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MOHAHLAULA
AIRLINES

Lesotho, India sign MoU on digital public infrastructure

By: Lemohang Botsane

In an event held in Maseru this week, Lesotho's Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation hosted the Ministry of State of External Affairs of India, His Excellency Pabitra Margherita, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

With this new focus on digital transformation, the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Communications, Kanono Ramashamole, said Lesotho and India are embarking on a new chapter that will help the ministry implement its data transformation strategy, affirming that they were committed to deploying the DPI.

Ramashamole said the next steps that follow this big landmark for the ministry will be to make time to further discuss areas necessary to improve the country's media landscape and broadcasting with the hope of yielding positive results from their collaboration with India.

Speaking at the signing event, Honourable Margherita said India's relationship with Lesotho is deeply rooted, saying the two countries share values of cooperation and common alignment. He said the two countries can also share knowledge through several departments,



from tourism to infrastructure development. "We can all collaborate and share expertise and ideas as well as experiences in almost everything", he said, adding that the MoU is a sign of commitment and understanding between the two countries in science and technology.

Honourable Nthathi Moorosi, the Minister of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation, expressed her honour to host India. She said the journey, which started with the signing of a binding document, was a special occasion as the two countries also celebrate five decades of vibrant relations that were established back in 1971, strengthening shared values and transparency, development and sound cooperation. This long-term relationship has also flourished

across sectors including education, trade, governance and military cooperation.

It was said that the two countries, over the years, have managed to build a foundation of trust and innovation from India's Line of Credit, India-Lesotho Centre for Advanced Education in Information Technology, to their military trading partnerships. Therefore, the agreement seeks to bolster Lesotho's digital transformation strategy that was launched earlier this year to promote knowledge exchange, capacity building and co-development of digital solutions in areas including digital ID systems, digilocker implementation, AI-enabled public services and the development of digital public goods are aligned with global standards. "As we align with international standards to maintain the confidence

of advanced...let this agreement inspire progress and mutual prosperity for our people," Honourable Moorosi said, saying the ministry was excited about the opportunities the collaboration will present to Basotho, especially young entrepreneurs and institutions. "This MoU, signed in the wake of our national digital transformation strategy launch, reaffirms our joint commitment to driving progress and innovation," the Minister said. The government of Lesotho is honoured to partner with India in this initiative, a global leader in digital innovation. Through this partnership, Lesotho seeks to build capacity, exchange knowledge and co-develop digital solutions that will empower its citizens and stimulate economic growth.



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— Information Liberates

Council of State Triggers Crucial IEC Appointment Process: Political Parties Given Until August to Submit Nominees

By: Malefo Thinyane

Maseru

Lesotho's political leadership has been called to immediate action following a formal communication from the Government Secretary, Mrs. Teboho 'Malisebo' Mokela, regarding the commencement of the appointment process for members of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), including its Chairperson. Acting on the directive of the Council of State at its sitting on 10th July 2025, His Majesty the King—through the Council as the appointing authority—has instructed that consultations among registered political parties begin without delay, in accordance with the Constitution of Lesotho.

This process, which is both constitutionally binding and time-sensitive, is intended to ensure the smooth transition and potential reappointment of IEC leadership ahead of key electoral activities expected in the coming years.

Legal Framework Governing the Process

The letter cites Section 66 of the Constitution of Lesotho, as amended by both the Fourth and Fifth Amendments, as the legal foundation for this appointment process. Specifically, Section 66(a)(4) mandates that:

“For the purpose of enabling the Council of State to select the names of persons to be submitted to the King... the Council shall request all registered political parties... to jointly propose to the Council within a period of thirty days... a list of not less than five names.”

This provision compels political parties to cooperate in crafting a shortlist of qualified nominees from which the Council will ultimately recommend appointments to His Majesty. It is a rare exercise in cross-party consensus,



enshrined in law to protect the independence and legitimacy of the electoral body. In addition, Section 66(7) (as amended by Act No. 8 of 2004) limits the term of any Electoral Commission member to a maximum of two five-year terms, reinforcing the principle of renewal while allowing for continuity where merited.

