

## Name-changing in an autocracy...

At the main campus entrance, a large concrete sign welcomes students and visitors to 'The University of...' followed by a blank space. After Swaziland changed its name earlier to eSwatini, the letters spelling out the old name of the country were removed from the university sign, and the new letters have not yet arrived. As previously reported in [Legalbrief Today](#), King Mswati III in April marked 50 years since his country's independence from British colonial rule by announcing that it would now be known by the translation of 'land of the Swazis'. A report on the [News24](#) site notes that the monarch's decision, taken without warning or consultation, revealed much about his autocratic rule and his country's history – as well as posing a logistical challenge as the name change came into immediate effect. It is 'Swaziland' on the banknotes, but the central bank now uses 'eSwatini', while police stations are gradually changing their signs. The report notes that the king's claim that eSwatini was Swaziland's old 'authentic' name is fiercely disputed. 'There is disagreement over the pre-colonial name – many say it was actually "Ngwane",' said Thulani Maseko, an activist and lawyer who is challenging the name change in court. He added that **'it tells you that the king does not consult with the people when he makes fundamental decisions'**. The report notes that Maseko spent 15 months in jail in 2014-15 for contempt of court after writing about lack of judicial independence, and he accepts that his legal battle over his country's name faces tough odds.