

New disability law gains strong support from Parliament [Page 4](#)



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National Crime Rate Down 4.1%, says NatCom

By Thokozani Mazibuko

‘UMBUTFO WeMbube Ume-Zica’

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Medicines worth E0.5m boost Eswatini's Malaria

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Visually impaired man receives new home from DPM



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▲ Minister for Housing and Urban Development Apollo Maphalala who was representing the Prime Minister being welcomed by National Commissioner of Police Manoma Vusie Masango.



▲ Senior police officers during the conference.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

‘UMBUTFO WeMbube Ume-Zica’
The Royal Eswatini Police Service has reported a significant drop in national crime statistics, which is what government representatives have described as a promising indicator of strengthened policing and community safety. This was announced during the Senior Police Officers and Senior Civilian Support Staff End of Year Conference, held at the Matsapha Police Academy.

The annual gathering brings together senior officers from the rank of Assistant Superintendent and above, alongside senior civilian support staff, to assess the organisation’s performance during the year and refine strategies for the year ahead. This year’s meeting placed strong emphasis on evaluating policing progress in 2025, setting the tone for an ambitious safety agenda for 2026.

Representing the Prime Minister Russell Mmiso Dlamini was the Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Apollo Maphalala. In delivering the Prime Minister’s remarks, Maphalala commended the Police Service for the discipline and commitment with which it continues to safeguard the nation. He

National crime rate down 4.1%, says NatCom

applauded the convening of the conference, noting that critical self-assessment is the cornerstone of effective policing and institutional renewal.

Maphalala likened the reflective purpose of the conference to the life cycle of an eagle, which renews its strength through deliberate self-transformation. In the same way, he said, the Police Service must constantly re-evaluate its operations, adapt to new challenges, and align its mission with the evolving needs of the public. He told the gathering that the peace pulse of the nation rests heavily on the shoulders of the Police Service and urged officers to remain steadfast in their professional calling.

The highlight of the conference came from the National Commissioner, Manoma Vusie Masango, who presented a comprehensive review of policing indicators for 2025. He announced that the country recorded a 4.1 percent decrease in volume crime compared to 2024, a development he described as encouraging and reflective of improved policing strategies. Volume crime, which includes common offences that affect everyday citizens, is a key indicator of public safety and community wellbeing. A reduction of this scale signals progress in both prevention and response efforts across the Service.

Masango credited this achievement to enhanced operational coordination, stronger intelligence-led policing, and improved collaboration with communities. He encouraged officers not to view the decrease as an end point but as motivation to push for further reductions in the coming year. Crime, he said, continues to evolve, and so must the strategies used to combat it.

Despite celebrating the positive trajectory in crime reduction, Masango raised concern over the escalation of road traffic accidents in 2025. He noted that while strides have been made in traditional policing, the country is experiencing a worrying spike in crashes, many resulting in deaths and serious injuries. He called for immediate and aggressive action to address the issue, stressing that road safety must become a

priority area for the Police Service going into 2026.

Masango underlined the need for more visible policing on major routes, stronger enforcement of traffic regulations, and increased public awareness campaigns targeting reckless driving, speeding, and drunk driving. He added that the Police Service will intensify partnerships with stakeholders in the transport sector to design integrated interventions that respond effectively to the rising accident statistics.

Throughout the conference, speakers emphasised the importance of maintaining professionalism, discipline, and innovation in policing. Participants engaged in sessions examining strategic areas such as crime prevention approaches, technology and policing, community engagement, staff welfare, and leadership development. The discussions were designed to equip senior officers with the tools and insights needed to strengthen policing delivery in the coming year.

Medicines worth E0.5m boost Eswatini’s Malaria response

By Delisa Magagula

THE Ministry of Health has received anti-malaria drugs valued at half a million emalangenani from the End Malaria Fund Eswatini, a contribution expected to strengthen the country’s preparedness as it enters the peak malaria season.

The donation was handed over to Minister for Health Mduduzi Matsebula by End Malaria Fund Director Steven Mthethwa at the Central Medical Stores.

Mthethwa commended national efforts over the years to control malaria transmission, noting that the continued partnership between government and stakeholders had played a central role in reducing cases. He said the organisation remained committed to supporting the health sector’s response. Mthethwa highlighted that the donation was a reflection of their confidence in the country’s malaria programme and its progress toward long-term elimination.

Minister Matsebula said the delivery of the medicines could not have come at a more crucial time, as mobility increases during the festive season and citizens travel to and from malaria-endemic areas in the region.



▲ The Ministry of Health has received anti-malaria drugs valued at half a million emalangenani from the End Malaria Fund Eswatini.

He stressed that Eswatini, like neighbouring countries, is currently in the high-risk period for malaria, which places added pressure on prevention and treatment services. He expressed gratitude to the End Malaria Fund for its consistent contributions.

“On behalf of the Ministry of Health, I extend our heartfelt appreciation to the End Malaria Fund board and all its partners for unwavering support to our fight against malaria,” he said.

Matsebula added that the donated drugs will allow the ministry to respond effectively to

rising demand.

“As the festive season has begun, many citizens will be traveling while we enter the peak of malaria season. The demand for malaria chemoprevention is on the rise, while admissions for severe malaria cases need to be met with the specified treatment as per our guidelines. This donation, therefore, comes at the opportune time to ensure we are well prepared for the season and to ensure that nobody dies from malaria in Eswatini,” Matsebula said.

The Ministry of Health said the drugs will



▲ The donated drugs will allow the ministry to respond effectively to rising demand. “As the festive season has begun.

be distributed across facilities in areas classified as high-risk, as well as border regions where surveillance teams are most active.

Health workers have been encouraged to continue early detection, timely treatment and community sensitisation, which remain central to the national malaria strategy.

Worth noting, the End Malaria Fund continues to support Eswatini with resources for prevention campaigns, awareness programmes, and equipment for testing and treatment.

The ministry said the latest donation further strengthens the national goal of keeping malaria cases low and preventing deaths throughout the high-transmission period.



▲ Beneficiary, Wandile Gumbi of Vusweni with the Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla.



▲ Wandile Gumbi's new house presented to him by the DPM's office.

By Thokozani Mazibuko

WHAT began as a life marked by hardship, makeshift shelter and constant uncertainty has transformed into a story of dignity and renewed hope for Wandile Gumbi of Vusweni.

The visually impaired resident has endured years of instability, including nights spent inside water pipes after being chased away from home, followed by a long period of renting structures that were barely habitable. His journey took an uplifting turn this week when he received the keys to a brand new house built especially for him.

The handover ceremony took place on Thursday at Vusweni under Maseyini Inkhundla and was led by the Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla. The event drew community leaders, neighbours, social workers and representatives from government departments who had been part of assessing Gumbi's situation and

coordinating the intervention.

Speaking during the ceremony, the Deputy Prime Minister said the new home symbolised government's ongoing commitment to protecting the dignity of people living with disabilities and those living in vulnerable conditions. She emphasised that no person should be left to survive in unsafe spaces or structures that put their health and wellbeing at risk. Dladla further noted that providing appropriate and stable shelter was a fundamental step toward empowerment and inclusion.

Gumbi's story was first brought to the attention of social workers through the community leadership, who expressed concern about his living conditions. Due to

family complications, he had been forced to leave home and spent several nights sleeping inside large pipes in his area to shield himself from the cold and rain.

Later, he managed to rent a small dwelling, but the structure was so dilapidated that it offered little protection and posed serious safety hazards.

Grateful

As a visually impaired individual, these circumstances made daily life even more challenging. Community leaders explained that they worried constantly about his security and were grateful when the matter was escalated to the Deputy Prime Minister's Office for intervention.

Community members who attended the

ceremony described the day as emotional and inspiring. Many reflected on how Gumbi's resilience had touched them over the years and how his perseverance despite hardship had encouraged unity within the community. Several neighbours said they believed the new home would allow Gumbi to focus on rebuilding his life without fear of where he would sleep or how he would stay safe. In her closing remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister urged community members to continue looking out for the vulnerable and reporting cases where individuals may be suffering in silence. She noted that meaningful development is achieved when communities and government work hand in hand to protect those at risk.



▲ Minister for Education and Training Owen Nxumalo receiving one of the devices from Minister for ICT Savannah Maziya during the handover ceremony held at the ESCCOM Headquarters.



▲ A total 20 rural schools are set to benefit from new digital equipment following a donation from the Eswatini Communications Commission

ESCCOM donates ICT equipment 20 rural schools

By Delisa Magagula

TWENTY rural schools are set to benefit from new digital equipment following a donation from the Eswatini Communications Commission.

During a handover event held at ESCCOM headquarters, the Minister for ICT Savannah Maziya and the Minister for Education and Training Owen Nxumalo, together with UNICEF, presided over the delivery of 60 desktops, four laptops and four projectors.

The handover forms part of a broader partnership between ESCCOM and the education sector aimed at increasing access to digital learning tools in underserved

communities.

The initiative supports ongoing efforts to improve digital literacy, strengthen teaching resources and ensure that learners in rural areas can participate fully in modern learning environments.

Maziya said the donation represented an important step toward preparing young people for an increasingly digital future.

"Technology has become essential for participation in education and future employment. Everyone deserves a chance to future-proof life, and it starts with the right tools and education," she said.

Minister Nxumalo welcomed the contribution, saying it would help reduce the long-standing disparities between rural and urban schools. He noted that limited

access to technology had constrained learners in rural communities, especially as digital skills become central to curriculum delivery and national examinations.

"This is the help we need to close the gap between rural and urban schools," he said.

Resources

Meanwhile ESCCOM Chief Executive Officer Mvilawemphi Dlamini said the organisation was committed to ensuring equitable access to digital resources.

He said the donation was part of their mandate to promote inclusion and support national development goals in the education sector. "We are closing the gap too and want no one left behind," he said. UNICEF representatives emphasised that access to digital tools is critical for improving learning

outcomes, especially in remote areas where educational resources are often limited.

The organisation has been working with government and partners to expand digital classrooms and strengthen teacher training programmes.

Worth noting, the equipment will be distributed to 20 selected schools based on need, readiness and existing infrastructure. ESCCOM said additional support, including training for teachers on device use and digital content management, will follow to ensure maximum impact.

The Ministry of Education and Training stated that the donation strengthens national efforts to modernise public education and prepare learners for a technology-driven world.

By Delisa Magagula

THE Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla has met with Members of Parliament and Senators to discuss the new legislation aimed at strengthening the protection, rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in Eswatini.

The meeting formed part of government's ongoing consultations as the country moves toward implementing the Persons with Disabilities Act, which was recently passed by Parliament and assented to by His Majesty the King.

The proposed law introduces a formal national registration system for persons with disabilities, a measure the Deputy Prime Minister said is essential for improving planning, targeted support and service delivery.

She told legislators that without accurate national data, government cannot adequately design interventions or ensure consistent access to support services.

"The aim is to have a clear record of all persons with disabilities in the country and ensure they are taken care of. This registration is not meant to exclude anyone but to help government understand the needs of every individual so that support reaches them without gaps," said Dladla.

New disability law gains strong support from Parly

Meanwhile, the Act provides for the establishment of the National Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities, along with a Secretariat responsible for implementing the Act's policies, coordinating programmes and advising government on matters related to disability inclusion.

Its functions include monitoring services, ensuring compliance with the law, and strengthening national systems that protect the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities.

During the meeting, senators welcomed the Bill and expressed confidence that it would close longstanding gaps in disability rights and access to support.



▲ The Deputy Prime Minister has met with Members of Parliament and Senators to discuss the new legislation aimed at strengthening the protection

Senator Lizzie Nkosi said the Act marks an important shift toward structured national protection.



▲ Senator Stukie Motsa also endorsed the law, noting the need for reliable data and coordinated national systems.

"This is an important step because without a proper framework, many people with disabilities fall through the cracks. The Act will help ensure that every person is known, recognised and supported," she said.

Senator Stukie Motsa also endorsed the law, noting the need for reliable data and coordinated national systems.

"We cannot assist people properly when we do not know how many they are, where they are, or what support they need. This law helps us respond better and plan better," he said.

Deputy Senate President Ndumiso Mdluli described the Act as a necessary tool for accountability and long-term planning.

