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Correctional Officer says he almost committed suicide



By: Tholoana Lesenya

Maseru-
Correctional Officer Tumelo Sekokotoana said suicide felt like the only escape for him after he was alleged to have paralysed Tlotliso Bereng during the search exercise. As he sobbed when relating his testi-

mony, Officer Sekokotoana told the Commission that he almost committed suicide.

Officer Sekokotoana who is suspected to have beaten numerous inmates told the Commission of Inquiry on the escape of inmates that he almost killed himself after the two inmates, Khatala and Christopher alleged that he assaulted Tlotliso Bereng who is now para-

lysed as a result.

He said his name was all over radios and newspapers, to the level that his picture was posted next to that of Bereng on one of the local newspapers. Officer Sekokotoana added that his life was very miserable after the testimony of these two inmates, saying even the people who did not know him would remark, "this is Sekokotoana who put Bereng on the wheelchair" he said.

"This did not sit well with me and if I did not have a wife and a child, I could have committed suicide" he added. He further said if there were no cameras, this accusation could have suited him based on the evidence of the pair before the Commission.

Officer Sekokotoana also established that inmates were assaulted and some without any reason. He stressed that the inmates, who also accused him of hitting them, were not telling the truth as the footage proved to that. "After I watched the footage, I recognized that it was a big project for every inmate within the institution," he said.

In the meantime, the recruits who were seen entering Bereng's cell as per footage are Correctional Officer Mothabeng, Mokoloko, Moabi and Mokhethi. They had since acknowledged entering Bereng's cell before the Commission. The search exercise was con-

ducted at Maseru Central Correctional Institution (MCCI) on December 22, 2023 and resulted in the assault of inmates, leaving Bereng paralyzed.

Furthermore, Officer Sekokotoana says he is associated by most inmates before the Commission because he is alleged to be strict. He said this in his testimony before the Commission of Inquiry on the escape of inmates. Officer Sekokotoana said he did his job excellently while at MCCI before he could go for a recruitment course and he was mindful that some inmates despise him. He added that some inmates connected him because they thought he would reveal the names of recruits who assaulted them.

He concluded that officers including seniors have formed a culture of uncertainty within Maseru Central Correctional Institution (MCCI) hence are divided. He disclosed this information while testifying before the Commission of Inquiry of escape of inmates. Officer Sekokotoana said there is wariness between officers in the facility will not go away, saying officers are even categorized by Commissioners who were in charge when they were admitted in the institution. "When we arrived at the institution, they called us Mothepu's puppets because he was Lesotho Correctional Service Commissioner then," he said.

Mofomobe Condemns LDF Brutality... Assures Victims His Party's Full Support

In what can only be described as a harrowing reign of unchecked brutality, the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) continues to perpetuate a chilling pattern of violence against its own citizens, under the guise of maintaining national security. With each passing day, it becomes increasingly clear that the LDF, instead of being protectors of the Basotho people, has transformed into a force of terror, leaving a trail of devastation and death in its wake.

The recent Operation Hard Fist, ostensibly aimed at ridding the country of illegal firearms, has instead turned into a violent crusade that targets innocent civilians. The tragic events of September 5, 2024, in Khokhoba, Ha Lebesa, are a grim reminder of the consequences of a military force that operates with impunity. Two residents, suspected of possessing illegal firearms, lost their lives at the hands of the LDF. Their crime? Allegedly being in possession of illegal weapons—without evidence, without a trial, and without due process.

Speaking on Tuesday 10 Sept at the Basotho National Party (BNP) press conference, Hon. Machesetsa branded the Mokotakoti and Ratjomose military barracks as "camps of torture".

"Two residents of Khokhoba, Ha Lebesa, were murdered in cold blood by the LDF on September 5. Their crime? Being suspected of possessing firearms, without evidence, without trial, and without due process," Mofomobe said. "What we have here is not law enforcement but outright extrajudicial killings, carried out by the very force that is sup-



Basotho National Party leader, Hon. Machesetsa Mofomobe

posed to protect our people."

Hon. Mofomobe also condemned the LDF press statement, which stated that they'll investigate the murders.

"What kind of an institution is this? They murder civilians and investigate themselves?" asked Hon. Mofomobe.

But this is not an isolated incident. On August 13, 2024, four Basotho men—Molemo Mosunyane, Kakaretso Tsapi, Retselisitsoe Moeti, and Thabiso Mohlolo—were subjected to unimaginable torture at the hands of the LDF. According to legal documents filed by Advocate N. Mafaesa, these men were unlawfully arrested, detained, and tortured for four excruciating days. The LDF allegedly demanded they produce firearms, which they repeatedly denied possessing. Their refusal was met with severe beatings, as they were struck with

sticks on their chests, buttocks, thighs, stomach, and legs.

The men were shuffled between Mokotakoti and Ha Ratjomose Barracks, where they endured further inhumane treatment, before being released without charge on August 16, 2024. The physical and psychological toll on these men is incalculable, with the victims suffering from shock, severe bodily harm, and long-lasting disabilities. Their legal team is now demanding M10,000,000 in damages for this heinous violation of human rights.

Hon Mofomobe condemned these incidents, "what the LDF is doing highlight a dangerous culture of impunity within the military ranks, where accountability seems to be a foreign concept. The Penal Code Act of 2010 is clear: acts of torture and inhumane treatment are crimes against humanity. Yet, the LDF soldiers respon-

sible for these crimes continue to act with impunity, shielded by their uniforms and the authority vested in them by the state."

"As BNP we are taking record of the perpetrators and when the time is right, they'll face the music," added Hon. Mofomobe.

Hon. Mofomobe blamed the prime minister by saying that, the deaths in Khokhoba, the torture in Mokotakoti, and the long list of other abuses committed by the LDF are not isolated mistakes—they are part of a systematic failure of leadership that puts the lives of Basotho citizens in jeopardy.

In response, Government of Lesotho issued a statement on Friday 13 September expressing regret over two incidents involving deaths during military operations and gang-related violence.

The government has called for investigations into the military's role in the deaths, reassured the public of its commitment to peace, and condemned both gang violence and any unnecessary force used by security forces.

In conclusion Hon. Mofomobe said, "the LDF's attempt to brand Operation Hard Fist as a campaign for peace and stability is nothing more than a cynical ploy to justify their brutality. The families of those who lost their lives in Khokhoba deserve justice. The survivors of the LDF's torture camps deserve accountability. And the nation of Lesotho deserves to know that those entrusted with protecting them are not the very ones who endanger their lives."

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Labour Migration Committee launched to safeguard migrants



By: Selloane Nyakane

Maseru-

The Minister Labour and Employment, Mr. Tseliso Mokhosi emphasized that the launch of the National Labour Migration Committee (NLMC) aims to address legal and policy challenges related to migrant workers, particularly focussing on governance and protection of Basotho workers abroad.

This he said, at Lancers Inn hotel on Tuesday in officially launching the Lesotho Na-

tional Labour Migration Committee.

He mentioned that the committee goals will complement the objectives of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) on migration and also establish ties with the National Advisory Committee on Labour (NACOLA) to advance social dialogue.

"The committee will facilitate inter-ministerial cooperation to strengthen Labour migration management and implement recent legislation and policy frameworks such as the Social Act," he added

Mokhosi furthered that the initiative is crucial for migrant workers facing legal

challenges abroad such as Xenophobia and unfair treatment and also provide a framework in safeguarding their rights both home and in destination countries.

However, Ms. Nthabiseng Letsie, Chief Legal officer said there were challenges which include: language barrier, lack of information dissemination, social protection and compensation for occupational diseases and injuries.

Further articulating that with the Labour Migration committee presence the challenges will be curbed.

African Union Commission Mr. Memo Peter Machette informed that as the commission they recognize Labour migration as development agenda which needs proper Coordination for the benefit for both country of origin and destination to avoid complexities.

He stressed that there is a need for a well focused approach should be adopted to ensure effective, productive committee towards success of safe Labour migration.

"The Labour Migration is in alignment with the African Unions Migration Policy for Africa (MPFA), the SADC Compact Migration Policy (2019-2024), the ILO Conventions Regulating Employment and Labour and the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration," he said

Machette also mentioned that the commission will stand in solidarity with Lesotho as the AU member state, to ensure for well functionality of the committees as well as proper implementation of policies that cater safe migration.

