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Strengthening Inheritance Laws for a Fairer Future?

...Page 10

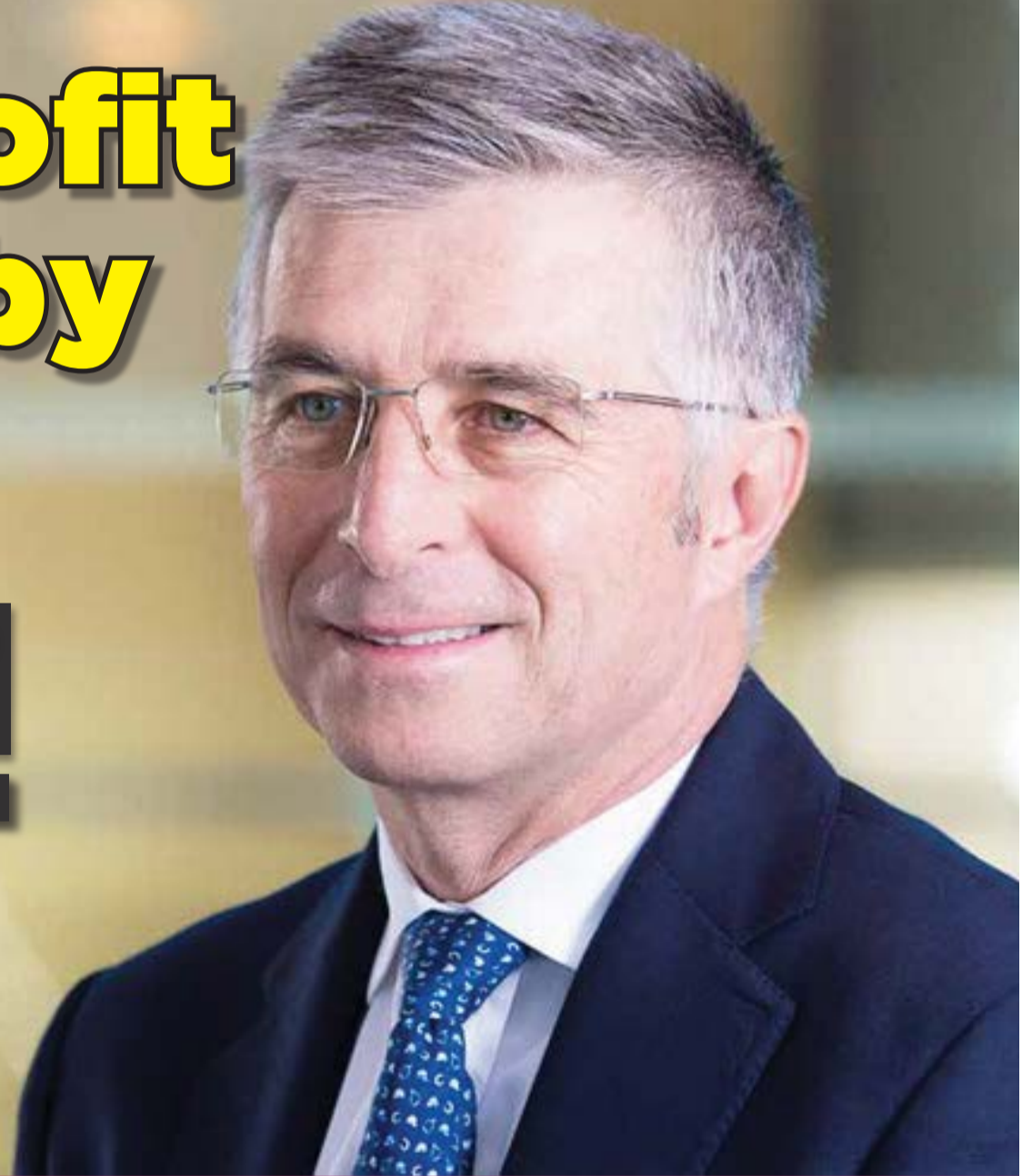
Investigation Uncovers: Water Contaminated by
Letšeng Diamonds Mine Poses Deadly Risk to Infants

...Page 6

Letšeng Profit Plummets by 92%

• Profit fell from M374million to
M30million...

Page 9



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Unnecessary Passport Stamping Remains...



By Tebello Kokome

MASERU

The two neighboring countries- Lesotho and South Africa joined forces at the Maseru Bridge port of entry (Bazzerratti Hall) on 14 March 2024 where the Minister of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police Hon. Lebona Lephema (Lesotho) and the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Pakishe Aaron Motsoaledi (South Africa) signed an agreement that permits Basotho nationals the liberty to stay in the Republic of South Africa for a period of 90 days (3 months). Be that as it may, it was not disclosed when this agreement will come into effect.

In his speech, Hon. Lephema presented the key critical and pressing issues that he wished to address when he first met with Minister Motsoaledi and those were: renewal of Lesotho Exemption Permit (LEP), implementation of six months visa, implementation and expansion of trusted traveler program, study visas, undesirable cases and agreeing on the appropriate model on how to manage migration between the two countries. He also indicated that the decision was not concluded easily because there were many factors that had to be considered, the most concerning

being that of many Basotho being involved in criminal activities i.e. illegal mining. He then appealed to Basotho saying that it is highly imperative that they should not just respect the laws of Lesotho, but they should also respect those of South Africa. He also mentioned that in the pipeline, they have plans of upgrading Lesotho's border management system to include eBorder, eVisa, and eResidence permits. "As we sign today, we have also agreed with Minister Motsoaledi that Basotho will be accorded 90 days visa whenever they cross the border as opposed to the normal 30 days."

In his remarks, Minister Motsoaledi paid homage to all those who were present and acknowledged all those who took initiative in ensuring that the agreement came to fruition. He pointed out that their new baby on the block which is the Border Management Authority (BMA) had raised many eyebrows and word was going around that they were tasked with sealing the borders of South Africa, instead they are meant to curb cases of crime such as human trafficking, smuggling counterfeit goods and others. The Minister further explained that the issue of 90 days came about because SADC countries are visa free

to each other, except for the Democratic Republic of Congo needless to say, Basotho were being awarded only 30 days.

The idea is to bring back the 6-month visa because he said that they still do not understand why it was done away with, so while that issue is still pending, Basotho will be granted 90 days when they cross. Lesotho happens to be the second country to sign a returns agreement after Kenya. The need for this arose when they realized that there are "people who use other countries as a springboard to jump on to the territories of a 3rd country without an agreement in those countries."