"Having a proper register will help the country deliver services in a structured manner and make sure no one is left behind. Government and communities will now have a clear guide on what needs to be done," he said,

The legislation outlines clear responsibilities for government through the National Advisory Council, which will oversee the implementation of disability policies, coordinate stakeholder efforts and ensure a consistent approach across ministries and institutions.

The Secretariat will serve as the administrative arm of the Council, responsible for day-to-day operations, monitoring and reporting.

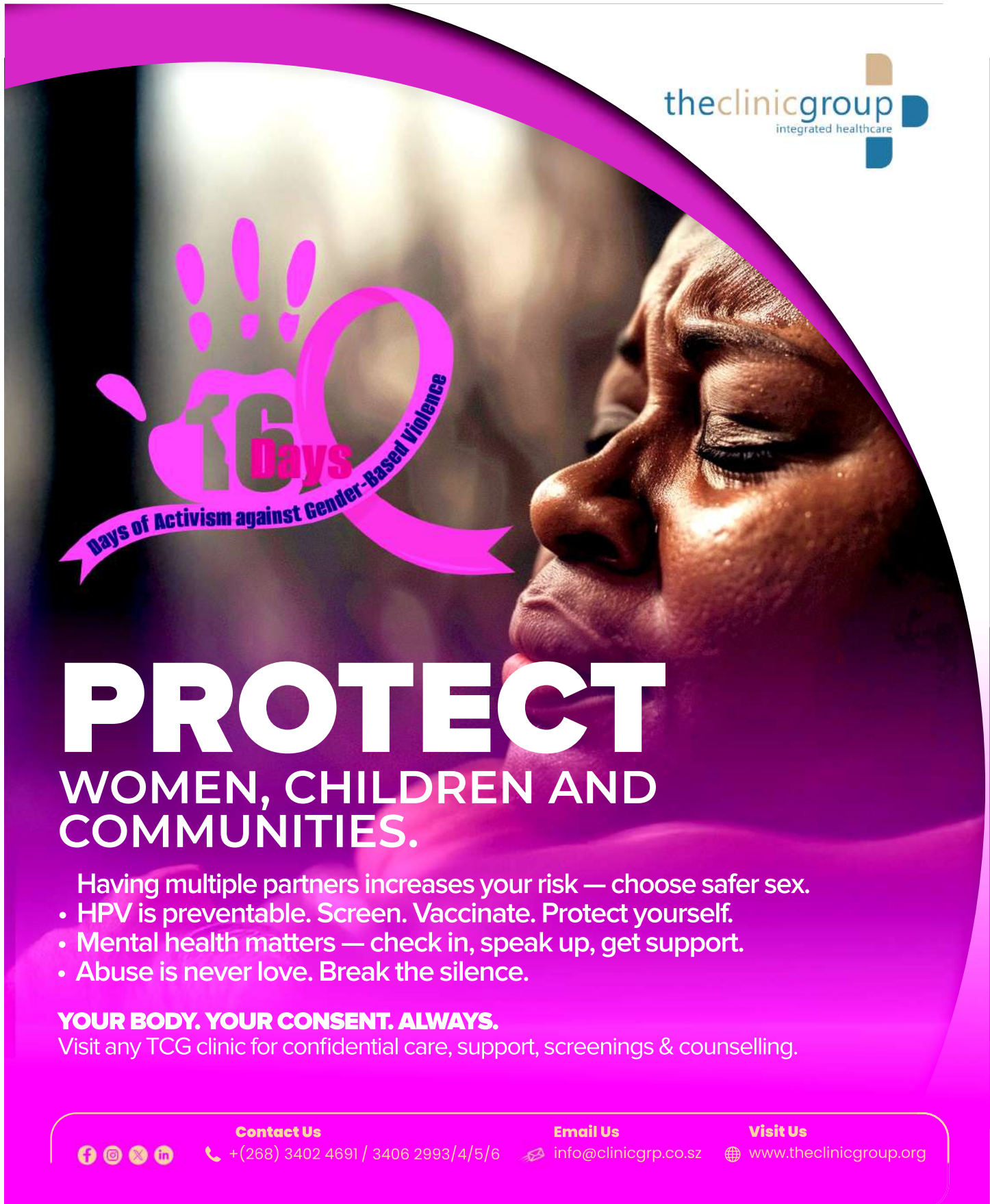
The Deputy Prime Minister said the consultations with MPs and senators are part of ensuring that lawmakers fully understand the purpose and mechanisms of the Act before its implementation begins.

She emphasised that the registration process will be conducted sensitively and in partnership with community structures, disability organisations and social service providers.

She added that government intends to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in national development, with equal access to services, opportunities and protections.

The new Act, she said, is intended to uphold dignity, strengthen support networks and ensure that every individual is accounted for in national planning.

With strong backing from senators and broader support in Parliament, the Act is expected to guide the country's next phase of disability inclusion, with emphasis on accurate national data, improved coordination and enhanced welfare systems.



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Agriculture minister congratulates 163 agripreneurs

By Thokozani Mazibuko

THE Minister of Agriculture, Mandla Tshawuke, has applauded the resilience and determination of 163 young agripreneurs who graduated on Thursday under the Innovative Climate Smart Youth Tunnel Production Project.

The ceremony, held at Riders Ranch in Sidvokodvo, celebrated Cohorts 8 to 11 of the programme, which continues to play a pivotal role in shaping Eswatini's next generation of agricultural entrepreneurs.

Delivering his keynote address, Tshawuke spoke through the Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Bongani Nzima, who represented him at the event. The minister praised the graduates for completing an intensive programme designed to build capacity in modern agricultural production and climate smart technologies. Of the 172 young people who enrolled, 163 successfully met all requirements, making the milestone one of the programme's strongest outcomes to date.

"It is a great honour to join you today as we celebrate the graduation of Cohort 8 to Cohort 11 of the Innovative Climate Smart Youth Tunnel Production Project. Today, 163 young agripreneurs graduate out of the 172 who began the programme. This achievement is a testament to your resilience, commitment and passion for the agricultural sector," the minister said.

The programme equips young people with critical skills in protected farming systems, specifically tunnel agriculture, which has become increasingly important in the face of climate change and erratic weather patterns. Graduates are trained in crop management, irrigation, agribusiness, financial literacy and practical farm operations. Many of the previous cohorts have successfully transitioned into business, supplying fresh produce to local markets, retail chains and school feeding programmes.

The minister highlighted that the success of the programme is rooted in strong collaborative partnerships. He paid special tribute to the Embassy of Taiwan, Unicorn United Kingdom and the Woman Farmer Foundation (WFF), whose combined support en-

... as climate-smart training project graduands



▲ Innovative Climate Smart Youth Tunnel Production Project graduates posing for a group photo.

sured that young people received quality training and mentorship.

"Allow me to acknowledge with deep appreciation our strategic partners. The Embassy of Taiwan sponsored 160 students. Unicorn United Kingdom supported 12 students. The Woman Farmer Foundation, the implementing institution, continues to transform lives and communities in Eswatini. To Mrs. Sonia Paiva and her team, we value your visionary commitment to empowering youth and championing innovation in agriculture," said the minister.

The Embassy of Taiwan has been one of the most consistent partners of the project, offering financial support, technical exchange and practical agricultural expertise. Representatives of the Embassy reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Eswatini's food security initiatives and youth empowerment efforts, noting that climate smart agriculture is essential for the future sustainability of the sector.

Unicorn United Kingdom, a development partner supporting agribusiness training in

Southern Africa, expressed their satisfaction with the programme's outcomes. Their sponsorship enabled young trainees to access materials, mentorship and exposure to advanced farming techniques.

The Woman Farmer Foundation, founded and led by Sonia Paiva, received special recognition for steering the programme since its inception. The Foundation's focus on empowering youth and women through agribusiness training has positioned it as one of Eswatini's leading institutions in agricultural development. Paiva expressed pride in the achievements of the new graduates and encouraged them to enter the market with confidence, innovation and discipline.

The minister urged the graduates to take advantage of government initiatives aimed at supporting youth participation in agriculture. These include access to start up resources, linkages to markets and enterprise development programmes. He also encouraged them to embrace agriculture as a viable business that can create jobs, generate income and contribute to national food se-



▲ Minister of Sports Bongani Nzima who represented the Minister of Agriculture Mandla Tshawuke awarding certificate to one of the Agripreneur graduate

curity.

"As you graduate today, you are not just receiving certificates. You are stepping into the world as agripreneurs who carry the responsibility of shaping the future of our agricultural sector. Your country is proud of you," he said.

Police, community members found body of missing Moz man at Nkomazi River

By Thokozani Mazibuko

A MAJOR breakthrough has been recorded in the search for a man who drowned earlier this week, after his body was discovered floating more than ten kilometres downstream from where he was last seen.

The Royal Eswatini Police Service has in a statement confirmed the recovery and expressed appreciation to community members for their vigilance and cooperation throughout the operation.

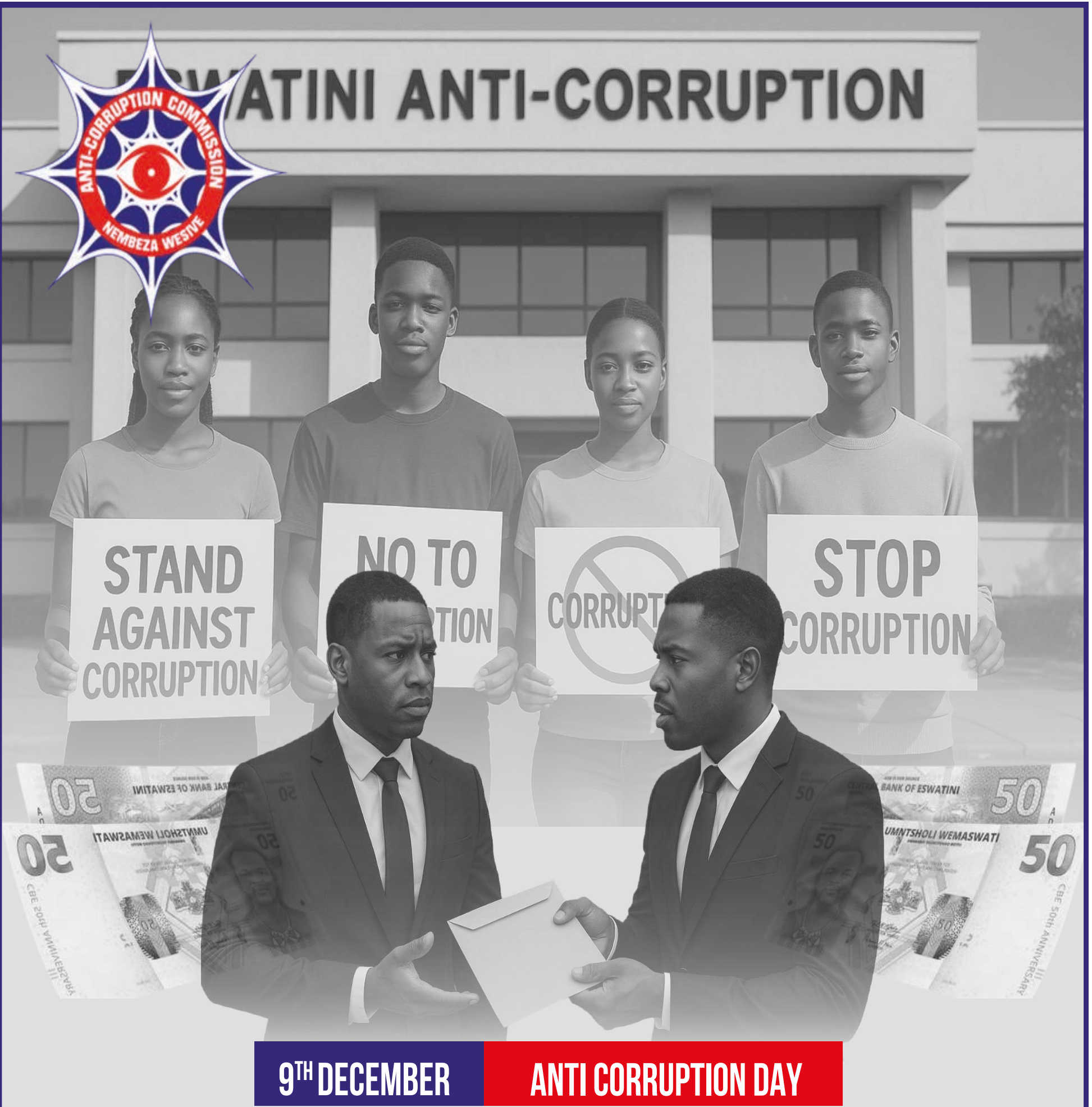
According to police, the victim, a 32 year old man from Boane in Mozambique, drowned at Sikhunyane area under Nkomanzi earlier this week. Residents and law enforcement officers immediately launched a search along the river, but the operation was complicat-

ed by strong currents and limited visibility in the water. The breakthrough came on 10 December 2025 at approximately 1130 hours, when a community member from Njakeni area spotted the body floating along the river. Authorities were alerted without delay, and officers from the Royal Eswatini Police Service responded to retrieve the remains. Preliminary reports indicate that the victim was carried by the river for more than ten kilometres from the original drowning point, explaining the extended search period.

