfura and threatened earlier this week that "there will be hell to pay" if Honduras changed preliminary results showing Asfura narrowly ahead of Nasralla, even as ballots were still being counted.

"There's a concerted effort to turn Latin



Honduran town votes in delayed election that could decide presidential race

American countries to the far right and create an unconditional allegiance to the U.S. government," said Laura Carlsen, a political analyst who was in Honduras as an election observer. "Honduras is a test case."

LITMUS TEST OF TRUMP'S INFLUENCE

In San Antonio de Flores, where residents don cowboy hats and buildings are decorated by murals of horses, Trump's influence loomed large over the weekend.

Ramon Avila, a farmer, said that he was keen to vote for Asfura and secure the U.S. as an ally. "The U.S. is the most powerful nation in the world," he said.

But Kathy Osorio, a school principal, said

that her support for Asfura soured after Trump's intervention, which she said felt to her like a bullying effort from Washington. While she declined to say who she was voting for, she said it wouldn't be Trump's preferred candidate.

"We should be able to elect who we want without fear," she said.

Sunday's delayed vote in San Antonio de Flores caps a week of electoral chaos in the country, which has included ballot processing delays and unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud by the leading candidates.

The town is a microcosm of Honduras' fractured politics. For two years, the town had no mayor at all, after a dispute over

the 2021 election turned into a protracted legal battle, ending only when the nation's Supreme Court ruled in favor of the center-right Liberal Party.

But on Nov. 30, tensions flared again. Normally, poll watchers of all three parties are accredited to sit at a table inside polling stations and review voters' credentials. The process is designed to ensure a fair electoral process. But when the Liberal Party never received the credentials for its poll watchers, it called foul.

"As we were at a disadvantage, the town decided we shouldn't have elections," said Mayor Pedro Caceres of the Liberal Party, who is running for reelection. (Reuters)

Kremlin says new US security strategy accords largely with Russia's view

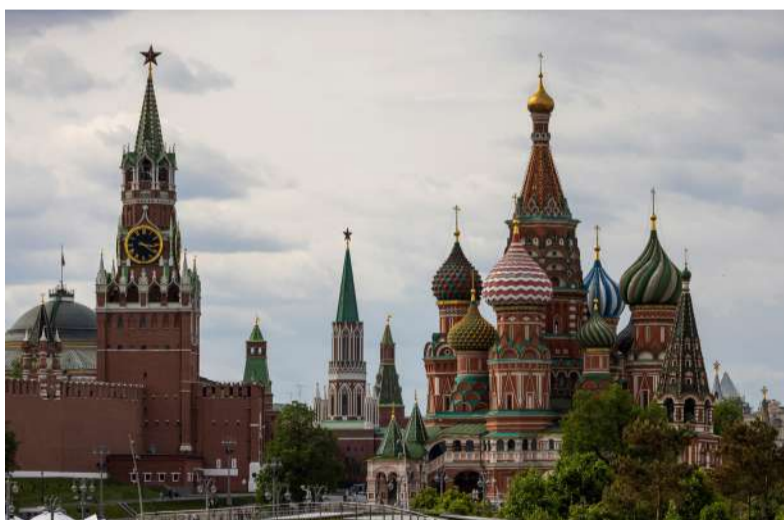
THE Kremlin on Sunday welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's new national security strategy and said it largely accords with Russia's own perceptions, the first time that Moscow has so fulsomely praised such a document from its former Cold War foe.

The U.S. National Security Strategy described Trump's vision as one of "flexible realism" and argued that the U.S. should revive the 19th century Monroe Doctrine, which declared the Western Hemisphere to be Washington's zone of influence.

The strategy, signed by Trump, also warned that Europe faces "civilizational erasure", that it was a "core" U.S. interest to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine, and that Washington wanted to reestablish strategic stability with Russia.

"The adjustments that we see correspond in many ways to our vision," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state television reporter Pavel Zarubin when asked about the new U.S. strategy.

Such fulsome public agreement between Moscow and Washington on the tectonic plates of global politics is rare, though they did cooperate closely after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union on returning nuclear weapons from former Soviet republics to Russia, and after the deadly Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United



▲ A general view on the Spasskaya tower of the Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, Russia.

States.

TRUMP'S STRATEGY LARGELY ACCORDS TO RUSSIA'S VIEW

During the Cold War, Moscow portrayed the United States as a decadent capitalist empire doomed by the historical certainties of Marxism, while U.S. Ronald Reagan in 1983 called the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and the "focus of evil in the modern world."

After the Soviet collapse, Moscow expressed hopes for a partnership with the West but as Washington moved to support the enlargement of the NATO alliance, as outlined in President Bill Clinton's 1994 strategy, tensions began to mount. They

were pushed to breaking point under President Vladimir Putin, who rose to the top Kremlin job on the last day of 1999.

Asked about the pledge in the U.S. document to end "the perception, and preventing the reality, of the NATO military alliance as a perpetually expanding alliance", the Kremlin's Peskov said it was encouraging.

But Peskov also cautioned that what he said was the U.S. "deep state" saw the world differently to Trump, who has used the term to refer to an allegedly entrenched network of U.S. officials who seek to undermine those who challenge the status quo, including Trump himself. (Reuters)

Bobi Wine says Uganda security forces beat him

UGANDA'S opposition candidate Bobi Wine said he was beaten alongside his aides and supporters by security forces while campaigning in the country's north, in an escalation of violence ahead of the country's presidential election on January 15.

Wine, a pop star-turned-politician, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, is challenging 81-year-old President Yoweri Museveni for the second time after coming second in the last election in 2021.

In a series of posts on his X account late on Saturday, Wine said he was hit in the face with a cane and that other supporters were also beaten and had to be hospitalised, as they approached a campaign venue in Gulu, the biggest city in Uganda's north.