In response to the question as to whether the returns agreement will operate similarly to the 6-month visa whereby travelers did not need to stamp their passports if their visa was still valid.

It was noted that this agreement operates just as the 30 days arrangement did, which means that a passport will be stamped each time one crosses the border. An arrangement is however made for students who cross daily or for women who go for antenatal services in South Africa. To the issue of reciprocity, Dr Motsoaledi made it blatantly clear that from this agreement, South Africa

does not gain anything. He continued to say that in another agreement, it may be tailor made for SA because the development needs of the two countries differ and they are treated as such. He alluded that reciprocity is not a linear function. "Some things we will do for Lesotho, which they may not do for us and some they'll do for us which we are not able to do for them," said the Minister. He gave a breakdown of how a critical skills work permit and a general work permit works when a question was posed pertaining to this matter. He explained that as the Home Affairs department they only endorse a permit when proper channels are followed, and it has been proven beyond reasonable doubt that the said candidate's skills are needed. To the matter of undesirable status, he merely shed a light that the electronic system used at the border is the one that flags individuals that overstay. He referred to instances where he had to facilitate the lifting of a ban for people who overstayed, due to unforeseen circumstances but they had valid proof i.e. papers indicating admission in a hospital. Unfortunately, there are other individuals who overstay for questionable periods and don't have valid reasons.



Lesotho National Development Corporation

Announcement

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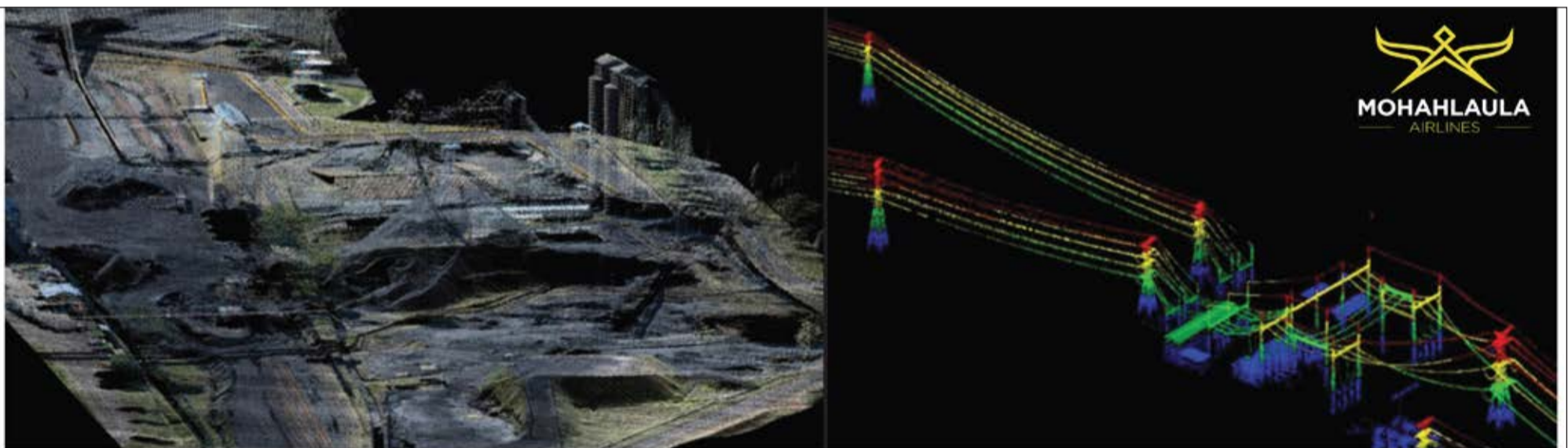
THE LESOTHO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (LNDC) AT IT AGAIN

The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) is a custodian of six industrial estates namely, Maseru, Tikoe, Thetsane, Maputsoe, Nyenye and Mohale's Hoek industrial estates. All these estates are actively involved in manufacturing sector predominantly underpinned by textile activities which generate tons of off cuts which litter the environment due to lack of requisite recycling capability. The LNDC, through the then Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture requested UNIDO's assistance for managing of the textile off-cuts to reduce open burning of off-cuts which is polluting the environment. Lesotho was high on UNIDO's priority list for consideration provided commitment is shown urgently which would secure a grant to finance setting up of infrastructure for textile recycling plant. This will not only ensure Lesotho's cleanliness but will also lead to generation of much needed jobs. Lesotho was identified by a UNIDO mission which visited Lesotho, and presented with an opportunity for a pilot plant for textile discards. LNDC was contracted by UNIDO to perform:

- A detailed inventory on textile discards generated by the garments manufacturers.
- Market survey on the use of textile discards; and
- A feasibility study including business plan, technical readiness and financial sustainability analysis.

The Contract also included identification of a credible private sector partner to operate the pilot project on textile discards. The project commenced in August 2020 and it was supposed to have been completed in six months but it was delayed by the restrictions which were brought about by the advent of Covid-19. Advertisements where private sector players were invited to submit Expression of Interest (EoI) were made in local print media. LNDC held meetings for the private sector to workshop the findings of the Market Survey and feasibility study as a way of encouraging private sector to see the potential in textiles off-cuts recycling. The assignment, was completed successfully as a credible private sector, Hippo Transport was identified and nominated after extensive evaluation and physical inspection by UNIDO experts. LNDC involvement in this project authenticates the LNDC theme "**re batalatsa mabala a hloekileng a khoebo bakeng sa bohle**". (**We are levelling the playing field for fair trade for all**). The project also resonates with the LNDC strategic objective of "promoting institutional integrity" by driving operating model that is focused on building industries for the domestic private sector, with access to markets, finance, infrastructure and FDI partnerships. Lesotho will reap the following benefits from this project:

- Promotion of circular economy in the textile and garment.
- Creation of the much-needed jobs for Basotho.
- Reduced pollution caused by open burning of textile off-cuts.
- Clean environment.
- Increased ranking of Lesotho as an investment destination of choice.



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US Air force Flies Over Lesotho's Dams In Familiarization Mission



"Hon. Lebona Lephema and U.S.A Delegation led by Captain Michele Lowe"



US Air force Beechcraft 200 Aircraft 30496 at Mejametalana Airbase

By Sebatso Rannyama

MASERU

The United States of America (USA) BE20 Aircraft 30496 landed in Lesotho for the first time piloted by Captain Michele Lowe. The Objective of this flight was to conduct a joint Kingdom of Lesotho and U.S Embassy familiarization flight consisting of guests from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Lesotho Defense Force and the US Embassy, in an effort to renew their commitment to future cooperation.