All Three Current Members Seek Reappointment

Accompanying the letter are notices from all three incumbent IEC Commissioners, including the current Chairperson, expressing their desire for further engagement with the Commission. The Commissioners have served their initial five-year terms and are now seeking reappointment in line with the provisions of the Constitution.

While the law allows for a second term, it is ultimately within the prerogative of the Council of State, acting on nominations submitted by political parties—to determine whether incumbents will be retained or replaced. This element introduces both an opportunity and a challenge for political leaders: to carefully weigh experience against the need for reform, and to prioritize institutional independence and competence over political loyalty.

Strict Deadline: End of August 2025

Political parties are now racing against a strict constitutional clock. According to the Government Secretary's letter, all responses and proposed nominees must be submitted no later than the end of August 2025.

“Please be advised that we are operating within strict legal

time frames,” reads the letter. “As such, you are requested to treat this matter with the utmost urgency it requires.” The Council's timeline leaves political actors just weeks to consult internally, agree collectively, and submit names in accordance with an agreed procedure. Given Lesotho's history of political fragmentation, this process will test the maturity and resolve of party leaders to act in the national interest.

Significance for Electoral Democracy

This appointment process could not come at a more critical time. The IEC remains one of the cornerstones of Lesotho's democratic architecture, charged with managing elections, enforcing electoral law, and ensuring that the will of the people is respected and protected. Failures in the Commission's leadership—real or perceived—can have far-reaching consequences, including voter apathy, political instability, and post-election disputes.

By requiring that political parties jointly nominate at least five names, the Constitution intends to safeguard the impartiality of the IEC while ensuring that its leadership reflects broad-based confidence.

This constitutional mechanism, if executed faithfully, can serve as a model of democratic cooperation and a check against the politicisation of independent institutions.

A Call to Political Leadership

The Council of State's instruction is more than a procedural step—it is a test of statesmanship. Political parties must now demonstrate their commitment to democratic consolidation by participating in this process with transparency, urgency, and integrity.

The country—and its constitutional democracy—demands nothing less.

Sidebar: What You Need to Know About the IEC Appointment Process
What Is the IEC?

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is the constitutional body responsible for:

- Organising and supervising elections
- Ensuring free and fair voting
- Managing the voters' roll and electoral boundaries

What the Constitution Says

Section 66 (a)(4): Political parties must jointly nominate at least 5 names for the IEC to the Council of State

Section 66 (7): IEC Commissioners serve a 5-year term, renewable once only

Timeline at a Glance

10 July 2025: Council of State advises His Majesty to begin IEC transition

23 July 2025: Royal Palace confirms end of current term (December 2025)

31 August 2025: Final deadline for political parties to submit names

Current Commissioners

All three current IEC members have expressed interest in reappointment.

Why It Matters

The IEC's independence is crucial for electoral legitimacy. Delays or partisan interference could compromise 2027 election preparedness.

This is a test of political maturity and constitutional compliance.

Lesotho's democracy begins at the ballot. It must be protected long before voters cast their votes.

Editor's Note:

This story will be closely monitored for developments regarding the submission of nominations and reactions from political stakeholders. For more updates on Lesotho's governance and legal reforms, follow our website on Political Affairs.



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A day in the lives of trafficking survivors