Representative for Workers, Ms. Motebang Leboela called for more comprehensive, inclusive and strategic migration solutions and humane mobility policies. She also hoped that with the enacted committee they look forward to see Labour migration policies that will benefit all, including informal economy groups as well as disabled persons.

She furthered that regular pathways can make migration safer and reduce unsafe and irregular migration, improve the capacity to identify who enters, transit through and remains in territory. Adding that respond to Labour market contribute to sustainable development thus regulatory safeguards against unethical and exploitive migrant workers recruitment practices that adversely impact job quality, employment conditions, access to decent work and adequate recognition of skills.

The committee structure includes representative from government ministries, Labour expects and migrant associations fostering comprehensive dialogue and solutions for all involved.

Government face M2Billion Shortfall to feed it's population

By: Selloane Nyakane

Maseru-

The Disaster Management Authority (DMA) has stated that the government is facing M2billion shortfall to feed it's population. The government initial budget was 3.7billion to fight the "unprecedented hunger crisis" but the government has only managed to raise M1.7 billion.

This, the Disaster Management Authority, Chief Executive Officer Reatile Elias expressed at the press conference held at DMA offices on Wednesday.

According to the Integrated Food Insecurity Phase Classification, it reports that 700,000 people which equates to 33.2 of the population are facing hunger and starvation. 293,000 people in rural areas are in crisis phase (IPC+3) from May -September 2024 likely to increase to 403,000 people from October 2024 to March 2025 while in urban areas 296.045 people are food insecure.

He informed that the current food and nutrition insecurity is primarily driven by dry spells and drought. Additionally crop pests and livestock diseases have further worsened the situation exacerbating the challenges to food and nutrition security.

"As the result of El Nino induced droughts in 2023/2024 agricultural season, the area planted recorded a decrease of 32% as compared to the 2022/2023 agricultural season leading to the Lowest yields since 2018/2019," he stressed

Further articulated that socio economic

shocks including job losses, reduced opportunities in on-farm and casual labor, price hikes, and high inflation have significantly reduced households total income and further weakened the already fragile households purchasing power.

Elias furthered that the national maize (staple food) production decreased by 52% in 2024 compared to the 2023 production, fueling the cost of living with the minimum expenditure basket increasing to 3,3897.89 per household of four people in 2024 compared to 2,600 in 2023

He mentioned that already DMA is supporting local farmers with local grain purchase "Beans and Grain", however there is also a need to timely provide the community with agricultural inputs subsidies with suitable crop varieties to built resilience.

Additionally, to Intensify integrated catchment management to improve rangelands and protect water sources along with conducting vaccination campaigns to prevent seasonal livestock diseases and most importantly operationalizing the National Strategic Resilience Framework to diversify livelihoods and built resilience against future shocks is significant.

He indicated that the government has already appealed to international partners to intervene, adding that 40% of the funds is needed for humanitarian assistance, 40% for resilience and 20% for developmental Programmes.

"The first batch of the funds will enhance agricultural and food security, the



second batch social protection and safety nets where disabled persons and vulnerable Basotho will benefit and the last batch will address issues of water sanitation and Hygiene and Health," he directed

He said budget for each area is: food insecurity 256.9 million, social protection 1.3 million, water and sanitation 173.7 million while in health area is 85.8 million. Adding that to fulfill the four areas DMA has advised the government to establish three (3) departments namely Logistics, Communications, Monitoring and Evaluation.

"The logistics department need 94.1, communication 94.1 while monitoring and evaluation department needs 360,000 while 1.7 million is already used for Agriculture,"

he said

He voiced that there is a program dubbed "tsoha o iketsetse" which Basotho works to in their respective communities to improve infrastructure and they earn M500 after every two weeks for a period of six months. Adding that the beneficiaries are now eighteen thousand and the government has spend over 7 million on the project.

He praised that the project is very impactful as some Basotho have started small businesses, it has help in cash circulation and gives a person freedom to buy whatever they want unlike food subsidies. Further concluding that there are other GOL projects such as Youth Apprenticeship that provides jobs for youth country wide.

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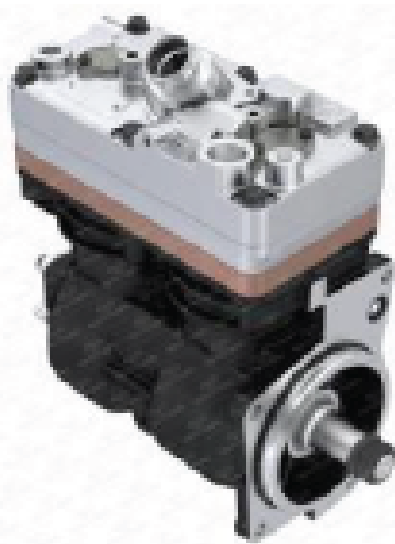


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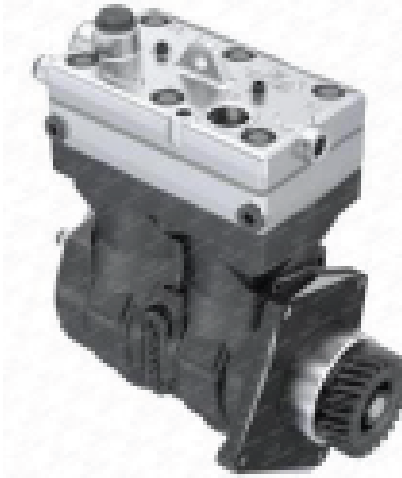


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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporter

For the past two years, Lesotho Tribune investigated an intricate web of corruption, negligence, and environmental degradation which quietly festered within Lesotho's most prized industry — diamond mining.

In an explosive five-part investigative series, we unravel how the government of Lesotho has consistently turned down over a billion Maloti annually, allowing a devastating loss of national wealth.

At the heart of this saga lies the illegal renewal of Letseng Diamonds' lease, a manoeuvre that has not only defied regulatory frameworks but also wreaked havoc on the Moloraneng stream and the surrounding environment.

The revelations do not stop there. This investigation exposes how the Ministers of Mines flagrantly violated the Mines and Minerals Act, disregarding legislation meant to safeguard Lesotho's natural resources. More shockingly, we uncover how diamond mining giants have been manipulating depreciation laws that simply do not exist, robbing the country of billions in tax revenue.

In this meticulously researched series, to be published in five riveting episodes, we delve into the murky nexus of power, policy, and profit, revealing the untold stories that have been hidden from public view — until now.

The Precious Stones Order of 1970: Embedding Equity in Diamond Taxation

Enacted through Section 17, the Precious Stones Order of 1970 mandates a 15% sales tax on unwrought diamonds exported from Lesotho. This statute was crafted not merely as a revenue tool but as a strategic measure to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth from Lesotho's natural resources. It aims to harness the diamond industry's potential to propel national growth, embedding equity at its core by requiring that beneficiaries of resource extraction contribute proportionally to national advancement.

The Precious Stones Order 1970, which is still legally in force, is an order that regulates the trade in precious stones and related mat-

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Revenue Services Lesotho Costs the Nation Over M1 billion By Failing To Collect Tax

ters. It is not subject to any mining legislation, but it requires that anyone prospecting or mining for diamonds must be authorized to do so under the prevailing mining legislation. Section 17 of the Precious Stones Order imposes the Sales Tax as follows...

(1) Unless otherwise agreed in writing between the Government of Lesotho and the licensed exporter or producer concerned, there shall be paid sales tax on the value of every diamond found in Lesotho and exported therefrom. (Amendment Order of 1973)

(2) The rate of the sales tax shall be fifteen per centum of the value of the diamond or such other amount as the Minister may from time to time by regulation prescribe.

(3) The sales tax shall be paid to the Commissioner on behalf of the Government by the licensed exporter who proposes to export the diamond at or prior to the time at which it is registered for export.

(4) (i) The value referred to in subsection (2) of this section shall be the true market value which shall be determined by the Commissioner. (ii) For the purpose of assisting him to determine the true market value the Commissioner may consult a diamond valuator. Although the section has been on the statute books in Lesotho for many years it has not been imposed.