The United States supports Lesotho that is prosperous, inclusive, secure, healthy and democratic. Lesotho is a key strategic partner of the United States in Africa and globally and their bilateral relationship today is stronger than ever. These two countries work together across multiple areas, with a focus on health, youth, stabilization and security, economic growth and employment, human rights and rule of law, good governance, climate change adaptation and mitigation and education.

On the Shared Values, it is

reported that Lesotho's future depends on strengthening democratic institutions and supporting a healthy, educated population, an engaged civil society, and economic growth that is inclusive and benefits all Basotho.

"200th Anniversary of the Kingdom of Lesotho: We wish the people of Lesotho heartfelt congratulations on the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Kingdom of Lesotho. We are proud of ways that the United States and Lesotho have expanded our partnership over recent years. We look forward to continuing to work with the Basotho people on regional stability, shared prosperity, and combatting corruption," regards by USA Delegation.

Captain Lowe said they flew close to several dams in the highlands, they reaffirmed that is a great opportunity to discuss mutual security, cooperation of justice in order to advance great partnership they have with the kingdom of Lesotho.

According to the Minister of Local Government, Chieftain-

ship, Home Affairs and Police Hon Lebona Lephema they flew overhead Katse Dam, Sanipass, Qacha-Tsoelike and past Mohale Dam and they could not fly over Semonkong as the weather was bad, it was misty. He appreciated the USA Representative by taking an initiative of coming all the way to come and tour Lesotho's land. "They were impressed with our country, this will ring a bell to them go and encourage investors to come especially in tourism as they have seen the beauty of Lesotho," Hon. Lephema said. Hon. Lephema added that 2021 marked the signing of the first-ever Memorandum of Cooperation between Embassy Maseru and the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, emphasizing the strengthening of their bilateral security cooperation.

He also informed that since then, more than 180 representatives of Lesotho's security agencies have participated in training and support programs at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Gaborone.

Another sign of the growing security partnership between the United States and the Kingdom of Lesotho was when for the first time Lesotho hosted the final planning conference for multinational maritime exercise Cutlass Express.

This according to Hon. Lephema a tangible demonstration of the country's dedication to ensuring the security and well-being of its citizens as well as the country's commitment to regional security, cooperation, and upholding the rules-based order. It was during this familiarization event that it was brought to that Ministry of Defense works close with the PEPFAR through the Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP). It was also reported that the current PEPFAR-funded DHAPP activities include targeted trainings to address stigma and discrimination in the military, which continue to be notable barriers for HIV prevention, treatment and care.

I miss Pakalitha Mosisili



By Ramahoana Matlosa

In Thursday the 14th Match 2024 is was former Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili's birthday and I was overcome by a strange sensation: I miss Pakalitha Mosisili. Maybe you might say it is natural for someone who supported a lot of Mosisili's policy decisions to miss his administration. Let me be honest I had been disappointed by some aspects of his administration such as the rate of corruption. I had hoped that the next Prime Ministers were going to correct that aspect especially when they campaigned against it. But since Mosisili left it feels as if there has been a decline in behavioural standards across the leadership of this country. Many of the traits of character and leadership that Mosisili possesses, and that maybe we have taken too much for granted, have suddenly gone missing or are in short supply.

The first and most important of these is basic integrity. The Mosisili administration has been remarkably scandal-free. Think of the Liabiloe's house bombing, how Lipolelo Thabane was killed and former Prime Minister Motsoahae Thabane and his current wife, Maesiah Thabane were suspects, remember the sitting gesture of former Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro and how he handled Covid-19 pandemic, day light robbery of public funds through cabinet sanctioned transaction of the purchase of fertilizer in Prime

Minister Ntsokoane Matekane and his inability to speak. When Matekane speaks, you would think he has aphasia, which has left him unable to communicate to other. Remember his Convention Centre speech during the political debate. We have had very little of that from Mosisili. He and his staff have generally behaved with basic rectitude. Matekane is constantly having to hold these defensive press conferences where he's trying to explain away some vaguely shady excuses of the importance of being pragmatic as opposed to being a good communicator, but Mosisili has not had to do that. He and his wife have not only displayed superior integrity themselves, they have mostly attracted and hired people with high personal standards. Remember his ministers Mohlabi Tsekoa, Dr. Mamphono Khaketla, Monyane Moleleki, Dr. Pontso Sekatle, Timothy Thahane, Sephiri Motanyane, Mofelehetsi Moerane, Mpho Malie just to name a few. There are all sorts of unsightly characters floating around politics, including in the Thabane government, Majoro's government and Matekane's administration. These kind of ministers would have never emerged in Mosisili's time.

Second, a democrat, Mosisili believed in democracy. He always took this country to elections at the end of every term in government. Matekane and his deputy Nthomeng Majara spent much of their campaign vowing to do away with democracy.

They refused to be ousted through a democratic and constitutional provision of a no confidence motion in the Prime Minister rather we were shocked to observe the heads of security agencies making a statement that they will not allow members of parliament to do their constitutional duties. Prime Minister Mosisili, meanwhile, allowed himself to go through the no confidence motion and lost.

Third, a sense of basic humanity. Those who were close to Mosisili knew how devastated he was when Maaparankoe Mahao was shot and killed during his administration. He cares deeply about other human beings. His testimony in the Phomape's Commission showed that the quality of Prime Minister Mosisili flowed out in the unexpected but important moment. He had exuded this basic care and respect of others time and time again.

Fourth, grace under pressure. I happen to find it that Matekane gets nervous on the big occasions — that he fumbles when he has to address people. A Prime Minister has to maintain equipoise under enormous pressure. Mosisili has done that, especially amid the crisis.

Fifth, a soundness in his decision-making process. Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) leader Mothejoa Metsing was laughed and made fun of when he cried foul that he was never consulted when Thabane's administration made major decisions. LCD was disappointed in Thabane's de-

cision making process and almost always felt that their views were never considered. Mosisili respected partners and made inclusive decisions.

Lastly, Mosisili had a resilient sense of optimism. If you were to listen to Thabane and Matekane's campaign, you would conclude that this country is on the verge of complete collapse. That's simply not true. We have problems, but they are less serious than those faced by just about any other nation on earth.