By: Selloane Nyakane

When Mats'episo (real names withheld), 32, from Pitseng, Leribe, left home on 20 October 2023, she believed she was stepping into a new chapter; one that promised a stable job and a better life for her 9-year-old son and elderly grandmother. Instead, she walked straight into a trap; the job she was promised in Welkom, South Africa, had been arranged by her friend, someone she trusted, but as soon as she arrived, the truth became clear: there was no job, there was no salary. With a trembling voice, she said she was supposed to work at the guest house, but unfortunately, when she got there, she was forced to sleep with the owner of the guest house. She said she was promised a salary of R2,500, but to her surprise, her employer deducted food, rent and other false costs from the salary, leaving her with nothing but trauma. She said night after night, after the hard work in the guest house, she was forced into sex with the owner until she fell pregnant. As if the pregnancy was enough, Mats'episo was not only haunted by the abuse but also by the threats she got if she considered terminating the pregnancy. "They told me if I aborted the baby, I would die," she said. That fear kept her silent but one night, she made a brave decision to run. She escaped by climbing over a wall, barefoot and terrified. But alive, she returned home, pregnant, broken. Her baby turned one on July 17, 2025, a living reminder of what she endured. Today, with support from Beautiful Dream Society (BDS), the European



Union and World Vision, Mats'episo is rebuilding. She runs a small piggery business and receives emotional support from counsellors. Another victim, Thato (not real names), a young man with a promising football career, said it all started with a handshake. In 2021, he was spotted while playing for a B Division team. A Nigerian man promised to help him attend professional trials in Dubai and offered a signing bonus of R25,000 if he succeeded. That was hopeful. He prepared carefully, getting vaccinated, testing for HIV and processing a visa. He finally flew out in November after a two-week quarantine in Kenya but when he landed in Dubai, there were no football trials. Instead, he was taken into a house full of strangers and stripped of his documents. He was forced to open multiple bank accounts and register his SIM cards. His identity and personal information would be used to launder money. Thato said he was even forced to sign a fake marriage certificate with a woman he did not know, but that did not work. "They used my name to commit crimes. I was their puppet," he said. Eventually, a local man who owned a flat noticed that Thato looked distressed and offered to help him. Authorities in Dubai uncovered the trafficking ring and he came back home. When he arrived, the Nigerian man who played a role in his trafficking was sentenced to 15 years in

prison and was also arrested for not having proper documentation in Lesotho. That is also getting help from BDS and World Vision. He received therapy and tools to start an electrical workshop drill, grinder and startup materials. "They used my talent against me. I lost my football career and I am never returning to it," he said painfully. Boitumelo, a seamstress, had been working in textile factories in Lesotho. After COVID-19 hit, she lost her job. In 2022, a man promised her work in South Africa's Newcastle factories where she'd earn better money. She and several other women boarded at night, smuggled through the border near Maputsoe. They were told not to bring their passports. When they arrived in Durban, the factory was dark, cramped and filthy with toilets next to the kitchen. There was little food or no food at all and even less hygiene. "They promised us work. What we found was slavery, sexual exploitation, work exploitation, followed by which I fell seriously ill, unable to speak or move until I was hospitalised," she recalled. She was rescued by police and later supported by BDS and World Vision. They provided her with a sewing machine and startup fabric on August 1, 2024. Today, she works from home and is slowly regaining her confidence. Keitumetse from Buthe-Buthe said she was approached by a churchmate, a woman much older than her, telling her that there was a job in Johannesburg. Keitumetse had to leave her business of selling hot dogs and food in town for Johannesburg, only to find out she was lured into sex work. Before she left, she was asked about her body,

her age and they requested her to share her photos. She left on April 7, 2024. When she got to Johannesburg, she was taken to what looked like a party house, loud music, weapons and men. She said various men entered the room to explore her, touch her and offer her drinks which were already opened. "I was scared and pretended to drink their drugged drink," she said. Keitumetse also highlighted that the men she was left with in the room slept due to heavy drinking, giving her a chance to escape to the neighbouring house, and later left for the nearest petrol station. She said she was finally rescued by police. She was repatriated and, like the rest of the survivors, she received therapy from the BDS, which gave her 100 broilers and sent her back to school. She received additional help from World Vision, and through the European support, she was given six piglets to start an income-generating project. Human trafficking is a pressing crisis that often goes unnoticed by many. Consider the poignant story of Thato, a talented athlete whose journey took him from the hopeful dreams of football fields to the grim reality of financial trafficking. This illustrates that human trafficking is not just a far-off issue affecting distant communities; it is a pervasive problem that can arise from trusted individuals in our own lives. The allure of opportunity can sometimes mask darker intentions, leading vulnerable individuals into exploitative situations. It's crucial to recognize that this is a societal issue that requires attention and action, as it can impact anyone, even those who seem to be following a promising path.



