

Ekukhanyeni High shines
at JA Africa Competition

▲ Ekukhanyeni High School Shines at Junior Achievement (JA) Africa Competition in Abuja, Nigeria. The school has put Eswatini on the map as they represented the country at this year's JA Africa Company of the Year Competition, competing against eight other nations. The team proudly brought home two prestigious awards; Best Project Management Award and the Kuda Award.

Citizens Economic Empowerment Regulations Validation Workshop:

‘Empowerment rules
to put emaSwati at
centre of economy’

● CEEC Chairperson Lincoln
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importance of collective
ownership of the process

By Thokozani Mazibuko

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Economic Empowerment
Council, has taken a vital step
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convening the Citizens Economic
Empowerment Regulations
Validation Workshop.

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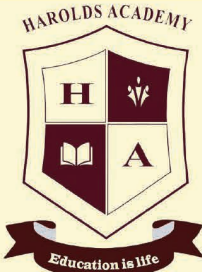
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By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, together with the United Nations Development Programme and the Citizens Economic Empowerment Council, has taken a vital step towards shaping an inclusive and people centered economy by convening the Citizens Economic Empowerment Regulations Validation Workshop.

The workshop has been hailed as a critical milestone in efforts to ensure that emaSwati do not merely participate in economic activity, but become genuine beneficiaries of sustainable and meaningful economic transformation.

The validation workshop brought together government officials, development partners, private sector representatives, and civil society, all united by a shared vision of transforming Eswatini’s economy in a way that prioritizes local participation, ownership, and long term empowerment. The gathering focused on reviewing and refining the Final Draft Citizens Economic Empowerment Regulations, which are expected to guide the implementation of the Citizens Economic Empowerment Act.

This year, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, with technical and financial support from UNDP, undertook extensive nationwide consultations. These engagements reached micro enterprises, women entrepreneurs, youth groups, private sector players, and civil society organizations across the country.

The consultations were designed to ensure that the regulations are informed by lived experiences, practical challenges, and genuine aspirations of emaSwati who are directly involved in economic activity. Stakeholders’ contributions during these consultations now form the backbone of the Final Draft Regulations being validated.

The Citizens Economic Empowerment Regulations are designed to broaden access to economic opportunities while creating an enabling environment for inclusive growth. Central to the regulations is the promotion of local ownership and participation in key sectors of the economy. By strengthening fair and inclusive procurement systems, the framework seeks to ensure that local businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises, are given meaningful opportunities to supply goods and services and participate competitively in national value chains.



▲ Some of the stakeholders who were present in the Citizens Economic Empowerment Council (CEEC) Regulations Validation Workshop at The Tums George Hotel in Manzini.

CITIZENS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT REGULATIONS VALIDATION WORKSHOP:

‘Empowerment rules to put emaSwati at centre of economy’

... CEEC Chairperson Lincoln Motsa emphasized the importance of collective ownership of the process.



▲ Citizens Economic Empowerment Council (CEEC) Chairperson Lincoln Motsa.

In addition, the regulations place strong emphasis on skills development and capacity building. Recognizing that empowerment goes beyond access to markets and finance, the framework promotes targeted training and skills enhancement initiatives aimed at equipping emaSwati with the competencies required to compete and succeed in an evolving economy.

This approach is expected to contribute to job creation, innovation, and business sustainability, especially among youth and women.

Pillar

Another key pillar of the Citizens Economic Empowerment Regulations is the promotion of transparency and accountability.

The regulations, by setting clear guidelines and oversight mechanisms, seek to build public confidence and ensure that empowerment initiatives deliver tangible benefits to intended beneficiaries. A transparent implementation process is expected to encourage ethical business

practices and strengthen trust between government, the private sector, and citizens.

Speaking during the workshop, Citizens Economic Empowerment Council Chairperson Lincoln Motsa emphasized the importance of collective ownership of the process. He described the validation workshop as the final opportunity to ensure that the regulations reflect national priorities and are responsive to real industry needs. Motsa called on all stakeholders to engage purposefully, share practical insights, and contribute to shaping a framework that is both workable and transformative. According to him, the success of the regulations will depend on the quality of stakeholder input and the commitment shown during implementation.

The collaboration between MCIT, UNDP, and the Citizens Economic Empowerment Council highlights the value of partnerships in driving inclusive development. UNDP continues to support Eswatini’s efforts to build resilient institutions and inclusive economic systems that leave no one behind.

Bonginkosi Mkhonza appointed new UNESWA registrar

By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

THE University of Eswatini (UNESWA) has officially announced the appointment of Bonginkosi Max Mkhonza as its new Registrar, with his tenure commencing on December 1, 2025.

This strategic appointment has been hailed as a significant milestone for the institution as it seeks to strengthen its governance and administrative capabilities during a critical phase of transformation. Mkhonza, a distinguished alumnus of UNESWA, brings a wealth of experience and leadership acumen to his new role.

His career spans numerous executive positions across both public and private sectors, where he has demonstrated expertise in corporate governance, institutional

strategy, human capital management, and organisational transformation. His extensive background in diverse industries equips him with a unique perspective and skill set essential for driving systemic reforms and fostering a culture of high performance.

The University faces a pivotal moment as it embarks on deep structural and operational changes aimed at enhancing its efficiency and reputation. Mkhonza’s proven track record in strategic renewal projects and systems reform will be instrumental in guiding UNESWA through this period. His leadership is expected to catalyse improvements in governance frameworks and streamline administrative processes, ultimately benefiting students, staff, and the broader academic community.

In his first statement as Registrar, Mkhonza acknowledged the challenges ahead with candour and determination. “It is both a privilege and a profound responsibility to return to the University that shaped my

own professional journey. I have no illusions about the magnitude of the task before us. The challenges are deep, complex, and long-standing. But I am confident that, through collaboration with Council, Management, Staff, and Students, and the support of the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, we can rebuild UNESWA into a modern, efficient, and trusted national institution. This is a moment that calls for courage, humility, and collective resolve,” he said.

Role

The Registrar’s Office at UNESWA plays a crucial role in managing student records, registration, and academic services, serving as the backbone of the University’s academic administration. Under Mkhonza’s stewardship, the office is expected to enhance its operational effectiveness, ensuring that students receive timely and accurate academic support while maintaining the integrity of institutional data.



▲ New University of Eswatini (UNESWA) Registrar Bonginkosi Mkhonza

By Delisa Magagula

E5.2bn fuel reserve project under Ministerial inspection

THE Minister for Natural Resources and Energy, Prince Lonkhokhela, led a high-level delegation on a detailed tour of the E5.2 billion Strategic Fuel Reserve Facility currently taking shape at Phuzumoya, Siphofaneni.

The visit formed part of government's ongoing oversight of one of Eswatini's largest national security infrastructure projects, designed to store 80 million litres of fuel and guarantee a minimum of 60 days of uninterrupted national supply once operational.

Prince Lonkhokhela was joined by Princess Sibahle and senior ministry officials as they assessed the latest progress on earthworks across the expansive site.

The project, which is being constructed in phases, marks a major investment in Eswatini's long-term energy security and its ability to withstand global fuel market disruptions.

The minister's inspection began with a briefing from project engineers, who outlined the milestones achieved to date. According to officials on site, the earthworks the foundation stage that prepares the terrain for tank installation, pipelines, and auxiliary systems are progressing according to schedule.

Large areas of land have already been shaped, compacted, and stabilised, forming the base on which the storage infrastructure will rise.

Prince Lonkhokhela was taken through the layout of the 80 million-litre storage system, which will include tanks for petrol, diesel, and Jet A-1 fuel. Once completed, the facility will hold enough supply to sustain the country for at least two months, significantly reducing Eswatini's exposure to external fuel shortages, transport delays, and regional supply chain interruptions.

During the tour, engineers explained that the reserve will not only function as a buffer during emergencies but will also streamline the country's ability to coordinate fuel logistics.

By centralising large-scale storage at Phuzumoya, the government aims to ensure quicker response times during shortages,

greater price stability, and improved long-term planning for national consumption demands.

Princess Sibahle, who accompanied the delegation, engaged with engineers on the environmental management plans implemented during construction. Project managers highlighted how the site has been zoned to minimise ecological disturbance while allowing for efficient construction flow.

Dust control, water runoff systems, and local workforce engagement were part of the environmental and social compliance measures shared during the briefing.

The delegation also visited the sections earmarked for access roads, security perimeters, and the control centre that will oversee fuel monitoring once the project enters its operational phase.

Engineers emphasised the scale of coordination required to build a reserve of this size from soil testing and compaction to the upcoming phases involving tank foundations, mechanical systems, and safety installations.

Throughout the inspection, ministry officials reiterated that the fuel reserve is a cornerstone project in Eswatini's national development agenda.

HRH Lonkhokhela said by investing E5.2 billion into a strategic buffer, the country positions itself to mitigate risks linked to volatile global markets, geopolitical tensions, and crises that could choke regional fuel flows.

Prince Lonkhokhela used the site visit to engage directly with the technical teams, requesting detailed updates on timelines, challenges, and next steps.

According to engineers, the next phase will involve transitioning from earthworks to structural installations, a stage that requires precision engineering and strict adherence to safety codes.

The tour also highlighted the economic footprint of the project. Construction has created jobs for local workers, while suppliers from surrounding communities have



▲ HRH Princess Sibahle joined the tour of Phuzumoya.

benefited from procurement opportunities.

Officials indicated that as the project advances into more complex phases, additional skilled labour needs will open opportunities for technicians, artisans, and specialists.

Worth noting the Phuzumoya facility will eventually operate as a national safeguard, ensuring continuity of essential services such as healthcare, transport, power generation, agriculture, and emergency response during fuel shortages.

"With the country's demand patterns evolving alongside economic growth, the 80-million-litre reserve is being positioned as both a protective mechanism and a development enabler," said HRH Prince Lonkhokhela during the tour.

When inspection concluded, the minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to seeing the project through to delivery.



▲ The E5.2bn Fuel Reserve Project is still underway.

The delegation expressed satisfaction with the pace of the earthworks and encouraged continued collaboration between engineers, contractors, and ministry officials to maintain momentum.

Worth mentioning the E5.2 billion Strategic Fuel Reserve Facility stands as one of Eswatini's most significant infrastructure undertakings an investment aimed at securing national resilience and strengthening the country's ability to navigate future global fuel uncertainties.

Fake boat cruise suspect faces 8 charges

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THANDEKA Mamba on Wednesday appeared before Manzini Principal Magistrate David Khumalo facing eight counts of theft by false pretenses, with the total amount allegedly involved standing at E174 260.

She appeared before Manzini Principal Magistrate David Khumalo.

Mamba, a 33 year old woman from Mbabane under Chief Zembe, is accused of unlawfully and intentionally misrepresenting herself to several complainants over different periods, promising them a Durban cruise in exchange for cash, which the Crown alleges was never intended to take place.

According to the charge sheet presented before court, the offences were allegedly committed between October 2024 and November 2025 in various parts of the Hhohho and Manzini districts. The accused is said to have targeted individuals from different communities, collecting varying sums of money under similar pretenses.

In count one, Mamba is charged with theft by false pretenses after allegedly misrepresenting to Mapule Zwane of Mpolonjeni



▲ Thandeka Mamba.

that she would arrange a Durban cruise. It is alleged that between June and November 2025, at or near Mbabane in the Hhohho district, the complainant gave the accused E131 040 in cash. The Crown alleges Mamba knew the representation was false and proceeded to unlawfully obtain and steal the money.

Count two relates to a separate complainant, Sikhulile Ngwenya of Pine Valley. The

court heard that between April and November 2025, at or near Manzini, the accused allegedly obtained E7 220 in cash under the same pretense of organizing a Durban cruise, while fully aware that the claim was untrue.

In count three, the accused is charged with unlawfully obtaining E6 500 from Nurse Mvubu of Ngculwini. It is alleged that between October 2024 and March 2025, at or near Ngculwini in the Manzini district, Mamba again misrepresented herself and induced the complainant to part with money for a cruise that never materialized.

Count four alleges that between April and November 2025, at or near Manzini, the accused obtained E6 500 in cash from Dorothy Themba of Mhlume under the same alleged false representation of arranging a Durban cruise.

The fifth count stems from alleged events that took place between January and November 2025 at or near Mahlanya in the Hhohho district. The Crown alleges that Philile Mdllovu of Mahlanya was induced to give Mamba E6 500 in cash on the false belief that it was payment toward a Durban cruise.