"Criminals in police and military uniform attacked us with sticks and stones and started beating up our people," he said in one post. "One of the thugs hit me with a stick on the face... several comrades are hospitalised. All this because Museveni is dead scared of the people."

(Reuters)



▲ Ugandan Presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, of the National Unity Platform (NUP) party, campaigns ahead of the general elections in Kira Municipality, Wakiso district on the outskirts of Kampala, Uganda.

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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Nothando Hlophe shuts down Mbabane Day

GOSPEL royalty walked onto the Coronation Park stage on December 6, 2025, and by the time Nothando Hlophe walked off the stage, Mbabane Day had been transformed from a city celebration into a spiritual awakening.

Nothando Hlophe, the powerhouse vocalist whose name has become synonymous with soul-stirring gospel, delivered a performance so breathtaking that even the weather seemed to surrender. The intermittent rain tried its best to scatter the crowd, but the people stayed, umbrellas up, spirits steady, hearts wide open, waiting for the voice that had carried them through joy, sorrow, storms, and sunrises.

Under the theme “Cosmopolitan Living,” Mbabane Day 2025 promised a celebration of the city’s diversity and vibrancy. But as the day unfolded, it became unmistakably clear that its emotional peak, its zenith, its roaring heartbeat, belonged to Nothando Hlophe. When she finally took the stage, draped in her trademark elegance and anchored by the poise of a seasoned performer, the entire park shifted. Phone torches flickered. Hands lifted. People drew closer, almost instinctively, as if responding to a holy summons.

What followed was an unforgettable display of musical mastery and spiritual depth. From the moment she began singing, her voice sliced through the damp evening air with the clarity of a bell and the authority of a prayer. The hundreds gathered at Coronation Park, young, old, families, church groups, and passers-by who suddenly found themselves staying longer than planned, were captivated. Many sang along softly at first, then louder as the set progressed, until the entire park was vibrating with praise.

Her performance of the beloved “Methodist Medley” was the first moment that truly broke the emotional floodgates. Voices rose, harmonies swelled, and suddenly the space felt less like a city park and more like an open-air service. The spiritual energy was thick enough to touch.



▲ Award-winning Gospel artist Nothando Hlophe rendering her performance during the commemoration of Mbabane Day at Mbabane Coronation Park.

It wrapped itself around people, held their hands, steadied their hearts.

Anthem

But it was her rendition of “Sithumela Wena,” her chart-topping, faith-filled



▲ Nothando Hlophe interacting with a fan from the audience.



▲ Hlophe in her element.

anthem, that sealed the deal. Before the song even began, the crowd erupted, as if their souls had recognised the opening chords before their ears did.

Midway through her set, she paused,

“But the Lord has been good. To all of us. Amen,” she said. And the crowd, without instruction, responded with a wave of “Amen!” that rolled from one end of the park to the other.

Poetry In Comfort showcases Eswatini’s poetic voices

THE Kingdom’s artistic heartbeat pulsed louder than usual on Saturday as Poetry In Comfort, one of Eswatini’s most distinguished poetry showcases, once again rose magnificently to its own reputation.

Held at the Manzini Liberty Centre, the event delivered moments woven from words, rhythm, emotion, and an atmosphere so warm and intentional that attendees could almost feel themselves being ushered into a new era of poetic excellence. In a world where many art events come and go like passing storms, Poetry In Comfort stood firm as a crafted sanctuary, a space where creativity is not only welcomed but celebrated with elegance and care.

The show brought together some of Eswatini’s brightest voices, including seasoned poets M Age, Anthonimass, and Siya Imbongi, each bringing their unique storytelling flavours. Their performances were anchored by the seamless hosting of MDZ The Poet, whose charm, humour, and mastery of the spoken word kept the audience engaged from start to finish. Complementing the poetry were soulful

performances from vocalists Blessing Dlodlu, Zinia, and Isabee, whose harmonies added a melodic heartbeat to the otherwise word-driven evening.

“We are presenting the art space with a poetry in comfort outdoor concept,” explained Sibonokuhle Simelane, the event director after the event. “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.”

Talent

And indeed, the event lived up to that promise. The day was carefully designed around distinct segments that highlighted not only the richness of Eswatini’s poetic talent but also the importance of nurturing it. The first notable segment was the Talent Search / Talent Appreciation, a spotlight reserved for young and previously undiscovered poets. It was a bold and necessary move, a reminder that behind the already established voices are many more waiting to be heard.

“This segment allows us to crown the best



▲ Attendees at the Poetry In Comfort show following proceedings.



▲ Vocalist Rina performing at the Poetry In Comfort event proceedings.

poet of the day, which was Mvu,” Simelane said. “We believe this will change the poetry industry; it is what it needs now. We aim to award all the amazing undiscovered talent a stage to showcase what they have to the world.”

Organisers were clear, however, that the

brand is anchored not only on talent but on quality. “We want to ensure that the event remains intimate and allows for meaningful interactions,” Simelane added, noting that they will continue limiting the number of entries to maintain the show’s exclusivity and elegance.



▲ Young Zesh posing for a picture after the his 'Homecoming' show at Mdzimba View on Saturday.



▲ Young Zesh jumping on stage, belting it out.



▼▲ Young Zesh rendering his set.



By Siphesihle Dlamini
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MDZIMBA View Shisanyama was not just packed on Saturday night, it was swallowed whole by a tidal wave of youthful energy, local pride, and electrifying performances that shook the mountain slopes to their core.

And at the centre of it all stood Young Zesh, the hometown hero who proved, beyond any reasonable doubt, that a star does not need a foreign sky to shine. He needs a home crowd that believes in him, and on this night, they believed with their chests. The long-anticipated Homecoming event had been whispered about for weeks, but nobody quite expected what unfolded, a venue overflowing with fun lovers, a lineup that proudly screamed Made in Eswatini, and a headline act who carried himself like a man returning to claim what had always been his. If Homecoming events were tests, Young Zesh didn't just pass, he rewrote the marking scheme.