Police spokespersons have commended the community member whose alertness led to the discovery. They emphasised that such cooperation between the public and law enforcement agencies strengthens emergency responses and improves outcomes in search and rescue operations. The recovery also provides closure for the victim's family, who had been anxiously awaiting news since the day of the incident.



▲ The Royal Eswatini Police Service has in a statement confirmed the recovery and expressed appreciation to community members for their vigilance and cooperation throughout the operation.



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BRIEFS

Buffett set to hand Berkshire baton to Abel

WARREN Buffett has embodied Berkshire Hathaway (BRKa.N), opens new tab for six decades, building a mighty conglomerate with a bevy of shareholder fans and making himself arguably the world’s most revered investor. As he prepares to pass the torch to Vice Chairman Greg Abel, the CEO-designate for 4-1/2 years, investors face the reality that Buffett’s aura, in part reflected in Berkshire’s stock price, will fade.

Rivian debuts custom self-driving chip

RIVIAN Automotive on hursday unveiled its first custom computer chip for self-driving, shifting away from Nvidia’s processors, and a new paid driver-assistance package called Autonomy+, as the electric-vehicle maker leans on artificial intelligence to boost revenue. The announcements, made at Rivian’s first Autonomy and AI Day, come as carmakers world-wide pour billions into AI systems that power long-awaited self-driving technologies that have faced faced several technical challenges.

US weekly jobless claims surge

THE number of Americans filing new applications for unemployment benefits surged last week, but that likely reflected difficulties adjusting the data for seasonal fluctuations around this time of year, ather than a material change in labor market onditions. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits jumped 44,000 to a seasonally adjusted 236,000 for the week ended December 6, the Labor Department said on Thursday. (Reuters)

Ubombo Sugar starts E2.4bln major expansion project

Stories By Delisa Magagula

THE Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority has confirmed that Ubombo Sugar Limited has begun implementing the commitment it made during the Inaugural Eswatini Investment Conference held in May 2025.

This follows the conclusion of a Power Purchasing Agreement between Ubombo Sugar Limited and the Eswatini Electricity Company, enabling the start of an expansion programme valued at E2.4 billion.

The Investment Conference, organised by EIPA earlier this year, served as a national platform to attract both domestic and international investors. It aimed to accelerate economic growth, diversify investment flows and highlight opportunities in sectors such as agro-processing, renewable energy, infrastructure and manufacturing.

The conference drew wide participation from regional and global investors and produced several investment pledges. Ubombo Sugar Limited was among the companies that announced significant commitments linked to industrial expansion and renewable power generation.

Ubombo Sugar Limited’s pledge consists of two core components. The first is a factory expansion under a debottlenecking project, structured in two phases, intended to increase processing capacity and improve production efficiency.

The second is a cogeneration project that will expand the company’s electricity generation to forty megawatts. The cogeneration initiative will rely on biomass from sugar operations, allowing the company to supply clean energy to the national grid.

Meanwhile, the Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority stated that the project aligns closely with national development objectives, including the strengthening of agro-industrial value chains and improving the country’s energy security.

By increasing the supply of locally generated renewable energy, the project is expected to reduce dependence on imported power and support a more stable energy system.

EIPA Chief Executive Officer Sibani Mngomezulu said Ubombo Sugar Limited’s progression from pledge to implementation demonstrates renewed investor confidence in the country’s economic direction.

He highlighted the importance of the foreign direct investment coming from Associated British Foods PLC, the parent company of Ubombo Sugar Limited.

“The investment pledge by USL and its subsequent migration to the implementation phase represents an intrepid signal of trust in the future of Eswatini’s economy and a vote of confidence in Eswatini as an attractive investment destination,” he said.

In addition, he said they welcome the FDI injection to the economy by the Associated British Foods PLC, USL’s parent company.

Mngomezulu said the successful implementation of the pledge will transform



▲ The Investment Conference, organised by EIPA earlier this year, served as a national platform to attract both domestic and international investors.



▲During the pledge, Ubombo Sugar Managing Director Muzi Siyaya said their goal was enhancing industrial efficiency.

the sugar industry, bolster national energy security and contribute to job creation.

“We believe that the implementation of this project sends a positive signal about Eswatini’s potential to host mega projects and we encourage those investors who made pledges at the Investment Conference to accelerate their proposed projects. We remain ready to assist and provide support in this regard,” he said.

Worth mentioning the sugar industry remains one of Eswatini’s most important contributors to employment, exports and rural economic activity.

During the pledge, Ubombo Sugar Managing Director Muzi Siyaya said their goal was enhancing industrial efficiency while integrating renewable energy solutions is seen as essential for maintaining long-term competitiveness.

Siyaya said the expansion at Ubombo Sugar Limited is also expected to stimulate economic activity through construction work and demand for equipment, engineering services and local

suppliers.

EIPA confirmed that the newly signed Power Purchasing Agreement between Ubombo Sugar Limited and the Eswatini Electricity Company is a critical milestone, as it formally enables the company to advance with construction and commissioning processes.

The authority noted that monitoring mechanisms established after the Investment Conference ensure that all pledged projects are tracked, supported and assessed for progress.

While Ubombo Sugar Limited begins to implement the factory expansion and cogeneration facility, the project is expected to contribute significantly to national development objectives.

EIPA said it will continue providing support to ensure the project stays on course, emphasising that it stands as a practical example of how investment pledges made at the national conference can translate into concrete economic outcomes.

FX RATES

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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	



▲ In her keynote remarks, the Honourable Minister emphasized the power of young people in driving climate action and the Africa Agenda 2063.



▲ Eswatini has taken another step toward cultivating a generation of climate-conscious leaders.

By Delisa Magagula

Youth Parliament launch signals stronger Climate leadership

THE Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs has officially launched the second cohort of the Eswatini Climate Change Youth Parliament for the 2025–2027 terms, reinforcing the country’s commitment to placing young people at the centre of climate action.

The event, on Thursday, gathered government leaders, development partners, and youth organisations to usher in a new group of young climate ambassadors who will help shape Eswatini’s environmental future.

In her keynote address, Minister for Tourism and Environmental Affairs Jane Mkhonta underscored the Ministry’s confidence in young people as catalysts for transformative climate solutions.

She said the Youth Parliament was deliberately established to empower Eswatini’s youthful population and deepen their participation in national climate strategies.

“Our cohort is youthful, and that is why the Ministry created this Parliament to harness the energy and leadership of young people

in building a sustainable Eswatini,” she said. The Minister also expressed gratitude to partners supporting the programme.

“Thank you to all partners who continue to support this initiative, especially UNICEF. You, the youth, are the climate champions Eswatini needs,” said the Minister.

The launch was also a moment of reflection and learning, with members of the first Climate Change Youth Parliament sharing insights from their tenure.

They recounted the advocacy campaigns

they led, the policy dialogues they contributed to, and the challenges they navigated while promoting climate awareness at community level.

Their presence was a reminder of the programme’s growing legacy and the evolving role of youth in Eswatini’s environmental governance.

Youth formations, including the UNICEF Youth Advisory Board and local climate action networks, participated in the discussions. Their involvement highlighted the importance of collaboration among young people as climate challenges become increasingly complex.

This sentiment was echoed by the Director of the Department of Meteorology, Duduzile Nhlengethwa-Masina, who called for unity and joint purpose across all youth structures.

She stressed that meaningful climate impact will require shared strategies and coordinated efforts. According to her, Eswatini’s progress will depend on how well institutions and youth groups pool their expertise, resources, and community reach.

Her message reinforced a central theme of the event: collective action will shape climate resilience more than individual efforts.

A defining feature of the Youth Parliament is the hands-on support it provides young participants. Over the next two years, the new cohort will undergo mentorship, training, and capacity-building programmes designed to strengthen leadership, technical understanding, and project management skills. These support mechanisms ensure that young parliamentarians do not only advocate for change but are equipped to plan and deliver climate initiatives within their constituencies.

This focus on practical empowerment aligns with Eswatini’s broader climate strategies, which aim to build a society capable of responding innovatively to environmental risks. Development partners reaffirmed their commitment to backing the Youth Parliament’s agenda. Speaking on behalf of UNICEF, Chiara Pierotti said the organisation remains dedicated to nurturing young people as key climate actors.

She said the new Parliament’s vision of seeing youth lead inclusive and innovative climate action was a legacy that all partners must work to sustain.

“The new Parliament’s vision is to see young people at the forefront of driving inclusive, innovative, and sustainable climate action for a resilient Eswatini is a legacy we must all support. Our task is to help young people move from climate advocacy to climate action,” she said.

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Buffett set to hand Berkshire baton to Abel, who has a tough act to follow



▲ Berkshire Vice Chairman Greg Abel poses with a shareholder during the Berkshire Hathaway Inc. annual shareholders' meeting, in Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.

WARREN Buffett has embodied Berkshire Hathaway (BRKa.N), opens new tab for six decades, building a mighty conglomerate with a bevy of shareholder fans and making himself arguably the world's most revered investor.

As he prepares to pass the torch to Vice Chairman Greg Abel, the CEO-designate for 4-1/2 years, investors face the reality that Buffett's aura, in part reflected in Berkshire's stock price, will fade.

Abel, 63, will become CEO on Jan. 1, and have one of the toughest acts to follow in corporate history. Buffett, 95, who has led Berkshire since 1965, will remain chairman.

"There is a huge halo effect (from Buffett)," said Lawrence Cunningham, a George Washington University law professor and author of several books on Buffett and Berkshire.

He said Abel must convince skeptics that Berkshire will thrive without Buffett making final decisions on which companies and stocks to buy, or providing guidance and wisdom in annual shareholder letters and meetings.

"I don't expect him to start cracking jokes and eat peanut brittle at the annual meeting," said Cunningham. "His biggest challenge is to say, I'm not Warren Buffett - and you shouldn't care."

Berkshire has already made some adjustments, announcing a management shakeup just three weeks before Abel takes over.

Abel will hand direct oversight of Berkshire's 32 consumer products, service and retailing businesses to Adam Johnson, who will continue running the NetJets luxury plane unit. Berkshire also elevated Nancy Pierce to run Geico, where she had been chief operating officer.

She replaces Todd Combs, who had also

been one of Buffett's portfolio managers and moves to JPMorgan Chase (JPM.N), opens new tab, where he has been a director. Berkshire also named a new chief financial officer, and its first-ever in-house general counsel.

Abel is positioning "trusted lieutenants and fresh talent to balance continuity with modernization at Berkshire," said Michael Ashley Schulman, chief investment officer at Running Point Capital in El Segundo, California.

BERKSHIRE TRANSFORMED OVER SIX DECADES

Buffett transformed Omaha, Nebras-

ka-based Berkshire from a failing textile company into a \$1.07 trillion conglomerate that is the corporate equivalent of a Sherman tank.

Its sprawl of close to 200 businesses, including the BNSF railroad, Geico car insurance, Berkshire Hathaway Energy and retail brands such as Brooks and Duracell, makes Berkshire a reasonable proxy for the U.S. economy.

Buffett also built his reputation picking stocks, including long-term investments in Apple and American Express (Abel joined Berkshire in 2000, and led Berkshire Hatha-

way Energy for a decade before becoming a Berkshire vice chairman overseeing non-insurance businesses in 2018.

"Greg Abel may be more hands-on than Warren Buffett," said Cathy Seifert, an analyst at CFRA Research in New York who covers Berkshire. "He may sharpen his pencil as it relates to companies improving operating expenses and finding strategies to grow. A tighter hands-on strategy is more of a needle-moving strategy than Berkshire leads us to believe."