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36 Inmates Released from Mohale's Hoek Correctional Facility in Honour of Basotho Bicentennial

By Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

In a historic gesture marking 200 years since the formation of the Basotho nation, the Mohale's Hoek Correctional Facility has granted amnesty to 36 inmates. The symbolic release, which took place on Friday, forms part of the broader national celebrations of Basotho heritage and unity. Senior Superintendent Letlaka Banyane, who oversees the facility, confirmed the release. He explained that the decision was made in alignment with the milestone bicentennial celebration of the Basotho people as a united nation.

"The release was granted under strict criteria," Superintendent Banyane said. "Inmates selected had either served half of their sentences for short-term convictions, or a quarter of longer-term sentences. This amnesty was not granted lightly, it was based on clearly defined legal and rehabilitative conditions." In his address, Superintendent Banyane urged the released individuals to embrace their second chance and reintegrate into society as law-abiding citizens. He high-



lighted the importance of post-release support and pointed to organizations like the Correctional and Rehabilitation Re-Oriented Agency (CRROA), which assists former inmates in rebuilding their lives. "The facility management truly wishes for the best for all former inmates," he added. "Rehabilitation doesn't stop at the gate, we hope they will take advantage of the resources available to them." Superintendent Banyane also addressed those still incarcerated, encouraging them to maintain good behavior and remain hopeful. "To

those still serving their sentences: your time will come. Stay disciplined, respectful, and dedicated to your rehabilitation. These are the very qualities considered when amnesty or parole opportunities arise." The facility's Senior Rehabilitation Officer and Public Relations Officer, Makhotsi Lesupi reinforced this message. She warned the released inmates against returning to criminal behavior, noting that any relapse would not only bring them back behind bars but would also reflect poorly on the credibility of rehabilitation programs.

"The behavior of ex-convicts is a measure of the success of our correctional efforts," Mrs. Lesupi stated. "We expect every individual released today to serve as a model of what successful rehabilitation looks like." As Lesotho commemorates its 200-year legacy as a nation, the release of these inmates adds a human dimension to the celebrations, a gesture of forgiveness, renewal, and hope. The authorities are optimistic that this act of clemency will encourage societal acceptance and promote lasting change in the lives of the former inmates.



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru, July 2025 – Standard Lesotho Bank has released its first standalone Environmental,

Social and Governance (ESG) Risk Report for the year ending 31 December 2023. This report reflects the bank's growing leadership in responsible finance, sustainable development, and ethical governance within Lesotho.

Environmental Sustainability and Risk Management

In 2023, the bank fully integrated ESG governance within its risk management framework, aligning with Standard Bank Group principles. All corporate and commercial lending now undergoes mandatory

ESG Lens

Standard Lesotho Bank ESG Risk Report

2023: Driving Sustainable Finance in Lesotho



assessments. The bank also improved its data aggregation and incident reporting systems, ensuring compliance with BCBS 239 standards. **Social Responsibility and Community Investment** Standard Lesotho Bank engaged a wide range of stakeholders civil society, regulators, corporate clients to define ESG priorities. Through its Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives, the bank invested R228 million in 2023, supporting education, health, and com-

munity development. Additionally, staff engagement was high, with over 99% of employees completing ethics and conduct training. **Strong Governance and Ethical Conduct** The bank follows a three-lines-of-defence model for ESG risk, ensuring accountability across business units, compliance teams, and internal audits. A strict Code of Ethics governs employee behavior, reinforced by mandatory scenario-based training and regular conduct risk reviews. The bank also enhanced third-party due diligence processes, promoting ethical procurement and reducing ESG-related risks. Progress in Sustainable Finance Standard Bank Group, which includes Standard Lesotho Bank, mobilized R105.1 billion in sustainable finance in 2023, with R15.5 billion directed toward renewable energy. While

most figures are South Africa-centric, Lesotho is positioned to benefit through new sustainable credit opportunities and partnerships.