From early evening, the venue brimmed with anticipation as people trickled in, settling into the rhythm of the night. Once the performances began, Mdzimba View transformed into something between a festival, a reunion, and a spiritual awakening. You could feel it, in the ground, in the air, in the way strangers danced like lifelong friends. First to set the tone was Culolam, and what a tone it was. His set was a warm surge of energy, the kind that makes people suddenly remember why they left their houses.

At exactly 9:30 pm, gifted DJ Kosie took over with an Amapiano set so smooth, so honey-dipped, that the entire crowd surrendered. It was the kind of set that makes you forget your responsibilities, your deadlines, your rent, everything but the bassline. At 10:30 pm, Notik and Blxck Malto stormed the stage with a sharp, gritty drill and Hip Hop delivery that sent adrenaline shooting through the venue. Their tag-team performance felt like a musical ambush, raw, unfiltered, and brilliantly chaotic in the best way possible.

Then came a cultural shift, Sancheziey, stepping into the spotlight with his traditional set, opened with his crowd-favourite hit "Salukazana." Instantly,

Mdzimba View erupts as Young Zesh shines in 'Homecoming'



▲ South African star Tony Dayimane was a surprise act at the show.



▲ A section of the audience during the show.

the atmosphere changed. People moved differently, grounded, united, drawn into the pulse of the drums and the melody of memory. When he followed it with "Batawuvuma," the entire venue erupted in singing, dancing, and that beautiful communal vibe that only traditional Eswatini music can spark.

Precision

Next came Obsession, who delivered a 3-step set with such precision and flair that

one could only stand back and marvel. Just as the crowd caught its breath, Histo burst onto the stage, beginning with "Emhlaheni Remix" and sliding effortlessly into "Makoti Longeva." Voices rose. Hands lifted. People danced like they were trying to prove something. And honestly, they did, they proved that Eswatini music has its own heartbeat.

But the night still had more surprises tucked away. When South African star Tony

Dayimane emerged as the unannounced act, starting with acapella performance, the crowd's reaction was volcanic. Cheers ripped through the venue as he transitioned into his signature sound, rapping to "Skuta Baba" before delivering "9 Missed Calls," his newest offering featuring Thathohatsi. His appearance added a continental shine to an already blazing lineup.

And then, finally, the moment everyone had been waiting for. Under the bright lights, with the mountain breeze settling like a spotlight of its own, Young Zesh stepped onto his Homecoming stage. No fancy intro. No overproduced theatrics. Just a raw rap acapella, bare, honest, spine-tingling. It was the kind of opening that announces, the king has returned.

When he launched into "Kogcina Bani," the reaction was deafening. People sang so loudly that for a moment it felt like he was the one trying to keep up with them. This was not just a performance, this was a declaration, a communion, a home embracing its son with open arms and louder voices.

He followed with "Sivumeleni," another crowd favourite that turned the venue into a choir. Then came "Wena," a performance so heartfelt that even the mountain breeze seemed to pause and listen. Each lyric landed. Each beat hit where it needed to. Young Zesh performed like a man both humbled by the moment and fully aware of his power. But the peak of the evening was not musical, it was emotional.

In a gesture that drew cheers, whistles, and even a few tears, Young Zesh called his family up onto the stage. The sight of him standing there, superstar, hometown kid, dreamer turned achiever, surrounded by the people who raised him, rooted him, and shaped him, created a moment that no camera could fully capture. It was history painted in human form. If stars are born on stages, then legends are made when they come home. A young king came home, and his people crowned him with applause.

Tyla, Black Coffee lead SA's musical exports in Spotify's Wrapped 2025

2025 wasn't just big for local listening; it was a breakthrough year for South African artists on the global stage.

Spotify's Wrapped 2025 results are in and superstars Tyla and Black Coffee are among the most-exported South African artists, reaching audiences far beyond the country's borders.

Tyla continues to lead the way, landing seven solo tracks in the top 10 most-exported songs from South Africa. "Push to start", "Water", "Truth or Dare", "Jump" and her feature on WizTheMc's song "Show Me Love" are in the top five of the list.

Since her announcement as an EQUAL ambassador in March 2023, Tyla has been streamed in over 187 countries, boasting nearly 1.5 billion combined streams on the platform's Top 100 EQUAL artists list.

Also announced as the RADAR Africa artist for 2023 in the same month, Tyla has neared 1.4 billion streams in 187 countries on the platform's Top 100 RADAR artists list.

With more than 700 million listeners worldwide turning to Spotify to soundtrack their lives, South Africa's local sounds are no longer just local – they're part of the global conversation.

"Spotify remains committed to spotlighting the artists and scenes that are reshaping culture, from Amapiano dance floors in Johannesburg to playlists in cities across the world," says Phiona Okumu, Head of Music at Spotify Sub-Saharan Africa.

Renowned music producer, DJ and artist DJ Maphorisa is the third most-exported South African artist and his frequent collaborator Kabza De Small is number seven. "Jeruselema" hitmaker Master KG is the fourth-most-exported South African artist, with his former labelmate and collaborator, Nomcebo Zikode, at number eight. (IOL)



▲ Spotify's Wrapped 2025 results are in and superstars Tyla and Black Coffee are among the most-exported South African artists, reaching audiences far beyond the country's borders.

Netflix's \$83 billion acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery: A game-changing deal in entertainment

STREAMING giant Netflix has sent shockwaves in the entertainment industry with the announcement that it will buy film and television studio Warner Bros. Discovery for nearly \$83 billion. (R136,639,552)

This is the entertainment industry's biggest consolidation deal this decade.