In count six, Mamba is accused of obtaining E5 000 from Nomvula Dlamini of Lozitha during October 2025. The offence is alleged to have occurred at or near Lozitha

in the Hhohho district, where the accused is said to have again represented that the money would be used for a Durban cruise.

Count seven involves Nolungelo Shongwe of Two Sticks. The court heard that during October 2025, at or near Manzini, the accused allegedly obtained E5 000 in cash under the same false pretenses.

The eighth and final count relates to Nomphumelelo Nhlabatsi of Lobamba. It is alleged that during October 2025 at or near Manzini, the accused obtained E6 500 in cash after promising a Durban cruise that she allegedly knew would not occur.

During her initial appearance, the charges were formally put to the accused, and the matter was explained to her. Court procedures were followed as the prosecution outlined the nature of the alleged offences and the amounts involved in each count.

The case has drawn public interest due to the number of complainants and the similarity of the allegations, with the Crown alleging a pattern of misrepresentation spanning several months and different locations. The total amount involved across all eight counts is E174 260.

Magistrate Khumalo guided proceedings and addressed the accused on her rights and the seriousness of the charges.



International frameworks, practical case studies shape Eswatini's cyber response

Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala
ncaban@rubiconmedia.group

DAY three of the three-day Countering Disinformation and Promoting Digital Transparency workshop had highlights on a presentation by Samuel Straw, Head of Research at the Taiwan Digital Diplomacy Association, who mapped the international legal and policy architecture Eswatini can use to strengthen its cyber defences and counter malign information campaigns.

Speaking to a roomful of government officials, media practitioners and private-sector representatives, Straw framed his remarks around two core messages: international norms matter, and practical, community-centred solutions make those norms work on the ground.

He opened with an overview of United Nations mechanisms; the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) describing the GGE as the engine of high-level consensus and the OEWG as the inclusive forum where countries like Eswatini can shape global norms on critical infrastructure protection,

... Samuel Straw urges harmonised laws, platform accountability as workshop closes

due diligence and mutual assistance during cyber incidents.

Straw stressed that existing international law already applies in cyberspace: sovereignty, non-interference and human rights protections continue to hold online. He urged Eswatini to draw on widely recognised instruments such as the Budapest Convention on cybercrime even for states that are not signatories which is to harmonise offences, strengthen evidence collection and facilitate cross-border cooperation.

Technical and governance standards featured prominently. Straw recommended adoption of frameworks like NIST and ISO 27001 to structure national preparedness around the cycle of identify, detect, respond and recover. He also highlighted the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) as a practical partner for training, toolkits and peer learning.

Again, he illustrated these frameworks with case studies. He cited a UN-led initiative in the Democratic Republic of Congo where trained youth and civil-society monitors detected inflammatory content, fed verified intelligence to authorities and

led public corrections and media-literacy campaigns to restore calm. He also pointed to the EU's Digital Services Act which is a regulatory tool that compels large platforms to moderate harmful content, publish transparency reports and provide meaningful redress mechanisms.

On regional cooperation, Straw called attention to the AU Malabo Convention and SADC efforts to harmonise cyber laws and strengthen CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team) linkages. He recommended that Eswatini leverage AfricaCERT and SADC networks for threat intelligence sharing, joint drills and early-warning systems.

In closing, he urged a two-track approach: align national law and policy with international norms, and build domestic capacities from technical teams to media literacy programmes so that detection, verification and public correction can be executed swiftly and transparently. Participants responded positively, noting the presentation's blend of legal clarity and practical steps, and reiterated the workshop's value in building Eswatini's digital resilience.



▲ The founder and president of the Taiwan Digital Diplomacy Association (TDDA), Chiayo Kuo.

National strategy: Good foundation, more capacity and review needed



▲ Samuel Straw, Head of Research at Taiwan Digital Diplomacy Association.

SAMUEL Straw at the Countering Disinformation and Promoting Digital Transparency workshop, commended Eswatini's National Cybersecurity Strategy for clarity and alignment with global best practice but urged steady implementation, regular review and sharper role definition across ministries.

Straw said the 2022 strategy's vision which is to deliver a safe, secure and resilient cyberspace is sound and that its five strategic pillars (protecting infrastructure, strengthening law, building skills, improving public awareness and enhancing cooperation) create a balanced programme. He emphasised that this foundation must now be matched by up-to-date data, adequate funding and a sustained pipeline of trained personnel.

A key concern, he said, is human capacity. Eswatini, like many countries, needs more cybersecurity specialists and structured training pathways. Straw recommended

short-term measures such as regional secondments and AfricaCERT partnerships to plug immediate gaps, while investing in local education and certification programmes for a longer-term talent pipeline.

Governance clarity was another priority. Straw called for clear, cross-ministry protocols that state who leads detection, who coordinates takedown requests, and how evidence is handed to law enforcement. He urged an incident-response playbook with defined stages like detection, verification, platform takedown, public correction and transparent reporting so that responses are swift and legally sound.

Moreover, supply-chain risks and critical infrastructure mapping featured in his recommendations. Straw warned that connected devices, chargers and industrial controllers can be exploited; he urged a consolidated registry of national assets and sectoral standards to remove weak links. He also urged procurement guidelines that assess

security risks across supply chains.

Public behaviour and media literacy remain weak links, he said. Straw pressed for continuous national awareness campaigns, school curricula on digital hygiene and accessible reporting portals so citizens and journalists can flag suspicious content. He recommended that platform moderation be paired with transparency reporting and an appeals mechanism to keep countermeasures accountable.

Finally, Straw advised annual reviews of the strategy and data updates to ensure interventions match evolving threats especially as AI expands attackers' capabilities. He praised the workshop's multi-stakeholder character and urged sustained collaboration with partners such as Taiwan and regional bodies. Participants welcomed his practical roadmap, describing the session as timely and useful in guiding next steps for Eswatini's cybersecurity and misinformation response.



▲ Stakeholders and partners who participated during the commemoration.



▲ Participants during the commemoration hosted by SWAGAA.

SWAGAA, partners honour lives lost to GBV

Stories by Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Swatini Action Group Against Abuse, together with its partners, on Wednesday commemorated the lives lost to gender based violence in a solemn and moving event that brought together community members, civil society organisations, traditional leaders, faith based groups, and development partners.

The event honoured women, men, and children whose lives were cut short as a re-

sult of gender based violence, a persistent challenge that continues to affect families and communities across the country. Participants gathered to reflect on the devastating impact of abuse, not only on victims but also on their loved ones and society at large. Through prayers, moments of silence, and messages of hope, the commemoration created a space for healing while reinforcing the urgency of collective action.

Speaking at the event, SWAGAA Director Nonhlanhla Dlamini expressed appreciation for the strong turnout, noting that the presence of various stakeholders demonstrated unity, solidarity, and a shared commitment to ending violence. She emphasized that

each person in attendance represented a stand against abuse and a voice for those who can no longer speak for themselves. Dlamini described the commemoration as a reminder that addressing gender based violence requires courage, compassion, and sustained collaboration.

Dlamini further highlighted that gender based violence remains one of the most serious human rights violations, cutting across age, gender, social status, and location. She noted that while laws and policies exist to protect survivors, there is still a need for stronger implementation, improved access to support services, and a shift in societal attitudes that normalize abuse. According to

her, real change will only occur when communities actively reject violence and promote respect, equality, and accountability.

Partners who supported the commemoration echoed similar sentiments, calling for increased awareness, prevention efforts, and survivor centered responses. They stressed the importance of creating safe spaces where survivors feel supported to come forward and seek help without fear of stigma or retaliation. Speakers also emphasized the role of men and boys in preventing violence, urging them to challenge harmful norms and become champions of positive masculinity.

GBV has rendered hundreds of Children parentless

THE Swatini Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) has raised concern over the growing number of children who have been left orphaned and vulnerable as a direct result of gender based violence.

Speaking during a commemoration held to honour the lives lost to GBV, SWAGAA Director Nonhlanhla Dlamini said hundreds of children across the country are now classified as orphans and vulnerable children following violent incidents that claimed the lives of parents and caregivers.

Dlamini described gender based violence as a crisis with far reaching consequences that extend beyond the immediate victims. She noted that when a woman or caregiver is killed as a result of violence, children are often left behind with little access to protection, emotional support, or basic necessities. According to her, these children suffer not only the trauma of losing a loved one, but also face heightened risks of poverty, neglect, abuse, and disrupted education.

The SWAGAA Director explained that many of the affected children are forced to live with extended family members who

may already be struggling financially, while others end up in child headed households. In some cases, children are separated from siblings or relocated to unfamiliar environments, further compounding their emotional distress. Dlamini emphasized that these realities highlight the hidden and long term impact of gender based violence on society.

She stressed that the commemoration was not only about remembering those who lost their lives, but also about drawing attention to the innocent children who continue to suffer in silence.

Dlamini said the presence of community members, civil society organisations, traditional leaders, and partners at the event demonstrated a shared responsibility to protect children affected by violence and to prevent further loss of life.

Dlamini further called for stronger community based interventions aimed at identifying and supporting children affected by GBV at an early stage. She said social protection systems must be strengthened to ensure that affected children have access to food, education, healthcare, and psychosocial support. According to her, investing in these children is critical to breaking cycles



▲ SWAGAA highlighted that GBV is now a national emergency

of violence and vulnerability. The event also highlighted the need for stronger implementation of laws and policies designed to address gender based violence and protect children. Speakers urged law enforcement agencies, the justice system, and commu-

nity leaders to work together to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and that survivors and affected families receive appropriate support. They stressed that justice and prevention must go hand in hand to create lasting change.



Ekukhanyeni High shines in Africa-Wide JA competition



▲ Ekukhanyeni High School JA girls team posing for the lenses..

By Ncaba Ntshakala
ncaban@rubiconmedia.group

EKUKHANYENI High School continues to raise Eswatini's flag high after delivering an exceptional performance at the JA Africa Company of the Year Competition.

Fresh from being crowned JA Eswatini 2025 national champions, the school's student-run enterprise, Kwakhanya PlantIQ, represented the Kingdom with distinction on the continental stage.

Competing against teams from eight African countries, the young innovators showcased their flagship creation which is the Smart Irrigation IQ, a device designed to enhance water efficiency in agriculture. The product, widely applauded by judges, demonstrates practical problem-solving at a time when climate change and water shortages continue to challenge farmers across the continent.

Their presentation, which blended technical understanding, creativity, and a compelling business case, earned them strong praise from judges and fellow competitors. Ekukhanyeni High School did not return home empty-handed but they secured two prestigious awards:

Best Project Management Award

The KUDA Award, which recognises emerging founders who display exceptional creativity, resilience, financial discipline, and the potential for strong early-stage business growth

According to JA Eswatini, these achievements position the students among Africa's rising innovators and highlight the strength of Eswatini's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem at school level.

In another milestone, the three young women behind Kwakhanya PlantIQ have been selected to attend the Girl LEAD Bootcamp in Accra, Ghana, in March 2026. The programme aims to equip high-potential young women with advanced leadership and entrepreneurial skills, opening doors to regional networks and global opportunities.

Junior Achievement Eswatini further congratulated the team for their commitment, discipline and excellence throughout the competition. The organisation also extended appreciation to Standard Bank Eswatini, whose support made the students' participation at the continental competition possible.

JA Eswatini further encouraged schools across the country to join its entrepreneurship programme, noting that beyond competition, students gain critical exposure, confidence, and real-world business skills that shape their future careers.

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BUSINESS BRIEFS

US holds first Gulf of Mexico oil and gas auction since 2023

WASHINGTON - The Trump administration will hold the government's first sale of oil and gas drilling rights in the Gulf of Mexico since 2023 on Wednesday, a key test of industry appetite for offshore acreage at a time when the United States is seeking to unleash more domestic fossil fuel production. The auction is the first of 30 mandated by U.S. President Donald Trump's tax cut and spending bill, which he signed into law in July. **Reuters**

Wall St futures steady ahead of Fed meeting

WASHINGTON - U.S. stock index futures were largely unchanged on Wednesday, ahead of a Federal Reserve monetary policy decision widely expected to deliver an interest rate cut and hawkish commentary on the path of future easing. The central bank's ongoing meeting is likely one of its most divisive in years, as policymakers seek a delicate balance between reducing borrowing costs to support the labor market and curbing any reacceleration of inflation. **Reuters**

VG.N hits back at Shell's fraud claims in LNG arbitration battle

Venture Global (VG.N), opens new tab submitted its response late on Tuesday to a legal challenge from Shell (SHEL.L), opens new tab over the oil major's defeat in an arbitration case concerning liquefied natural gas cargoes, rejecting allegations of fraud and accusing Shell of breaching arbitration confidentiality. The legal documents submitted in New York Supreme Court mark the latest development in a prolonged saga over Venture Global's claimed failure to deliver LNG under long-term contracts while selling on the spot market as prices soared after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. **Reuters**

EswatiniBank

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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	



▲ Earlier this year Eswatini aggressively marketed itself at the 2025 Japan World Expo.