Purpose of the Precious Stones Order of 1970

In the Kingdom of Lesotho, the mining and subsequent sale of diamonds signify not merely transactions of commerce but profound diminishment of the nation's wealth. The 10% royalty imposed on mining activities by the Mines and Minerals Act of 2005 is predicated on this recognition—it serves as a recompense for the depletion of the nation's assets. This royalty is crafted not as an arbitrary levy but as a necessary restitution, ensuring that a just portion of the diamond's inherent value is reinvested into the nation's future.

Further exacerbating this depletion is the act of exporting these precious stones. When diamonds leave the borders of Lesotho, not only is the immediate monetary value exported but also the potential for further economic enrichment through local beneficiation.

Such exports represent not only a forfeiture of revenue but a missed opportunity for economic development, job creation, and skill enhancement within the nation.

In response to this compounded loss, the 15% sales tax mandated by the Precious Stones Order of 1970 acts as a corrective measure.

This tax is not punitive but protective, ensuring that Lesotho secures a proportionate share of the diamonds' comprehensive value, which includes their potential to catalyse local

economic benefits.

The exemption of this tax for diamonds processed locally transcends fiscal policy; it is a strategic incentive. It fosters the establishment of a local diamond industry, thus converting a finite natural resource into a source of sustainable benefits.

This exemption is designed not as a mere financial relief but as a strategic investment in the nation's future, promoting the creation of a local value-added industry that can perpetuate economic benefits long after the diamonds are extracted and depleted.

On the contrary, exporting diamonds without local processing does not merely sidestep economic benefits; it imposes a negative externality. It signifies a transfer of wealth from Lesotho to international markets, a transfer that strips the nation of the comprehensive benefits of its natural resources.

The 15% tax on exported diamonds thus functions to mitigate this externality, ensuring that Lesotho is compensated for the broader economic opportunities forfeited when a mining company chooses to export unpolished diamonds.

This tax is designed not only as a means of raising revenue but also as a pivotal policy instrument aimed at shaping corporate behaviour.

By increasing the cost associated with exporting unwrought diamonds, the tax encourages mining companies to channel their operations toward local beneficiation, aligning their business strategies with national economic development objectives.

Furthermore, as an excise tax specifically levied on diamonds, this fiscal measure seeks to redistribute the economic burden, shifting it from the general populace to those directly benefiting from the export of Lesotho's valuable diamonds. It ensures that those entities which reap the most substantial profits from Lesotho's diamonds also contribute significantly to the nation's economic sustenance.

Denominated in US dollars, the tax also serves as a safeguard against currency fluctuations, securing the real value of the revenue against global economic volatilities. This aspect underscores the tax's role not merely as a revenue tool but as a bulwark for national economic stability.

In sum, the imposition of this sales tax on diamond exports is more than a fiscal obligation; it is an assertion of national rights—a declaration that the wealth derived from Lesotho's natural resources is to be enjoyed broadly by its people. It reinforces the principle that the extraction of diamonds, while a depletion



of physical resources, should also culminate in substantial and equitable economic gains for the nation.

Revenue Services Lesotho to blame for not collecting sales tax?

When quizzed by Lesotho Tribune, why they have not been collecting the sales tax as mandated by the law, Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), through Mr. Pheello Mphana had this to say.

"In 1970, the administration of the Precious Stone Order of 1970 (the Order) which amongst others regulated payment of Diamond Sales Tax, fell under the responsibility or scope of functions of the then Minister of Finance, Commerce and Industry..."

"What was then the Ministry of Finance, Commerce and Industry in 1970, has today evolved into the Ministries [of] Finance and Development Planning, Natural Resources and Trade, Industry, Business Development and Tourism. The bulk of matters provided for in the Order are too remote to functions currently played by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, except for the determination of diamond sales tax rates and its collection. The bulk of matters dealt with under the Order are now regulated by the Minerals Act No.4 of 2005 which makes no mention of the collection of diamond sales tax."

Mr. Mphana continued, "given that what used to be a single Ministry then responsible for the Order, has evolved into three Ministries, with of course the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning having the closest connection to the collection of diamond sales tax, it could be argued that the Minister of Finance and Development Planning is empowered by the Public Finance Management and Accountability Act (PFMA) of 2011, to assign the responsibility for the management, super-

vision and collection of the Diamond Sales Tax to the RSL...”

“Given however that the office of the Commissioner of mines and to whom amongst others the diamond sales tax was payable to, was an office found in the Ministry of Finance, Commerce and Industry, and which today its functions cuts across the spectrum of the control of the Ministries of Finance and Development Planning, Natural Resources and Trade, Industry, Business Development and Tourism, in respect of their respective mandates.”

“All the three Ministries therefore have some form of connection to the Order, whether strong or weak, with no single Ministry today being in a position to claim it is exclusively in charge of the administration of the Order. As it were, there could only be one Ministry responsible for the administration of an Act of Parliament and by implication the Order and which could affect amendments to it.”

Mr. Mphana concluded, “The Minister of Finance and Development Planning would require the consensus of the other two Ministries to make legislative changes to the Order empowering the RSL to collect the Diamond Sales Tax, given that it has the closest connection to the collection of diamond sales tax, which as a matter of fact is not being collected by the other two Ministries.”

Ministry of Finance and Development Planning did not answer questions posed three weeks ago until publication of this article.

Who is Responsible for Enforcement and Administration of the Sales Tax?

The Minister of Finance and the RSL are responsible for administering the Sales Tax

Section 110 of Chapter X of the Lesotho Constitution. Which relates to the finances of Lesotho, states that all revenues or other moneys raised or received for the purposes of the Government of Lesotho (not being revenues or other moneys that are payable, by or under an Act of Parliament, into some other fund established for any specific purpose or that may, by or under such an Act, be retained by the Authority that received them for the purpose of defraying the expenses of that Authority) shall be paid into and form a Consolidated Fund.

This is also expressed in the “Offices of Ministers Notice 1970” which provides in section 8 that “the office of Minister of Finance, [Commerce and Industry] has responsibility for amongst other matters, the overall control and application of the national financial resources of Lesotho. The preparation and presentation to the Council of Ministers of estimates of the revenue and expenditure of Lesotho, formulation of Taxation policies and generally the administration of those laws that relate to the revenues and expenditure of Lesotho”.

The Public Financial Management and Accountability Act of 2011 section 20 states that the Minister of Finance has responsibility for the management, supervision, control, and direction of all matters relating to the financial affairs of Government which are not by law assigned to any other minister or Authority.

Section 31 of the LRA Act of 2001 reads:

Upon the coming into operation of this Act- (a) all references to the Director of Customs and Excise, the Commissioner of Sales Tax or Commissioner of Income Tax in the laws specified in the Schedule or any other law shall be construed as references to the Commissioner-General; (b) any reference to the existing revenue departments in the laws specified in the Schedule or in any other law shall be deemed to be a reference to the Authority. (c) except as provided in paragraph (a) any reference to an officer of the existing revenue departments howsoever designated in the written laws specified in the Schedule or in any other law shall be deemed to be reference to the Authority.

Based on the above, the Minister of Finance and the RSL are responsible for administering the Sales Tax...

Does the Customs and Excise Act Include the Control of Exports Under Any Other Law?

In addition, as part of the Minister of Finance and RSL's responsibility for administering the Sales Tax, there are additional checks in the Customs and Excise Act, 1982, to ensure enforcement of the Sales Tax. The Director must ensure that all laws (which includes the Order) relating to exported goods must be complied with before allowing such export.

The 15% sales tax as envisaged by the Precious Stones Order of 1970 would be considered an excise tax. An excise tax is a specific ad valorem sales tax imposed on a particular good or service, and in this case, it is imposed on the export of unwrought diamonds from Lesotho. The tax is levied in addition to other broad consumption taxes, making it a selective tax imposed on an act. Therefore, it meets the definition of an excise tax.

Consequently, the 15% sales tax as envisaged by the Precious Stones Order of 1970 would fall under the Customs and Excise Act of 1982 as an excise tax.