People are motivated to make wise choices more by hope and opportunity than by fear, cynicism and despair. Unlike the above mentioned leaders, Mosisili never appealed to those passions. Matekane is showing us all just how difficult being the Prime Minister really is. Mosisili made it look like it wasn't all that hard to do, and at times, made it look like a really good ride. I miss Mosisili's pro-poor policies. His pro-poor policies emancipated a lot of Basotho from poverty. Matekane's administration is a club of the rich and for the rich only. They are in government for themselves. No wonder Members of Parliament and cabinet do business with the same government they control.

Matekane is showing us all just how hard it is to be Prime Minister when you know absolutely nothing about government, basic etiquette, humility, and just plain common sense. Was Mosisili perfect? Did all his actions and politics result in positive outcomes? Surely not, and that's just fine. We all make mistakes in our decisions even when we think we are doing for the best. Mosisili has a powerful and charming voice. Pakalitha has that deep, authoritative, euphonic and captivating voice. I always found his voice comforting to listen to. Even his enemies could never miss his speeches because he always had something up his sleeve.

As I conclude it is important to note that Mosisili radiates an ethos of integrity, humanity, good manners and elegance that I am beginning to miss, and I suspect Basotho also miss him. Mosisili for all his faults has been the best prime minister in my lifetime and quite frankly it is not even close. I miss my Prime Minister and leader



6

Lesotho Tribune

By: Pascalinah Kabi

Infants who consume water from Maloreng Stream could face a potentially deadly threat—suffocation induced by hemoglobinemia disease. This is according to a government report that concluded that the Letšeng Diamonds Mine is intentionally contaminating a stream that villagers daily depend on for survival. “From the chemical perspective with parameters that DWA (Department of Water Affairs) laboratory was able to analyse, drinking this water, will cause diarrhoea, sensitive individuals and infants will suffer from hemoglobinemia, in which case, they (sensitive individuals and infants) will suffocate, which can lead to death,” reads a January 2023 report compiled by the Department of Water Affairs. The report further highlights that prolonged con-

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Investigation Uncovers: Water Contaminated by Letšeng Diamonds Mine Poses Deadly Risk to Infants



This investigation was produced in partnership with the Pulitzer Centre.

sumption of this water increases the risk of gastrointestinal cancer. Moreover, it reveals that the water exhibits severe taste and staining issues, as indicated by the results.

“The Maloraneng stream was found to be polluted indeed and the source was found to be a point source that can only be attributed to the LDM (Letšeng Diamonds Mine) given the parameters that are outside recommended limits.

“It has been scientifically proven that Maloraneng community’s complaints are valid and tally with the effects of parameters that

were found to be above recommended limits,” read the report.

Letšeng Diamonds Mine says it did not understand the connection between drinking water sources and hemoglobinemia.

“Therefore, we have no comment except to say that it is a documented medical fact that at elevations above 1000m, haemoglobin concentrations increase as an adaptive response to the lower partial pressure of oxygen and reduced oxygen saturation of blood,” Letšeng said on March 4, 2024.

Few years ago, the Maluti

Community Development Forum reported the tragic death of a one-year-old infant being transported twelve kilometers on his grandmother’s back to access public health services. Breach of mining lease agreement

Advocate Borenahabokhethe Sekonyela asserts that Letšeng Diamonds Mine has violated its Mining Lease Agreement by persistently polluting Maloraneng stream.

“They have not only breached the Mining Lease Agreement, they have also breached the Mines and

continues in page 7

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continued from page 6

Minerals Act because they are not paying compensation, we still have to audit how much should they have paid,” Advocate Sekonyela said on 29 February 2024. He added: “I cannot remember what specific provisions say should be done when the breach has happened but unfortunately the level of enforcement is very wanting.”

In 2019, the Lesotho government controversially renewed its mining lease agreement with Letseng Diamonds Mine, a notable four years before its scheduled expiry date. The agreement was executed in accordance with section 44 of the Mines and Minerals Act, 2005.

Former Minister of Mines, Keketso Sello, who signed the agreement, revealed to The Post that he experienced “immense pressure” to finalize the lease after Letseng reported him to then Prime Minister Thomas Thabane.

“They reported me to the Prime Minister and said I was refusing to sign the lease,” Sello told The Post four years ago, adding that he is “relieved to have been moved from the Ministry of Mines.”

To date, this mining lease agreement remains shrouded in secrecy by the state. Seen by this reporter, Section 7.1 of the agreement reveals that Letseng Diamonds Mine has been awarded Environmental Clearance concerning the mining lease and this Agreement.

“The Mining Company shall conduct Mining Operations in accordance with the Environmental Clearance or any replacement or amendment thereof,” reads Section 7.1.2.

Section 7.1.3 reads: “The Mining Company shall comply with the terms and



conditions of the Environmental Clearance or any replacement or amendment thereof, the Environment Act and any other Applicable Laws pertaining to the environment.

“A material failure to comply with Applicable Laws pertaining to the environment, the terms of the Environmental Clearance or any replacement or amendment thereof, environmental licenses or permits; and this clause constitutes a breach of this Agreement.” On March 4, 2024, Letseng Diamonds Mine said a material breach of its non-compliance on environmental protection has not been established.

“For there to be a material failure of our compliance relating to the environmental clearances issued to Letseng, there has to be a finding confirmed by the relevant regulators following engagements with Letseng,” read a statement from Letseng.

It added: “Currently, our operational processes and procedures are geared to ensure compliance as prescribed in the environmental clearance which goes beyond compliance where international best practices have also been adopted to offer assurance of good environmental practices.”

The mine said it has systems of checks and audits in place to avoid any such

the mining lease agreement. “Should a non-conformance occur, we do have systems and plans to mitigate as far as is reasonably practicable.”

Government blames Basotho for its reluctance to impose fines

On February 29, 2024, the Ministry of Environment notified parliament that mining activities have a significant adverse impact on water resources, with substantial volumes being affected.

Nevertheless, the department admitted to refraining from prosecuting polluting mines in accordance with the Environmental Act of 2008, citing concerns over potential backlash from Basotho citizens.

“We have not charged any mine honourable member,” Acting Director of Environment, Qongqong Hoohlo said.

Lesotho’s Environment Act of 2008, section 37 states that a person who pollutes the environment is liable for a M5, 000 fine.