Japan market offers Eswatini E9.71bln wood export potential

Stories by Delisa Magagula

ESWATINI is moving into a stronger position in global trade through its preferential access to the Japanese market, a development expected to significantly boost the country's export performance.

According to the latest EIPA Market Insight. Through this non-reciprocal arrangement, a range of Eswatini products can enter Japan at zero or reduced tariffs. This advantage allows local producers to compete directly with global suppliers in one of the world's highest-value import markets.

The EIPA analysis shows that the most substantial opportunity lies in the timber sector. The product category of coniferous wood, sawn or chipped lengthwise at 6 mm, carries an untapped export potential of E9.71 billion. In the report, Japan is identified as the world's third-largest importer of this specific wood product, confirming a strong and consistent level of demand. This creates a significant opening for Eswatini exporters who can meet the required standards and scale.

The report notes that the timber industry has long been recognised as an important contributor to Eswatini's export portfolio.

However, the new tariff advantage provides

a clear pathway for producers to expand into a much larger market. With supportive logistics, compliance with market standards, and consistent supply, the sector stands to secure a stable position in Japan's import landscape.

beyond timber, several other high-value categories have been highlighted. Raw sugar with added flavouring or colouring shows an export potential of E3.24 billion, positioning it as the second-largest untapped opportunity for Eswatini under the arrangement.

Viability

Meanwhile organic chemical products also demonstrate strong export viability, valued at E2.56 billion, according to EIPA data. These insights are based on the ITC Export Potential Map, which evaluates market demand, competitiveness, and trade barriers.

The tool confirms that Eswatini has the capacity to deliver competitive products and to scale up in sectors where global demand remains high. According to the EIPA Market Insight, the correct use of the tariff preference provides local suppliers with an opportunity to secure a stronger economic foothold in the Asian region.

"If fully leveraged, can support broader national goals of export growth, job creation, and economic diversification. The opportunity for entry into Japan's structured



▲ EIPA CEO Sibane Mongemuzulu once reported that Eswatini Exports to Japan stand at E44 million.

and high-value market also encourages local producers to improve product standards, invest in capacity, and explore partnerships that strengthen long-term market presence," states the Market insight.

... Diversification strengthens Eswatini's export growth

ESWATINI is advancing a coordinated national strategy to diversify its export base, build new product lines, and strengthen global partnerships, in line with efforts to support long-term economic resilience.

According to the EIPA Market Insight, this approach is designed to expand market access, stabilise export earnings, and reduce dependence on a narrow set of industries.

The textiles and apparel sector remains one of Eswatini's most significant contributors, supporting an estimated 20,000 jobs.

However, the insight confirms that national policy is shifting toward the development of new export-ready products. This effort aims to maximise existing trade preferences and position Eswatini for broader global engagement.

A key element of the strategy is the strengthening of diplomatic and economic ties with Japan. Eswatini's active participation in forums such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and its cooperation with institutions including JICA and JETRO are central to maintaining favourable trade conditions.

Investments

These relationships help open doors for investment, technical support, and improved access to Japanese buyers, the insight states. Export potential data indicates that the diversification strategy is already gaining traction.

In addition to the high-value opportunities in timber and sugar, new growth avenues are emerging in several agricultural and

agro-processing categories. These include avocados, citrus fruits, jams, peanuts, and essential oils. Each of these sectors has been assessed as commercially viable, with measurable demand in international markets.

The EIPA Market Insight notes that diversification is not limited to identifying new products. It also includes encouraging producers to meet international standards, strengthen quality control systems, and build logistical capacity to ensure reliability.

This multi-layered approach improves the competitiveness of Eswatini goods globally. The insight concludes that Eswatini's combination of active economic diplomacy, product diversification, and targeted market intelligence provides a strong foundation for sustainable growth.

Consumer watchdog brings festive protection to shoppers

By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Competition Commission is stepping up consumer protection efforts for the festive season through a nationwide campaign designed to bring its services directly to shoppers.

The initiative, launched this week, aims to reduce unfair business practices at a time when consumer spending traditionally rises. According to the Commission's Advocacy and Communications Manager, Mancoba Mabuza, the goal is to ensure that consumers make informed choices and that retailers operate within the law.

Mabuza explained that the Commission enforces two key laws, the Competition Act of 2007 and the Fair Trading Act of 2001.

These laws prohibit the sale of unsafe products, the marketing of items in a misleading manner, and any conduct that compromises consumer rights.

He says the legislation clearly states that shops may not sell expired goods, harmful items, or products that do not match the quality advertised.

One of the most common issues recorded by the Commission is retailers refusing to accept returns of faulty goods. Mabuza notes that consumers are often told to keep items

... 73 out of 74 cases settled through negotiation between retailers, consumers.



Ezulwini. Instead of waiting for the public to contact the Commission, officers will set up pop-up stations where consumers can lodge complaints immediately.

Mabuza said this allows investigators to engage directly with shoppers and visit shops on the same day to resolve disputes.

If a consumer buys a faulty product in town, they can walk to the Commission's stand, report the matter, and have it attended to without delay.

The Commission resolves most complaints amicably, according to Mabuza. He said that in the past financial year, 73 out of 74 cases were settled through negotiation between retailers and consumers.

When needed, the Commission conducts full investigations, prepares reports, and refers cases to the Board of Commissioners, which acts as the adjudicating body.

He notes that not every case automatically favours the consumer, if investigations show that a buyer damaged a product through misuse or ignored clear instructions, the Commission reports those findings and closes the matter.

Businesses are encouraged to operate transparently during the festive season. Mabuza said retailers must prioritise integrity, accountability, and adherence to the law.

"They must avoid misleading advertisements, selling expired goods, or refusing legitimate returns. Making profit should not come at the expense of consumer safety or rights," said Mabuza.

Meanwhile consumers can report unfair practices through the Commission's WhatsApp line, 7606 2962. The number allows customers to send messages, photos, and queries, and the Commission responds immediately.

According to Mabuza investigators are already on the ground attending to complaints, and the festive campaign is expected to increase the Commission's visibility in shopping hubs.

they did not agree to or that do not match contractual terms

He clarifies that the legislation takes precedence over any store policy. If a business sets rules that contradict the law, those rules cannot be used to deny a customer's rights.

The Commission therefore intervenes to resolve disputes and ensure compliance with the Consumer Protection provisions.

To help consumers protect themselves, Mabuza advises buyers to carefully inspect

products before purchase, especially food items and electronic goods.

"Receipts, manuals, warranty documents, and purchase agreements should always be kept, as these form part of the contract between the buyer and the seller. When lodging a complaint, the Commission uses these documents to assess the agreement and determine whether the retailer breached the law," said Mabuza.

He added that deceptive advertising remains a concern. Some shops promise promotions such as buy one, get one free, only for customers to find that no such product exists in store.

In other cases, shops advertise discounts that are not applied at the till, or state that items have 'run out' when the promotion never existed. Mabuza says these practices are prohibited because they mislead the public.

The Commission considers the festive season a particularly high-risk period. With bonuses, year-end incentives, and holiday excitement, shoppers often visit stores in large numbers.

Mabuza explained that this demand may tempt some outlets to ignore quality standards, especially with perishable goods. He said the campaign will highlight common risks and encourage shoppers to be more alert when buying food, electronics, and other high-value items.

Worth mentioning the National Consumer Protection Campaign will run in populated urban areas, including Mbabane and



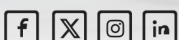
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE PROVISION OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY CODE OF CONDUCT & ETHICS POLICY

The Construction Industry Council invites sealed proposals from eligible, reputed, qualified Consultancy firms for the provision of consultancy services for the development of the Construction Industry Code of Conduct & Ethics Policy.

The 'Request for Proposals' document can be obtained from the Reception at the Construction Industry Council Plot 427, Ligwalagwala House, **J.S.M Matsebula Street** at a non-refundable fee of **One Thousand Emalangeni (E1000.00)** per set, or through the ESPPRA tendering portal. The method of payment will be bank transfer to the CIC Standard Bank Account number, 9110004761777, Mbabane Branch. The Council does not accept cash.

Late bids will be rejected and the deadline for submission is **16th January 2026 at 12:00 noon (GMT+2)**.

MAQHAWE MNISI
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



www.cic.co.sz

US farmers say Trump's \$12 billion aid package won't cover losses

U.S. farmers facing steep losses this year welcomed President Donald Trump's \$12 billion aid package announced on Monday, but said they would need more than that to fully offset low crop prices and lost export opportunities from his trade war.

The aid will help farmers prepare for the next planting season, said five farmers and agricultural groups, four agricultural economists and three bankers. Yet they added that it is a fraction of farm losses and will not rescue the sagging farm economy.

"This support will serve as a lifeline for those simply trying to make it to next year. But it is just a lifeline, not a long-term solution," said Mike Stranz, vice president of advocacy at the National Farmers Union.

Farmers have been saddled with low crop prices, higher costs for labor and inputs, opens new tablike fertilizer and seeds. Meanwhile, exports of crops like soybeans have declined due to Trump's trade disputes.

Farm losses this year range from \$35 billion to \$44 billion for the nine major commodity crops, including corn, soybeans, wheat and peanuts, said Shawn Arita, associate director of the Agricultural Risk Policy Center at North Dakota State University.

Trump administration officials have said the aid is only meant to serve as a stopgap until favorable changes to farm support programs from Trump's tax and spending bill take effect, which should result in higher government farm payments.

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said the administration's ultimate aim is for farmers to have strong markets "instead of farming for government checks."

In the meantime, "this bridge is absolutely necessary based on where we are right now," she said at the White House on Monday.

Agricultural lenders expect less than half



▲ An aerial view of a combine harvester as it harvests soybeans in Deerfield, Ohio, U.S.

of farm borrowers to be profitable in 2026, with liquidity, income and inflation as their top concerns, according to a November survey of agricultural lenders by the American Bankers Association and Farmer Mac.

LOTS OF CASH, LITTLE RELIEF

Even before the new aid, the Trump administration was set to supply farmers with a near-record \$40 billion in total government payments this year, fueled by ad hoc disaster and economic support.

Trump's tax and spending law, called the One Big Beautiful Bill, could push some farm payments higher next year. It increases reference prices - below which farm safety net programs are triggered - for commodities

like corn and soybeans.

This week's aid program is "intended to help producers stay afloat until the major improvements from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, including a 10% to 21% increase in reference prices, take effect in October of 2026," said Richard Fordyce, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's under secretary for farm production and conservation, on a Monday call with reporters.

Reference price adjustments, though welcome and significant, are not enough to help farmers get ahead of mounting debt and higher expenses, said Wesley Davis, an independent agricultural economist.

More than half of farmers expect to use

federal aid payments to pay down debt, rather than to invest in machinery or working capital, according to an October Purdue University/CME Group survey.

The \$12 billion in aid will "get spread out quite a bit," said Jennifer Ifft, professor of agricultural economics at Kansas State University. "If you're in a bad place financially, this is just a bridge."

AID ONLY 'SLOWS THE BLEEDING'

Soybean farmers were particularly hard hit when China halted all U.S. soybean imports between May and November. Farmers lost billions of dollars in soybean sales at the start of their peak export season and will likely not recover that lost demand, according to traders and analysts.

The federal aid will only address about one-quarter of soybean losses, said Caleb Ragland, a Kentucky farmer and president of the American Soybean Association.

"We're appreciative of an economic bridge," Ragland said. But the money is just "plugging holes and slowing the bleeding."

Most of the \$12 billion in aid will not be available for farmers of produce and vegetables. They are eligible to apply for support from a \$1 billion portion of it, which will not be nearly enough to cover their losses, said Kam Quarles, CEO of the National Potato Council and co-chair of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance.

