

Swaziland urges "witch doctor" tax

9th December, 2012



A politician from the tiny southern African kingdom of Swaziland has proposed a hike in the tax rate on the nation's traditional healers. Majahodvwa Khumalo has urged the government to levy the tax to help solve his country's worsening economic situation. He believes the time is ripe for upping the tax on the healers, known as 'sangomas'. Mr Khumalo said the sangomas have quadrupled their fees in recent years but are still paying very little in tax. He told the Swazi parliament the healers needed to pay their fair share towards the country's economic recovery, saying: "A majority of our people consult traditional healers but the money they pay to government falls far too short of the money they make."

The sangomas currently pay an annual fee of 10 emalangeni (\$1.15) to ply their trade. Many Swazis visit the healers, who are a key part of the nation's health service. Opponents say raising taxes on the sangomas would bring in very little revenue. Swaziland is in dire financial straits. Its budget deficit has skyrocketed to 15 per cent of its GDP. Many say King Mswati III should do more to help his country. He spends a small fortune on his many wives, lavish lifestyle, and a bloated military. The sangomas feel they are being singled out. They have already spent decades trying to rid themselves of a "witch doctor" label given to them by Europeans. Western pharmacists are now studying their cures and medicines.

Sources: Reuters / Wikipedia

Writing

Rich people should pay a much higher rate of tax than ordinary workers. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

politicians / kingdoms / Swaziland / traditional healers / pay their fair share / majority / annual fee / health service / opponents / revenue / dire financial straits / cures

True / False

- The king of Swaziland has told traditional healers to pay more tax. T / F
- The healers have increased their fees four-fold in recent years. T / F
- A politician believes healers should help the country's economy more. T / F
- The politician said the healers were already paying enough in tax. T / F
- The healers pay around \$10 a year in fees to the government. T / F
- Critics of the proposal say a tax on healers would bring in little money. T / F
- People in Swaziland believe the king should spend less money. T / F
- The West has no interest in the traditional ways of the Swazi healers. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|------------|---------------------|
| 1. tiny | a. encouraged |
| 2. hike | b. terrible |
| 3. urged | c. increase |
| 4. consult | d. yearly |
| 5. make | e. very small |
| 6. annual | f. remedies |
| 7. dire | g. tag |
| 8. lavish | h. earn |
| 9. label | i. seek advice from |
| 10. cures | j. luxurious |

Discussion – Student A

- Should Swaziland treat its traditional healers better?
- Do you think traditional medicine can be better than modern medicine?
- Have you ever been in dire financial straits?
- How should a country get its budget deficit down?
- What do you think of King Mswati III for the way he spends his country's money?
- What do you think of the label "witch doctor"?
- What questions would you like to ask King Mswati III?
- What do you think his answers might be?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. the tiny southern African | a. fortune on his many wives |
| 2. proposed a hike | b. traditional healers |
| 3. urged the government to levy | c. their trade |
| 4. He believes the time is | d. in the tax rate |
| 5. A majority of our people consult | e. of a "witch doctor" label |
| 6. ply | f. kingdom of Swaziland |
| 7. Swaziland is in dire | g. and medicines |
| 8. He spends a small | h. financial straits |
| 9. trying to rid themselves | i. the tax |
| 10. studying their cures | j. ripe for upping the tax |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of traditional healers?
- What is healthcare like in your country?
- What do you think of the proposed tax hike on Swaziland's healers?
- Is the tax system in your country fair?
- How is your country's economic situation?
- What do you think the sangomas might say about the proposed tax?
- Does everyone pay their fair share in tax in your country?
- What should happen to people who avoid paying tax?

Spelling

- the tiny tsohreun African kingdom
- dreug the government
- rgsoneniw economic situation
- upaurdlqed their fees
- the Swazi imleatpran
- A traojymi of our people
- onpptnose say...
- Swaziland is in dire financial sttrsia.
- budget itdcfei
- spends a small efunrto
- a bloated ariylimt
- Western mtshrcisapa

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. c	3. a	4. i	5. h
6. d	7. b	8. j	9. g	10. f

Role Play

A traditional healer - You are shocked you may have to pay more tax. Tell the others three reasons why. You think the king should pay more. He spends most of the country's money on himself. You do a valuable job for your country. You should not be singled out to pay tax.

King Mswati III - Your citizens all need to pay tax. Tell the others three reasons why. The traditional healers make good money and should pay more. Their fees quadrupled recently but their tax has stayed the same. You hate criticism. You do everything you can to look after your people.

A Swazi farmer - You think the traditional healers should pay more tax. Tell the others three reasons why. You are a poor farmer and you pay your taxes. You love your king and hate people who attack him. He needs a good lifestyle. He looks after his people. The healers are moneygrabbers.

IMF economist - You are an expert on the Swazi economy. The king spends too much of tax revenues on himself, his family, his army, etc. He needs to spend more on his people. Tell the others three reasons why. Any tax on traditional healers will bring in very little extra revenue. It's a really bad idea.

Speaking – Getting Better

What's the best way? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| • traditional medicine | • acupuncture |
| • Western medicine | • time |
| • aromatherapy | • mind control |
| • mother's remedy | • other _____ |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.