The preamble of the Customs and Excise Act indicates that it provides for the levying of customs, excise, and sales duties, as well as the control of the importation and exportation of certain goods. Additionally, subsection (3) of section 39 requires that every exporter exporting any goods, including diamonds, must deliver a bill of entry in the prescribed form and pay any applicable export duties and taxes, which would include the excise tax on diamonds as required by the Precious Stones Order 1970.

Subsection (2)(a) of section 40 declares that if any goods intended for export are liable to any export duty under this Act, the amount thereof shall be stated in the bill of entry relating to such goods and shall be payable upon presentation of such entry to the Director.

Section 72(a) explains that for the purposes of this Act, the value of any goods exported from Lesotho shall be the price of those goods free on board at the place of dispatch from Lesotho, which value shall be declared on the bill of entry export.

Subsection (2)(a) of section 107 directs that the Director shall not allow goods to pass from his control until he has satisfied himself that the provisions of this Act or any law relating to the importation or exportation or transit carriage through Lesotho of goods have been complied with in respect of such goods.

Therefore, the Customs and Excise Act provides for the levying of customs, excise, and sales duties on goods, and subsection (10)

of section 114 specifically states that “the exportation of goods the exportation of which is in terms of any provision of this Act or of any other law required to be authorized by a permit, certificates or other authority, is hereby prohibited unless exported under such a permit, certificate or other authority which in terms purports to have been issued by virtue of such provisions and such permit, certificate or other authority is produced to the officer before exportation of such goods.”

The Precious Stones Order of 1970 is a law requiring authorization for the export of rough diamonds and imposes a specific ad valorem sales tax on such exports, which would fall under the definition of an excise tax. Therefore, it can be concluded that the 15% sales tax as envisaged by the Precious Stones Order of 1970 would fall under the Customs and Excise Act of 1982 as an excise tax.

Regulatory Function of Tax Sovereignty

Tax sovereignty stands as a fundamental pillar of a state's governance, empowering it to perform essential governmental functions and epitomizing the breadth of state authority. This sovereignty transcends the mere collection of revenues, extending into the realm of economic regulation and the shaping of societal behaviours through fiscal policy. Historically, tax policy has been a dynamic tool for indirect regulation, influencing both economic and social outcomes by incentivizing or disincentivizing particular behaviours among taxpayers.

Globally, governments deploy their tax sovereignty to foster industrial growth, support sectors impacted by economic transitions, incentivize specific industries, and promote social justice and equality. This regulatory dimension of tax sovereignty is pivotal in sculpting national economic strategies, propelling social reforms, and advancing foreign policy goals through differential tax regimes.

The role of taxation as a regulatory instrument is well-acknowledged by legal scholars and enshrined within constitutional frameworks, underscoring its legitimacy and efficacy in achieving comprehensive regulatory objectives beyond mere fiscal accrual. This perspective is buttressed by jurisprudential precedents, notably in jurisdictions like the United States, where taxation has been leveraged to support general welfare, regulate non-fiscal behaviours, and facilitate desired social and economic outcomes.

In the context of Lesotho, the Precious Stones Order of 1970, particularly through Section 17, exemplifies the strategic use of tax sovereignty for regulatory aims. The stipulation of a 15% tax on the export of rough diamonds serves not merely as a fiscal mechanism but as a regulatory duty designed to encourage local diamond beneficiation, bolster the domestic economy, and ensure a fair distribution of natural resource benefits.

This export duty is strategically aimed at promoting the local processing of diamonds, thereby enhancing industrial development, generating employment, and advancing national interests by retaining substantial diamond value within Lesotho. It represents an assertion of Lesotho's sovereignty over its natural resources, ensuring that their exploitation contributes positively to national welfare

and aligns with broader development goals.

The regulatory essence of the Diamond Sales Tax is integral to ensuring a sufficient domestic supply of rough diamonds, fostering the growth of a local diamond industry, and encouraging in-country beneficiation. This policy echoes measures in other diamond-producing nations, such as South Africa, which impose export taxes to stimulate local industries and economic expansion.

Moreover, the Precious Stones Order of 1970 establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework for the diamond sector, including the creation of a Diamond Cutting Industry Board, underscoring the government's commitment to regulate the industry, ensure a stable local diamond supply, and support the development of a domestic processing industry. This framework acts as a deterrent against exporting rough diamonds by incentivizing local sales and processing to circumvent the 15% export levy.

In essence, the Diamond Sales Tax articulated in Section 17 of the Precious Stones Order of 1970 is a manifestation of Lesotho's tactical use of tax sovereignty to achieve regulatory objectives. It exemplifies taxation not solely as a revenue-generating tool but as a strategic instrument for economic regulation, industrial development, and the promotion of national interests. This tax reflects a sophisticated understanding of tax sovereignty, where taxation transcends its traditional role and becomes a fundamental mechanism for advancing public policy, economic justice, and the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources for the collective benefit of the Basotho nation.

Why is the Government of Lesotho Turning Down M1 Billion in Revenue Per Year?

Lesotho's economic framework is significantly bolstered by the M1.1 billion in royalties received annually from South Africa for water from the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, constituting about 5% of the national budget. Concurrently, the nation foregoes a comparable sum due to the non-enforcement of the excise tax on rough diamond exports. This uncollected revenue represents not only a fiscal shortfall but also a missed opportunity for substantial economic development and job creation within the country.

The government of Lesotho faces a pivotal opportunity to mitigate these challenges through the enforcement of the 15% sales tax on rough diamond exports as stipulated by the Precious Stones Order of 1970. This enforcement could compel mining companies to process diamonds locally, fostering job creation and industrial growth, or to comply with the tax obligation, enhancing domestic revenue mobilization. The Order, duly enacted by Parliament, mandates the Minister of Finance and the RSL to ensure its rigorous implementation, thus addressing significant economic needs and advancing national development.

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EcoCash Tobetsa Campaign Celebrates Second Grand Prize Winner

By Mamello Mochesane

Maseru-
Sasai Econet Financial Services (SEFS) handed over a brand-new Nissan NP200 to Malineo Motsephe from Morija, marking her as the second grand prize winner in the ongoing EcoCash Tobetsa campaign.

The recent handover by SEFS, a subsidiary of Econet Telecom Lesotho, highlights the success of the EcoCash Tobetsa campaign, which celebrates the use of EcoCash, Lesotho's leading mobile money platform. Paulinah Moreira, speaking on behalf of the General Manager of SEFS, described the event as a testament to the company's commitment to transforming the lives of its customers.

"It is such an exciting day as we hand over a brand-new vehicle to one of Lesotho's senior citizens. This campaign doesn't just reward loyalty but it underscores our dedication to convenience and empowerment," she said.

Moreira emphasized the importance of the ongoing campaign, encouraging customers to continue participating.

"The two Nissan NP200 car winners and others who have won amazing prizes prove that the EcoCash Tobetsa campaign is pivotal in our mission to empower our valued customers across Lesotho." She also highlighted how EcoCash is revolutionizing financial transactions in the country, making them more accessible and secure.

Motsephe, the latest grand prize winner, ex-



pressed her gratitude and joy for winning the car. "I'm truly humbled to drive away with a prize of this magnitude. No one would have thought that by simply using EcoCash for my everyday

transactions, I would win something that brings so much delight to my family," she said.

SEFS remains committed to offering innovative financial solutions aimed at enhancing economic participation and financial inclusion in Leso-

tho. Through their products and services, they hope to continue empowering individuals and businesses, paving the way for a thriving digital economy.

Revenue Services Launches ACP System

By Mamello Mochesane

Maseru-
In a step towards modernizing the tax landscape in Lesotho, Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) has officially launched the Automatic Compliance Project (ACP). This innovative system is set to revolutionize how taxes are handled, making the process simpler and more efficient for both taxpayers and tax administrators.

Speaking at the launch, Mathabo Mokoko, the Commissioner General of RSL, described the event as a breakthrough for Lesotho's tax ecosystem.

"This project represents a significant milestone in our efforts to streamline and modernize the tax compliance process for businesses and individuals alike," she stated, highlighting the importance of the ACP in reducing the complexity and time-consuming nature of tax compliance.