Instead of imposing these fines on polluting mines, Hoohlo said her department has adopted a different approach of establishing a mining forum which includes membership from departments of environment and water affairs, the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), and various mining compa-

nies operating within Lesotho.

“I think when we are carrying our duties of protecting the environment, we look at all sides given that environment is where a person lives and make a living out of. I think honourable members, you can understand how many Basotho’s lives will be affected if we can say one big mine should be closed,” Hoohlo said.

She implored the Natural Resources Committee to give her department a direction, stressing “but our understanding was that if a mine is closed, it will negatively affect the country’s economy and not many people will understand why environment has closed the mine.”

She suggested that many Basotho were primarily concerned about the livelihoods of their fellow citizens employed in the mines and the revenue generated by the government from these resources.

“This is why we are saying we are journeying with them. We want them to get things correct but as they attempt to get things correct, those Basotho working in the mines should not be hurt because they have not erred.

“As the Ministry, we are requesting the direction from this honourable committee. If the committee supports us, we can shut down a mine or mines tomorrow, but the question is, will you support us in responding to the public outcry?” Hoohlo asked.

In response, Mekaling lawmaker Thabiso Lekitla stated that the committee’s focus was not on advocating for the closure of any mines due to water pollution. Instead, they were interested in seeing the Ministry of Environment enforce fines in accordance with the

continues in page 8

continued from page 7

Environment Act.

“For the purposes of recordings of these proceedings, I wanted to make it clear that this committee is not saying mines must be shutdown. Instead, we are saying for revenue collection, fine polluting mines, let them pay those fines. This committee has never said mines must be closed,” Lekitla explained.

Meanwhile, Letšeng Diamonds Mine indicated that the Department of Water Affairs was in the process of revising its report after holding meetings with the department and the mine. “As such subsequent meetings have since been held between Letšeng Diamonds and DWA on this matter, and an understanding has been reached on matters of concern. Therefore, Letšeng Diamonds does not offer any comments for public consumption on the January/February 2023 report, being referred to. We will be happy to engage on the revised report when it becomes published,” read Letšeng statement.

On January 25, 2024, Director of Water Affairs, Maseatile Motoho, acknowledged receipt of inquiries regarding this report, assuring that the department was in the process of formulating responses.

However, by March 7, 2024, when this journalist visited his office unannounced, Motoho had yet to provide answers to the questions. Instead, Motoho declined to confirm whether his department was reviewing the report, as suggested by Letšeng Diamonds Mine.

“I have no comment, but regarding reports from Water Affairs, it is within our discretion to decide whether or not to review them,” Motoho stated. He then urged the journalist to



allow his department space to operate.

“I understand that you are carrying out your duties as a journalist, but our working environments are different. I believe we should give each other’s professional space,” Motoho added. The Maloraneng stream, along with Patising and Feeane, flows downstream of the Letšeng Diamonds Mine operations in Mokhotlong. Three small villages, named after these streams, are situated adjacent to these streams.

Maloraneng mothers allege Letšeng Diamonds Mine is causing illness in their babies

Draped in a pink floral sweater, a 16-month-old toddler bends down, the fabric slipping over her head to reveal a shocking sight: a visible, itchy body rash.

Her mother, Mamelolo Tšotetsi, watches her daughter play along with an 18-month-old girl, only half-dressed. These two girls, playing together, sporadically scratch their bodies, attempting to alleviate the discomfort caused by the body rash afflicting their small frames.

Tšotetsi, who sits on a chair in the middle of her friend’s yard, gave birth to her daughter at Mokhotlong Hospital in 2022. Immediately after giving birth, Tšotetsi moved in with her

parents at Molikaliko village Mokhotlong, in line with the Sesotho cultural practice that a married woman must stay with her parents after giving birth to her first child.

“We stayed with my parents for four months,” Tšotetsi said, adding: “and my daughter’s skin was perfectly smooth, she did not have this rash.”

After four months, the 25-year-old Tšotetsi relocated to Maloraneng village in Mokhotlong to stay with her husband and in-laws. She claims that a week later, her daughter developed a body rash that nurses at Molikaliko Health Centre struggle to diagnose and heal.

“I took her to the clinic at Molikaliko, they prescribed medication for her. The rash only subsides, it never heals completely. The water from the stream is making my baby sick,” explained Tšotetsi.

About 15 meters away from Tšotetsi lies an almost one-month-old baby boy who has lived in Maloraneng Village since birth. His mother, ‘Makeabetsoe Mokoena, gave birth to him on 24 December 2023, in her modest hut.

Mokoena, aged 28, discloses that her son also suffers from a body rash that skin medication like calamine has been unable to alleviate. “I suspect that the skin rash

on my child is caused by water because the water that we use, the one that flows from Letšeng, is not clean. We use that water for laundry because the one from the tap is very limited; we use the tap water for drinking.

“But, to wash nappies, we use water from the stream. We also use the stream water to bathe the child, and I also use it for bathing. I suspect that this stream water is causing the skin rash. You can also see the child; he has a scarred skin rash,” Mokoena said.

Letšeng Diamonds Mine did not provide a direct response to inquiries regarding the Department of Water Affairs’ assertion that the complaints from the Maloraneng community are scientifically validated. However, in January 2022, Letšeng Diamonds Mine admitted in a confidential report that its operations are polluting water systems that poor, rural communities rely on daily.

The report, titled Annual External Social and Environmental Management Plan Compliance Audit Report, states that: “Standards for nitrate are consistently exceeding in the Patising”.

“Despite the implementation of several mitigatory measures to clean the seepage (dilution and engineered wetlands), the system remains polluted with nitrate to levels exceeding domestic and livestock guidelines. “Standards for the nitrates are consistently exceeded in the Patising, Qaqa and RTZ systems while biomonitoring (SASS and diatoms) results show the Patising system to be in a poor condition, mostly owing to elevated salts and organic pollution (Biannual Water Quality Monitoring Report of March 2021).”

Letšeng Profit Plummetts by 92%



Clifford Elphick, Gem Diamonds CEO.

By: Staff Reporter

London-listed, Gem Diamonds Limited (LSE: GEMD) released its Full Year Results for the fiscal year of 2023, revealing a challenging year marked by global economic turmoil and a significant downturn in the diamond market. Gem Diamonds owns 70% of Letšeng Diamonds and 30% by Government of Lesotho. Letšeng is Gem Diamonds only cash generating asset.