Berkshire, through Buffett's assistant, declined to comment, saying Buffett addressed some of Berkshire's future in his Nov. 10 letter to shareholders. Buffett and Abel were not available for interviews.

HOW BERKSHIRE MAY EVOLVE

While Berkshire's stock has gained nearly six million percent since 1965, far above the Standard & Poor's 500's (46,000% gain, in recent years it has performed similarly to or lagged that index.

Buffett has long tempered investor expectations, telling shareholders in November that while Berkshire's businesses overall have "moderately better-than-average prospects," the company's size "takes its toll."

Abel must contend with that size. While armed with \$381.7 billion of cash that throws off lots of income, that can drag down overall performance because it isn't invested elsewhere.

Shareholders accept that returns won't match what they once were.

(Reuters)

Rivian debuts custom self-driving chip, \$2,500 driver-assistance package

RIVIAN Automotive on Thursday unveiled its first custom computer chip for self-driving, shifting away from Nvidia's processors, and a new paid driver-assistance package called Autonomy+, as the electric-vehicle maker leans on artificial intelligence to boost revenue.

The announcements, made at Rivian's first Autonomy and AI Day, come as carmakers worldwide pour billions into AI systems that power long-awaited self-driving technologies that have faced several technical challenges.

Rivian said its longer-term goal is Level 4 autonomy, in which a vehicle can operate without human input in certain conditions, and that its new foundational AI model trained on vast amounts of real and simulated driving data, called the Large Driving Model, will underpin those efforts.

The new in-house chip, called the Rivian Autonomy Processor, will boost the vehicles' capacity to process data from cameras, LIDAR and other sensors, key to achieving its target of higher levels of autonomous driving.

Tesla too, develops its own AI chips, produced by Samsung (005930.KS), opens new tab and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (2330.TW), opens new tab.

Vidya Rajagopalan, senior vice president at Rivian, said the company expects that "at launch in late



2026, this will be the most powerful combination of sensors and inference compute in consumer vehicles in North America."

The EV maker's shares were down about 3% in afternoon trading.

Driver-assistance package Autonomy+, priced at \$2,500 one-time payment or \$49.99 per month, will include a Universal Hands-Free feature that works on more than 3.5 million miles of roads across the U.S. and Canada. The price is significantly lower than Tesla's \$8,000 to buy its Full Self-Driving system outright, or \$99 per month as a subscription.

Rivian also said it will add LIDAR sensors for three-dimensional mapping to its next-generation R2 models, improving their ability to iden-

tify obstacles and road conditions. The approach mirrors that of Alphabet's Waymo.

Its chip and driving model efforts will help Rivian expand hands-free driving capabilities later this month and roll out point-to-point autonomous driving next year, CEO RJ Scaringe said. The company expects to launch "eyes-off" functionality in 2026.

Rivian also introduced an AI Assistant that it says can manage some vehicle functions, sync with apps and flag potential repair issues.

COOLING EV DEMAND

The announcements arrive as demand has cooled for electric vehicles in the U.S. after a \$7,500 federal tax credit expired.(Reuters)

US weekly jobless claims surge amid seasonal adjustment challenges

THE number of Americans filing new applications for unemployment benefits surged last week, but that likely reflected difficulties adjusting the data for seasonal fluctuations around this time of year, rather than a material change in labor market conditions.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits jumped 44,000 to a seasonally adjusted 236,000 for the week ended December 6, the Labor Department said on Thursday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 220,000 claims for the latest week.

Claims had dropped to a three-year low in the prior week,

partly attributed to difficulties adjusting the data around the Thanksgiving holiday. Economists continue to describe the labor market as being in a "no fire, no hire" state despite a raft of layoffs announcement by large corporations, including Amazon.

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday cut its benchmark overnight interest rate by another 25 basis points to the 3.50% to 3.75% range. However, policymakers signaled they would likely pause further reductions in borrowing costs as they sought clearer signals about the direction of the job market and inflation that "remains somewhat elevated."

(Reuters)



▲ People wait in line to enter the Nassau County Mega Job Fair at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Uniondale, New York.

Microsoft fights \$2.8 billion UK lawsuit over cloud computing licences

MICROSOFT was on Thursday accused of overcharging thousands of British businesses to use Windows Server software on cloud computing services provided by Amazon, Google and Alibaba, at a pivotal hearing in a 2.1 billion-pound (\$2.81 billion) lawsuit.

Regulators in Britain, Europe and the United States have separately begun examining Microsoft and others' practices in relation to cloud computing.

Competition lawyer Maria Luisa Stasi is bringing the case on behalf of nearly 60,000 businesses that use the Windows Server on rival cloud platforms, arguing Microsoft makes it more expensive than on its own cloud computing service Azure.

Stasi is asking London's Competition Appeal Tribunal to certify the case to proceed, an early step in the proceedings.

Microsoft, however, says Stasi's case does not set out a proper blueprint for how the tribunal will work out any alleged losses and should be thrown out.

MICROSOFT ACCUSED OF 'ABUSIVE STRATEGY'

Stasi's lawyer Sarah Ford told the tribunal that thousands of businesses had been overcharged because Microsoft charges higher prices to those who do not use Azure, making it a cheaper option than Amazon's



▲ A view shows a Microsoft logo at Microsoft offices in Issy-les-Moulineaux near Paris, France.

AWS or the Google Cloud Platform (She also said that "Microsoft degrades the user experience of Windows Server" on rival platforms, which Ford said was part of "a coherent abusive strategy to leverage Microsoft's dominant position" in the cloud computing market.

Microsoft argues that its vertically integrated business, where it uses Windows Server as an input for Azure while also licensing it to rivals, can benefit competition.

In July, an inquiry group from Britain's Competition and Markets Authority said Microsoft's licensing practices reduced competition for cloud services "by materially disadvantaging AWS and Google".

Microsoft said at the time that the group's report had ignored that "the cloud market has never been so dynamic and competitive".

(Reuters)

Disney to invest \$1 billion in OpenAI, license characters for Sora AI tool

WALT Disney (DIS.N), opens new tab is investing \$1 billion in OpenAI and will let the startup use characters from Star Wars, Pixar and Marvel franchises in its Sora AI video and image generator, a crucial deal that could reshape how Hollywood makes content.

The partnership announced on Thursday is a pivotal step in Hollywood's embrace of generative artificial intelligence, despite the industry's concerns over the impact of AI on creative jobs and intellectual property rights.

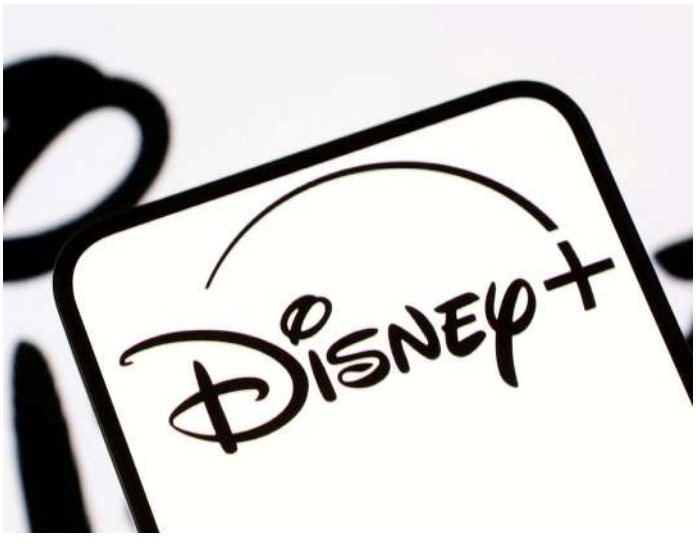
As part of the agreement, Sora and ChatGPT Images are expected to start generating fan-requested videos using licensed Disney characters in early 2026.

The companies will use OpenAI's models to build new products, tools and customer experiences, including for Disney+ subscribers.

The partnership comes months after Hollywood's premier talent agency sharply criticized the same technology Disney is now embracing.

Creative Artists Agency, which represents thousands of actors, directors and music artists, said in October OpenAI was exposing artists to "significant risk" through Sora, questioning whether the AI company believed creative professionals "deserve to be compensated and credited for the work they create".

(Reuters)



Investors say Elon Musk's SpaceX trading debut will be 'craziest IPO' ever

Investors welcomed reports that SpaceX was mulling a potential IPO that would help fund Elon Musk's Mars ambitions and value the rocket and satellite company at more than \$1 trillion, as some have been waiting for years to buy into the company.

SpaceX is looking to raise more than \$25 billion in an initial public offering that could come as early as June, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Though it is a high-risk and capital-intensive business, the demand for shares from retail investors will be "substantial," Shay Bolor, chief market strategist for Futurum Equities Research, said in an interview.

"It's going to be the craziest IPO in the history of the stock market. If it's trying to go for \$1.5 trillion, I wouldn't be surprised if it goes up to over \$2 trillion once it gets open," Bolor said.

RISKS AND DRAMA

SpaceX CEO, chief designer and founder Musk's well-documented unorthodox management style and anti-establishment rhetoric are not a deterrent, investors and analysts said.

Of the five companies Musk currently leads, including infrastructure firm The Boring Company and artificial intelligence startup and X owner xAI, his oversight of the only publicly traded one - electric vehicle maker Tesla - has been fraught with civil fines and clashes with regulators.

He once called U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission officials "bastards" after they stripped him of his role as chairman



▲ SpaceX logo and Elon Musk photo are seen in this illustration.

at Tesla and restricted his social media use over his 2018 tweet saying he had "funding secured" to take Tesla private.

Musk, who is already the world's richest person with a net worth of more than \$460 billion, threatened to leave Tesla earlier this year if the board did not approve an unprecedented 10-year, \$1 trillion pay package. Tesla's shares and sales suffered after Musk's four-month stint running the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency.

The risks and drama an innovative CEO

like Musk brings to a company are "part and parcel of being an investor in these types of companies, the reward has to compensate holders for the risk," said Christopher Marangi, co-chief investment officer for value at Mario Gabelli's GAMCO Investors.

GAMCO has exposure to SpaceX through its investment in EchoStar, which took the company's shares as part of a spectrum deal in September.

It is "too speculative" to say whether GAMCO would buy more shares in a SpaceX IPO, but "conceptually we would be excit-

ed for the prospect of space-oriented companies," Marangi said, noting that GAMCO also has a stake in Telesat

'STEAK AND SIZZLE'

Dan Hanson, senior portfolio manager who oversees Neuberger Berman's \$2.1 billion Quality Equity Fund, said SpaceX's combination of strong current operations and future potential should draw plenty of interest in an IPO. The fund had about 5% of its assets in unlisted shares of SpaceX as of the end of November.

"This is the rare situation where you have both the steak and the sizzle," he said.

While theoretical projects like sending humans to Mars might attract popular interest, Hanson said SpaceX's launch business and Starlink communications products are both established and would help it get a strong valuation - making it ready for an IPO.

Proceeds from an IPO could help SpaceX fund new technologies like space-based data centers that would not need as much energy-consuming cooling as Earth-based centers, Hanson said.

"It has all the markings of a market darling in today's technology revolution," said James St Aubin, chief investment officer of Ocean Park Asset Management, which does not have a stake in SpaceX. "There is a blue-sky outlook for its services. This allows the investors to side-step any valuation concerns while letting forecasts for growth prospects run wild."

(Reuters)

Bangladesh president, feeling 'humiliated', wants to step down halfway through term

BANGLADESHI President Mohammed Shahabuddin said on Thursday he plans to step down midway through his term after February's parliamentary election, telling Reuters he has felt humiliated by the interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus.

As head of state, Shahabuddin is commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but the role is largely ceremonial, and executive power rests with the prime minister and cabinet of the mainly Muslim country of 173 million people.

However, his position gained prominence when a student-led uprising forced long-time premier Sheikh Hasina to flee to New Delhi in August 2024, leaving him as the last remaining constitutional authority after parliament was dissolved.

Shahabuddin, 75, had been elected unopposed for a five-year term in 2023 as a nominee of Hasina's Awami League party, which has been barred from contesting the February 12 election.

BANGLADESH PRESIDENT SAYS YUNUS SIDELINED HIM

"I am keen to leave. I am interested to go out," he said in a WhatsApp interview from his official residence in Dhaka, in what he said was his first media interview since taking office.