For russet potatoes alone, losses this year are about half a billion dollars, Quarles said.

"The need is much bigger," he said.

During Trump's first administration, he issued about \$23 billion in trade aid to farmers over two years. Farmers in some regions were overpaid because of how the USDA calculated payments, according to a 2021 Government Accountability Office report.

(Reuters)

Airbus CEO says Boeing likely to win order race this year

AIRBUS CEO Guillaume Faury conceded likely defeat in the annual order race against Boeing on Wednesday, saying it was possible Boeing would win for the first time in six years, helped by settlements over U.S. tariff disputes.

Airbus remains ahead of its U.S. rival in deliveries and the pipeline of outstanding orders, Faury told France Inter.

Buoyed by strong demand for its 787 long-haul jet, Boeing on Wednesday posted 908 net orders after cancellations between January and November, compared with 700 for Airbus.

"The fact that we have been ahead on orders for five years means our order backlog is much higher than that of our main competitor," Faury told the French radio station.

"But it is true that they have been helped by the American president as part of tariff negotiations with several countries, where plane orders became part of the resolution of trade disputes."

TRADE TENSIONS WITH US SUPPORT BOEING ORDERS

Analysts say several airlines either placed Boeing orders or timed previously planned order announcements to soothe trade tensions with the United States this year, particularly in Asia.

U.S. industry officials say the long-haul 787 is selling well regardless of trade matters. Airbus is leading on smaller jets, such

as the A321.

Airbus orders have lagged for months, but Faury's comments confirm a probable change in the ranking for new business, while Airbus is expected to retain its title as the world's largest manufacturer through higher deliveries.

Asked about reports of a large pending order from China, Faury said he did not expect an imminent new order for hundreds of jets but spoke of clearances for previous orders.

On Wednesday, Airbus said it had secured Chinese agreement to go ahead with the delivery of 120 previously ordered jets.

Industry sources have said Airbus was banking on an order for up to 500 jets from China to meet its internal order goals. Beijing is in negotiations with Boeing for a similar package.

With China locked in fraught trade relations with the United States and Europe, Western analysts say it is expected to maintain a broad balance in jet imports to meet its growth after several years in which it was largely absent from the market.

China's state buying agency did not respond to a request for comment.

Faury said a major software recall affecting 6,000 jets in the A320 family, which includes the A321, had been completed. The final number of jets needing attention was closer to 4,000 and all have now been fixed, he told France Inter.

Air Transat said its operations were re-



▲ An advertising poster for Airbus is pictured at the Airbus A330 final assembly line at Airbus headquarters in Colomiers, near Toulouse, France.

turning to normal after it had started to suspend flights this week following a 72-hour strike notice from ALPA.

The union said the new contract "delivers on the goals of better job security, enhanced compensation, and more flexible schedules to allow for a better work-life balance."

The deal averted a second major strike at a Canadian carrier this year. Flight attendants at Air Canada walked off the job in August, halting operations at the country's largest airline for four days.

Air Transat had previously said it proposed compromises, including a 59% salary increase over five years and improvements to working conditions. The union and the airline did not provide details of the tentative deal.

The carrier focuses primarily on holiday travel to international destinations in Europe, the Caribbean, the U.S. East Coast, South America and Africa, according to its website.

(Reuters)



Elon Musk’s SpaceX to raise over \$25 billion in blockbuster 2026 IPO

ELON Musk’s SpaceX is looking to raise more than \$25 billion through an initial public offering in 2026, a move that could boost the rocket-maker’s valuation to over \$1 trillion, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters on Tuesday.

The company’s move towards a public listing, which could rank among the largest global IPOs, has been largely driven by the rapid expansion of its Starlink satellite internet business, including plans for direct-to-mobile service and progress in its Starship rocket program for moon and Mars missions.

SpaceX has started discussions with banks about launching the offering around June or July, the person said, requesting anonymity to discuss confidential information.

The company did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Talks over a listing plan are unfolding against the backdrop of a resurgence in the IPO market in 2025 after a three-year dry spell.

Wall Street’s top executives expect the momentum to carry into 2026, turbocharged by a pipeline of high-profile companies preparing to test investor demand.

“SpaceX represents one of the most exciting opportunities in the global IPO market and has been on the dream-list of several investors for years,” Samuel Kerr, head of equity capital markets at Mergermarket told Reuters.

“It is a genuine growth industry, with space technology seen as a key frontier in both defense, satellite proliferation and in tech infrastructure in general the growth of orbital data centers.”

BLOCKBUSTER LISTING

Several big startups have stayed private for longer and continued to raise capital in private markets, and a listing from a company like SpaceX could prompt more of them to move toward public offerings.

SpaceX ranks as the world’s second most-valuable private startup after ChatGPT maker OpenAI, according to data from Crunchbase. OpenAI and rival Anthropic are also reportedly in talks for an

IPO next year.

“If all these deals come through the U.S. IPO market will experience a genuine revival, the green shoots of which have already been seen this year,” Kerr said.

The news of the potential IPO comes days after a media report that said SpaceX is kicking off a secondary share sale that would value the rocket-maker at \$800 billion. However, Musk dismissed the report, calling it inaccurate.

Saudi Aramco (2222.SE), opens new tab is the only completed IPO to achieve a more than \$1 trillion valuation. The state-owned petroleum and natural gas giant debuted in December 2019 with an estimated market capitalization of \$1.7 trillion.

SpaceX expects to use funds from the public listing to develop space-based data centers, including purchasing the chips required to run them, according to Bloomberg News, which was first to report the potential terms of the offering.

SPACE RACE

Several billionaires and private firms are fueling a new space race in the U.S., pouring money into rockets, satellites and lunar missions, including SpaceX and Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin.

With NASA relying more on commercial partnerships and defense spending rising, the space industry is becoming a high-stakes arena for technological dominance, national security and economic opportunity.

Still, questions about Musk’s ability to run multiple listed companies valued at more than \$1 trillion could keep investors cautious, analysts said.

“SpaceX could be one of the most divisive stocks to join the market in years,” Dan Coatsworth, head of markets at AJ Bell told Reuters.

“If SpaceX did float, expect growing pressure on Musk to commit to only one of his listed entities – Tesla or SpaceX. It’s hard to see how one individual could run two \$1 trillion+ companies at the same time.

(Reuters)

How Chinese entities are already using Nvidia’s powerful H200 AI chips

U.S. President Donald Trump’s move to allow exports to China of Nvidia’s second-best artificial intelligence chip, the H200, will spur strong demand from the country’s tech giants, research institutes, and its defence-industrial complex.

Beijing has not yet confirmed whether it will allow the chip to be sold in China, but a Reuters review of more than 100 tenders and academic papers shows it is already being supplied to domestic buyers via the grey market.

The analysis shows the nature of customers in China who will jump at the chance for legal bulk buys of the H200 chip, which is many times more powerful than any chip Nvidia is allowed to sell there.

ELITE UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES

China’s leading universities all have research teams focused on AI development,

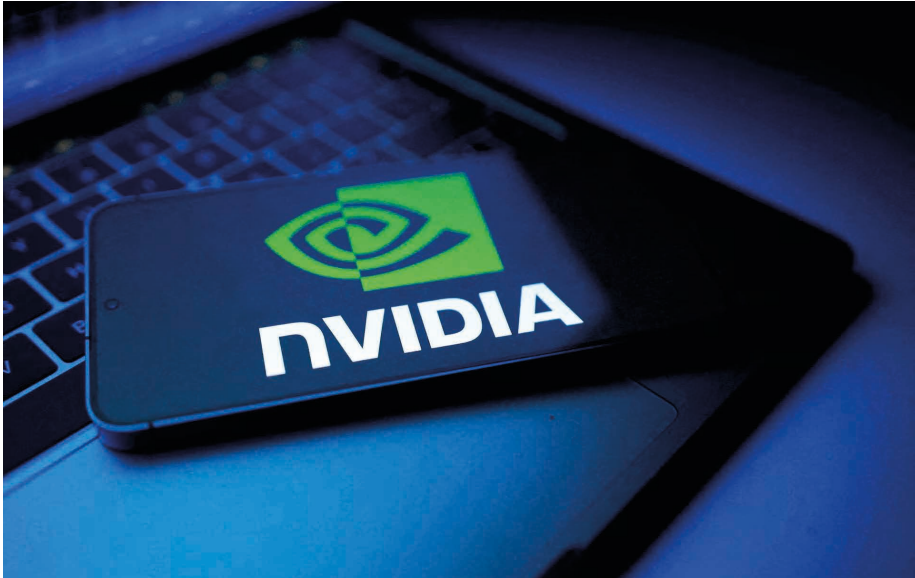
and the number of high-end chips they have at their disposal directly affects talent recruitment and research.

One professor at Beijing Jiaotong University advertises that his laboratory owns eight H200 chips, allowing for AI model research.

Researchers at the state-backed Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and the Sun Yat-Sen, Tsinghua, and Shanghai Jiao Tong universities used four Nvidia H200 processors to train an AI model designed to detect whether an image is AI-generated, they showed in a paper published last month.

In June, a state-run AI institute in the eastern city of Hefei issued a tender for a server equipped with eight Nvidia H200 chips to power a “quantum AI model” project.

(Reuters)



▲ A NVIDIA logo appears in this illustration.

ByteDance, Alibaba keen to order Nvidia H200 chips after Trump green light

BYTEDANCE and Alibaba have asked Nvidia about buying its powerful H200 AI chip after U.S. President Donald Trump said he would allow it to be exported to China, four people briefed on the matter told Reuters.

The Chinese companies are keen to place large orders for Nvidia’s second most powerful artificial intelligence chip, should Beijing give them the green light, two of the people said. However, they remain concerned about supply and are seeking clarity from Nvidia, one added.

Before Trump’s decision to allow Nvidia’s

Taiwan-manufactured H200 to be exported to China, the most advanced AI semiconductor that could legally be exported to China was the H20. The H200 is almost six times as powerful as the H20.

The Chinese government has yet to give a clear answer to Trump’s announcement on H200. In recent months, it has barred government-funded data centres and Chinese tech companies from buying Nvidia’s AI chips, Reuters has reported, pummeling Nvidia’s market share in China.

(Reuters)



▲ Bytedance logo is seen in this illustration.

Congo's top diplomat says sanctions needed to salvage Trump's peace push

DEMOCRATIC Republic of Congo's foreign minister has called on the Trump administration to expand targeted sanctions against Rwanda to "restore the credibility" of its mediation efforts, as Rwanda-backed M23 rebels advanced on a strategic town bordering Burundi.

The United Nations says some 200,000 people have fled their homes in recent days and scores of civilians have been killed, casting further doubt on hopes for an end to violence in eastern Congo.

Just last week Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi and his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame met with President Donald Trump in Washington and affirmed their commitment to a U.S.-brokered peace deal.

In an interview with Reuters late on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner said Washington should ramp up sanctions on Kigali in light of the violence.

She proposed measures targeting "individuals in the chain of command" and institutions like the Rwandan military that could hurt Kigali's ability to purchase weapons.

"Washington has to restore the credibility of its process through accountability," Wagner said.

The U.S., Britain and the EU have already imposed sanctions on several M23 and Rwandan officials and some of their businesses over the rebellion.

Diplomats say Washington has another package of sanctions ready if Rwanda fails to meet commitments



▲ U.S. President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance meet Democratic Republic of the Congo's Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner and Rwanda's Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe (not pictured) in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington D.C.

made in U.S.-brokered deals to lift what Kigali calls its defensive measures in eastern Congo by the end of the year.

REGIONAL VIOLENCE FEARED

M23 staged a lightning advance in eastern Congo this year, seizing more territory than ever before, including the region's two largest cities. The fighting has killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands more.

Even as the group takes part in peace talks led by Qatar in Doha, the group is tightening its grip on power.

Reuters reported on Monday that M23 had captured Luvungi, a town that had stood as the front line since

February, and that fierce fighting was under way near Sange and Kiliba, villages further along the road towards Uvira from the north.

In a statement on Wednesday, Rwanda's foreign ministry accused the Congolese and Burundian militaries of escalating the violence in eastern Congo and said Kinshasa was never serious about peace negotiations mediated by Washington and Qatar.

"The international community has not demanded an end to these attacks prepared for months by the DRC and instigated in the past week," it said.