The company's profit for the year fell sharply by 92% to US\$1.6 million, down from US\$20.2 million in 2022.

This decline in profit was attributed to a 26% decrease in revenue, which amounted

to US\$140.3 million compared to US\$188.9 million in the previous year.

The primary factor contributing to the decrease in revenue was the lower prices achieved for its rough diamonds, a result of the challenging market conditions. Sales volume slipped by 3% to 104,520 carats, while the average price per carat dropped by 24% to US\$1,334. Despite these challenges, Gem Diamonds remained focused on cost control measures, enhanced operational efficiencies, and the deferment of non-essential longer-term projects. Gem Diamonds also made significant changes to its management, workforce, and operating methodologies at

its Letšeng and Ghaghoo mines to meet the challenges of lower revenues and increasing costs. The company's safety performance at Letšeng was commendable, with zero fatalities recorded in 2023, an improvement from the previous year.

In December 2023, Gem Diamonds acquired employees, mining fleet, and support operations from Matekane Mining Investment Company for US\$22.7 million, terminating its contract with the service provider 11 months early due to the election of its owner, Sam Matekane, as prime minister of Lesotho. Looking ahead, Gem Diamonds expects sales to improve slowly in 2024, with signs of price recovery at

the top and bottom end of the market. The company remains cautiously optimistic that prices will stabilize and that there will be some growth towards the end of the year. However, global economic growth outlooks for major economies and important diamond consumer markets such as the US and China remain uncertain. Gem Diamonds continues to focus on sustainability and climate action, achieving a 26% reduction in scope 1 and scope 2 carbon emissions compared to its target of a 30% reduction by 2030. The company's efforts to optimize its mine plan aim to ensure sustainable returns for its stakeholders in the years to come.



10

Lesotho Tribune

EDITORIAL

Strengthening Inheritance Laws for a Fairer Future?



By: Editorial

Lesotho's draft Administration of Estates and Inheritance Bill, 2024, represents a significant step forward in the country's legal framework governing inheritance, estate administration, and the rights of beneficiaries. This bill, enacted by the Parliament of Lesotho, aims to consolidate and review existing laws to ensure a more transparent, efficient, and fair process for all parties involved. One of the key provisions of the bill is its emphasis on protecting

the rights of individuals to determine the distribution of their estates through wills. By providing clear guidelines for drafting wills, including requirements for witnesses and the form and content of the will itself, the bill seeks to ensure that individuals' final wishes are respected and upheld.

Additionally, the bill addresses various procedural matters related to estate administration, such as the appointment and removal of appraisers for property valuation and the role and powers of

the Master of the High Court. These provisions are crucial for ensuring that estate administration is carried out in a timely and efficient manner, benefiting both beneficiaries and the wider community.

Furthermore, the bill sets out penalties for failure to comply with reporting requirements related to estates and wills, underscoring the importance of transparency and accountability in the administration of estates. Overall, the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Bill,

2024, represents a positive step forward for Lesotho's legal framework governing inheritance and estate administration. By modernizing and streamlining the process, this bill has the potential to create a fairer and more efficient system that benefits all parties involved.

What are your thoughts about this draft bill? Tell us in the comments section below. However if you have strong feelings write your piece, which should not exceed 800 words to editor@lesothotribune.co.ls

History does repeat



Ts'epo Letsoela and Semoli Mokhanoi during their time at Symmetry

By: Staff Reporter

In today's edition of our investigative series, we will show that Mr Semoli and Mr Letsoela brotherhood turned business partnership has been the single commonality in the investments of PODCPF assets from its formation in 2008. We further demonstrate that this duo has only been using different companies merely as vehicles to perpetuate their capture of the Fund, discarding them as soon as they no longer serve their interests and moving forward with another company. We then ask a key question, will history keep repeating itself and what would be the vehicles to be used by the duo after the imminent collapse of Cadiant and Mergence?

The Public Officers' Defined Contribution Pension Fund (PODCPF) was established under The Public Officers' Defined Contribution Pension Fund Act of 2008. It is managed by a Board of Trustees that is appointed by The Minister responsible for Finance in consultation with the Minister responsible for Public Service

according to section 6(2) of the Act.

The fund provides retirement benefits and related matters to permanent and pensionable Public Officers.

However past and present trustees and senior employees of Pension Fund have come forward with damning and alleged corrupt information about how one South African, Mr. Semoli Mokhanoi has managed to entrench himself and companies he has interest(s) in, at the Pension Fund since 2011, significantly prejudicing the Fund and members.

In this part five of eight investigative series, we look at the genesis of this capture, but before we do, let us recap on what this series has uncovered up to this point.

On the 28th of January 2024, Lesotho Tribune published a condemning investigative report that uncovered the shameless conflict of interest taking place among key service providers of the Public Officers Defined Contribution Pension Fund (PODCPF), specifically Cadiant Partners Consultants and Actuaries Lesotho and Mergence Lesotho.

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WHATSAPP FOR PAYMENT DETAILS



12

Lesotho Tribune

By : AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES

The space travel company SpaceX has completed its most successful test yet of Starship, the world's most powerful rocket — but as the unmanned rocket completed its flight, it was destroyed upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere.

Thursday's test flight was the third conducted with Starship rockets, ahead of planned missions with the United States space agency NASA to send astronauts to the moon.

SpaceX, a company founded and owned by tech entrepreneur Elon Musk, livestreamed the latest Starship experiment, noting that the vessel flew farther and faster than it had in two previous tests.

However, as the rocket returned to Earth, it lost communication with SpaceX engineers. The livestream suddenly cut off, its final image showing the rocket's heat shield flaring with friction. SpaceX later reported that the vessel did not survive the last leg of its flight. It was expected to splash down into the Indian Ocean.

Shortly after the mishap, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced it would investigate the failed re-entry, a standard practice whenever a space flight goes awry.

Starship remains a prototype, but its development is key to both NASA's planned moon missions and Musk's own aspirations of space travel.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



SpaceX's mega rocket Starship cuts through clouds and haze on its third test flight from Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas [Eric Gay/The Associated Press]

Despite problems, SpaceX hails progress after third test of Starship rocket The rocket, key to NASA's future plans, was lost after re-entering Earth's atmosphere but hit key milestones during flight

On the Musk-owned social media platform X, NASA chief Bill Nelson called the event “a successful test flight”. He gave a nod to NASA's upcoming Artemis moon missions, voyages that are expected to feature SpaceX technology.