"Until elections are held, I should continue," Shahabuddin said. "I am upholding my position because of the constitutionally held



▲ Bangladeshi President Mohammed Shahabuddin administers oath-taking ceremony of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as the country's head of the interim government in Bangladesh at the Bangabhaban, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

presidency."

The president said Yunus had not met him for nearly seven months, his press department had been taken away and, in September, his portraits were removed from Bangladeshi embassies around the world.

eliminated. I felt very much humiliated."

Shahabuddin said he had written to Yunus about the portraits, but no action was taken. "My voice has been stifled," he added.

Yunus' press advisers did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

PRESIDENT IN CONTACT WITH ARMY CHIEF

The president said he was in regular touch with Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman, whose troops stood aside in August 2024 amid deadly protests against Hasina, sealing the fate of the veteran politician. Shahabuddin said Zaman had made it clear he had no intention of grabbing power.

Bangladesh has a history of military rule, but Zaman has said he wants democracy to return.

Shahabuddin said that, although some student protesters had initially demanded that he resign, no political party had asked him to do so in recent months.

Opinion polls suggest the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of former prime minister Khaleda Zia and the hardline Jamaat-e-Islami will be the frontrunners to form the next government. They were part of a coalition that ruled between 2001 and 2006.

Asked if Hasina, who had governed for 20 years, had tried to contact him after fleeing, Shahabuddin declined to answer. He said he had been independent since becoming president, not affiliated to any party.

(Reuters)

M23 consolidates control over Congo town in blow to peace talks

THE M23 rebel group consolidated control over the strategic town of Uvira in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on Thursday, residents said, as Kinshasa warned that the Rwanda-backed advance could derail U.S. President Donald Trump's efforts to broker peace in the region.

Sporadic gunfire echoed on Uvira's outskirts Thursday morning. For months, the town had served as the base of the Kinshasa-appointed provincial government after rebels captured the provincial capital, Bukavu, in February.

Despite the tension, residents ventured out in search of food after spending the previous day hiding in homes or fleeing to the countryside to avoid clashes.

"The government told us that Uvira would never fall and that the situation

was under their control," said Godefroid Shengezi, a local teacher. "The reality today is quite the opposite."

Shengezi said he had been unable to locate his three young children and feared they had crossed the nearby border into Burundi, where officials say they have received tens of thousands of refugees in recent days.

The rebel coalition called the Alliance Fleuve Congo, which includes the M23, said Uvira residents were safe and could resume their activities in the town.

PEACE PROCESS UNDER THREAT

The latest breakthrough in M23's advance in the mineral-rich region comes a week after Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi and his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame met President Donald Trump in Washington and affirmed their commitment to a U.S.-brokered peace deal.

(Reuters)



▲ Bangladeshi President Mohammed Shahabuddin administers oath-taking ceremony of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as the country's head of the interim government in Bangladesh at the Bangabhaban, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



▲ A drone view shows protesters demonstrating outside the parliament during an anti-government rally, in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Bulgarian government resigns after weeks of street protests

BULGARIAN Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov handed in his government's resignation on Thursday following weeks of street protests over its economic policies and its perceived failure to tackle corruption.

Zhelyazkov announced his resignation in a televised statement minutes before parliament had been due to vote on a no-confidence motion.

"Our coalition met, we discussed the current situation, the challenges we face and the decisions we must responsibly make," Zhelyazkov said, announcing the government's decision to step down.

"Our desire is to be at the level that society expects," he said. "Power stems from the voice of the people."

Thousands of Bulgarians had rallied on Wednesday evening in Sofia and dozens

of other towns and cities across the Black Sea nation, the latest in a series of rolling demonstrations that have underlined public frustration with endemic graft and the failure of successive governments to root it out.

Last week, Zhelyazkov's government withdrew its 2026 budget plan, the first drafted in euros, due to the protests. Opposition parties and other organisations said they were protesting against plans to hike social security contributions and taxes on dividends to finance higher state spending.

Despite the government's retreat over the budget plan, the protests have continued unabated in a country which has held seven national elections in the past four years - most recently in October 2024 - amid deep political and social divisions.

(Reuters)

Mfowethu, Lugodvo Kuwe for men’s mental health camp

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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THE Mfowethu uGrend Men’s Mental Health Camp will feature a special comedy and reality showcase titled ‘Lugodvo Kimi.’

This popular Lugodvo Kimi trend is famously performed by the comedy quartet Gogo, S’lwane, Slim Bee, and Hembe. ‘Mfowethu uGrend?’ camp is an innovative men-only initiative that confronts the often-overlooked mental health challenges men face.

This groundbreaking event is set to take place from December 19 to 21, 2025, at the scenic Malolotja Nature Reserve. The camp is the brainchild of the Gogo & S’lwane Care Foundation, led by the popular comedians and social media influencers Gogo Eswatini and S’lwane. Known for their viral “Lugodvo Kimi” TikTok trend that captured national attention, the duo has expanded their influence beyond entertainment to champion a cause critical to the well-being of Eswatini’s communities.

The camp’s sessions will be moderated by Mfundo “Ndosh” Simelane and feature voices such as Mtera Thwala, Clement Dlamini, Malungelo Mamba, Lethumusa Simelane, and Dumsani “Njobo” Mamba. Gogo Eswatini and S’lwane will host the event, guiding participants through the program with empathy and understanding.

At the core of ‘Mfowethu uGrend?’ lies a powerful philosophy: healing men today is essential for the health, prosperity, and stability of future generations. The camp is designed as a sanctuary where men can confront their struggles without fear of judgment, recognising the urgent need to address the escalating mental health crisis among men in Eswatini and beyond.

S’lwane explained the motivation behind the camp with stark clarity, highlighting



▲ Comedians Gogo & S’lwane.

the visible signs of distress in society. “We looked within ourselves, searched within our own families and communities. We read newspapers, saw it on TV and heard about it on the radio. Worse, even our social media timelines are littered with it, from the attempted suicides to the completed ones, to the sexual and gender-based violence. The red flags are all over us, unmistakable. The crisis that is men’s mental ill-health is one we feel we can no longer ignore.”

Gogo Eswatini echoed this urgency,

emphasising the responsibility that comes with their public platform. “At some point, one feels like their influence is pointless if it is not fully leveraged to help better the lives of the people who make us what we are as influencers or public figures. Particularly, in such a troubled world as ours lately, every other weekend we are either burying a friend or a relative due to suicide, or we are reading in the papers that Man X has butchered Woman X, which to us will always be troubling.”



▲ M Nation.

M Nation set for SA New Year’s Eve show

ESWATINI’S music sensation M Nation is gearing up to headline a major South African New Year’s Eve celebration.

The artist will take centre stage at the highly anticipated ‘3rd Nagile Dam New Year Music Festival’ on January 1, 2026. M Nation’s headline performance is set to be a highlight, drawing attention to Eswatini’s growing influence in the Southern African music scene. In an interview, M Nation expressed his excitement about performing on such a prominent platform beyond his home country.

He emphasised that these international appearances are a clear sign of his growing success and recognition. “International shows are evidence that we are doing well. It tells us to work more because we are getting so much international recognition, so our brand is growing very fast and in a very good way,” he said.

Heritage

M Nation’s music is deeply rooted in his cultural heritage, and he plans to bring a fresh and authentic experience to the South African audience. “People should show love and come in numbers because we are coming with something different that has so much SiSwati language in it,” he shared. His commitment to incorporating the SiSwati language and cultural elements into his music highlights his role as a cultural ambassador, promoting Eswatini’s rich traditions on an international stage.

Fans can expect a vibrant and dynamic performance that not only entertains but also celebrates Eswatini’s identity. M Nation assured his followers that “emaSwati will be well represented on this international stage,” reinforcing his dedication to proudly showcasing his roots.

Diamond Drama Festival presents ‘Santa in the House of Judas’

THE Diamond Drama & Theatre Festival, in collaboration with the Old Stone Church Museum, is set to present a compelling theatrical event titled ‘Santa in the House of Judas: A Christmas Revelation of Blood and Hope.’

Scheduled for December 13, 2025, this production promises to offer audiences a unique blend of drama, poetry, storytelling, and dance, exploring the complex themes of betrayal, violence, and hope intertwined with the Christmas story. Morais Kiran, the Marketing Officer for the Diamond Drama and Theatre Festival, shared insights into the creative vision behind the play.

She explained that Santa’s character embodies the warmth, magic, and festive spirit traditionally associated with Christmas. In stark contrast, the ‘House of Judas’ symbolises betrayal and the darker facets of human nature. The phrase ‘Blood and Hope’ captures the tension between King Herod’s brutal violence and the miraculous birth of Jesus. Together, these elements form the core of the ‘Christmas Revelation,’ inviting audiences into a

narrative that is both familiar and deeply reimagined.

Kiran described the play as a vivid portrayal of a world overshadowed by fear and treachery, where the birth of a king sparks a profound struggle between despair and hope. “Santa in the House of Judas reveals the untold story of Christmas, where miracles rise boldly out of darkness,” she said.

Set against the backdrop of Bethlehem during King Herod’s ruthless reign, the drama unfolds in a tense atmosphere where danger lurks. Santa enters a household marked by betrayal, with Judas scheming and Herod’s rage threatening innocent lives caught in the balance of fate.

Tickets for this evocative production are priced at E20, inviting the community to engage in a Christmas story that challenges conventional narratives and offers a profound reflection on the human condition during the holiday season.

► Morais Kiran, the marketing officer of the diamond drama and theater festival.



Angel Ndlela spills tea on Africa’s finest ‘housewives’

JOHANNESBURG - The Real Housewives Ultimate Girls Trip: Africa has been streaming on Showmax for the past two weeks, and from last week it was made available on Mzansi Magic.

One of the most talked-about reality shows in Africa, the cast is packed with some of the continent’s finest “housewives”.

Representing The Real Housewives of Durban are Annie Mthembu, Angel Ndlela and Jojo Robinson. Joining them are Johannesburg OGs Christall Kay and Evodia Mogase, bringing their familiar glamour and attitude.From Nairobi, Dr Catherine Masitsa and Zena Nyambu add their style and sophistication, while Princess Jecoco from Abuja and Mariam Timmer from Lagos bring the unmistakable Nigerian heat.

Angel spilt the tea on the show, her dream cast and more. What was your reaction when you got the call to join the trip to Brazil with the girls? Ndlela: I remember I was about to take off on a flight to Durban from Polokwane when I received the call. I was so shocked at how God’s grace can locate you for things I genuinely never saw coming. I cried because I’m one of the cast members who was constantly doubted in terms of “belonging”. Not that I’ve ever needed validation, but this was a stamp that I definitely belong in the world of Housewives.

How would you describe the overall energy of the trip compared to your usual franchise?

Ndlela: Absolutely amazing. At no point was I nervous or anxious about meeting anyone; in fact, I made it a point that I would enjoy this to the fullest, not allowing anything to make me feel otherwise.

What surprised you the most about filming with housewives from other African cities and countries?

Ndlela: What surprised me the most was that we were picked accordingly; we have such similar personalities, some more extreme than others, but we were all very strong, opinionated and assertive. It was an interesting dynamic to see play out because nobody backs down, and that makes for great television.

‘Uzalo’ star bags international brand ambassadorship with Koffywrapz

JOHANNESBURG - Uzalo actor Bhekisizwe Mahlawe, affectionately known to fans as Calvinator, has scored an exciting new partnership, being unveiled as the brand ambassador for international coffee franchise Koffywrapz.

Calvinator says joining the brand feels like the start of something fresh and culturally connected.

“I’m so excited by the opportunity to be a brand ambassador for Koffywrapz, because it’s a new franchise and we know that coffee shops have been there for some time. But this one is very unique and new it relates more to people in the township, because you can fuse it with shisanyama or kota,” he told TshisaLIVE. “I’m just excited about the partnership.”

The star believes Koffywrapz brings a refreshing perspective to the coffee culture, especially for communities that have long viewed coffee spaces as exclusive.

“Coffee isn’t for upmarket people. We as Africans tend to think coffee shops are for wealthy people, but it’s not about coffee

What personal goals did you set for yourself before joining the cast?

Ndlela: I wanted to fully be myself. In season 4 of RHOD, I came in hot; in season 5, I was a bit more reserved, but this time, I was myself fully. I owed it to myself to just be me.

Who did you connect with the fastest, and why?