(Reuters)

Guinea-Bissau's transitional military adopts charter barring leaders from elections

GUINEA-BISSAU'S military junta adopted a 12-month transitional charter that bars the interim president and prime minister from running in the next elections, two weeks after officers staged a coup that suspended the constitution.

The 29-article charter, published on Tuesday, requires presidential and legislative elections to be held at the end of the one-year transitional period, with the polling date to be set by the transitional president.

Army officers in Guinea-Bissau, branding themselves the Military High Command, toppled President Umaro Sissoco Embalo on November 26 and installed

Major-General Horta Inta-a as interim president the following day.

Ilidio Vieira Te, a civil servant and former finance minister, was named prime minister a day later.

The coup came one day before the electoral commission was due to announce the results of presidential and legislative elections.

The Military High Command will control legal and institutional reforms during the transition, including drafting revisions to the suspended constitution, setting up a new Constitutional Court, changing regulations for political parties and overseeing the appointment of new electoral officials, according to the charter.

A 65-member National Transition Council, including 10 senior army officers representing the Military High Command, will serve as a transitional legislative body, the charter says.

Guinea-Bissau, a small West African coastal nation wedged between Senegal and Guinea, has experienced repeated instability since gaining independence from Portugal in 1974, with only one president ever completing a full term in office.

(Reuters)

Australia begins enforcing world-first teen social media ban

AUSTRALIA became on Wednesday the first country to ban social media for children under 16, blocking access in a move welcomed by many parents and child advocates but criticised by major technology companies and free-speech advocates.

Starting at midnight (1300 GMT on Tuesday), 10 of the largest platforms including TikTok, Alphabet's YouTube and Meta's (Instagram and Facebook were ordered to block children or face fines of up to A\$49.5 million (\$33 million) under the new law, which is being closely watched by regulators worldwide.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called it "a proud day" for families and cast the law as proof that policymakers can curb online harms that have outpaced traditional safeguards.

"This will make an enormous difference. It is one of the biggest social and cultural changes that our nation has faced," Albanese told a news conference on Wednesday.

"It's a profound reform which will continue to reverberate around the world."

In a video message, Albanese urged children to "start a new sport, new instrument, or read that book that has been sitting there for some time on your shelf," ahead of Australia's summer school break starting later this month.

Some of those below the cut-off age of 16 were anxious about adjusting to life without social media, but others were less concerned.

"I'm not really that emotional about it," said 14-year-old Claire Ni. "I'm kind of just, like, neutral."

Luna Dizon, 15, said she still had access to her TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat accounts, but worried about "culture shock" once the ban took full effect.

"I think eventually, without (social media), we'll learn how to adapt to it," she added.

While the government has said the ban would not be perfect in its operation, about 200,000 accounts were deactivated by Wednesday on TikTok alone, with "hundreds of thousands" more to be blocked in the next few days.

Many of the estimated 1 million children affected by the legislation also posted goodbye messages on social media.

"No more social media ... no more contact with the rest of the world," one teen wrote on TikTok.

"#seeyouwhenim16," said another.

BAN HAS GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

The rollout caps a year of debate over whether any country could practically stop children from using platforms embedded in daily life, and begins a live test for governments worldwide frustrated that social media firms have been slow to implement harm-reduction measures.

Albanese's centre-left government proposed the landmark law citing research showing harms to mental health from the overuse of social media among young teens, including misinformation, bullying and harmful depictions of body image.

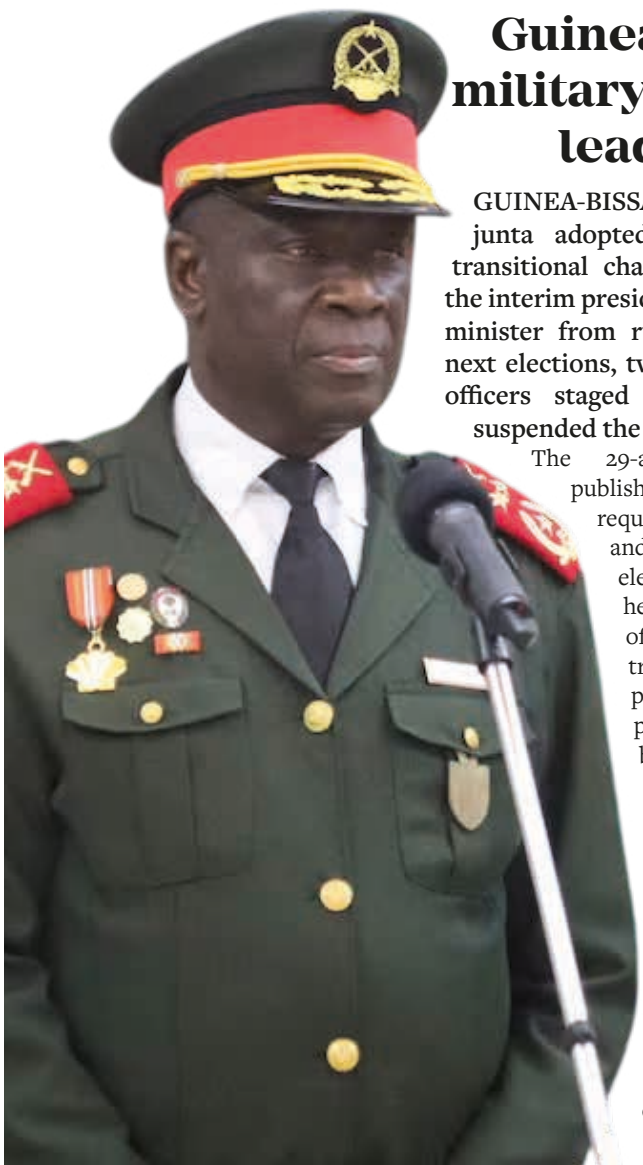
Several countries from Denmark to New Zealand to Malaysia have signalled they may study or emulate Australia's model, making the country a test case for how far governments can push age-gating without stifling speech or innovation.

Julie Inman Grant, the U.S.-born eSafety Commissioner who is overseeing the ban, told Reuters on Wednesday a groundswell of American parents wanted similar measures.

"I hear from the parents and the activists and everyday people in America, 'we wish we had an eSafety commissioner like you in America, we wish we had a government that was going to put tween and teen safety before technology profits,'" she said in an interview at her office in Sydney. (Reuters)



▲ Annie Wang, 14, poses after an interview discussing Australia's social media ban for users under 16, which is scheduled to take effect on December 10, in Sydney, Australia.





▲ Young Zesh rendering his set at the Responsible Betting Campaign powered by MulaSport at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology.

▲ Limkokwing University students event organisers from the faculty of Public Relations pose for a group picture.

‘Responsible Betting Campaign’

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

LIMKOKWING University of Creative Technology erupted into a whirlwind of screams, chants, and musical nostalgia on Wednesday afternoon as Young Zesh delivered a performance that students will be talking about long after exam season.

The Eswatini superstar headlined the Know Your Game, Bet Responsibly campaign event, an initiative powered by MulaSport to educate young people about safe and responsible gambling habits. But while the conversations were serious, the performances were electric. From the moment Young Zesh stepped on stage, the atmosphere shifted, an instant surge of excitement, as if someone had turned up the emotional volume of the entire room.

Dressed in his signature urban flair and wearing the confidence of an artist who knows his influence, he kicked off his set with “Sivumeleni,” his Nomndayi-assisted hit that instantly had students screaming the lyrics as though rehearsed. The University’s MPH transformed into a choir, its harmonies echoing through the walls with the type of unity only music can summon.

Without missing a beat, he glided into “Kogcina Bani,” the bassline thumping through the floor as the crowd jumped in unison. Phones shot into the air as students recorded each second, determined not to let the moment slip away unnoticed. And when he moved on to “Liphasela,” the cheers reached a level typically reserved for stadium finales. The energy was warm, contagious, and unfiltered, exactly the environment that cemented Young Zesh’s reputation as one of Eswatini’s most captivating performers.

What followed next was an unexpected treat. Young Zesh paused, breathed in the crowd’s anticipation, and launched into an acapella rap verse, no beat, no backing track, just lyrical precision and raw delivery. The hall filled with whistles that sounded more like a celebration than applause. Students leaned forward, hanging on each bar, appreciating the craft behind

Young Zesh thrills Limkokwing students



▲ The attendees enjoying the show.



▲ MCO Jamrock during his performance.

the performer. As soon as the opening notes of “KaKhoza” rang out, Limkokwing unleashed its full voice. Students danced in the aisles, screamed from the back rows, and sang along word-for-word as though the song was a shared anthem. It was a unified eruption of excitement, the kind of performance that confirms why KaKhoza has become a cultural stamp among the youth.

If Young Zesh lit the match, MCO Jamrock arrived to pour petrol on the fire. Clad with his charismatic stage presence and an energy that could rival a power

station, MCO Jamrock opened with his hit “Uyacubuka,” the viral sensation with over a million views. The moment the beat dropped, chaos ensued, cheers, stomps, dancing, hands in the air. The crowd’s reaction was instant and overwhelming.

He followed up with “Imvelo,” effortlessly riding the instrumental as students sang along like they were at a sold-out concert rather than a university event focused on responsible betting. It was music in its purest form, shared, felt, and lived.

While the creative performances stole the show, the event’s central theme,

promoting responsible betting, remained clear. Organisers from Mulasport engaged students in practical, informative dialogues about betting limits, financial control, and the emotional discipline required to avoid addictive habits.

By the time the event wrapped up, Limkokwing University had experienced both an educational seminar and a concert-worthy spectacle. Young Zesh and MCO Jamrock didn’t just entertain, they connected, inspired, and brought life to an initiative aimed at protecting young people’s futures.

Mfana Ka Gogo headlines De Lounge show

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

SOUTH African music enthusiasts are eagerly anticipating an electrifying night as Mfana Ka Gogo takes the stage at De Lounge on December 12, 2025.

This highly awaited event, part of 'The Ultimate Vibes Tour,' is set to a dynamic fusion of talent, featuring Eswatini's own Young Zesh as a headliner alongside a vibrant supporting cast including Mr Solid, YD Madd, Onion, Quekey, Zulu D, BK, Percy, and Mzoro. Entry fees have been structured to accommodate a wide audience: students can gain access for E30 via Delta Pay or E10 for a special student rate, while non-students will pay E100 in advance or E150 at the gate, ensuring that the event remains accessible to many.

The upcoming performance at De Lounge is expected to showcase this unique blend, with Mfana Ka Gogo delivering a set that highlights both his vocal prowess and his skill as a storyteller. Fans can look forward to an engaging show that reflects his journey, from the church choir to the hip-hop stage, and his commitment to pushing musical boundaries.

Joining him on this tour is Young Zesh, a celebrated Eswatini artist known for his vibrant energy and compelling performances. Together with a lineup of talented supporting acts, the event promises to be a highlight on the region's cultural calendar, offering a platform for both established and emerging artists to shine. Mfana Ka Gogo's rise to prominence is a compelling story of passion, perseverance, and artistic evolution. Born and raised in Durban, South Africa, his journey into



▲ Mfana ka Gogo.

music began in the sacred halls of his local church choir.

Music

Singing alongside his grandmother from the age of six, he developed a deep-rooted love for music and a strong foundation in gospel traditions. These early experiences not only nurtured his vocal talents but also instilled a profound respect for the power

of music to inspire and connect.

Drawn to the innovative sounds and storytelling of icons like AKA, Kanye West, Drake, Jay-Z, and Cassper Nyovest, he embraced the genre with enthusiasm. This new influence allowed him to expand his creative horizons, blending his gospel roots with the raw energy and lyrical dexterity of hip-hop.

Makoti Festival 2026 tickets now available

MAKOTI Festival tickets are now on sale across all major platforms including Howler, Instacash, Computicket, Mojaticket, and the festival's official website.

The Makoti Festival has officially announced its return for the grand fifth edition, scheduled for 25 April 2026 at Malkerns Country Club. Festival Director Thembinkosi Mthethwa urged festivalgoers to secure their tickets early, hinting at a series of thrilling announcements in the weeks ahead. These will include the unveiling of headline artists, DJs, and special guests set to grace the 2026 stage. "Next year's build-up officially kicks off, and people must watch this space for more updates," Mthethwa remarked.