The acquisition gives Netflix access to a vast film catalogue and streaming service HBO Max. Over the decades, Warner Brothers has produced film classics including "Casablanca" and "Citizen Kane", as well as more recent blockbuster shows including "The Sopranos", "Game of Thrones" and the "Harry Potter" movies.

"Together, we can give audiences more of what they love and help define the next century of storytelling," said Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix, which has produced global hits including "Stranger Things", "KPop Demon Hunters" and "Squid Game".

Disney's massive US\$71-billion (R1.21 trillion) takeover of Fox back in 2019 was long considered Hollywood's benchmark mega-deal, until now.

The newly announced agreement places Warner Bros. Discovery's value at about US \$27.75 per share (R474), giving the media giant an eye-watering equity valuation of roughly US \$72 billion (R1.23 trillion), and an enterprise value of around US \$82.7 billion (R1.41 trillion) once debt is factored in.



▲ This is the entertainment industry's biggest consolidation deal this decade. The acquisition gives Netflix access to a vast film catalogue and streaming service HBO Max.

Warner Bros. Discovery ended Thursday's trading session on the Nasdaq at US \$24.54 per share (R419).

"Today's announcement brings together two of the world's greatest storytelling powerhouses," said David Zaslav, President and CEO of Warner Bros. Discovery, in a statement that set the global entertainment industry buzzing. (IOL)

The boards of both companies have unanimously approved the deal, which is expected to be finalised within the next 12 to 18 months. The announcement has sent shockwaves across the world and in South Africa, with many wondering where the deal leaves South African streamer Showmax, which has HBO Max on their platform. (IOL)

Musician Pops Mohamed dies

LEGENDARY music icon, Pops Mohamed, born Ismail Mohamed-Jan, has died at the age of 76, leaving behind a powerful legacy that forever shaped the country's music landscape.

He died on Thursday, December 4, but the cause of his death has not yet been revealed. Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture Gayton McKenzie expressed his sadness at the passing of the renowned musician.

"Pops Mohamed was not merely a musician but a guardian of our cultural heritage, a teacher, a visionary. His music carried the voices of our ancestors and opened doors for new generations to embrace and celebrate our roots," McKenzie said.

He was born on December 10, 1949 in Benoni, Gauteng. Mohamed built a musical career spanning more than five decades.

Widely known as the "Minister of Music," he was a masterful multi-instrumentalist, composer, producer and cultural custodian.

He played a remarkable array of instruments, including the kora, mbira, African mouth bow, didgeridoo, guitar and keyboard, fusing traditional African sounds with jazz, kwela, soul, world music and contemporary influences.

Over his career, he made significant contributions to preserving and evolving African musical heritage, travelling widely to perform and conduct workshops across South Africa, Europe, Asia and beyond.

Mohamed's work was recognised by his peers and the broader arts community.

In 2023, he received the South African Music Awards Lifetime Achievement Award, celebrating decades of dedication to the country's music industry and his role as a pioneer in promoting traditional and contemporary African music.

In 2010, he was awarded the Arts & Culture Trust Lifetime Achievement Award for his exceptional and lasting impact on South Africa's arts and culture.

Among his landmark achievements was the album Ancestral Healing, which won the third annual FNB SAMA Award for Best Traditional Performance, introducing traditional African sounds to global jazz and world music audiences.

SAMRO also paid tribute to Mohamed, noting he "challenged boundaries of race, genre and tradition, devoting his life to blending African jazz and indigenous sounds with global influences."

The organisation said he leaves behind a rich catalogue of more than 20 albums and a lasting legacy of mentorship, creative freedom and musical unity.

McKenzie extended his condolences to Mohamed-Jan's family, the many artists he mentored, and all South Africans mourning the monumental loss. Messages of sympathy have been pouring in since his death.

Details of his memorial and funeral services have not yet been announced



▲ Legendary musician Pops Mohamed.



FOR most healthy people, bananas are a tasty, nutritious fruit.

But it's best to just eat one or two a day, as too many could lead to weight gain and nutrient deficiency. Eating a balanced diet is key for optimal health.

Bananas are an incredibly popular fruit — and it's no wonder why. They're convenient, versatile, and a staple ingredient in many cuisines worldwide.

Though bananas are a healthy, nutrient-dense snack, eating too many could be detrimental. This article explores how many bananas you should eat per day.

Bananas are highly nutritious

Bananas are as delicious as they are convenient, but their nutritional value is what really makes them shine.

They're a good source of essential nutrients, including manganese, potassium, and vitamins C and B6.

**A medium-sized, fresh banana (118 grams) provides the following nutrient-
Trusted Source:**

- Calories: 105
- Carbs: 27 grams (g)
- Fiber: 3 g
- Fat: 0.3 g
- Protein: 1 g
- Vitamin C: 10 milligrams (mg) or 11% of the Daily Value (DV)
- Vitamin B6: 0.43 mg or 25% of DV
- Potassium: 422 mg or 9% of DV
- Manganese: 0.32 mg or 14% of DV
- Magnesium: 32 mg or 8% of DV

Bananas also contain various plant compounds that may Trusted Source reduce stress, inflammation, and your risk of chronic diseases.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Trusted Source recommends eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Adding bananas to your routine is a great way to boost your intake of whole fruit and promote your overall health.

Very low in protein and fat

The vast majority of the calories in bananas come from carbs. They only provide negligible amounts of protein and fat.

In fact, protein and fat combined make up less than 8% Trusted Source of the total calorie content of a banana.

Protein is a major structural component of your body, and it's needed for proper immune function, tissue repair, muscle building, and bone health.

Meanwhile, fats provide energy, assist with absorbing fat-soluble nutrients, and play a role in hormone production and brain health.