Ndlela: I actually formed a stronger bond with Jojo; it really grew our sisterhood. I also gravitated towards Jecoco: I love her energy so much.

Did the fight with Jojo catch you off guard?

Ndlela: Not really. I’m always ready for anything with anyone. Life and this show have taught me to always be aware.

What was the most intense moment of the trip for you?

Ndlela: There’s a scene we shot at Christ the Redeemer [the famous statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil]. There was a shift in me that changed my life forever, I kid you not.

If you could cast anyone for the show from any city, who would your dream cast be?

Ndlela: I would add myself, Brinette, Mrs Mops, Madame, LaC, Jojo, Londie, Mariam, Chioma, Jecoco, Dr C and Annie. Hell, I could go on, but these are my first picks.

As one of the youngest women in the franchise, what has the show taught you about yourself and other people?

Ndlela: The show has taught me just how strong, resilient and funny I am. About other people, it has taught me that if you do not

conform to the box they want to confine you in, they resort to cruelty, which again taught me that I can take it. I am strong like that.

Which housewife is the funniest when the cameras stop rolling?

Ndlela: Christall was something else; she can be annoying at times, but she is very funny.

Who is the most different onscreen versus offscreen?

Ndlela: Dr C. She is much nicer and more mature off-screen. I don’t know what happens [to her] when the cameras go on.

Sowetan Live



◀ Angel Ndlela.



▲ K.Keed.

K.Keed dominates new age hip hop scene

RAPPER K.Keed has set the tone for what she is about in South Africa’s hip hop scene.

Hailing from Gugulethu, Cape Town, she rose to prominence in 2019 and has solidified her presence with standout performances at the Boiler Room: Contemporary Scenes X Wear Broke and Rocking the Daises for Heineken. Now with the release of Bite the Bullett (Deluxe), which is an extension of her debut album, she gets vulnerable with her followers, giving them a raw introspection and emotionally charged evolution of the original project

“The story of Bite the Bullet is a personal one — it’s about self-reflection and facing adversities to get where I am,” K.Keed said.

“The destination isn’t always fixed, but the journey teaches you who you are. With this deluxe, I wanted to see if I could make it sound better without disturbing its true essence by just elevating it. Choosing to walk through the fire has shown me my capabilities. I’ve learnt resilience, that emotions and reality work hand in hand, and I’ve poured that growth into the music.”

Extension

The additional songs in the deluxe serve as an extension of the Bite the Bullet world, and she has been intentional about the collaborations she has on her project.

She says Way Home with Tellaman was one of the earliest songs created for the project, not forgetting the different vibe the contributions from Blxckie and Sastii bring to the project.

“I had a lot of fun creating them and just challenging myself to see how I could elevate a world that’s already been established in a holistic manner.

“My style and their styles blended well together, especially since we represent the new age of hip hop.

“I’m a person who knows what I want, so when choosing artists, I’m intentional, and it’s well thought out. There’s no pressure in any way because I know I bring something different to the table, and I’m sure other artists think the same. It’s important to make sure that all the different styles complement each other; that’s the only way we can establish the uniqueness of everyone’s distinct style. I know what I’m capable of and where I fit in, so I play my part in a song and let others be themselves too, because that naturally creates balance while creating.”

Times Live



▲ Bhekisizwe with the founders outside the coffee outlet.

only. There is also healthy food.”

With his rising acting profile, Calvinator says balancing his on-screen schedule and brand ambassador duties hasn’t been a challenge.

“The brand doesn’t interfere with my acting. I attend the brand’s engagements,

like activations, when I’m not shooting.”

Koffywrapz is set to expand across townships and urban hubs, bringing a fusion of global café culture and local flavour with Calvinator leading the charge as the face of the brand.

Times Live

Red Flags?

YOUR body will often let you know if something suddenly goes drastically wrong.

If something feels really off -- like changes in being able to see, talk, walk, think clearly, or communicate, or having chest pain or shortness of breath -- call 911. Don't wait to see if you feel better. If it's a stroke or heart attack, you need medical care right away.

Do You Need A Rest Day?

You don't feel up to your regular workout. Should you pass? Tune in. Do you feel sore and worn out? Then you may need a lighter day. Or are you feeling tempted by your favorite show and your couch? How often you need rest depends on how hard you work out and what you do, and how you feel. If you're not in pain, some movement is usually a good idea. A certified personal trainer can give you a training schedule that builds in recovery.

Is It Aging?

Some pain from wear and tear on your body is natural as you get older. Or you may notice that you're not as flexible or strong as you used to be. The cushion at your joints and between the bones of your spine can start to break down. That could hurt and limit your movement. It helps to stay active, but when the pain doesn't go away, your doctor might suggest a specialized "rehab" exercise routine to manage it.

Your Heart Rate Feels Off

You may feel lightheaded or dizzy with a racing, fluttering, or slowed pulse. If it lasts more than a few minutes or happens often, it might be from an illness or heart rhythm problem. Serious chest pain or trouble walking or speaking could mean a heart attack or stroke: Get to a hospital. An easy workout that suddenly seems hard and raises your pulse longer than usual may mean you're overdoing it. Talk to a doctor about your symptoms.

Burned Out?

If you're under stress that doesn't let up, it can really get to you. You might notice that you've got less energy, headaches, an upset stomach, or other symptoms. Little things that you used to be able to shake off now bother you. These may be signs that you need to step up your stress management. What helps: exercise, positive relationships, meditation, smiling and laughing, and taking breaks from whatever causes you stress.

Mood Matters

Everyone has times when they feel down or anxious. But if you have depression or anxiety, those conditions can affect you physically as well as emotionally. You might notice that you cry a lot, isolate yourself, avoid doing things you normally love, have tense muscles, find it hard to concentrate, and sleep or eat more (or less) than normal. These are cues to talk to your doctor or a therapist to get help.

Appetite Changes

If you find that you eat a lot more, or a lot less, than usual, your body may be



How to listen to your body

telling you that something isn't quite right. It might be that you're stressed out and are eating for emotional reasons. Or you might be depressed, and that's dimmed your appetite. Some conditions, and even getting older, can also affect your appetite. It helps to be active and to favor flavorful, healthy food. If that doesn't help, let your doctor know.

Injured or Just Sore?

A good gym session might make you mildly sore. But muscle pain that lasts several days could mean you overdid it -- too much, too soon, or too hard -- and have an injury. It's best to wait until you're back to normal to exercise again. So to stay healthy and keep to your routine, keep your intensity low and ramp up slowly.

Put on the Brakes

When you're working out and your body screams "Stop!" listen. You may have broken a bone or torn a muscle or ligament. Try RICE:

- Rest: Lie down and keep your weight off
- Ice: 20 minutes at a time
- Compression: Use a bandage for support
- Elevation: Raise the hurt area (above your nose if you can)

Go to an ER or clinic if the pain is intense, it worsens, or you also have fever and chills. Call your doctor if it still hurts after 2 weeks.

Sleep Problems

Do you often toss and turn at night? Your body may be saying you need more sleep. First, try simple things, like going to bed and getting up at the same time every day, sleeping at least 7 hours a night.

Keep your bedroom cool, and don't watch TV or check your phone after bedtime. Being active during the day also helps. Avoid big meals and caffeine too close to bedtime. If that's not enough, ask your doctor what the problem might be.

Pain That Doesn't Quit

Are you noticing twinges and aches that happen over and over again? Don't try to cover them up with medication or just "work through" them.

You want to stop a minor ache from turning into a major problem that won't go away. A doctor can help you pinpoint the source of the problem and treat it. You might need physical therapy so you start to feel it better.

A New Lump

Whether you're a woman with a lump in their breast or a young man with a testicular lump, these are good things to get a doctor to check. You really can't tell what they are, just based on how they feel. They aren't always cancer, but it's important to find out about new lumps for sure, and as soon as possible, in case you need treatment.

A Bad Reaction

Maybe you think you're starting to get allergies to pollen, or that your gut can't handle lactose or gluten. Or you notice that your skin is itchy and dry all of a sudden. These are things that are easy to jump to conclusions about. But it's a good idea to see a doctor to find out if you really do have an allergy or if something else is causing your symptoms. That way, you'll know what you need to avoid and how to treat your triggers.

Trust Yourself

You know yourself inside and out: how you feel on a good day, what feels "off," when you're sick, when you're rested. It can all show up in your body, from a clenched jaw from stress, to a sore calf muscle after hiking all weekend, to something serious. Sometimes it's hard to tell on your own, so never hesitate to ask your doctor, who's there to help.

What Helps Your Doc

When you go to your doctor to find out what's causing the problems you've noticed, there are a few things that will help. Bring a list of your symptoms, when they started, what seems to help, what makes them worse, and how you tried to fix the problem.

Tell your doctor about all the things you take, including vitamins, herbal products, over-the-counter medicines, and prescriptions. And bring a list of questions that are on your mind. **WebMD**

Donovan hits back at Australia coach Popovic over World Cup draw reaction

FORMER United States captain Landon Donovan delivered a fiery response to Australia coach Tony Popovic's "smug" take on the World Cup draw, predicting an early exit for the Socceroos from next year's 48-team tournament.

The US, co-hosts of the World Cup alongside Canada and Mexico, will play Paraguay, Australia and a playoff winner in group D.

Mauricio Pochettino's US side have beaten both Paraguay and Australia in recent months, making them favourites to progress from the group.

Australia coach Popovic, however, struck an optimistic tone when discussing his side's chances immediately after the draw, saying: "I am sure the boys are looking at the draw and can't wait to get over there."

In an appearance on a FOX Soccer podcast alongside former US internationals Cobi Jones and Brad Guzan, Donovan took issue with Popovic's reaction.

"I watched the Aussie coach's interview after the draw and it was really interesting. It was unique," he said.

"Because, most coaches say all the same stuff you're expecting - like 'oh, it's a difficult draw, this is going to be so hard. And his first comment was: 'we're satisfied'. And I was like: 'really? Are you?' He just had this smugness about him.

"And I'm just, 'Alright, I can't wait. I wish I was on the field. I want to



▲ Former United States captain Landon Donovan.

play these guys.' ... They're a solid team, they're hard to play against, this is not going to be some blow-out. But it's a team I think we should beat."

EXPECTING KNOCKOUT FOOTBALL

In their predictions for the group, Donovan, Jones and Guzan all tipped the US to sail through into the knockout stages.

"We all picked how we thought this would go and we're all aligned," said Donovan, who is the joint-record goalscorer for the US men's

team.

"We think the US (will) top the group. Turkey again, we're maybe getting ahead of ourselves, but we think that will be them (playoff winners), and we think they finish second.

"Paraguay (in third) and then thanks for coming Aussies and your smug coach. You can get back on the Qantas airplane and head back home, pal."

The World Cup will be held from 11 June to 19 July.

(Supersport)

Seve-like Chacarra and Burke blitz Royal Joburg to lead Dunhill

HE hits the ball a mile, just like Seve, he can expertly shape the ball both ways, not unlike the great Seve, he's got charisma, like Seve, and he's a swashbuckler of note out in the course, again a bit like Seve.

Spaniard Eugenio Chacarra, who shared the first-round lead with South Africa's Christiaan Burke on a brilliant nine-under-par 63 on Thursday in the Alfred Dunhill Championship at Royal Johannesburg, is therefore something akin to a second generation Seve Ballesteros.

"My father comes from the same northern Spain village, Pedrena, as Seve did, so our family knew their family. Seve was my hero when I was a little guy and I knew him. I was nine when he passed away and I was devastated. Now I try and play a bit like him."

Serengeti's power hitter Burke was off to a sensational start, making six straight birdies on holes one to six before ending off his round with an eagle-three at the par-5 18th.

The 25-year-old Chacarra hit every green in regulation in his 63, carding eight birdies, an eagle and just the one dropped shot.

"That was a three-putt that came out of nowhere, but otherwise a great day. This is my first visit to South Africa. I played well at Sun City last week but today was much better.

"The course is very wet after all the rain they've had but a softer course can make golf a bit easier as you can attack the pins and I did that today."

Chacarra and Burke lead by one from South Africa's Brandon Stone and Thriston Lawrence, who both posted 64.

"It's the best I've putted in, maybe, 18 long months," said 32-year-old Stone.

"I've gone to a broomstick putter and today, seriously, I holed everything. The best putting round I've had as a professional golfer. No doubt about this. It was just one of those days. And it's great to be back at Royal Johannesburg. I first played here as a kid about two decades ago and I was able to

channel that inner child from back then out there today."