Tax compliance in Lesotho, like in many countries, has often been seen as a daunting task. Businesses and individuals have had to navigate a web of regulations, forms, and deadlines, often resulting in errors and inefficiencies.

"This does not only creates a burden for taxpayers but also for tax administrators," Mokoko noted, adding that tax authorities often waste valuable resources correcting mistakes or chasing non-compliance.

The Automatic Compliance Project is designed to address these challenges head-on. By leveraging technology like artificial intelligence and data analytics, the ACP simplifies and automates the entire process. Tax information will now be collected, processed, and verified more efficiently, reducing the likelihood of human error and ensuring that taxpayers can meet their obligations on time.

"This will allow us to better identify and address non-compliance, ensuring that everyone pays



their fair share," said Mokoko.

The system aims to foster a more equitable tax environment where compliance becomes automatic and non-compliance requires deliberate effort.

Mokoko emphasized that the transformation will not happen overnight, but RSL is taking it step by step. The first phase, known as the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) 1, focuses on auto-populating PAYE tax returns for RSL, the Land Administration Authority (LAA), and select government ministries.

"This is the beginning of a journey," Mokoko

remarked, acknowledging the enormity of the task ahead.

She proudly announced that the two initial PAYE taxpayers, RSL and LAA, have already integrated with the ACP system, enabling automatic sharing of payroll data and pre-filling PAYE returns.

"This marks the beginning of a new era in tax compliance for Lesotho," she declared, describing how the system will make tax compliance smoother, faster, and more convenient for everyone involved.

However, not all targets have been hit immediately. Mokoko mentioned that integrating with government ministries was delayed due to re-

structuring following the 2022 general elections. Yet, she remained resolute, expressing confidence that other PAYE taxpayers, including the government, would eventually join the system.

As the system is rolled out, feedback from users has been overwhelmingly positive. Maleru Tebello, an assistant accountant at LAA, shared her first experience using the ACP system to file PAYE returns for the month of August.

"I logged into the website, and the Excel sheet was already reformulated with accurate figures," Tebello explained.

She emphasized the benefit of eliminating human errors, which are common when manually preparing tax forms.

"There were no challenges I encountered while using the system, though it was my first time, which shows there are no complications in using it," Tebello said, praising the system for its user-friendly interface.

Mokoko closed her speech by extending her gratitude to all who made the project possible, particularly the leadership of LAA, who played a crucial role in its implementation. She described the LAA's decision to be among the first to integrate with the ACP as a positive example for others to follow.

"We deeply appreciate such collaboration. Re Tjena Ka Lona," she expressed with pride.

Looking to the future, Mokoko emphasized that the launch of the ACP is just the beginning. RSL is committed to continuous innovation and adapting to the ever-changing tax landscape.

"We will continue to innovate and adapt, always striving to improve the experience for our taxpayers," she concluded, calling for collective effort to make automatic tax compliance a reality for all.

With the launch of ACP, the hope is that more organizations and individuals will benefit from the streamlined processes, ultimately leading to a more equitable tax environment for everyone.



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

There's an old joke that the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." While it may draw laughs, the underlying truth is more sobering. Time and again, government intervention has proven not just ineffective, but often counterproductive, making life harder for the very people it claims to assist. In reality, governments around the world are plagued by inefficiency, waste, and bureaucracy, rendering their ability to "help" little more than a costly illusion.

Just this week, the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) revealed that the Lesotho government is facing a staggering M2 billion shortfall in funds required to feed its population. Initially, the government budgeted M3.7 billion to combat what it termed the "unprecedented hunger crisis." Yet, it has only managed to scrape together M1.7 billion, leaving over 700,000 Basotho—33% of the population—facing hunger and starvation. This crisis is not new, but rather a culmination of years of poor planning, lackluster execution, and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

The root causes of this failure go far beyond the "El Niño-induced droughts" and "crop pests" that the DMA CEO Reatile Elias mentioned at a press conference. Yes, the weather plays a role, but the real problem is the systemic inability of the government to anticipate and address crises. This pattern of failure extends across various sectors, where promises are made but seldom fulfilled.

Consider the agricultural sector. According to Elias, the 2023/2024 planting season saw a 32% decrease in the area cultivated compared to the previous year, resulting in the lowest yields since 2018. National maize production dropped by 52% from 2023 to 2024. The consequences of these failures have been felt far and wide, with food prices skyrocketing and inflation eroding household incomes. A typical household of four now needs M3,897.89 just to cover basic expenses, up from M2,600 in 2023. These numbers reveal a government scrambling to respond to the consequences of its inaction.

When a government fails to manage some-

EDITORIAL

I'm From the Government and I'm Here to Help You



Hon. Nthomeng Majara, deputy prime minister. This image is used for illustrative purposes only...Photo credit: Joseph Ntakha

thing as fundamental as food security, it raises serious questions about its capacity to govern effectively. Instead of focusing on long-term resilience and self-sufficiency, the government continues to lurch from crisis to crisis, appealing for international aid while its own programs falter.

Take the "Tsoha o Iketsetse" initiative, a program where citizens are paid to work on community infrastructure projects. Participants earn M500 every two weeks for six months. While the program may provide temporary relief, it does little to address the underlying issues of poverty and unemployment. It's a Band-Aid solution in a country that desperately needs surgery. Government projects like these may give the illusion of assistance, but they're merely short-term fixes to long-term problems.

Meanwhile, the government's appeal to international partners for funds only reinforces the cycle of dependency. Forty percent of the needed funds are earmarked for humanitarian assistance, with the rest divided between resilience and development programs. These funds are essential, yes, but they won't solve

the deeper issue: the state's chronic inability to manage its resources effectively.

The truth is, when government steps in to "help," it often exacerbates the problem. Government agencies like the DMA may be well-intentioned, but they are hamstrung by inefficiency, corruption, and the slow-moving machinery of bureaucracy. Promises of subsidies and social protection schemes sound good on paper, but in practice, they are plagued by delays, mismanagement, and an inability to reach those most in need.

For example, the government claims it is supporting local farmers by purchasing grains and beans, but the impact has been minimal. Without timely provision of agricultural inputs and subsidies for suitable crop varieties, farmers are left to fend for themselves in an increasingly hostile environment. The call to "intensify integrated catchment management" to protect water sources is commendable, but again, it's just another promise that will likely remain unfulfilled.

This pattern of failure is not unique to Lesotho. Across the world, governments over-promise and under-deliver. Whether it's

in disaster management, agriculture, health-care, or education, the track record of government intervention is abysmal. Bureaucracies are bloated and ineffective, and politicians are more interested in photo opportunities and short-term gains than in long-term solutions. The result is a system that is more focused on sustaining itself than on actually solving problems.

Perhaps the most telling example of government's inefficacy is its own finances. Lesotho, like many countries, is grappling with a massive budget shortfall. Despite the critical need to address hunger, the government is struggling to raise funds, relying heavily on international aid and loans. This cycle of borrowing and spending has left the nation drowning in debt, with no clear plan for fiscal responsibility. When the government itself can't balance its books, how can we trust it to solve the complex problems facing its citizens?

The lesson here is clear: government, in its current form, is ill-equipped to help. The more we rely on the state, the more we become trapped in a cycle of dependency and stagnation. The time has come for a radically limited form of government, one that focuses on its core functions—protecting individual rights, enforcing contracts, and maintaining public order. Everything else should be left to the private sector and local communities, where innovation, competition, and personal responsibility can thrive.

The private sector, not government, is where real progress happens. In a free market, individuals and businesses are incentivized to find solutions, create value, and drive innovation. Entrepreneurs, not bureaucrats, are the true engines of prosperity. When governments step aside and allow the private sector to flourish, societies become more resilient, adaptable, and prosperous.

At the end of the day, the best help the government can offer is to get out of the way. If we continue to look to the state for solutions, we will only be met with more failure, more dependency, and more disappointment. The real path forward lies in empowering individuals, families, and communities to take control of their own lives, free from the heavy hand of government.

So the next time someone says, "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help you," remember that the best help you can get is the freedom to help yourself... running tell them, "if this is the best help you can provide, then I don't want it!"