Reflecting on the previous year's success, the fourth edition of the Makoti Festival was held on 26 April 2025 at the same venue, the Malkerns Country Club. The event showcased a rich tapestry of talent from Eswatini and neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Botswana. The festival's vibrant atmosphere was amplified by the presence of main MCs Mzwakhe "Tjovitjo" Khumalo and Siphesihle Nkwanyana, supported by guest MCs Buhle (Nobuhle Glennette Ndlovu) from Ligwalagwala FM and Moska Saeed Mositi from Lesotho, who helped engage and entertain the diverse crowd.

Since its inception in April 2022, the Makoti Festival has rapidly evolved into a



▲ Makoti Festival Director Thembinkosi Mthethwa.

major cultural fixture in the region.

Its influence has expanded beyond Eswatini's borders, as evidenced by media launches earlier this year in Mbombela (South Africa), Lesotho, and Maputo (Mozambique). These strategic moves highlight the festival's growing footprint and its role in fostering regional cultural exchange. The Makoti Festival stands out

not only as a celebration of music and entertainment but also as a family-oriented cultural event deeply rooted in Eswatini traditions. It honours women of all ages, married, unmarried, and young girls preparing to embrace their future roles as makotis (brides). The festival's mission is to celebrate and empower these women while preserving and promoting cultural heritage.



▲ Sphiwo Ndoni.

Sphiwo Ndoni announces 'One Man Show'

ESWATINI'S celebrated gospel artist Sphiwo Ndoni is preparing to captivate audiences with his much anticipated "One Man Show."

The show is scheduled for March 21, 2026, at the TLC Events Centre. This landmark event is themed "Back To The Altar." Sphiwo Ndoni, a multi-award-winning figure in the gospel music scene, revealed in an exclusive interview that this show marks a significant milestone in his career. "This will be my first proper live recording," he shared, emphasising the dual focus of the event, achieving a high-quality production that excels both visually and sonically, while dedicating ample time to heartfelt worship.

Comprehensive

The artist assured fans that the evening will showcase a comprehensive ministry, presenting the very best of what Sphiwo Ndoni has to offer. Attendees can expect a rich blend of new music accompanied by a massive production, designed to elevate the worship atmosphere and engage the audience fully. This show is not just a concert but a carefully crafted spiritual journey, blending artistry and devotion.

Given the intimate size of the TLC Events Centre, Sphiwo Ndoni urged his supporters to secure their tickets early. "The venue is not very big, so I foresee a sold-out event very soon," he warned. The "Back To The Altar" theme reflects a call to spiritual renewal and recommitment, a message that resonates strongly in today's world. Through his music and ministry, Sphiwo Ndoni aims to inspire and uplift, encouraging his audience to reconnect with their faith profoundly.

This upcoming One-Man Show is positioned to be a defining moment in Sphiwo Ndoni's career, combining his musical talents with a powerful ministry message. It is set to be an unforgettable night for gospel music lovers and anyone seeking a meaningful worship experience.



What Are Shin Splints?

SHIN splints are when you have pain anywhere along your shin bone or tibia.

Your tibia is the big bone that starts under your knee and runs down the front of your lower leg. The pain happens where your muscles attach to your shins. Shin splints are a common problem when you exercise a lot in ways that put stress on your lower legs. If you have shin splints, your doctor also might call it medial tibial stress syndrome. That’s another name for the painful inflammation you get when you overwork and stress the muscles, tendons, and bone in your shins.

Types of shin splints

Sometimes, you might see shin splints described as different types, such as anterior, medial, or posterior. These names relate to the different parts of your leg (front, middle, or back) and the muscles where you feel your pain. For example, you’ll feel medial shin splints on the inner side of your shin, while anterior shin splints are on the outer side.

But shin splints aren’t a specific injury with distinct types. It’s a general name for pain along the front of your lower legs from overuse or stress. The most common place to feel pain in your shins is on the inner side.

Shin splints vs. stress fractures

Other conditions can make your shins hurt, too. If you have what you think are shin splints and they aren’t getting better, check with your doctor to make sure you don’t have a stress fracture in your tibia or some other condition.

While shin splints come with pain and inflammation, a stress fracture is a small crack in your bones. Both shin splints and stress fractures can happen when you put too much stress on the muscles, tendons, and bones in your lower legs. If you have shin splints and you don’t rest, you could end up with a stress fracture.

Shin Splint Symptoms

Common symptoms of shin splints include:

- ▶ Dull pain or aching down the front of one or both of your shins
- ▶ Shins that hurt when you touch them
- ▶ Shin pain that gets worse when you exercise
- ▶ Pain in your shins that gets better with rest
- ▶ Mild swelling around your lower legs

What do shin splints feel like?

When you have shin splints, you might not feel them all the time. You might only feel it when you’re running or exercising some other way that puts stress on your shins. As your shin splints get worse, you might start to feel the pain all the time.

Shin Splint Causes

You can get shin splints if you do the same exercises or motions many times in ways that put stress on the muscles, tendons, and bones around your shins. You could get them if you make sudden changes in your exercise routine, such as exercising harder, more often, or for a longer time. You might also get shin splints if you exercise with shoes that don’t fit you well or are worn out.

Some forms of exercise are more likely to cause shin splints than others. Examples include:

- ▶ Running
- ▶ Dancing
- ▶ Military training

Shin splints

● Causes, symptoms, and treatment



But any type of exercise that puts a lot of stress on your lower legs could cause shin splints.

Risk Factors for Shin Splints

Some people are more likely to get shin splints than others. Your choices about exercise can also put you at more risk for shin splints. Risk factors for shin splints include:

- ▶ Running, especially on uneven ground, uphill, or on hard surfaces like concrete
- ▶ Wearing shoes that don’t fit well or lack support
- ▶ Having feet that are very flat or inflexible
- ▶ Being overweight
- ▶ Not warming up before exercise
- ▶ Not stretching after exercise
- ▶ Having a vitamin D deficiency
- ▶ Having an eating disorder
- ▶ Having bones that are weaker than they should be

The way your ankles and hips connect to your legs and how they move when you walk or run also can affect your risk for shin splints. If you exercise a lot and are worried about shin splints, ask your doctor about your risk and what you can do to lower it.

Shin Splint Treatment

Shin splints often get better without treatment within a few weeks. But there are steps you can take to heal faster.

- ▶ **Rest your legs.** You can still be active, but choose activities that won’t make your shin splints worse, such as swimming or biking.
- ▶ **Ice your shins.** Use ice packs for 20-30 minutes several times a day for a few days or until the pain is gone.
- ▶ **Use insoles or orthotics for your shoes.** Shoe inserts—which can be custom-made or bought off the shelf—may help if you have flat feet or weak ankles.
- ▶ **Try compression.** Wearing a compression bandage or sock may help if you have swelling.

▶ **Replace your shoes.** If your shoes don’t have enough support or are worn out, get a new pair that will cut down on stress to your shins. Ask your doctor or an expert in sports medicine how to find the best running shoes for shin splints.

▶ **Take anti-inflammatory painkillers if you need them.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), like aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen, will help with pain and swelling. These drugs can have side effects, though, like a greater chance of bleeding and ulcers. Use them as directed on the label, unless your doctor says otherwise.

▶ **Give it time.** Don’t go back to your normal exercise routine until you’ve been pain-free for 2 weeks or more. When you do start exercising again, start slow. Don’t forget to warm up before each workout and stretch after. If the pain comes right back, stop what you’re doing and rest.

Shin splint massage

Massage may help you relax the muscles around your shins. Try rubbing your calves, Achilles tendon, and other muscles in your legs gently or go to a massage therapist who knows about shin splints. But it’s a good idea to check with your doctor first. There isn’t much evidence that massage will make shin splints go away. If massage adds to stress on your muscles and tendons, it could even make them worse.

Shin splint stretches

Stretching your lower legs and ankles may help your shin splints feel better and heal. Ask your doctor if you should see a physical therapist for advice about stretches or other exercises. Once you feel better, stretching may help you stay well.

How long do shin splints last?

There’s no way to say exactly when your shin splints will go away. It depends on what caused them. People also heal at different rates; 3-6 months isn’t unusual. The most

important thing is that you don’t rush back into your sport. If you start to work out before your shin heals, you may hurt yourself more.

If you decide to see a doctor, expect them to give you a thorough exam of your lower legs. They may watch you run to look for problems. They might also take X-rays or bone scans to check if it’s shin splits or a stress fracture. They’ll also make sure you don’t have tendinitis (inflammation in the tendons that connect your muscles to your bones) or another, more serious issue.

Stretches for Shin Splints

It’s important to give your shins time to rest. But you can try some exercises at home to gently stretch your calves, shins, and ankles. If you aren’t sure or have questions, see a doctor or physical therapist for help.

Some stretching exercises to try include:

▶ **Calf stretches.** Try different ways to stretch your calves. One way is to sit on the floor with a towel around your toes and ball of your foot. Pull the towel with your leg straight. Another way to stretch your calves is to stand facing a wall with your injured leg back. Lean into the wall with your heel on the floor until you feel a stretch. Hold either stretch for 15-30 seconds three times.

▶ **Shin stretches.** Stand with a hand against the wall. Bend your knee and use your other hand to pull your foot until you feel a stretch along your shin. Hold for 15-30 seconds three times.

▶ **Ankle stretches.** To work your ankles, sit with your feet off the floor. Use your foot to write letters in the air by moving your ankle in all directions. You’ll feel this on the top of your foot and all through your ankle. Another way to work your ankles is by looping an elastic band that’s anchored to a chair or door around the top of your foot. While sitting down, pull your toes toward you and then relax. Repeat.

WebMD

Egypt cuts ties over Salah

AT a cafe in a bustling Cairo neighbourhood, Liverpool games once drew wall-to-wall crowds, but with Mohamed Salah off the pitch, his Egyptian fans would now rather play cards or quietly doomscroll than watch the Reds play.

Salah, one of the world's greatest football stars, delivered an unusually sharp rebuke of manager Arne Slot after he was left on the bench for three consecutive games.

Adored by fans as the "Egyptian king", Salah told reporters he had been "thrown under the bus" by the club he has called home for seven-and-a-half years.

The outburst divided Liverpool fans worldwide but in the Cairo cafe, people knew what side they were on, and Tuesday's Champions League clash with Inter Milan went unnoticed.

"We're upset, of course," said Adel Samy, 40, a longtime Salah fan, who remembers the cafe overflowing with fans whenever he was playing.

On Tuesday evening, only a handful of customers sat at rickety tables – some hunched over their phones, others shuffling cards, barely glancing at the screen.

"He doesn't deserve what's happening," Samy told AFP.

Islam Hosny, 36, who helps run the family cafe, said the street outside used to be packed with "people standing on their feet more than those who sat on chairs" whenever Salah played.

"The cafe would be as full as an Ahly-Zamalek derby," he told AFP, referring to Egypt's fiercest football rivalry.

"Now because they know he's not playing, no one comes."

At a corner table, a customer quietly asks staff to switch to another match.

'TIME TO LEAVE'

Since joining the Merseyside team in 2017, Salah has powered the club's return to the top of European football, inspiring two Premier League titles, a Champions League triumph and victories at FA Cup, League Cup and FIFA Club World Cup.

With 250 goals in 420 appearances, he is Liverpool's third-highest goalscorer of all time, and for Egyptians, the country's greatest sporting export.

But this season, Salah has struggled for form, scoring five goals in 19 appearances as Liverpool have won just five of their last 16 matches in all competitions, slipping to eighth in the Champions League with 12 points.

(Supersport)

Dobson Ready for Rochelais' Full-Force Challenge

THERE are conflicting stories around the strength of the Stade Rochelais (La Rochelle) team that the DHL Stormers will be facing in Gqeberha but director of rugby John Dobson is trying hard to ignore it.

The last time the French side were in South Africa to play the Stormers was when they came here for the 2024 Investec Champions Cup round of 16 game.

Having won their Pool game with a last gasp Manie Libbok conversion a few months earlier, on this occasion the boot was on the other foot, with Libbok failing with what would have been a match-winning kick into a howling wind.

That's how close it has been between these two teams in the past, and while when they last met La Rochelle were here as European champions, in fact they'd doubled up for successive titles, and now they are among the also-rans, Dobson is not going with the angle that says they will be under-strength for the Gqeberha game.

"We are prepared for their full metal jacket team as they were an incredible side when they played us two years ago and in two games we went toe to toe over 80 minutes," said Dobson.