Branden Grace, Danie van Tonder and Zimbabwe's Benjamin Follett-Smith all signed for 65s, with Oliver Bekker and England's John Parry home in 66 on the iconic East Course, where magnificent English Oak, Weeping Willows and Sweet Chestnut trees line the manicured fairways.

South Africa's 21-year-old sensation Aldrich Potgieter and compatriots Dean Burmester, Christiaan Bezuidenhout, Louis Oosthuizen, Jaden Schaper and defending champion Shaun Norris are bracketed with a big group on 67, Bezuidenhout making birdies at the last five holes he played (No 5 to No 9 as he started his day at the 10th) to get to that number.

"I started off a bit slowly because it was chilly early in the morning, but my eagle three at 18 (his ninth hole of the day) got me going," Grace said of his 65.

"I love this golf course and have done well here before," he added, referring to his 2007 Silver Vase amateur win at Royal and his 2012 Joburg Open victory.

Chacarra attended Oklahoma State University where he was a first team All-American, reaching a high of No 2 in the World Amateur Golf Rankings, before turning professional and joining LIV Golf in June 2022.

In October 2022, Chacarra gained his first professional victory, winning LIV Bangkok. In 2023 he won the St Andrews Bay Championship played at Fairmont St Andrews on the Asian Tour as part of the International Series. He defeated Matt Jones in a 10-hole sudden-death playoff.

Chacarra left LIV Golf after three seasons, and earned full DP World Tour status when he won the Hero Indian Open on a sponsor's invite in March this year.

(Supersport)



▲ Aldrich Potgieter.

FIA boosts F1 superlicence points allocation for IndyCar drivers

TOP IndyCar drivers will find the road to Formula One a little easier after the FIA increased the number of superlicence points available to those competing in the US-based open-wheel series. The International Automobile Federation (FIA) agreed at a meeting on Wednesday to reward better those finishing between third and ninth in IndyCar.

To qualify for a superlicence, drivers must acquire 40 ranking points over a three-year period.

Only the IndyCar champion receives that many in one go, with 30 for the championship runner-up.

The FIA's revised rules allocate more points for those finishing between third and ninth from 2026 "to reflect the growing significance of the category".

Formula One does not currently have a US driver, although the sport is booming in the United States with three races and Cadillac entering next season as an 11th and American team on the starting grid.

Nine-time IndyCar race winner Colton Herta will compete in next year's Formula Two championship while serving as a test driver for Ca-



▲ Colton Herta

dillac.

Herta has failed to secure enough points on his superlicence based on his IndyCar form over recent seasons.

IndyCar fans have long felt the FIA has undervalued the talents of IndyCar drivers in comparison to junior series like Formula Two.

Under the change, Herta would be closer to meeting the threshold for a

superlicence.

"It's good news for IndyCar and good for the drivers in the series if they do want to race in F1," Arrow McLaren principal Tony Kanaan told www.motorsport.com.

"An IndyCar driver shouldn't need to go to a feeder series to prove they've got what it takes to compete in any other series."

(Supersport)

Salah is right to feel betrayed by Liverpool

FOOTBALL is a funny old game. All it took was a brief barren spell in front of goal for Mohamed Salah, and the English media suddenly seemed to develop amnesia about just how great he has been for Liverpool.

Not only that, but his coach Arne Slot has bowed to pressure from former players turned pundits, who were all calling for Salah to be dropped from the team.

Salah has every right to feel aggrieved by the turn of events. His explosive interview in the aftermath of the 3-3 away draw with Leeds United at Elland Road had been a long time coming. This is a Liverpool side leaking goals and desperate for stability at both ends of the pitch. In such circumstances, Salah should have been protected, not singled out.

Yet four games without a goal were enough for Slot to drop him to the bench against West Ham, a decision that appeared to spark the tension we are now seeing. What followed was another exclusion from the starting line-up against Sunderland, although this time he did emerge off the bench at half-time. His no-show against Leeds appears to have been the final trigger for the Egyptian.

He went on a strong rant, saying he had been thrown under the bus, and added that someone clearly wanted him out of the club he has served with distinction for the past eight years. Imagine, for a moment,



▲ Liverpool head coach Arne Slot has insisted he does not feel his authority has been undermined by Mohamed Salah's comments.

Steven Gerrard being benched during a period when the team needed leaders on the pitch. Slot would not have escaped scrutiny. Yet with Salah, the bar seems conveniently lower.

It's as if Slot and company were waiting for Salah's drop in form to finally move him but this should have never been the case.

Salah deserved more time to turn his form around because this is the first occasion in eight years in which he has genuinely struggled in front of goal. 250 goals for Liverpool makes him the club's third-highest goalscorer of all time, behind Roger

Hunt (285) and Ian Rush (346) since arriving from Serie A side AS Roma in 2017.

Salah is far from naïve and clearly has a big ego, as all top players do. Big-name players like Salah, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are wired differently. That's part of what makes them great and I think Salah is justified in feeling betrayed by the coach. It is difficult to ignore the sense that promises were made before he signed his contract extension, only for the goalposts to move once the season began.

(The Citizen)

Sports minister awaits Broos response to racism and sexism allegations

MINISTER of Sports, Arts and Culture Gayton McKenzie says he is awaiting a response from Bafana head coach Hugo Broos after the Belgian was accused of making racist and sexist remarks.

"I'm awaiting the response from SAFA & Coach Hugo Broos before I comment. The comments made by the coach requires clarification as it is open to any interpretation currently," tweeted McKenzie.

UDM complaint about Broos

On Thursday, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) said they had asked the Human Rights Commission (HRC) to investigate comments Broos made about Bafana defender

Mbekezeli Mbokazi and his agent Basia Michaels.

Broos slammed Mbokazi at a press conference on Wednesday at TUKS High Performance Centre, after the 20 year-old missed a flight from Durban to join the Bafana camp ahead of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations finals.

'He is a black guy but when he comes out of my room he will be white,' Broos said of Mbokazi.

Broos also criticised Mbokazi's move to the MLS in the US to join Chicago Fire. He referred to Mbokazi's agent, Basia Michaels as a 'nice little woman who ... thinks she knows football.'

(The Citizen)



▲ Bafana head coach Hugo Broos.

A Christmas wish for the Boks

THERE was some surprise in both directions when the ban handed down to Eben Etzebeth by a Six Nations disciplinary committee was announced last week. Some felt it was too lenient, some thought it was too harsh.

What happened in the last two minutes of what was a brilliant international season for the Springboks has probably received enough attention already, so let's move on, except to say this: what Etzebeth is getting is what every Bok who was used in the Castle Rugby Championship and the July Incoming Tours should be getting.

There has been some talk from the Sharks about putting Etzebeth to work as a coach, both of age-group teams and helping Warren Whiteley with the lineouts, during part of his suspension (they acknowledge that he also deserves a holiday that is due to him at some point too).

But regardless of what chores they choose for him to do, he will not be playing himself, which means he gets roughly, or maybe just a little bit more, of what he got in terms of time away from playing when South African rugby was committed only to the southern hemisphere season through the alignment with Super Rugby.

It used to be the case that the Boks would end their rugby year with the last international game on the last weekend of November. They were usually pretty knackered by then, so they looked forward to a complete mental and physical break from the sport over December and halfway into January. They'd



▲ Eben Etzebeth.

then start their pre-season and might play a pre-season game in late February before starting the Super Rugby proper in March.

Even then, there were complaints that the season was too long and arguments that further time should be allocated for a window of no rugby so that the players could go through a proper conditioning phase. But it was heaps better than what the case is now, with the top players going straight from a long tour, which culminated a long international season, into a busy period of Vodacom URC and Investec Champions Cup fixtures.

Etzebeth's next game will be on 28 March, and given that he needs a mandatory eight-week rest as per the Bok resting protocols, he is missing closer to four to six Sharks games, rather than the 12 stipulated in his suspension.

Given that he is not out for the entire season, like some of us thought he would be, the Sharks can balance out their unhappiness at losing him over this period with the probability that he will return refreshed after having his first continuous non-injury-related break from the game since he was playing Super

Rugby for the Stormers.

Given that SA's commitment to the Rugby Championship means he played in August and September when his teammates were resting, his time in France would not have allowed him an off-season either.

And if there are Bok teammates who envy Etzebeth for his time off, I wouldn't blame them. He's getting what they should all be getting.

THERE MUST BE AN ENDING AND A BEGINNING

All of the above cues my answer when asked in a YouTube podcast what my wish would be for the Springboks for Christmas. Indeed, for more than just the Boks but South African rugby in general. It has to be the long-awaited inception of a global season, which in this country's case would mean the end of the ridiculous 12-month season that not only impacts negatively on the SA challenge in the URC and the Champions Cup but could yet come back in time to bite the Boks.

That the All Black players who will face the Boks in the big event of next year, which is the Greatest Rivalry series in late August and September, are now spending their time doing the summer pursuits of fishing, surfing, watching cricket and generally taking time off from the game, while all the Boks are still working, has to be a concern. (Superpsort)

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
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KENYA is next in line for the men’s netball national team in the ongoing 2025 African Netball Cup. The two sides will face off in the semifinals of the annual continental cup on Sunday in Malawi.

Eswatini won the group stages meeting against the East Africans by 37-28 win.

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

The local lads booked their spot in the last four of the international assignment after finishing at the top of Group B with six points.

Eswatini National Netball Association (ENNA) Secretary Nkabindze Shabalala confirmed the news when reached for comment.

“We wish the team best of luck during the semifinals and are confident that they will do well in the semifinals,” he said.

The team is under the guidance of Green Lightning coach Vimbibukhosi Ndlanga-mandla.

Kenya test for men’s netball national team



▲ The mens netball national team.

Mukelo bows out of World champs

SO close yet so far for local boxer Mukelo Dlamini.

The pugilist has bowed out in the 2025 International Boxing Championships following his defeat to Orazbek Assylkulov from Kazakhstan on Tuesday.

He lost the bout by knockout, ending the country’s dream in the global showpiece currently taking place in the United Arab Emirates.

Other local boxers suffered early exits in the tournament such as Thabiso Dlamini, Khaya Shongwe, Khaya Mkhabela and Qhawe Gamedze.

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

Eswatini Boxing Association Secretary Nkosinathi Dlamini commended the boxer’s effort in the tournament.

“The Eswatini Boxing Association (EBA) is proud to report on the recent participation of our national boxing team in the International Competition in Dubai. Despite facing tough opponents, our boxers demonstrated remarkable skill, determination, and sportsmanship, earning them a special place in the hearts of Eswatini nationals worldwide,” he said.

He also thanked the world governing body IBA hosting the games, and the Eswatini

Sport and Recreation Council for supporting the team.

“We would like to thank the International Boxing Association (IBA) for the opportunity to participate in the prestigious competition. We also thank the Eswatini Sports Council for their unwavering support and guidance throughout the preparation process,” he said

Results for Boxing national team

- ▶ Mukelo Dlamini (57kg) - Lost in Round 16.
- ▶ Sibonelo Ndzimandze (71kg) - Lost in Round 32.
- ▶ Khaya Shongwe (54kg) - Lost in Round 32.
- ▶ Qhawe Gamedze (60kg) - Lost in Round 32.
- ▶ Khayelihle Mkhabela (67kg) - Lost in Round 32.
- ▶ Thabiso Dlamini (63.5kg) - Lost in Round 32.



▲ Mukelo Dlamini.

Eswatini for Angola cross-country race

LOCAL Athletes will gain international exposure before the end of the year.

This follows the invitation of local athletes to the Angola cross country competition on the weekend of December 30-31, 2025.

Athletics Eswatini president Zakhele Dlamini confirmed the assignment during their recent press conference.

“We have been invited to take part in the Angola cross-country competition and will soon announce details of the competition in due course,” he said.

Dlamini further revealed that they will be having regional competitions in the Shiselweni and Manzini regions.

“We have seen a gap in the two regions, and we are working towards setting races. We urge athletes to secure permanent licenses from the Association to be eligible to take part in our competitions next year,” he said.

The Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) vice president also welcomed



▲ Athletics Eswatini president Zakhele Dlamini.

their new Marketing and Communications officer, Victor ‘Mavikane’ Dlamini.