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Lesotho Tribune

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Hydrogen Plant Brings Hope Lesotho

BY: DENISE HILL, NASA

This week, the National University of Lesotho (NUL) Masters of Sustainable Energy student, Tšepiso Angelina Ramaisa took social media by storm after it was reported that she has successfully completed the first part of the work in which she is designing a plant that will produce Green Hydrogen. Ms. Ramaisa is supervised by Professor Thimothy Thamae and Mr. Moruti Kao.

Lesotho Tribune caught with Ms. Ramaisa to find out more on her project.

Lesotho Tribune (LT): Who is Tšepiso Ramaisa?

Tšepiso Ramaisa (TR): I am Tšepiso Angelina Ramaisa, a 27-year-old female and a final-year Master's student in Sustainable Energy at the National University of Lesotho. I am passionate about renewable energy and focused on advancing Lesotho's energy sector through sustainable practices. My work centers on exploring alternative energy solutions, including green hydrogen production, to address the country's energy challenges. With a strong interest in the potential of renewable resources like hydro, solar, and wind, I aim to contribute to Lesotho's tran-

sition towards a more sustainable and energy-independent future.

LT: What inspired you to design a hydrogen plant, and how did you become interested in this specific area of sustainable energy?

TR: Designing a hydrogen plant was inspired by my passion for renewable energy and my desire to help address the energy challenges faced by Lesotho. Growing up in a country with abundant natural resources like hydro, solar, and wind, I saw the untapped potential for cleaner and more sustainable energy solutions. As I delved deeper into sustainable energy during my studies, I became particularly intrigued by green hydrogen due to its potential to revolutionize energy systems, especially in regions like Lesotho, where hydrogen could be produced using renewable sources like hydroelectric power.

My interest in green hydrogen was further sparked by its ability to offer a clean alternative to fossil fuels, emitting only water as a by-product. This not only reduces carbon emissions but also positions hydrogen as a versatile energy carrier for various applications, from fuel cells to large-scale power generation. The idea of contributing to Lesotho's energy independence, while also tackling climate change on a larger scale, motivated me to focus on designing a hydrogen plant tailored to the country's renewable resources.



LT: In an article published by NUL innovation hub, you mentioned that the design process almost "broke your neck." Could you elaborate on the biggest challenges you faced while creating the material balance equations?

TR: One of the biggest challenges was ensuring that the equations accurately accounted for all components—hydrogen, oxygen, water, and the electrolyte—while maintaining the balance throughout the entire system. This was crucial for calculating the exact input and output quantities to ensure optimal efficiency.

Another major hurdle was the complexity of integrating the different process streams. I had to ensure that

the molar fractions added up to one for each component at various points in the system. Any small error could throw off the entire calculation, leading to inefficient energy use or incorrect predictions of production rates. Managing this level of detail, while also factoring in reaction rates, temperature variations, and system efficiency, made the process extremely demanding. On top of that, working with limited data specific to Lesotho's renewable energy resources added another layer of difficulty. Since most existing models were not tailored to our local context, I had to adapt or create new parameters, which made the design process much more intricate than anticipated.

LT: Why do you believe focusing

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on fertilizer production would be a more suitable starting point for Lesotho, rather than focusing on hydrogen-powered cars?

TR: I believe focusing on fertilizer production is a more suitable starting point for Lesotho, rather than hydrogen-powered cars, for several key reasons. First, agriculture is a vital part of Lesotho's economy, and the country faces challenges with soil fertility and food security. Producing green hydrogen to manufacture ammonia, a key ingredient in fertilizers, would directly support the agricultural sector, improving crop yields and boosting food production. This approach addresses an immediate need and has the potential to significantly impact local livelihoods and food security.

Second, the infrastructure required for hydrogen-powered cars, such as refuelling stations and vehicle adoption, is still in its infancy globally, let alone in Lesotho. The costs and logistics of introducing hydrogen vehicles are high, and the market demand for them in Lesotho is currently low. On the other hand, fertilizer production is a well-established industry with an immediate market, making it a more practical and impactful entry point for hydrogen technology. By starting with fertilizer production, Lesotho can build a foundation for green hydrogen utilization in a way that aligns with its economic priorities, while creating a pathway for future hydrogen applications like transportation. This approach allows the country to gradually develop the expertise and infrastructure needed for larger-scale hydrogen adoption, including in the transport sector, when the time is right.

LT: How do you see Lesotho benefiting from green hydrogen in the agricultural sector, especially with the production of ammonium nitrate fertilizer?

TR: Lesotho stands to gain significant benefits from green hydrogen in the agricultural sector, particularly through the production of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. Agriculture is a cornerstone of the country's economy, and improving soil fertility is essential for increasing food production and supporting rural livelihoods. By utilizing green hydrogen to produce ammonia—a key ingredient in ammonium nitrate—Lesotho can manufacture fertilizers locally, reducing dependence on imports and lowering costs for farmers. This would lead to higher crop yields and improved food security, which is critical for a country where agriculture employs a large portion of the population.

Moreover, producing fertilizer using green hydrogen aligns with global sustainability goals, as it eliminates the carbon emissions typically associated with conventional ammonia production. Traditional methods rely on natural gas or coal, contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. By using

renewable energy, such as hydroelectric power, to produce green hydrogen, Lesotho can create a cleaner, more sustainable fertilizer industry, positioning itself as a leader in environmentally friendly agriculture. In addition to boosting local food production, this approach could also open up export opportunities for Lesotho, allowing it to supply sustainably produced fertilizers to neighbouring countries. Over time, the green hydrogen industry could stimulate rural development, create jobs, and contribute to the country's overall economic growth, while ensuring that agricultural practices remain environmentally sustainable.

LT: Given the controversy around using hydrogen to power cars, what are your thoughts on its long-term feasibility for automobiles in Lesotho or even globally?

TR: While hydrogen-powered vehicles hold promise, their widespread adoption will depend on technological advancements, economic feasibility, and the development of necessary infrastructure. For Lesotho, focusing on hydrogen applications in sectors like agriculture and gradually developing transportation infrastructure might be a more practical approach. Globally, continued research and investment in technology and infrastructure is crucial to realizing the full potential of hydrogen as a clean transportation solution. In this regard, Lesotho can build a robust infrastructure for hydrogen-powered vehicles and lead the way in demonstrating the viability of this technology. Developing local expertise, investing in infrastructure, and fostering partnerships with global automotive and energy companies could help Lesotho establish itself as a significant player in the green hydrogen industry.

LT: Can you tell us more about the collaboration between you and other students, like Thuso Mosuoane, and how this teamwork contributes to the project's success?

TR: Thuso's contributions are critical as we move forward. The next steps, including energy balances, process and instrumentation diagrams, and process control, require a detailed and methodical approach. By addressing these areas, Thuso will help ensure that our hydrogen production model is not only accurate but also operationally viable. His work will integrate the material balances with energy considerations, design the necessary instrumentation for monitoring and control, and develop comprehensive process control strategies. This allows us to build on each other's strengths and expertise, ensuring that each component of the project is meticulously developed and that the overall system functions cohesively. The collaborative effort ensures that we cover all aspects of the design and implementation process, contributing

to the project's success and advancing our goal of establishing a robust green hydrogen production system.

LT: Lesotho has an abundance of water and renewable energy sources like solar and wind. How do you see these resources positioning Lesotho as a leader in green hydrogen production?

TR: Lesotho's abundance of water and renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, uniquely positions it to become a leader in green hydrogen production. Water is essential for producing green hydrogen through electrolysis, and Lesotho's ample water resources provide a reliable supply for this process. By utilizing its renewable energy sources to power electrolysis, Lesotho can produce hydrogen sustainably with minimal carbon emissions, setting itself apart as a key player in clean energy solutions.

The country's significant solar and wind resources offer the potential to generate the large amounts of electricity required for electrolysis. Solar energy is typically more available during the day, while wind energy can be harnessed effectively at night or during different weather conditions, ensuring a stable and continuous supply of renewable energy for hydrogen production. This combination of resources supports a reliable and efficient production process. Additionally, as global demand for clean energy solutions grows, Lesotho's commitment to green hydrogen could position it as a significant exporter, tapping into the expanding global market. Developing a green hydrogen industry also brings substantial economic benefits, including investments in infrastructure and technology, and generates high-value jobs. Environmentally, it supports global climate goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting the use of renewable energy.