"We are hearing conflicting stories. Some have it that they are coming here under-strength, others say the opposite. So we have to be prepared for the scenario of facing their best team."

A star player for La Rochelle over their period of success is Will Skelton, and Stormers captain Salmaan Moerat spoke about how he was looking forward to testing himself against one of the best in the business as if he was playing, which illustrated Dobson's point about being prepared for any scenario.

"You want to measure yourself against one of the best so it will be great if he does play as you want to measure yourself against the best," said Moerat.

"If he plays it will be a massive challenge. He is one of the best maul setters in the world. La Rochelle take great pride in their maul."

However, Skelton was among a group of players that La Rochelle deregistered before the start of the Champions Cup, meaning he is unavailable for the trip to Gqeberha. Perhaps the story that they will come for this game with a team loaded with younger players is closer to the truth, as it is often instructive to look at a travelling French team's log position in the Top 14 before ascertaining how they will approach the game.

If they are down in the bottom part of the log in their regular league, the tough promotion-relegation system in place in France makes it imperative to put more effort into that. (Supersport)



▲ John Dobson.

Maswanganyi Not Shocked by AFCON Omission

ORLANDO Pirates midfielder Patrick "Tito" Maswanganyi has spoken out about his omission from the Bafana Bafana squad for this month's Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Hugo Broos included Maswanganyi in his preliminary 54-man squad, but Maswanganyi failed to make the final 25-man squad for the tournament in Morocco.

After being a regular last season under Jose Riveiro, Maswanganyi has been in and out of the starting line-up under new coach Abdeslam Ouaddou. The 27-year-old midfielder has played 14 matches in all competitions for the Buccaneers, scoring four goals and making two assists.

"I already knew"

Speaking on Metro FM's Sports Night Amplified with Andile Ncube, Maswanganyi admitted that the chances of going to Morocco were slim for him because of his lack of game time.

"I already knew that I wasn't going to make it to the AFCON squad because I wasn't playing, I would get a few minutes to

play. But I think when I was called up to the national team, I had problems with small injuries," said Maswanganyi.

"I think those kinds of things do affect your mind and your position in the national team, because we have a lot of players in the country who are working hard and are doing very well and deserve to be selected. For me, I did not even think about it, because I already knew that I wasn't going to make it," he added.

Maswanganyi, who Broos touted as the ideal replacement for veteran Themba Zwane, admitted to being hurt by not going to Morocco to represent his country, but added that he understood Broos's reason for not selecting him.

"Yeah, for sure it does, because everyone wants to be there, but if you can't be there, you can't force things. I think I need to work hard and wait for my opportunity. Right now, I am working hard to find my place back in the team. If I do well in the team, that raises my chances of being in the national team," concluded Maswanganyi. (The Citizen)



▲ Orlando Pirates midfielder Patrick "Tito" Maswanganyi.

ENZO Maresca admitted he was “worried” by Chelsea’s slump after Atalanta’s 2-1 victory in the Champions League extended the Blues’ winless run to four matches on Tuesday.

Joao Pedro’s first-ever Champions League goal put Chelsea ahead in the first half in Bergamo.

But the Blues lost their momentum after the interval and former West Ham striker Gianluca Scamacca grabbed the equaliser before Charles De Ketelaere, who provided the assist for Atalanta’s leveller, capped his influential display with the late winner.

Chelsea found it impossible to subdue Belgium forward De Ketelaere, who has six goals and seven assists in his last 12 Champions League appearances.

Since their memorable 3-0 win over Barcelona in the Champions League on November 25, Chelsea have gone four matches without a victory in all competitions.

Maresca’s 11th-placed side have 10 points from six league phase games and their bid for a top-eight finish — which guarantees automatic qualification for the last 16 — is now on a knife-edge.

Chelsea’s last two matches are in January at home against Pafos and away to Napoli.

“I am always worried. Two points in four games is not what we expect and we have to do better,” Maresca said.

“First half we were winning, we were good and controlling the game. After we conceded the first goal, we lost control a little bit of the game.

“We had different chances to make it 2-0 and when we conceded 1-1 the dynamic changed a little bit.

“We are playing every two days. For a moment we looked like we struggled a bit. Now it’s about trying to win the next game.”

Third-placed Atalanta have enjoyed wins over Club Brugge, Marseille, Eintracht

Maresca concerned as Atalanta fight back to beat Chelsea



▲ Enzo Maresca.

Frankfurt and Chelsea this season as they chase a last-16 berth.

Maresca made five changes from Saturday’s 0-0 draw at Bournemouth in the Premier League, with Cole Palmer rested after his return last weekend from a two-month injury absence.

There was no place for Chelsea’s emerging teenage star Estevao, who has three Champions League goals this season and starred against Barcelona.

Lethargic Chelsea

Maresca’s reshuffled line-up nearly fell behind inside five minutes when Ademola Lookman weaved into the area for a cross that deflected off Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez before it was hacked to safety.

Lookman was a thorn in Chelsea’s side and it took a last-ditch block from Josh Acheampong to deny the former Everton winger, with the rebound curled just over by Marten de Roon.

Chelsea made the most of that escape to take the lead in the 25th minute.

When Joao Pedro deftly slotted in Reece James’ cross from four yards, the goal was initially disallowed for offside before a VAR check ruled in favour of the Chelsea forward.

It was only Joao Pedro’s third goal for Chelsea in his last 16 games in all competitions.

James should have doubled Chelsea’s lead when he smashed just wide from the edge of the area early in the second half.

It was a crucial miss and Atalanta made James pay as they drew level in the 55th minute.

De Ketelaere’s cross to the far post caught Chelsea’s defenders flat-footed and Scamacca made a perfectly timed run to head home from close range.

Scamacca almost punished Chelsea’s sloppy marking again moments later with a glancing header that Sanchez saved at full stretch.

Maresca responded to Chelsea’s lethargy by sending on Alejandro Garnacho, who forced an immediate save from Marco Carnesecchi.

But Chelsea were creaking at the back and De Ketelaere snatched the winner in the 83rd minute, advancing unchecked to the edge of the area for a powerful strike that deflected in off Marc Cucurella.

(The Citizen)

Broos blasts ‘unprofessional’ Mbokazi over missed Bafana flight

BAFANA Bafana head coach Hugo Broos has slammed Mbekezeli Mbokazi for missing his flight to join up with his teammates ahead of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations finals in Morocco.

Broos unhappy with agent over MLS move

Broos also criticised the 20 year-old central defender’s agent Basia Michaels over his move from Orlando Pirates to Major League Soccer side Chicago Fire.

On Saturday, Mbokazi captained Orlando Pirates to victory in the Carling Black Label Knockout at the Peter Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane, his final match for the Buccaneers.

He was supposed to fly to Johannesburg on Monday and join the Bafana camp at the TUKS High Performance Centre in Tshwane.

But Mbokazi missed his flight and only joined the camp on Tuesday.

“I am not pleased with what he did,” said Broos.

“He let us know he missed his flight from Durban yesterday.”

Mbokazi seemingly went home to KZN after the CKO final.

“It was the coach of Pirates (Abdeslam) Ouaddou who informed me,” added Broos.

“He (Ouaddou) was very angry that he missed his flight. These were his (Ouaddou’s) words – ‘unprofes-



▲ Mbekezeli Mbokazi of Orlando Pirates. sional attitude’.

“I have already spoken about players with an unprofessional attitude. Then Pirates sent me a nonsense message. I will not tell you what it was but it was nonsense. It is worse that the club protects the player.

“This is very bad. You are a 20 year-old guy and you have been called up to play in the AFCON and in the World Cup next year. We give you a few extra days off ... (but) if someone has a good attitude they don’t want the days off and are here

on Monday.

“So I will have a chat with him after training. He is a black guy but when he comes out of my room he will be white (with fear).

‘Suddenly he thinks he is a star’

“I know why. Suddenly he thinks he is a star. This is the attitude of a star – ‘I decide when I come’.”

Mbokazi’s rise to stardom has been fast and he secured a big money move to Chicago Fire in the MLS. He will join his new team after the AFCON finals. (Supersport)

Royal Joburg all set for a grip-it-and-rip it Dunhill

WHEN Aldrich “Rocket Man” Potgieter hits a golf ball it stays hit.

And the fans at this week’s Alfred Dunhill Championship at Royal Johannesburg’s superbly manicured East Course starting on Thursday can expect this 21-year-old phenomenon to be regularly unleashing those mammoth 400-yard drives that have stunned the golf world.

“Last week at Sun City in the Nedbank I didn’t use driver much because on that golf course if you hit driver you can run out of fairway, end up in the bush and lose a golf ball,” said Potgieter during a practice round on Wednesday.

“But here at Royal Joburg

there’s not much rough so even if you miss the fairway you’re unlikely to be in any trouble. So my plan is to use my driver a lot because you can really let it rip,” smiled the powerfully built young pro who won the Rocket Classic on the PGA Tour this year, leading to speculation that he may well be the next South African super star.

Potgieter is drawn in Thursday morning’s first round with compatriot Branden Grace and England’s John Parry. And in the group immediately behind them is Dean Burmester – no slouch off the tee himself, Christiaan Bezuidenhout and France’s Martin Couvra.

(Supersport)



▲ Aldrich Potgieter.

Stories by Chris Dlamini

IT was cash time for Eswatini’s top pool trio last weekend. Following the second edition of the E135 000 Gauranteed Pool Tournament hosted by Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) Pool Team, three of Eswatini’s top players dominated the podium.

They made thousands from the tournament, ensuring the lion’s share of the singles division prize package remained within.

These are eventual champion Eddie ‘Bharuka’ Mondlane, runner-up Nathi ‘Bhubesi’ Sihlongonyane and Zweli ‘Siziba’ Dlamini, who finished third and seventh in the open singles. The competition started on Friday until Sunday at the Manzini Sports Lounge, Cardo Square, Ngwane Park.

Bharuka took home E30 000, then E15 000 for Bhubesi as runner-up plus E2 000 for his life 2 sixth spot finish, and E5 000 for Siziba in third place.

The latter also had life 2 entry, making it to seventh, earning him an extra E2 000 to take his earnings to E7 000. In the end, the trio made E54 000.

However, one of them had already made E30 000 from one game, a return match played earlier on Friday at the same venue between Bhubesi and Zimbabwe’s Blessing ‘Bibido’ Muzarurwi. They settled what they began in Zimbabwe early this year when they played a E30 000 pot match.

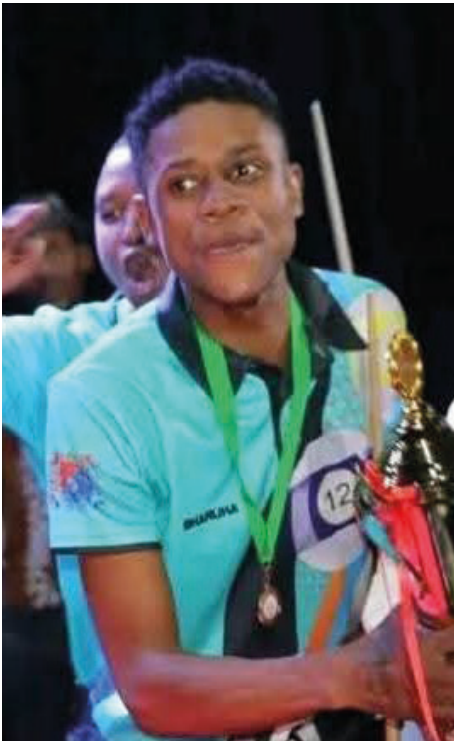
Bhubesi beat Bibido in both pot matches. It was E30 000 at stake once again for the winner and nothing for the loser.

This win and the Guaranteed Tournament winnings took his earnings to E47 000, making the richest player in only three days of blackball competition. Initially, the second

Three days, E84k for Eswatini pool trio



▲ Nathi ‘Bhubesi’ Sihlongonyane.



▲ Eddie ‘Bharuka’ Mondlane.



▲ Zweli ‘Siziba’ Dlamini.

edition was set for a E138 000 package but ended up at E135 000.

Adding to the trio’s success was ladies’ national team stars Mbali Dlamini who earned E7 000 as the champion, and her runner-up Ncobile ‘S’ncobesh’ Dlamini. The latter received E3 000 as runner-up.

Worth mentioning is that S’ncobesh also took the number three, getting an extra E2 000 alongside fourth-placed Kizza from Botswana.