“We are pleased to announce the new spokesperson of the association. We are confident that he will take the sport to greater heights due to his experience in the sport,” he said.

He previously held the same position in 2024 before stepping down due to the previous leadership tur-

moil that rocked the association.

The incoming Marketing and Communications Officer said he was honoured by the appointment.

“I am humbled by the appointment, and I will work with the entire Athletics family in taking the sport to greater heights. We will hold more road running events in the four regions of the country in a bid to improve the standard of the sport in the country,” he said.



▲ Local runners in action during a local race.

MTN PREMIER LEAGUE BUILD-UP

‘Rio’ returns to Moneni!

By Chris Dlamini

...As E120k ‘carrot’ race goes on in action-packed Sunday
D D W L L

Faltering bitter rivals clash

Mbabane Swallows vs. Manzini Wanderers

Date: Sunday, December 14, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 3.45pm

The league was deprived of this bitter rivalry last season - Manzini Wanderers was in caught challenging its relegation, albeit successfully, but could not be registered to play. The fallen hub giants desperately need a win after hitting rock bottom, taking the 16th spot in the standings. They could not better the situation on Wednesday as they played a 1-all draw with fellow struggling hub minnows Sisonkhe who are 15th. Just like their capital city bitter rivals Mbabane Swallows, they are desperate to make amends as of this clash. The difficult part is that Umkhonto KaShaka, as Mbabane Swallows, is affectionately known, is not doing quite well, and have their own internal squabbles still haunting them. They have not won a match in the last six but three draws and defeats. On Wednesday (yesterday), Swallows played a 1-1 draw with their bitter rivals, Young Buffaloes, which sees them on mid-table with 12 points. Umkhonto KaShaka is six points ahead of Wanderers who have six points down the basement. As is, things are not looking for both sides, but it is LiWeseli (Wanderers) that needs this like a people do oxygen.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

Sizolwethu ‘Nunu’ Shabalala (M. Swallows wing forward)

Mario Jamine (M. Wanderers goalkeeper)

LOG STANDINGS:

M. Swallows - 9 (12 points)
M. Wanderers - 16 (6 points)

HEAD-TO-HEAD:

03/03/24
M. Swallows 3-0 M. Wanderers
02/12/23
M. Wanderers 1-3 M. Swallows
PERFORMANCE GUIDE:
M. Swallows
D L D D L
M. Wanderers
D L L L W

Once a Pirate, always a Pirate for ‘Rio’

Moneni Pirates vs. Green Mamba
Date: Sunday, December 14, 2025
Venue: Mavuso Sports Centre, Manzini
Kick-off: 1.30pm

It’s no sweet home-coming but a battle for points - that is the situation as Moneni Pirates reunite with their former star midfielder Lindani ‘Rio’ Matsenjwa, now with the weekend rivals Green Mamba. He will face his former team just about a week since he was captured celebrating with the Moneni Buccaneers after they

ALL eight elite fixtures in one day - you are definitely spoil for choice!

As you make your pick, here’s a tip, Mavuso Sports Centre has three of the country’s ‘Big 4’, then a star-studded and competent Green Mamba, while you also have Mbabane Highlanders and Royal Leopard, leaders and reigning champions Nsingizini Hotspurs against Young Buffaloes at Mkhuzweni Technical Centre and King Sobhuza II Stadium respectively. Let’s quickly go through some of these mouthwatering clashes as Nsingizini Hotspurs look to retain their lead and gain more ground towards the first round leaders’ E120 000 incentive.

A must-win for ‘Bull’, Leopard!

Mbabane Highlanders vs. Royal Leopard

Date: Sunday, December 14, 2025
Venue: Mkhuzweni Technical Centre
Kick-off: 3pm

After playing draws in their midweek fixtures, both giants Mbabane Highlanders and Royal Leopard will be looking for one thing - redemption. What remedy can would be good for either side? It definitely is the maximum points as the gap above them will widen with more points dropped. Highlanders were disappointed to draw with Ubombo Sugar, a goalless one for that matter after they had just beaten a stronger Young Buffaloes on Sunday with a 2-1 margin. So, to come out of that setback, a win works better even for their loyal supporters. The black and gold outfit also has to avenge last season’s failures against Ingwe Mabalabala, as Royal Leopard fondly trades. The latter wants to retain supremacy over Inkunz’emnyama or the Black Bull (Highlanders), it all works. Leopard also got a point on Wednesday against security forces derby rivals Green Mamba. Their match ended 1-all. It is a match where football has always been played, goals scored - the last meeting produced three goals, Leopard narrowly winning 2-1. Another interesting part here is that they are both currently way out of the first round incentive race, but not the title race, and Highlanders will face their former stars in gifted twins Fanelo and Lungelo Tsabedze as well as Captain Muzi ‘Mzoro’ Dlamini. A game for the eye!

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

Sphiwe Hopewell Cele (Highlanders wing forward)
Lungelo Tsabedze (Leopard forward)

LOG

STANDINGS:

M. Highlanders - 8 (13 points)
R. Leopard - 13 (10 points)

HEAD-TO-HEAD:

01/02/25
R. Leopard 2-1 M. Highlanders
28/09/24
M. Highlanders 0-2 R. Leopard

PERFORMANCE GUIDE:

M. Highlanders
D W L D L
R. Leopard



Royal Leopard and Mbabane Highlanders players.



Mbabane Swallows players celebrtaing a goal.



Manzini Wanderers players line-up before a match.

edged Swallows 1-0. Matsenjwa is on his first season at Green Mamba. The two sides collide in the first of a double-header fixture at the tiny hub arena. Looking at previous meetings last season and the previous match results, it does not look good for Emabhakaniya (Moneni Pirates). They need this one as much as Green Mamba. The latter are in the E120 000 ‘carrot’ race as they sit just five places and four points behind leaders Nsingizini Hotspurs, with five games to go before the round ends. Moneni, after a fourth consecutive win over Mbabane Swallows last Sunday, suffered a 2-1 setback on Wednesday against giant-killing rookies Tabankulu Celtics. On the other hand, Green Mamba drew 1-all in the security forces derby with Royal Leopard. Both teams will be out for the max-

imum points to improve their standings, which makes up for a good match.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

Biko Sibandze (M. Pirates wing forward)
Lindani ‘Rio’ Matsenjwa (G. Mamba midfielder)

LOG STANDINGS:

M. Pirates - 11 (11 points)
G. Mamba - 6 (18 points)

HEAD-TO-HEAD:

11/05/25
M. Pirates 1-2 G. Mamba
14/12/25

G. Mamba 0-1 M. Pirates

PERFORMANCE GUIDE:

M. Pirates - L W D L L
G. Mamba - D W W L D

By Sibusiso Masilela
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BIG moment for former Nsingizini Hotspurs striker Junior Zidonga.
The lanky TS Galaxy striker has been included in the 25-member final squad for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations.

The continent’s showcase will take place in Morocco between December 21 and January 18, 2026.

This is according to the ‘Warriors’ squad released by the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) on Thursday.

Zidonga had a one-season stint with the reigning MTN Premier League champions last season.

He was part of the ‘Insingizi yezulu’ squad that competed in the 2024 CAF Confederation Cup against Betway Premiership side Stellenbosch FC under the guidance of Zimbabwe mentor Alexio Sergion.

He later left the Shiselweni-based side due to family commitments before securing a move to Marumo Gallants.

He later moved to the Mpumalanga-based side.

Eswatini’s top female referee, Letticia Viana, will be part of the Video Assistant Referees panel during the biennial continental assignment.

The Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) finals are the culmination of the tournament, where the top teams from Africa compete for the prestigious title. The finals are held every two years, with the most recent final taking place in 2024, where Ivory Coast defeated Nigeria 2-1 to claim the championship. The format of the finals has evolved over the years, with the introduction of extra time and penalty shoot-outs as tie-breaking methods. The tournament’s history is marked by Egypt’s dominance, with seven titles to its name.

Ex-Nsingizini Hotspurs striker for AFCON Finals



▲ Zimbabwe National Team players appreciate their supporters after qualifying for the AFCON Finals.

Goalkeepers

- Washington Arubi (Marumo Gallants)
- Elvis Chipezeze (Magesi)
- Martin Mapisa (MWOS FC)

Defenders

- Godknows Murwira (Scotland FC)
- Emmanuel Jalai (Dynamos FC)
- Sean Fusire (Sheffield Wednesday FC)
- Munashe Garananga (FC Copenhagen)
- Gerald Takwara (Al Ittihad Misurata SC Libya)
- Isheanesu Mauchi (Simba Bhora FC)
- Brandon Galloway (Plymouth Argyle FC)
- Teenage Hadebe (FC Cincinnati)
- Alec Mudimu (Flint Town United)
- Divine Lunga (Mamelodi Sundowns FC)

Midfielders

- Marvelous Nakamba (Luton Town FC)
- Jonah Fabisch (FC Erzgebirge Aue)
- Andrew Rinomhota (Reading FC)
- Prosper Padera (SJK Seinä Joki)
- Tawanda Chirewa (Wolverhampton Wanderers FC)
- Knowledge Musona (Scotland FC)

Strikers

- Bill Antonio (KV Mechelen FC)
- Ishmael Wadi (CAPS United FC)
- Tawanda Maswanhise (Motherwell FC)
- Daniel Msendami (Marumo Gallants FC)
- Prince Dube (Young Africans SC)
- Washington Navaya (TelOne FC)
- Macauley Bonne (Maldon & Tiptree FC)
- Junior Zidonga (TS Galaxy FC)
- Tadiwanashe Chakuchichi (Scotland FC)



▲ Junior Zidonga.

Sitsebe drops in FIFA rankings

THE senior women’s national team, Sitsebe, has dropped one place in the latest FIFA rankings.

The Bongani Makhukhula-led charges are now ranked 184 according to the latest charts released by the World Governing body on Thursday.

Spain are topping the charts, followed by the United States of America (USA) and Germany.

Sitsebe recently played a series of friendly matches against Mozambique in preparation for the 2026 COSAFA senior women’s championships and the 2026 Women’s Cup of Nations qualifiers.

Makhukhula said they will continue working hard in the international scene.

“The rankings are clearly showing us that we should put in extra effort as a country, and we will continue doing so in the upcoming competitions. The recent friendly matches have helped us to gauge our players,” he said.

The Women’s Africa Cup of Nations

(WAFCON), known for sponsorship purposes as the TotalEnergies Women’s Africa Cup of Nations is a biennial international women’s football tournament organised by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) since 1998 as the qualification for the FIFA Women’s World Cup for African nations.

Initially started as a home-and-away qualification competition, it got rechristened as a biennial tournament in 1998.

Nigeria is the most successful nation in the history of the tournament since it became full-scale in 1998, winning 10 of the 13 editions so far and making it to at least the semi-final in every tournament they have played.

Equatorial Guinea won as hosts of the 2008 and 2012 editions. South Africa won the 2022 edition to become the third African nation to ever win the tournament. Morocco, Ghana, and Cameroon are the only nations outside of the previous winners to have also made it to the tournament’s final. Nigeria is the current champion, having won the 2024 final.



SA defender’s future uncertain at Malanti Chiefs

SOUTH African defender Zipho Ngcobo’s future with Malanti Chiefs looks uncertain.

A source close to the matter revealed that the player is on his way out of the Pigg’s peak based side during the December/January transfer.

“Zipho might leave Malanti Chiefs, and he is not clear about his next move. He will know his next move in the next few weeks, pending his talks with his current team,” the source said.

Malanti Chiefs senior official Lungile Dube maintained that the player was still part of the team.

“The player is still part of us, and he is only nursing a hamstring injury, hence he has missed recent matches,” she said.

Ngcobo joined the black and gold outfit four years ago and helped the club regain promotion at the end of last season as the National First Division champions.

He has been regular for the Sreten Palovic led side, and he helped the team reach the quarterfinals of the 2025 8Bet Trade Fair cup.

He is part of the Malanti contingent, which include Daniel Yeboah (Ghana) Sandile Mazibuko and Gift Namieg (both South Africans).



Salah right to feel betrayed by Liverpool
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Sport







NATIONAL TEAM CALL UP:

Ex-Nsingizini striker for AFCON Finals



... Lanky SA's TS Galaxy striker Junior Zidonga included in Zimbabwe's 25-member final squad for AFCON tournament slated for December 21, 2025-January 18, 2026, in Morocco.