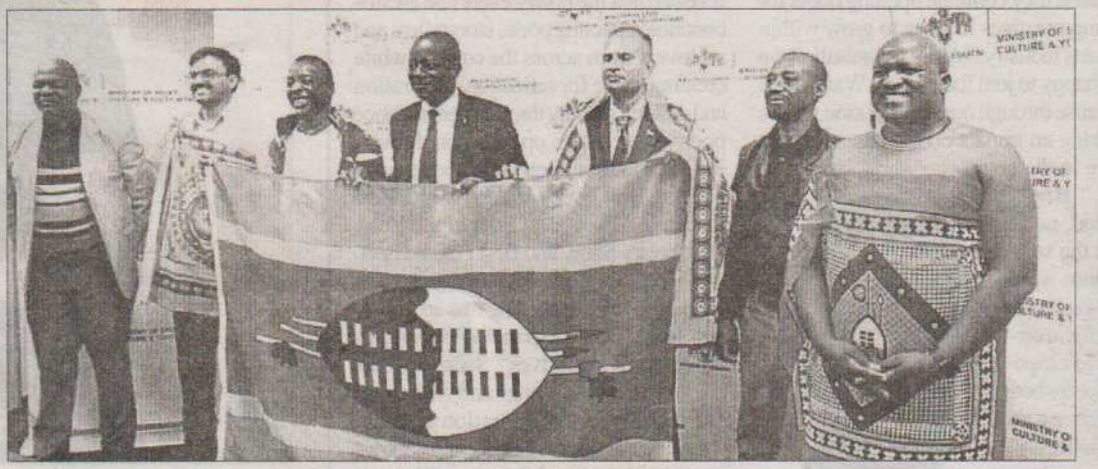
Minister bids farewell to artist heading to India

BY KHETSIWE KHUMALO

MINISTER of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs Bongani Nzima yesterday bid farewell to fine artist Honest Mhlanga, who is set to represent the country through art in New Delhi, India.

Speaking at the ministry's boardroom, Minister Nzima praised Mhlanga for flying the country's flag on the international stage. He also mentioned that a second artist was still finalising travel documents and hoped the process would be completed successfully.

"Today, we proudly acknowledge fine artist Honest Mhlanga, who is set to travel and represent Eswatini internationally. Opportunities such as these are important in exposing our creatives to global platforms and in showcasing the richness of Eswatini's artistic talent," said Nzima. Mhlanga, who flew out in the afternoon, is set to attend the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi and is expected back home on May 26. Nzima stressed that government would continue to support artists whenever they represented the country at recognised international festivals, competitions and exhibitions. "As we continue to grow our creative sector, it is important that we maintain unity and respect for our national symbols while positioning the country positively on the global stage," he added.



Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs Bongani Nzima with fine artist Honest Mhlanga, Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini Ram Prasad and other government officials during the farewell ceremony at the ministry's boardroom yesterday morning.

The minister also thanked the Indian Embassy for supporting local artists and promoting cultural exchange between Eswatini and India. Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini Ram Prasad said Mhlanga had been specifically invited to create sketches from an African perspective for an exhibition during the summit. "Honest Mhlanga had been requested by India to represent the country and make sketches using an African lens. These artworks will be displayed at an exhibition attended by world leaders and galleries.

After the exhibition, they will return to Eswatini and be displayed at the Indian High Commission offices and on social media as a gift to the country," said Prasad. Mhlanga said he was honoured to represent the country and promised to conduct himself with respect while abroad. "I will treat myself with the utmost respect while in India in accordance with the way Emaswati behave wherever they are. I pray that the creative gods allow me to produce the best I can to represent the country," said Mhlanga.

The artist admitted that he was nervous about producing two artworks for the exhibition but remained excited about the opportunity. He also encouraged government to support the arts sector more strongly before international organisations take the lead.



Eswatini National Council of Arts and Culture Chief Executive Officer Stanley Dlamini dresses Prasann Dubran in a lihiya presented to him by the minister.



Fine artist Honest Mhlanga (centre) with Prasann Dubran and Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini Ram Prasad.

...URGES ARTISTS TO REQUEST NATIONAL FLAG

ARTISTS and creatives travelling abroad have been urged to formally request the national flag before departure.

Speaking during the farewell event for Mhlanga, Minister Nzima said the Eswatini flag represented the country's pride, identity and sovereignty, adding that creatives representing the nation internationally should carry it with honour.

"The flag is not merely a symbol; it represents our pride, identity and sovereignty as a nation, Nzima said.

He added that the ministry also had incentives and support measures available for those officially representing the Kingdom of Eswatini on international platforms.

Further

Nzima further commended local comedy duo Gogo and Slwane for representing the country well during the recent African Social Media Influencers Summit (ASMIS) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, between May 7–8.

"I would also like to specially commend Gogo and Slwane for representing the country exceptionally well during the recent African Influencers event.

"Their participation and impact on the international stage continue to demonstrate that Emaswati are capable of competing and excelling globally," said Nzima.

The minister said government was proud with the manner in which the duo carried the country's identity and culture with dignity and excellence.

The African Social Media Influencers Summit brought together some of Africa's leading digital creatives, opening opportunities for collaboration, learning and cross-border creative exchange.

Gogo and Slwane have since returned home after participating in the continental gathering.

The event featured popular African content creators, including William Last KRM, Bradley The Gen Z Giant and Tenge Tenge, who engaged with fellow influencers from across the continent.