LT: What role do you see for government and private sector investment in advancing green hydrogen technology in Lesotho?

TR: The government can provide the foundational support needed to develop the hydrogen sector by creating favourable policies and regulations that encourage investment and innovation. This includes offering financial incentives, such as subsidies or tax breaks, for companies investing in green hydrogen technologies and infrastructure. Additionally, the government can spearhead research initiatives, collaborate with international partners, and invest in public infrastructure like hydrogen refuelling stations to support the growth of this emerging industry.

On the other hand, private sector investment is essential for driving technological advancements and scaling up green hydrogen production. Private companies can invest in research and development to improve hydrogen production technologies and reduce

costs. They can also contribute to building the necessary infrastructure, such as electrolyzers and storage facilities, and develop commercial applications for hydrogen. Collaboration between private investors and local businesses can foster innovation and create a competitive market environment, further accelerating the adoption of green hydrogen technologies.

LT: Looking ahead, what do you think will be the most significant hurdle

in bringing your hydrogen plant design to life?

TR: Looking ahead, the biggest challenge in bringing the hydrogen plant design to life will likely be securing enough funding and resources. Building and running a hydrogen plant, especially one focused on producing hydrogen for fertilizers, requires substantial investment. This includes the costs for setting up the equipment, maintaining operations, and developing the infrastructure needed, like refuelling stations and facilities for producing fertilizers. Additionally, ensuring that the technology is reliable and efficient will be crucial. Overcoming these financial and technical challenges will be key to making the hydrogen plant and its associated fertilizer production a reality.

LT: How does your research at NUL contribute to global efforts towards decarbonization, and how do you see your work impacting the future of green energy?

TR: My research at the National University of Lesotho contributes to global decarbonization efforts by advancing green hydrogen production, which is a key technology for reducing carbon emissions. By focusing on producing hydrogen from renewable sources like hydro, solar, and wind, my work aims to create a cleaner, more sustainable energy solution that can replace fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Green hydrogen has the potential to play a significant role in various sectors, including transportation, industry, and agriculture. By developing efficient and cost-effective methods for hydrogen production, my research helps pave the way for broader adoption of this technology. This not only supports Lesotho's energy transition but also contributes to global efforts to combat climate change. Looking to the future, the impact of my work in green hydrogen production could be substantial. As the technology matures and becomes more economically viable, it could lead to significant reductions in carbon emissions worldwide. By demonstrating the potential of green hydrogen in a country with abundant renewable resources, my research may inspire similar initiatives in other regions, further accelerating the global shift towards green energy and a more sustainable future.

Lesotho Braces for Rainfall Season with Mixed Forecast



By: Tholoana Lesenya

Maseru- Lesotho's Minister of Forestry and environment, Letsema Adont'si, has provided an update on the upcoming 2024/2025 rainfall season, highlighting key weather patterns and their potential impacts on the country. With varying rainfall forecasts, including potential flash floods and dry spells, Lesotho faces a critical period for both agriculture and the environment.

The onset of rains in 2023/2024 occurred during the second week of October, with most regions experiencing normal to above-normal rainfall from October to December. However, a notable shift followed, with the main rainy season from December to February seeing below-average rainfall. High temperatures were recorded in early October and late November, and the months of January, February, and March 2024 observed relatively dry conditions paired with high temperatures.

Looking ahead, Lesotho's 2024/2025 season forecasts a similar mixed outlook. Most regions are expected to see below-normal rainfall between October and December 2024, except for the southwestern and extreme northern areas where normal to above-normal rains are predicted. The period between November 2024 and January 2025 is projected to bring above-normal rainfall to many parts of the country, with a stronger likelihood of heavy rains in December 2024 through February 2025. The early months of 2025 may also see normal to above-normal rainfall, though the eastern regions could face below-normal rain during this time.

The temperature forecast for the entire 2024/2025 rainfall season is concerning,

with predictions of temperatures being above long-term averages, a pattern that has been observed in previous seasons.

The summer months, while expected to bring rains, could also bring severe weather events such as flash floods, thunderstorms, hailstorms, and strong winds. These extreme conditions are common during the rainy season in Lesotho and pose threats to both people and property.

Letsema emphasized the potential damage to homes, crops, and infrastructure, calling for preparedness at both community and governmental levels.

Farmers, in particular, are advised to prepare for potential losses, as flash floods and strong winds can lead to devastating crop destruction. Such conditions can worsen the already challenging task of ensuring food security during the rainy season.

An alarming trend of illegal burning of rangelands has raised concerns about the environmental impacts. These fires, often set deliberately during dry periods, lead to severe soil erosion, especially during rains when the soil lacks vegetative cover. Wetland degradation is another major consequence, causing water shortages in streams, wells, dams, and taps across Lesotho.

Letsema also noted the release of carbon stored in burnt vegetation into the atmosphere, which worsens climate change. Wildfires have had a direct impact on communities this year, with several cases of burnt livestock, crops, houses, electricity poles, and even vehicles.

"I make an urgent plea to those who burn the rangelands to stop immediately," the minister urged, as the environmental consequences are both immediate and far-reaching.

The Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) has been at the forefront of moni-

toring and managing climate data for over 120 years. As part of their mandate, LMS collects and archives climate records to build a robust National Climate Record. This data is critical for forecasting and managing the country's environmental challenges. LMS also serves as a key player in helping Lesotho meet its international obligations related to meteorology.

Recently, from August 19 to 30, Climate Experts from Lesotho participated in a SADC meeting, where they joined other member states to develop the regional outlook for the 2024/2025 cropping season. The forecasts generated during this meeting are crucial for sectors like agriculture, which rely on accurate weather predictions to manage risks associated with droughts, floods, and other weather-related challenges.

Following the meeting, Lesotho's stakeholders, particularly in agriculture, are expected to hold discussions on how the forecasted conditions will affect the country. These conversations will help them create strategies and practices that ensure resilience and sustainability, even as weather patterns grow more unpredictable.

The Department of Forestry and environment, under Minister Letsema's leadership, continues to play a vital role in preparing Lesotho for the challenges ahead. The mixed rainfall forecasts for the 2024/2025 season underline the need for proactive measures, particularly in agriculture and environmental protection.

Basotho citizens are urged to heed the warnings and take necessary precautions, especially during the summer months when the risk of flash floods and severe storms is high. Communities must also be vigilant in preventing wildfires, which have already caused significant damage this year.

Moabi flops to reveal arriving Bereng's cell



By: Tholoana Lesenya

Maseru- Even though Correctional Officer Lehlohonolo Moabi acknowledged that he entered Tlotliso Bereng's cell during the search exercise, he still failed to reveal that in his testimony before the Commission.

Officer Moabi, together with Officer Mothabeng, Mokoloko and Mokhethi were seen entering Bereng's cell on the footage, during the search exercise that was conducted at Maseru Central Correctional Institution (MCCI) on December 22, 2023. The search resulted in beating of inmates, leaving Bereng paralysed.

When questioned why he did not relate that he entered Bereng's cell in his evidence before the Commission of Inquiry on the escape of inmates, Moabi stated it was due to the fact that he moved in many cells at maximum block during the search thus he forgot, not arguing that he entered Bereng's cell.

The Commission's Chairperson Justice Realeboha Mathaba inquired Moabi if he accepts that Bereng was still full of life when he went out of his cell to be searched and when he went back to the cell as per footage as well as that Mothabeng and Mokoloko left him still fine.

"I am not saying Mothabeng and Mokoloko did not assault Bereng" he said, reminding Moabi that he and Mokhethi entered Bereng's cell after he was searched and that nobody entered subsequently thus nobody could have injured him.

Responding to the above, Moabi acknowledged everything and told the Commission when making submissions that he was shameful when he watched how inmates were assaulted on the footage.

In the meantime earlier in his testimony, Bereng, who is now out of prison due to his condition said he did not know Officers who battered him as they were wearing masks and that he was new at the institution.