This took S’ncobesh’s E4 500.
Eswatini pool stars earnings in three days:

- 1. Nathi ‘Bhubesi’ Sihlongonyane - E47 000
- 2. Eddie ‘Bharuka’ Mondlane - E15 000
- 3. Zweli ‘Siziba’ Dlamini - E7 000
- Total - E84 000

- Ladies**
- 1. Mbali ‘Walikora’ Dlamini - E7 000
 - 2. Ncobile ‘S’ncobesh’ Dlamini - E4 500

Young Smakhelwe beats SA’s ‘Gandaganda’ stunner

YOUNG, bold, and gifted. These three words simply tell the full story of the kind of talent youngster Smakhelwe Magagula is.

The pool gem, called up to the senior national team a few weeks before the E135 000 Guaranteed Pool Tournament over the weekend, showed why he earned the call up.

While he did not make the podium, he still had a brilliant showing against some of the region’s finest, including South Africa’s (SA) respected star, TemKing.

Notably, TemKing is the one who

shocked his fellow countryman, Jeremiah ‘Gandaganda’ Naidoo out of the tournament after the latter had already lost his life 1 entry to Zweli ‘Siziba’ Dlamini.

Magagula outfoxed TemKing 6-3 in the hour and half timed race to seven frames format games. TemKing could not match the youngster who made it as far as six frames to three in the set time.

Magagula is plying his trade with Malkerns Pool Team under the Mlu and Lee Investments E30 000 Pool League, under the auspices of the Manzini Regional Pool Association (MRPA).



▲ Jaison ‘Gandaganda’ Naidoo.



Big up Eswatini champs, pool won – SA streamer

“IT was a great three days in Eswatini where pool won.”

South African (SA) pool streamer Nkateko Sodi has made his feelings known after spending the past weekend in the kingdom.

Through Facebook, he posted to share his utmost pride and thanks to Eswatini for hosting them, while paying tribute to the champions in the singles and ladies categories, Eddie ‘Bharuka’ Mondlane and Mbali ‘Walikora’ Dlamini.

“I arrived home safely after an amazing couple of days in Eswatini. I thank God, and you all for the support I have received, and I just want to say a huge thank you to you all.

He also took time to acknowledge the tournament champions. “Congratulations to Team Siwela (SA) for winning the teams’ grand final, ‘Bharuka’

for winning the men’s singles grand final and Mbali Dlamini for winning the ladies grand final, but a special mention to Dodge SM Media-LIVE POOL and CuePixels Photography,” he wrote.

The excited Sodi also said, “We Love POOL Calabash Cuesports’ for helping with streaming equipment, encouraging them to continue.

“Lastly, the biggest thank you to my sponsor, Team Siwela. I have the best team around me, and I’m honoured to get to work with the very best in the industry. Blessing Siwela, keep it up,” he said.

Sodi added that it was not all easy, but at the end of the day, ‘pool won, and that’s all that matters’, while also congratulating all participants from SA, Eswatini, Botswana and Mozambique.



▲ Youngster Smakhelwe Magagula with veteran pool players.



MULASPORT NATIONAL FIRST DIVISION LEAGUE ANALYSIS

It's tougher on top

● Red Rhinos, Madlenya lead race for elite promotion ahead of explosive fixtures

By Chris Dlamini

WHERE is the inaugural MulaSport National First Division (NFD) League headed after ahead of the eye-catching matchweek nine fixtures? Who will cash out the first-round incentive? Who looks set for elite promotion next May? Only the top two get promoted. Let's briefly look into the league.

Elite Promotion Contenders:

1. Red Rhinos - 19 points

► They currently hold the summit after winning the top-of-the-table clash against last season's elite outfit, Madlenya. They are strong contenders for a return to the elite league after a second consecutive term. BoBhejane (Red Rhinos) have yet another crucial fixture as they take on fifth-placed Magwanyana in a must-win tie to retain the summit position.

2. Madlenya - 17 points

► Without a doubt, they are so far doing a good job, showing they just came from the elite league. They can make it back with consistency until the end of the league in May. They also have to deal with top four rivals, Nkwene Sundowns, on Saturday with the top spot and dropping from second all possible. A two-point difference separates them from leaders Red Rhinos. Jozi Gobana, so goes Madlenya's tagline.

3. Pigg's Peak Professionals - 16 points

► They pose the real threat to Red Rhinos and Madlenya. They have what it takes to



▲ Red Rhinos players.



▲ Madlenya FC players.



▲ Action between Viva Stumbo XI and Mankayane United.

challenge for promotion to the end. They face a lowly-placed Usuthu Liverpool away this Sunday, one they are expected to win.

4. Nkwene Sundowns - 14 points

► They have dropped a bit as they were at one point sitting on second. However, they are well in competition for both the first round and promotion. Next up, they face Madlenya in a big clash.



▲ Lozitha Spurs players.

- Relegation Candidates -

1. Ludzeludze Killers - 3 points

► The bottom four is going down, and leading the pack of candidates at the moment is Killers. Can they get dig deep into their reserves on Friday when they face mid-table outfit, Msumpe Manchester? They need to start winning games or get relegated, come May.

2. Viva Stumbo XI - 5 points

► Promoted from the Manzini Super League as champions last season, their debut NFD campaign appears to be on nose-dive back to where they came. There are still good points to win to survive, but time is of the essence. They have Manzini Sundowns, fellow strugglers who lack consistency, to play next on Saturday at Manzini Club.

3. CK Survivors - 6 points

► Six points from eight

games are not a good sign. It remains to be seen if they will get out of the bottom four where they currently sit on the 14th, or they will go against their name. They have a tough one against Sidwashini United, fresh from the top flight where they spent one season. This one goes down at Manzini Club as well, on Sunday at 3pm.

4. Usuthu Liverpool - 7 points

► Yes, the likes of Mankayane United and Manzini Sundowns also have some serious work to do, or they will be spending another season in this league, but at seven points now, Usuthu must watch out, and Pigg's Peak Professionals will not compromise on Sunday when they go head-to-head.



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Nsingizini takes charge of E120 000 first round ‘carrot’ race

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

MTN Premier League defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs have taken charge of the E120 000 first round carrot race.

The Shiselweni-based side secured a 2-0 win over their rivals, Ezulwini United, on Wednesday at Nsukuwansuku Stadium.

The victory consolidated the Mandla Qhongi-led side's top spot by three points as they are still sitting on the summit of the log with 22 points after 10 matches.

Goals from Quality Dlamini and Neliswa 'Tiger' Dlamini condemned the 'Stingers' to their first loss of the campaign.

Newcomers Amawele FC pulled an upset with a 2-1 win over the carrot contenders Manzini Sea Birds at Prince of Wales Ground.

Sea Birds remain second in the log standings despite their third loss of the campaign.

Other matches saw Green Mamba and Royal Leopards share the spoils by 1-all at Ka Langa Technical Centre, while Mbabane Swallows held Young Buffaloes to a tall stalemate.

Giant slayers Tambankulu Celtics returned to winning ways with a 2-1 win over Moneni Pirates at their fortress, Tambankulu Stadium, following the recent defeat to Green Mamba.



▲ Nsingizini players celebrate upon winning against Ezulwini United 2-0 remaining at the top of the log.

Rangers secured a slender 1-0 win over Malanti Chiefs at King Sobhuza II Stadium.

The league matches will be in full swing on Sunday in a series of game 11 fixtures, with the headlining fixture involving Nsingizini Hotspurs and Young Buffaloes at King Sobhuza II Stadium.

Some of the MTN premier league results

Rangers FC 1-0 Malanti Chiefs.
Ezulwini United 0-2 Nsingizini Hotspurs.
Green Mamba 1-1 Royal Leopard.
Tabankulu Celtics 2-1 Moneni Pirates.
Young Buffaloes 1-1 Mbabane Swallows.
Amawele FC 2-1 Manzini Sea Birds

The full fixture
14 December 2025
Killarney Stadium

Malanti Chiefs vs T.Celtics
3pm
King Sobhuza II Stadium
Nsingizini vs Y.Buffaloes
3pm.

Mkhuzweni Technical Centre

R. Leopard vs M.Highland-
ers 3pm.

Ka Langa Technical Centre

Sisonkhe vs Amawele
3pm.

Mayaluka Stadium

Ubombo Sugar vs Rangers
3pm

Mavuso Sports Centre

M Pirates vs Green Mamba
1.30pm.

M.Swallows vs M.Wanderers
3.30pm.

Simunye Stadium

Sea Birds vs Ezulwini Utdd
3pm.

PTY faction is in contempt –Swallows FC

MBABANE Swallows FC faction is accusing the PTY FC of being in contempt of court.

This follows a move by the opposition to oust the FC regime headed by interim president Absalom Ngwenya through a press statement released by the Elders headed by Enock Nkosi and Jabulani 'Maria Maria' Fakudze on Tuesday.

The current regime has since responded to the opposition move through a press conference held a day later in Mbabane.

Swallows FC Director Robert Magongo said they are disappointed by the opposition's move.

"We are saddened by the continuous disturbance from the opposition, and they are in contempt of court since the High Court declared our president, Absalom Ngwenya, as the rightful leader of the team. We do not know their motive as they are always disturbing the team and hindering the progress of the club," he said. Magongo further said they will consider taking further actions if the opposition persists with their actions.

The team's former director and Elder Musa Magongo also lamented the opposition's move. "We honestly do not know what the PTY faction really wants, as we are doing our best to stabilise the team. We have even secured a sponsor who is assisting us with the welfare of players and urges them to refrain from their actions," he said.

Ngwenya also graced the press briefing. High Court Judge Zonkhe Magagula recently declared as a rightful leader of the capital city giants after it was challenged by the PTY faction headed by former player Wonder 'Samba jive' Nhleko.

Instacash FA cup back with a bang

BIGGER and better
The annual Instacash FA Cup has made a sensational return to local football, with the introduction of national championships that will feature the four regional winners in 2026, taking place between January and April.

This follows the launch of the tournament, held at Sigwaca House, which was attended by EFA CEO Frederick Mngomezulu and other stakeholders on Wednesday.

The Fintech company managing director, Mandla 'Cheeks' Nxumalo, said they are pleased with the return of the tournament.

"We are happy with the re-



▲ Instacash Managing Director Mandla 'Cheeks' Nxumalo, EFA CEO Frederick Mngomezulu with regional associations during the launch of the regional knockout tournament.

turn of the tournament, which has been improved following the introduction of the regional national finals. The four national finals will come from the top four teams that will win the regional competitions, and the games will kick off next year," he said.

Nxumalo further stated that they have partnered with Joma Sports in this year's competition.

"Outstanding teams will win kits from our partners Joma, and we will announce other partners in due course, as we are still in negotiations with several

companies to sponsor the tournament. Other details will be communicated in due course," he said.

Eswatini Football Association Chief Executive Officer Frederick Mngomezulu thanked the sponsor for continued support.

"We are grateful for the support of the sponsor, which contributes to the development of the sport in the country. We urge teams to protect the image of the sport and sponsor by adopting the spirit of fair play during the games," he said.

The launch was graced by Chairpersons of the four regional associations and the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Youth Affairs portfolio committee Chairman Sifiso Shabalala.

Netball teams through to semis

ESWATINI'S maiden netball World Cup dream is still alive.

This follows their advancement to the netball national semifinals in the 2025 Africa Cup, taking place in Malawi.

The national side needs to win the annual continental cup or finish as runners-up to rewrite the history books by qualifying for the global showpiece scheduled for Australia in 2027.

The men's national team has booked its place in the 2025 Af-

rica Netball Cup semifinals following the 37-28 win over Kenya on Wednesday to finish on top of Group B.

The national side started the campaign with a 44-42 victory against the hosts, Malawi, on Tuesday.

The senior national team coach, Vimbibukhosi Ndlangamandla, congratulated the team for its latest achievement.

"I am with the performance of the team, and I am proud of the boys. We will continue working



▲ The mens netball national team.

hard in the next round. We are grateful for the support that we are receiving from the nation," he said.

The national team reached the finals of the continental cup held last year in Namibia.



Egypt cuts ties over Salah

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Eswatini Thursday 11,
December 2025
Daily News

Sport



Nsingizini takes charge of E120 000 first round 'carrot' race

... League defending champions Nsingizini Hotspurs end Ezulwini United's unbeaten run with a 2-0 win on Wednesday at Nsukuwansuku Stadium.

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