Because bananas lack these vital nutrients, they don't hold up well on their own as a nutritionally complete meal.

If a banana is your usual go-to snack, consider pairing it with a source of healthy fat and protein, such as peanut butter, a handful of walnuts, or a boiled egg, to make it more nutritionally balanced.

Too much of a good thing

Bananas are a healthy addition to almost any diet, but too much of any single food — including bananas — could do more harm than good.

Bananas are not typically considered a high calorie food. However, if your banana

How many bananas should you eat per day?



habit is causing you to eat more calories than your body needs, it could lead to unhealthy weight gain.

Additionally, over 90% of the calories in bananas come from carbs

In unripe or green bananas, the main source of carbs comes from starch. As the fruit ripens Trusted Source, the starch converts to sugar. Thus, by the time your banana is ripe enough to eat, a large proportion of the calories may be coming from sugar.

Carb over-consumption — without balancing it with proteins and healthy fats — could make blood sugar control more difficult for those with blood sugar conditions, such as diabetes or prediabetes.

Additionally, eating too many bananas

may lead to nutrient deficiencies, especially if you're not making room for foods that contain the nutrients bananas lack, such as protein, fat, calcium, vitamin D, and iron.

Finally, people with late-stage kidney failure may need to monitor their potassium levels because too

much can interfere with medications. It would take more than one banana to have an effect, but it's a good idea to speak with your doctor to understand how many you can safely eat.

How many bananas should you eat?

Balance and

The bottom line

Bananas are one of the most popular fruits in the world. They're full of important nutrients, but eating too many could do more harm than good.

Too much of any single food may contribute to weight gain and nutrient deficiencies. One to two bananas daily are considered a moderate intake for most healthy people.

Be sure to eat this fruit as part of a balanced diet that provides all the nutrients your body needs. (Healthline)



What next for Salah and Liverpool after explosive outburst?

MOHAMED Salah plunged his future at Liverpool into serious doubt after claiming he had been made the fall guy for the Premier League champions' disastrous form this season.

In an explosive outburst, Salah spoke to reporters after being left on the bench for Saturday's 3-3 draw at Leeds, dropping a bombshell accusation that his relationship with Reds manager Arne Slot is broken.

It was the third consecutive game the Egyptian had been axed by Slot, who is struggling for solutions to a run of four wins in 15 games in all competitions for troubled Liverpool.

We look at how the breakdown between the Egypt star and his manager developed and what comes next for both Salah and Liver-

pool:

WHY WAS SALAH DROPPED?

An undoubted Liverpool legend, only two players have scored more than Salah's 250 goals for the 20-time English champions.

Salah, who arrived at Anfield from Roma in 2017, was fundamental to two Premier League title triumphs, ending a 30-year wait to become champions in 2020, and winning the Champions League in 2019.

In April, as he played a starring role and led Liverpool to the title in Slot's debut year last season, Salah was rewarded with a lucrative new two-year contract.

Salah has struggled to match those heights this season, scoring just five times in 19 appearances.

The 33-year-old, who was dropped for Champions League fixtures against Galatasaray and Eintracht Frankfurt, started all of Liverpool's first 12 league games, but Slot's patience ran out after a 3-0 home defeat to Nottingham Forest.

Liverpool spent £300 million (\$400 million) on forwards Florian Wirtz, Hugo Ekitike and Alexander Isak in the summer transfer window.

Despite slow starts for Wirtz and Isak, they appear the future for the Reds and Slot has prioritised trying to get them up to speed over the past week.

"I'm sitting on the bench and I don't know why. It seems like the club has thrown me under the bus. That's how I am feeling. I think it is very clear that someone wanted me to get all of the blame," Salah said.

(Supersport)

Nervous Norwegian winner Reitan overshadows Hovland in Sun City

NERVOUS Kristoffer Reitan overshadowed fellow Norwegian Viktor Hovland with a one-shot victory on Sunday in the Nedbank Golf Challenge at South African resort Sun City.

After taking a five-stroke lead into the final round, the 27-year-old survived a tense finish to post a par 72 and a 17-under total of 271.

A par four at the final hole sufficed to keep him in front of joint runners-up Don Bradbury (66) from England and South African Jayden Schaper (68).

Hovland is ranked 13th in the world having won seven times on the USPGA circuit and was the star attraction at the Gary Player Country Club 170 kilometres (105 miles) north west of Johannesburg.

But his opening round 69 left him six shots behind leader Reitan and he never subsequently mounted a serious challenge while his compatriot stayed top

of the leaderboard throughout.

Bradbury claimed six birdies and Schaper four in the final round, but Reitan was erratic with four birdies and four bogeys as his lead dwindled to just one stroke with three holes remaining.

Playing together, the trio all parred the final three holes, giving the Norwegian ranked 59th his second European title after the Belgium Open last February.

"I had nerves and fear throughout the final round. It was a situation I had never been in before – leading by five with one round to go," Reitan told reporters.

"I was so relieved to get over the line in front. Don (Bradbury) and Jayden (Schaper) kept pushing me. Both of them played brilliant golf today.

"My nerves affected some of my shots, but I became courageous during the final three holes. I am very proud of my victory.

(Supersport)



▲ Kristoffer Reitan.

Rutter rescues Brighton in West Ham draw

BRIGHTON forward Georginio Rutter stopped West Ham climbing out of the Premier League relegation zone with a last-gasp equaliser in a dramatic 1-1 draw on Sunday.

Nuno Espirito Santo's side were moments away from escaping the bottom three thanks to Jarrod Bowen's second half strike at the Amex Stadium.

But Rutter grabbed Brighton's leveller in stoppage-time to leave West Ham stuck in 18th place.

The third-bottom Hammers are two points behind fourth-bottom Nottingham Forest in the fight for survival.