“Together, we are making great strides through Artemis to return humanity to the Moon — then look onward to Mars,” he wrote.

Musk also celebrated the test flight on X, writing: “Starship will take humanity to Mars.”

Refining the world's most powerful rocket

Starship, while still in its testing stages, is considered an advancement in rocket technology, as the largest and most powerful vessel of its kind.

With almost 16.7 million pounds (74.3 meganewtons) of force, its Super Heavy booster rocket produces almost double the thrust of the world's second most powerful rocket, NASA's Space Launch System.

Fully assembled, Starship also stands 121 metres (397ft) tall.

But the first two tests of the rocket ended in livestreamed explosions shortly after lifting off, spurring concerns about technical difficulties with the mega-rocket, as well as questions about the proposed timeline for

the NASA collaboration.

The first test, in April 2023, resulted in SpaceX blowing up its rocket within minutes of launch, after the booster rocket and the second-stage engine failed to separate.

With the second test flight, held in November, the booster indeed separated from the spaceship, but both then exploded over the ocean.

SpaceX, however, has stressed these early tests were not expected to succeed, as the Starship prototype continues to be refined.

SpaceX hails milestones

Thursday's test, launched from a site near Boca Chica Village on southern Texas's Gulf Coast, marked a major milestone for the company, though.

Unlike the previous two tests, which ended within minutes of launch, Thursday's Starship completed most of its hour-plus flight trajectory.

SpaceX also reported that Starship accomplished several key objectives on its latest flight, including opening and closing its payload door to test its ability to deliver satellites and other cargo into space.

Starship flew halfway around the world before it began its descent, hitting a top speed of more than 26,000 kilometres

per hour (16,000 miles per hour) and achieving an altitude of more than 200km (125 miles).

High-definition footage from an onboard camera showed the vessel firing its engines in space, with the curve of the Earth visible in the background.

Ground control said it stopped receiving signals when Starship was 65km (40 miles) above sea level. The company's announcers, who had been narrating the livestream, ultimately declared the vessel “lost” before it could achieve its final goal of splashing down.

Trial-and-error approach

SpaceX has pursued a strategy of carrying out tests in the real world rather than in labs. But that has stoked condemnation from conservation groups that fear the fiery launches and falling debris may damage sensitive habitats around Starship sites.

In May, groups including the Center for Biological Diversity and the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe sued the Federal Aviation Administration over its approval of SpaceX's tests, saying the government agency had failed to adequately assess their environmental impact before giving the green light.

Nevertheless, SpaceX has continued to hold test launches, an approach that has propelled it to the forefront of the emerging space flight market.

NASA currently relies on SpaceX's Falcon 9 rockets to propel cargo into space, sometimes pairing it with the company's Dragon Freedom capsule to send manned crews to the International Space Station (ISS). SpaceX also has a network of satellites called Starlink that provides dozens of countries with high-speed internet and other connectivity services.

Still, the pressure is on for SpaceX to prepare Starship for NASA's planned missions to land astronauts on the moon in 2026. It currently intends to use a modified Starship as the lander vehicle.

In a sign of what may be a modern-day space race, China is also hoping to land its first crew on the moon in 2030.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES



13

Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporter

Following three years of negotiation, Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan has announced the termination of negotiations for the transaction to sell 51% of South African Airways (SAA) to the Takatso Consortium.

The collapse of the negotiations – which put an end to the sale to the equity partner – was announced during a media briefing by the Minister in Cape Town on Wednesday evening.

Gordhan explained that while three years ago, a valuation of SAA's business and assets had been reached, circumstances have now changed – prompting a disagreement on the revised transaction structure.

Three years ago, the airline had undergone business rescue, battled through being grounded and was facing serious challenges following the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Late last year, clearly, we had a different market, we had a different economy, and we had a different flying public in terms of numbers of people that were flying and a new valuation was done.

“And the new valuation...the business came out now at a value of R1 billion and the property went up to about R5.5 billion which meant

AFRICA

SAA, Takatso deal collapses



that any negotiations on this transaction would have to take into account the new valuations that have emerged,” he said.

The Minister revealed that negotiations continued “for the latter part of last year” and since this year began.

“However, we came to a point where whilst there was meeting of minds...on some of the issues, there were other issues on which there was no meeting of minds.

“So late last week, there was agreement that in terms of a clause in the old sale and purchase agreement, whereby mutual consent, this transaction could be terminated. That clause was put into action and both parties have agreed – after we enquired about the status of the negotiation – that there was no clear path forward as far as the transaction with Takatso is concerned.”

Gordhan insisted that because SAA remains a public entity:

* Cognisance must be placed on its growth over the past five years;

* Fair value must be placed on the sale of the 51% stake in the airline;

* and the process to sell the

shares must ensure that SAA is left in a “more sustainable condition than it was in 2019”.

He added that despite the collapse of the deal, the future remains bright for the airline and dismissed any notions that it will rely on government bailouts going forward. “We are convinced, in terms of the numbers available to us, that it can sustain itself for the next year to 18 months and there are various, other ways in which immediate financing can be obtained. “But at no stage, in the course of the months that come, will SAA get money from the fiscus. It must run its operations as efficiently as it can and as profitably as it can and sustain itself,” he said.

READ | Strategic Equity Partnership for SAA aimed at saving airline: Gordhan Moving forward

Gordhan assured employees of the state-owned airline that their jobs are currently not in danger as a result of the collapse of the deal.

“So the message to the SAA staff...is that you don't worry about your jobs, you don't worry about the future of your families, that we will ensure that we work with the

board and management...to continue to support the sustainability of SAA and to ensure that the corporate plan that has been developed by SAA is further strengthened,” he said.

READ | SAA officially relaunched

The Minister added that the corporate plan is well fleshed out and projects a growth in the airline.

“That corporate plan actually entails the gradual growth in the number of routes that SAA will take up in the course of the next few years. Currently, it has about 19 routes and that will grow up to 40 routes in a five year period.

“Similarly, it will have the capacity to lease more aircraft, both for domestic use, use within the continent and for inter-continental flights as well.

“All of these plans will be rigorously examined with the necessary aviation expertise to ensure that jobs are secure, that the airline is secure and that there is a future for SAA and its flag to be seen continuously within the country, within the continent and across continents as well,” Gordhan said. – SAnews.gov.za

What a bad government we have!