However Mothabeng, Mokoloko, Moabi and Mokhethi self-confessed that they entered Bereng's cell during the search although they denied assaulting him. Bereng was assaulted by correctional officers during the search after inmates escape last year on 22 December, leaving him paralysed, even though he was never part of the inmates that escaped.

Bereng holds Honours Degree in Information Technology and opened a company called Info Tech Galaxy where he repairs phones, computers and designs websites.



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Summer Cropping Likely to Face Delays as Ministry of Agriculture Fails to Sign Contract with Glorified Group

Maseru - Lesotho's summer cropping programme may be in jeopardy due to an unresolved contract dispute between the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition and Glorified Group of Companies. Despite Glorified Group's successful tender to supply 11,000 units of DKC7372 hybrid maize seeds, valued at M13.75 million, the Ministry has yet to finalize and sign the contract, raising concerns about the timely delivery of vital agricultural inputs.

According to sources who talked to Lesotho Tribune, the reason behind the delay to sign a contract, is interference from one of the "biggest" office in this country.

"Moleko [PS] has been instructed not to sign a contract with Glorified..." our source said.

Lesotho Tribune's efforts to get a comment from Mr. Moleko were unsuccessful at time of going to print.

The seeds, critical for the upcoming cropping season, were meant to bolster the nation's agricultural output. However, the Ministry's delay in awarding the contract has left Glorified Group, and

the wider farming community, in limbo. On August 12, 2024, the Ministry informed Glorified Group that its bid had been deemed the most favorable, following a rigorous tender evaluation. In a letter signed by the Ministry's Principal Secretary, Thabo Moleko, the company was formally invited to enter into a contract.

Despite Glorified Group's swift acceptance of the offer on August 18, weeks have gone by without any further communication from the Ministry. To complicate matters further, other companies that participated in the same tender process have reportedly received their contracts and are moving ahead with deliveries, while Glorified Group has been left out in the cold with no explanation.

Lesotho Tribune can confirm that indeed other service providers have signed their contracts with the Ministry.

Frustrated by the lack of progress, Glorified Group has now taken legal action against the Ministry. Represented by Ramaili & Associates, the company has issued a formal demand for the Ministry to either finalize the contract or provide a reasonable explanation for the delay. In

a letter dated September 3, 2024, Glorified Group's legal team described the Ministry's inaction as "shocking and surprising," particularly given the urgency of the upcoming planting season.

"Our client was selected as the most favorable bidder and duly accepted the offer. It is therefore deeply concerning that, while other companies have been awarded contracts, Glorified Group has been inexplicably sidelined," stated the letter from Ramaili & Associates. The legal representatives have given the Ministry 24 hours to respond, failing which the company will take the matter to court to seek immediate relief.

This isn't the first time Glorified Group has found itself entangled in legal disputes with the Ministry. Earlier this year, the company successfully sued the Ministry over a similar issue involving a contract for the supply of field crop seeds. In February 2024, the High Court ordered the Ministry to pay Glorified Group M6.02 million for work completed under a 2022-2023 tender. Despite a ruling by the Procurement Tribunal in May 2023, the Ministry had delayed payment, leading to court proceedings.

In that case, Judge Letlaka ruled that

the Ministry had failed to honor its contractual obligations, and ordered the immediate settlement of the outstanding sum. The court also awarded Glorified Group its legal costs, further highlighting the Ministry's troubled procurement practices.

The current situation has once again cast a spotlight on the Ministry's handling of tenders and contracts, with industry experts speculating that internal issues may be to blame for the delays. However, no official explanation has been provided by the Ministry, leaving Glorified Group and the wider public in the dark.

The timing of the dispute could not be worse. However for those who leave in Lesotho this does not come as a surprise... The delay in securing the maize seeds threatens to disrupt the upcoming summer cropping programme, which is vital to the country's food security. Farmers rely on the timely delivery of agricultural inputs, and any hold-up could have significant consequences for crop yields this season.

Glorified Group has emphasized that it remains committed to fulfilling its obligations under the tender and is prepared to deliver the seeds as soon as the Ministry resolves the matter. However, the company is also determined to seek legal recourse if necessary, to ensure that its rights are protected.

Makhunoane says recruits are extremely bitter



By: Tholoana Lesenya

Maseru - Bitterness is one of the things that makes the recruits lash out their fury on inmates. This was said by Correctional Officer Tumelo Makhunoane when making submissions before the Commission of Inquiry on the escape of inmates, on the search exercise that was conducted at Maseru Central Correctional Institution (MCCI) on December 22, 2023, which resulted in the assault of inmates, leaving one paralysed.

Officer Makhunoane said they lack inspiration as they earn little wages and have since been promised it would be revised. "It has been five years since we arrived at the institution and promised every month that our salaries would be increased," he said.

He additionally guaranteed the Commission that what happened to them on the above mentioned date would never happen again as it was pointless for them to have used force when searching inmates. In another issue, Officer Makhunoane was caught up earlier by numerous

inmates in their testaments before the Commission by revealing that they saw him in Block C when inmates were assaulted.

Nevertheless, he maintained that he was not in that block during the search, "I only did the search in block A and maximum" he stressed. Remarking on this matter, the Commission's Chairperson Justice Realeboha Mathaba reminded Makhunoane that he did not cross examine inmates who claimed he was in block C when he was given a chance to do so.

Temporarily, both officers and their superiors earlier showed in their evidences that they have lost determination due to salaries, which have not been reviewed for years and littler as compared to that of other security agencies.

However, the recruits, who implicated Maseru Central Correctional Institution (MCCI) Officials say they do not have any reason to falsely incriminate them.

This they said when being cross examined before the Commission of Inquiry on the escape of inmates, by MCCI Commander, Assistant Commissioner Manaka, his second in charge Senior Superintendent Mahlelebe and Correctional Service Training School Commander, Assistant Commissioner Nthako.

The three are suspected to have picked up the cries of inmates as they passed by in Block C during the search exercise that was conducted at MCCI on December 22, 2023. One Correction-

al Officer Thabo Moiloa said he had no intention to implicate the trio, saying the cries of inmates were so loud that it was unbearable for anyone in that block not to have heard them.

On the other hand, Khosi Hlalele and numerous witnesses told the Commission earlier in their testimonies that the trio must have heard the cries of inmates based on how loud they were. "The cries were still there when they passed by and were from several prison cells" said Hlalele, saying he could not recall inmates being assaulted in the passageway as the trio passed by.

However, Assistant Commissioner Manaka said Moiloa was insincerely incriminating him as one of the officers whom he recognized assaulting the late Bokang Tsoako who escaped from prison. He further said the divisions of witnesses were conflicting as others said no one was in the corridor in block C when they passed, others said recruits pretended they were doing nothing and that their Instructor said there was no noise and no inmate was assaulted when they passed by.

He additionally said some inmates and recruits collaborated against MCCI management with the aim to implicate them so that punitive action could not be taken against involved officers. Meanwhile the trio have since denied hearing cries of inmates when cross examining the witnesses who associated them, saying the inmates were not assaulted when they passed by.

The recruits are continuing to testify on the events of December 22 last year and some admitted that they assaulted the inmates while others are still denying assaulting them.

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Lesotho Tribune

AFRICA

Exiled Botswana ex-President Khama returns home to face charges

Botswana's ex-president Ian Khama appeared in court on Friday to face charges of illegally owning a gun and receiving stolen property, after returning from three years in exile ahead of an election in which his bitter rival is seeking a second term.

The magistrate suspended two arrest warrants against him on Friday for failing to turn up to answer the charges back in April 2022. Khama had been in exile, mostly in neighbouring South Africa, since late 2021.

The allegations include unlawful possession of a firearm, receiving stolen property and procuring the registration of a firearm by false pretence. The former president has denied them and says they are politically motivated.

Khama, whose father Seretse Khama was Botswana's founding president, quit the ruling Botswana Democratic Party in 2019 after falling out with his successor President Mokgweetsi Masisi.

Khama backs the opposition Botswana Patriotic Front and had previously said he would return to Botswana to help oust the incumbent in a national election on Oct. 30.

He will next appear in court on Sept. 23, magistrate Mareledi Dipate said.



Former Botswana president Ian Khama sits in the Broadhurst Magistrate court in Gaborone on September 13, 2024. / Photo: AFP

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