Conceding so late was a painful blow for West Ham but after holding Manchester United to a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford on Thursday, West Ham's battling display was further evidence of their improvement since Nuno replaced the sacked Graham Potter in September.

West Ham have lost just one of their last six league matches to revive their survival hopes.

Brighton blew a two-goal lead in a 4-3 defeat against Aston Villa in midweek, surrendering their 10-match unbeaten run at home in the process.

Avoiding another loss in front of their own



▲ West Ham United's Jarrod Bowen celebrates scoring their first goal Action.

fans kept seventh placed Brighton in the hunt for European qualification.

On the rain-lashed south-coast, both teams struggled to cope with the treacherous conditions.

West Ham boss Nuno Espirito Santo brought Lucas Paqueta back into the team after his suspension for a needless dismiss-

sal provoked by two incidents of dissent in quick succession against Liverpool.

The 28-year-old claimed his behaviour was the result of frustration at a spot-fixing investigation launched against him by the Football Association in 2024 that ended this summer with Paqueta being cleared of all charges.

Nuno said Paqueta was still affected by the investigation but the Brazilian went close to putting West Ham ahead with stinging strike that Bart Verbruggen pushed away.

Verbruggen kept Brighton level with a brilliant double save after halftime, clawing away Bowen's deflected effort before quickly scrambling to his feet to stop Crysencio Summerville's volley.

West Ham finally made the breakthrough in the 73rd minute.

Jan Paul van Hecke's careless back header was intercepted by Callum Wilson and he slipped a pass towards Bowen, who stretched for a low shot that crept past Verbruggen from an acute angle.

However, Brighton laid siege to the West Ham goal in the closing stages and snatched their equaliser in stoppage-time.

West Ham keeper Alphonse Areola made two saves in a penalty area scramble, but Rutter pounced on the loose ball and squeezed his low shot into the net from close-range.

FA Cup holders Crystal Palace will climb to fourth place if they win at Fulham in Sunday's other game.

(Supersport)

'Siziba' defies odds, stuns SA's 'Gandaganda'

By Chris Dlamini

HE is on fire.
That is Eswatini's creme de la creme of pool, Zweli 'Siziba' Dlamini.

The decorated national team star took his good form to the money-spinning E138 000 Guaranteed Pool Tournament at Police Academy in Matsapha over the weekend.

Dlamini started the competition well on Friday night and was on Saturday in the quarters and semi-finals of his life 1 entry. Each player had two lives in the competition.

Dlamini stunned South Africa's one time back-to-back champion, Jerry 'Gandaganda' Naidoo, also called 'The Green Machine'.

He beat the SA star 7-5 in the semis to advance to the final set for Sunday (yesterday).

Interestingly, the other life 1 semi-final pitted local greats in Nathi 'Bhubesi' Sihlongonyane and Eddie 'Bharuka' Mondlane. This effectively meant an all-Eswatini final.

Mondlane eventually won the final spot with a 6-5 margin and met Dlamini in the final. The seventh frame could not be played as the match was timed up.

It is also worth noting that this article was printed before the match was played.

It is worth noting that Dlamini (Siziba) was crowned the champion of the Manzini Pool Club (MPC) Singles Tournament just the previous weekend after his 7-5 final win against Khanyokuhle 'PlayStation' Simelane. He was now battling for yet another title.



▲ Jaison 'Gandaganda' Naidoo.



▲ Zweli 'Siziba' Dlamini.



▲ Blessing 'Bibido' Muzarurwi.



▲ Nathi 'Bhubesi' Sihlongonyane.

'Bhubesi' roars to E30k win

By Chris Dlamini

WHAT a roaring win!

Eswatini blackball star Nathi 'Bhubesi' Sihlongonyane went into the second edition of the E138 000 Guaranteed Pool Tournament already E30 000 richer.

He completed a double over visiting Zimbabwe star player Blessing 'Bibido' Muzarurwi on Friday.

The duo first played in Zimbabwe for the same pot match of E30 000, which Bhubesi won 15-9.

Bibido, also here for the star-studded Guaranteed Pool Tournament, first played his return match with Sihlongonyane at the

Manzini Sports Lounge, formerly Manzini Pool Club, at Cardo Square in Ngwane Park.

It was E30 000 at stake again. Sihlongonyane was just on another level from the onset, shooting ahead to lead 6-4, and 10-4, before Bibido fought back to make it 10-8, 11-10, and in the end it was 13-10 in Sihlongonyane's favour.

The duo moved on to Police Academy

for the E138 000 tournament that ran until Sunday. Teams and singles competed for the cash prizes, with the champions in the two categories taking home E30 000 apiece

This year's edition added the ladies category and the winner there will walk home E7 000 richer.

2025 WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS:

More heartbreak for Eswatini in Dubai

By Sibusiso Masilela

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THE going is getting tougher for Eswatini in the 2025 World Boxing Championships.

This follows the exit of two more boxers, Khaya Shongwe and Qhawe Gamedze, in the global showpiece taking place in the United Arab Emirates.

The two boxers lost their respective bouts against Suleymanov Zalim (Uzbekistan) and Mamedova Enrique (Spain) in the 54kg and 60kg categories, respectively, on points.

The duo became the fourth local boxers to bow out of the global showpiece after Thabiso Dlamini and Khaya Mkhabela.

Eswatini Boxing Association Secretary Nkosinathi Dlamini commended the boxers for their performances.

“We salute these warriors! You may have lost the bouts, but you’ve won our hearts with your bravery and commitment,” he said. The country is pinning its hopes on Sibonelo Ndzimandze and Mukelo Dlamini, who are still going to compete in the competition.

Dlamini further wished the two boxers the best of luck in their bouts.

The national team is under the guidance of seasoned coach Douglas Simelane, who is assisted by Muzi Shongwe.