By: Staff Reporter

In Lesotho, is the fundamental right to freedom of speech is under attack, threatening the very essence of democracy? This article is inspired by Lesotho Times report on Thursday 14 March 2024, which confirmed that the Commander of Lesotho Defense has been “called in” to deal with “media leaks” in relation to the rot at Public Officers pension fund, under the so called information security! And to that we say, what a bad government we have! And this is why...

The concept of free speech has deep roots, dating back to Athenian democracy over 2,500 years ago. The Athenians valued two key aspects of free speech: isegoria, or equality of speech, allowing all freeborn male citizens to voice their opinions in the assembly, and parrhesia, which encouraged uninhibited speech and a culture of tolerance.

Today, freedom of speech and expression, particularly regarding political and public issues, is considered the lifeblood of any democracy. It allows for a diverse range of voices and opinions, leading to informed decision-making and preventing tyranny. Democracies thrive on open debate and criticism of government actions or policies.

However, in Lesotho, recent events suggest a worrying trend towards censorship and suppression of free speech. Democratic governments are supposed to refrain from controlling the content of speech, yet there have been instances of authorities silencing dissenting voices and restricting access to information.

Protests, which serve as a testing ground for any democracy, have been met with heavy-handed responses, undermining the right to peaceful assembly. A civil society requires spirited debate, even among those in deep disagreement, to thrive.

While freedom of speech is a fundamental right, it is not absolute and should not be used to incite violence or promote hatred. Democracies must find a balance between defending free speech and countering speech that encourages violence or undermines democratic values. In Lesotho, the challenge for democracy lies in striking this balance. The protection of free speech is crucial, as it allows for the scrutiny of government actions and promotes accountability. However, this protection must be balanced with the need to prevent speech that incites violence or undermines the democratic process.

The recent trend towards censorship and suppression of free speech in Lesotho is a cause for concern. Democratic governments should uphold the principles of free speech and ensure that all voices are heard, even those critical of the government. This is essential for the health of democracy and the protection of individual rights.

In conclusion, protecting freedom of speech is crucial for the health of democracy in Lesotho. The government should uphold this fundamental right and ensure that all voices, even those critical of the government, are heard and respected. Democracies thrive on open debate and criticism, and the suppression of free speech undermines these core prin-

principles. It is essential that the people of Lesotho continue to defend their right to free speech and resist any attempts to curtail this fundamental freedom. Arlene Saxonhouse's insights on the theoretical link between free speech and democracy, particularly her exploration of shame as a limiting factor in both concepts, offer a fresh perspective on this issue. By examining the theoretical relationship within the ancient Athenian context, Saxonhouse opens up alternative interpretive paths, shedding new light on ancient authors and providing innovative approaches to contemporary issues and dilemmas. While her points may be controversial, her interpretive framework offers provocative readings that challenge conventional thinking.

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Taste Quest: Discovering Lesotho's Best Food Restaurants



By: Staff Reporter

Are you a food enthusiast with a taste for adventure? Do you love exploring new culinary delights and savoring the flavors of different cultures? If so, then join us on a journey to uncover the best food restaurants in Lesotho!

Lesotho, known for its stunning landscapes and rich

cultural heritage, also boasts a vibrant food scene that is sure to tantalize your taste buds. From traditional dishes like papa and moroho to international cuisine with a local twist, Lesotho has something for every palate.

In this article, we invite you to participate in our Taste Quest. We want to hear from you about your favorite food spots in Lesotho and why you think

they offer the best dining experience. Simply share your top picks in the comments below, and the most mentioned restaurants will receive a visit from our team.

Once we've sampled the menus at the most recommended restaurants, we'll provide our verdict on the overall dining experience. From the ambiance and service to the quality and taste of the food,

we'll give you an insider's look at what makes these restaurants stand out.

So, whether you're a local foodie or a curious traveler looking to experience the best of Lesotho's culinary scene, join us on this exciting culinary adventure. Stay tuned for updates as we embark on our Taste Quest and discover the flavors that make Lesotho a food lover's paradise!



16

Lesotho Tribune

By Litsitso Letsunyane

Wrexham AFC and Kick4Life FC unveiled their club twinning partnership, marking a significant milestone in their shared mission to make a positive impact within their communities.

Wrexham AFC, situated in North Wales, stands as one of the world's oldest football clubs, with a rich history spanning generations. Acquired by renowned actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney three years ago, the club has since undergone a remarkable journey, even featuring in the acclaimed 'Welcome to Wrexham' documentary series. Beyond the pitch, the club's charitable trust tackles various community initiatives, ranging from football programs for marginalized groups to initiatives promoting gender equality and tackling anti-social behavior.

The union between Wrex-

ARTS & SPORTS

Wrexham AFC and Kick4Life FC Forge Transformative Partnership



ham and Kick4Life builds upon a longstanding national twinning between Wales and Lesotho, dating back to 1984. Drawing parallels in size, landscape, bilingualism, and cultural heritage, the partnership aims to amplify their community impact through collaborative efforts. Through coaching exchanges, advocacy for women's football, and the development of a comprehensive 'Football for Good' curriculum encompassing health, education, social inclusion, and employability, the initiative aspires to

reach 3,000 vulnerable children and young people over the next three years.

Maleshoane Motlatsi, Kick4Life Academy Director, expressed her enthusiasm, highlighting the potential for talented youth to pursue their education and football dreams at Wrexham, mirroring the success of sending some of their talented student athletes to the USA. Humphrey Key, Executive Director of Wrexham AFC, echoed Motlatsi's sentiments, underscoring the club's overarching goal of connecting the Wrexham

community to the global stage, viewing this partnership as the inaugural step in achieving that vision.

Steve Fleming, Co-Founder of Kick4Life, hailed the collaboration as a testament to the transformative power of football in effecting positive social change. Emphasizing the unique synergy between the two clubs, he anticipates a fruitful exchange of knowledge and experiences, illustrating how football can transcend geographical boundaries to uplift lives.

Acknowledging the support of the British High Commissioner, Harry MacDonald, and the British High Commission, both Wrexham AFC and Kick4Life expressed gratitude for their backing in launching the partnership during Lesotho's Bicentennial celebrations.

As Wrexham AFC and Kick4Life FC embark on this journey of collaboration, their shared commitment to leveraging football as a force for good sets a promising precedent for clubs around, demonstrating the immense potential for sports to foster positive change within communities, regardless of geographical divides

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