IBA president Umar Kremlev thanked the Gulf nation for hosting the games.

Kremlev thanked the Gulf nation for hosting the tournament through a press statement.

Throughout its history, the IBA Men’s World Boxing Championships has delivered countless moments of triumph, passion, and inspiration. For many athletes, it serves



▲ The Boxing national team with Eswatini Boxing Association (EBA) President Webster Lukhele and ESRC CEO Darius Dlomo.

as a life-defining experience, shaping their futures both inside and outside the ring. Our mission remains steadfast: to empower every boxer to flourish, earn a living, grow professionally, and etch their names into the annals of history for themselves and

their nations. Boxing knows no boundaries; it is a universal language that unites people across continents, and we are dedicated to bringing the spirit of boxing to every corner of the world,” he said.

EOCGA board member Pearl Dlamini is

also an executive member for IBA.

IBA is funding several initiatives in Africa, such as the Mandela Boxing Cup.

Kremlev once funded a one-year training program for local boxer Thabiso Dlamini in Russia through their Boxing Federation.

E600 000 for EOCGA board travel expenses

By Sibusiso Masilela

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THE Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) has tabled an E600 000 budget for board travel expenses.

The figure is included in the E13 million budget tabled by Treasurer Zakhele Zulu during the 31st Annual General meeting held at the George Hotel on Saturday.

The board travel fees have been reduced by E17 000 from the previous expenditure of E617 000.

The board travel expenses include international meeting, such as the signing of Memorandum of Understandings with three international MoUs with Taipei, Lesotho and Seychelles. The national sports body has tabled E200 000 for exchange of programs, which include the MoU’s expenses including training of athletes and officials.

EOCGA has allocated over E2 million for world programs, which has been increased



▲ ESRC CEO Darius Dlomo with CEO Maxwell Jele and board member Victor ‘Mavikane’ Dlamini.

by over E1 million from the previous E1million expenditure during the previous financial year. The organisation has further allocated E510 000 towards its preparations for the 2026 Dakar Youth games and the

annual Lesotho Youth Games.

They have further allocated E425 000 for athletes’ youth development programs, where they spent E55 000 during the previous financial year.



▲ EOCGA President Adam ‘Bomber’ Mthethwa and CEO Maxwell Jele during their annual general meeting held at the George Hotel.



▲ EOCGA Treasurer Zakhele Zulu delivering his report.

WEEKEND RESULTS

Premier League		
Aston Villa	2 - 1	Arsenal
AFC Bournemouth	0 - 0	Chelsea
Everton	3 - 0	Nottingham Forest
Leeds United	3 - 3	Liverpool
Manchester City	3 - 0	Sunderland
Newcastle United	2 - 1	Burnley
Tottenham Hotspur	2 - 0	Brentford
Brighton & Hove Albion	1 - 1	West Ham Utd
Fulham	1 - 2	Crystal Palace

La Liga		
Real Oviedo	0 - 0	RCD Mallorca
Deportivo Alavés	1 - 0	Real Sociedad
Athletic Club	1 - 0	Atlético de Madrid
Real Betis	3 - 5	FC Barcelona
Villarreal CF	2 - 0	Getafe CF
Elohe CF	3 - 0	Girona FC
Valencia CF	1 - 1	Sevilla FC

Serie A		
U.S. Sassuolo	3 - 1	ACF Fiorentina
Inter Milan	4 - 0	Como 1907
Hellas Verona	3 - 1	Atalanta BC
US Cremonese	2 - 0	U.S. Lecoe
Cagliari Calcio	1 - 0	AS Roma

South African Soccer (PSL)		
Carling Knockout Final		
Orlando Pirates	1 - 0	Marumo Gallants

LOG

Premier League	Team	Played	Won	Tied	Lost	Pts
Arsenal F.C.		15	10	3	2	33
Manchester City F.C.		15	10	1	4	31
Aston Villa F.C.		15	9	3	3	30
Chelsea F.C.		15	7	4	4	25
Everton F.C.		15	7	3	5	24
Crystal Palace F.C.		14	6	5	3	23
Brighton & Hove Albion F.C.		15	6	5	4	23
Sunderland A.F.C.		15	6	5	4	23
Liverpool F.C.		15	7	2	6	23
Tottenham Hotspur F.C.		15	6	4	5	22
Newcastle United F.C.		15	6	4	5	22
Manchester United F.C.		14	6	4	4	22
AFC Bournemouth		15	5	5	5	20
Brentford F.C.		15	6	1	8	19
Fulham F.C.		14	5	2	7	17
Leeds United		15	4	3	8	15
Nottingham Forest F.C.		15	4	3	8	15
West Ham United F.C.		15	3	4	8	12
Burnley F.C.		15	3	1	11	10
W. Wanderers F.C.		14	0	2	12	2

DRAMATIC MTN PREMIER LEAGUE Y'ELLO SUNDAY:

By Chris Dlamini

(At Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini)

Y. Buffaloes..... 1

M. Highlanders..... 2

ARMY team Young Buffaloes once again lost to capital city giants Mbabane Highlanders.

For a third consecutive time in the MTN Premier League since last season, Highlanders recorded a win over the army outfit. The black and gold capital city giants won the tough encounter 2-1. It was no easy game, and the half-time drama is testimony to that. Both sides first rejected walking through the tunnel to the dressing rooms.

Even before the half-time whistle came, there was already a brewing storm inside the tunnel between the two teams' rivals. Police and Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) officials quickly intervened to avoid blows being exchanged as it was that tense. Some pushing and shoving, followed by verbal exchanges, took place as the teams walked through.

The 'Bull' (Highlanders) head coach, Ernest Mavuso found himself on the floor fighting to get back up on his feet as police and the teams' marshals and officials wrestled on the way to the dressing rooms.

Otherwise, it was a scene that passed, but outside the tunnel at its entry point, there was still tension as Highlanders supporters had wanted to lay their hands on one of the Buffaloes marshals. The police calmed the storm, and clubs returned for a tension-filled second half.

Inkunz'emnyama completed a fourth consecutive win over Emathole Ezinyathi (Buffaloes) with a brace from former Ezulwini United forward Msimisi Zwane. He was on target for Highlanders in just the first minute, tapping in after a good combination team play from the middle of the park,

'Bull-ish Landers beat Buffaloes!



▲ Mbabane Highlanders Thando Dube and Young Buffaloes Njabulo Maziya tussling for the ball. Highlanders won 2-1.

catching Buffaloes early on.

He was back again for his second a few minutes later.

He finished off from close range a well weighted Siyabonga Mkhonto cross from the left flank, which saw the Highlanders stand erupt with wild scenes of jubilation in only seven minutes of play.

Buffaloes pulled one back before the break through Bongwa 'Owa' Matsebula just two minutes after the half-hour mark. He also forced a reflex save from Highlanders goalkeeper Sisekelo Maseko, who had a brilliant match. Just before the break, Buffaloes thought they had got the equaliser, but the goal did not stand after a foul on the

goalkeeper was given.

Buffaloes returned with more vigour in the second stanza, but it was all in vain as they still had to be cautious not to be exposed at the back. As much as Buffaloes pressed hard, Highlanders stood resolute and missed chances of their own, but it was the army team that was unlucky.

They missed gilt-edged chances, which could have seen the possibly win the match. It turned out it was Highlanders' day to celebrate a win, which has been evasive in their last five matches. Highlanders had also lost 1-0 to minnows Rangers prior to the Buffaloes fixture, which was a must-win for them given their barren run.

The win lifted Highlanders from nine points to 12, and could end two places higher from the number 10 they occupied in the standings but it was all dependent on other results involving Malanti Chiefs as well as Mbabane Swallows.

Malanti was up against Sisonkhe at Killarney Stadium in Pigg's Peak while Swallows were away to Moneni Pirates. The latter won the match in which they had declared Swallows as their daily bread.

It was the fourth consecutive defeat at the hands of Moneni for Swallows since last season. Moneni won this one 1-0.

Meanwhile, Buffaloes remain with 13 points and occupied the sixth spot ahead of the Highlanders result.



▲ Moneni Pirates striker Senanelo Nkambule negotiating his way past Mbabane Swallows defenders. Pirates won 1-0.

Pirates get another 'slice' of their daily bread

By Chris Dlamini

Moneni Pirates..... @ 1,

Vukile Khumalo 81st minute

Mbabane Swallows..... @ 0,

MONENI Pirates got another 'slice' of their bread after beating Mbabane Swallows by a solitary goal.

The 'Sea Robbers' fulfilled their build up tag of labelling the red and white glamour side, their daily bread, with a Vukile Khumalo second-half penalty winner. The spot kick handed the 'Buccaneers' their fourth consecutive win over 'Umkhonto ka Shaka' in all competitions since last season.

The defeat was a stab in the heart for the Caleb Ngwenya-led side, who dominated the MTN yello Sunday fixture played at Mavuso Sports Centre. Swallows had an upper hand in the first half with striker Njongo Mazibuko asking questions to the opponents seven minutes into action. The former Red Rhinos

striker ballooned his over the bar with Pirates goalkeeper Qiniso Nyawo at his mercy. Pirates were sleeping as they failed to create any meaningful chances in front of goals. Nyawo was called to action three minutes before the break when he kept out a Njongo close-range effort, forcing the match to go to the break on a goalless draw. Swallows continued to press during the second half with Njongo's 25-yard shot saved by the alert Nyawo at Pirates' goals.

Swallows goalkeeper Sandanezwe Mathabela kept his team in the match when he rescued his teammate Philiso Newman from scoring an own goal in the 67th minute.

Lead

Pirates then snatched the 79th minute from the spot through their left back, Vukile Khumalo, after winger Biko Sibandze was tripped inside the box by Mandla Palma.

Khumalo made no mistake to lead the ball home, provoking wild celebrations from the vibrant Pirates grandstand. The victory moved Pirates to position nine with 11 points after nine matches while Swallows dropped to position 10 with the same number of points.

'Bull' striker eyeing golden Boot

By Sibusiso Masilela

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MBABANE Highlanders striker Msimisi Zwane is eyeing the MTN Premier League Golden Boot Award.

Zwane said this after netting his brace during their 2-1 win over Young Buffaloes on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

The former Ezulwini United player won himself E2 500 for his effort in front of over 2 000 fans. "I am happy with the award, which is a result of unity from my teammates. We will continue working hard as a team and appealing for patience from

our fans, and we are working hard to grind positive results for the team," he said.

Zwane's brace ensured that the crowd pullers extend their winning streak against the army side to three in the league.

Meanwhile, the second match between Moneni Pirates and Mbabane Swallows saw Pirates winger Biko Sibandze win the match of the award, taking home the E2 500 first prize money. Sibandze dedicated the award to the Pirates family.

"I am pleased with the award, which has motivated me to work hard as I was against my former team. I will continue working hard throughout the campaign," he said.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders striker Msimisi Zwane receiving his match award from PLE Vice chairman Ngudze Mamba and MTN Eswatini's Phumla Motsa.



What next for Salah, Liverpool after outburst?

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Pirates get another 'slice' of their daily bread

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Daily News
Sport



DRAMATIC MTN PREMIER LEAGUE YELLO SUNDAY!

'Bull-ish Landers beat Buffaloes!

... For the third consecutive time in the MTN Premier League since last season, the black and gold capital city giants won the tough encounter 2-1.

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