Conclusion

Standard Lesotho Bank's ESG Risk Report signals a strategic commitment to sustainable banking. While challenges remain in extending ESG practices to SMEs and rural sectors, the bank's 2023 performance sets a benchmark for ethical, impactful finance in Lesotho.

ESG Summary Table

ESG Pillar	Highlights	Focus Areas
Environmental	E&S screening; improved ESG data systems	Support for green financing; climate risk integration
Social	R228 million CSI; 99% ethics training; stakeholder-informed materiality	Broader outreach to underserved communities; employee wellbeing
Governance	Three-lines-of-defence model; ethics code; procurement due diligence	Transparent reporting; robust conduct monitoring

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru, 24 July 2025 In a powerful signal of solidarity during turbulent times, Clifford Elphick, Chief Executive Officer of Gem Diamonds, is reportedly offering to take a substantial reduction in his own compensation currently estimated at LSL 25.9 million per year to support the restructuring efforts aimed at saving Letseng mine and preserving livelihoods in Lesotho. Gem Diamonds, owner of the high-altitude Letseng mine in Lesotho, has embarked on sharp cost-cutting measures amid a steep global slump in rough-diamond prices, weaker US dollar exchange rates, and pricing pressures from synthetic alternatives. As part of this financial response, the company announced a reduction of waste mining volumes by almost half and is laying off roughly 250 staff, equating to 20% of Letseng's workforce.

Alongside job cuts and operational throttling, the company has also initiated temporary salary reductions for its

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Letšeng CEO considers to cut his M25.9 million Salary

Letšeng Seeks Lifeline: CEO Clifford Elphick Eyes His Own Pay to Help Mine Stay Afloat



board, executives and management, with the possibility that pay will be partially replaced by share awards to align leadership incentives with shareholder interests. In what is being interpreted by industry observers as a courageous act of leadership, Elphick is believed to be offering to trim his annual pay previously reported as LSL 25,879,140 in 2022 to "save" Letseng. That level of executive compensation, when translated from USD benchmarks, is considerably high for a company of Gem Diamonds' current market capitalisation and earnings profile.

At the heart of this gesture is a symbolic and practical commitment: Elphick is prepared to reduce his own income in real terms to bolster Gem Diamonds' ability to weather one of the most challenging market periods in years and in doing so, preserve jobs and investment in Lesotho. Gem Diamonds has confirmed that these changes are expected to cut costs by US\$1.4–1.6 million per month. Waste stripping tonnage has been cut back from more than 5 million to approximately 1.8–2 million tonnes annually, while carat production and sales have declined sharply

year-on-year, sales value falling 46% to US\$ 44.7 million in the first half of the year.

Despite meeting production targets, the firm continues to face margin erosion—a decline made worse by the burden of high executive pay. Industry analysts note that Gem Diamonds, now valued at just £7 million, once boasted a valuation of £550 million; the discrepancy speaks to a dramatic valuation fall that heightens pressure on cost structures at every level.

Letšeng is no ordinary mine it produces some of the world's most remarkable high-value diamonds, including the famed 910-carat Lesotho Legend and the 603-carat Lesotho Promise, making it the kimberlite operation with the highest average dollar-per-carat value globally. The mine contributes significantly to the Lesotho economy: as a major local employer, taxpayer, and partner to national interests.

The CEO's willingness to forego part of his own earnings transcends corporate image it's a potential lifeline. By offering to step back financially, Elphick is underlining the message that saving Letseng is a collective responsibility, starting at the very top. **What's At Stake Key Issue** Why It Matters High executive pay vs low company value With CEO compensation exceeding LSL 25 million even as the firm is now valued in single-digit millions Elphick's proposed cuts spotlight disparities in value and pay.

Layoffs and cost-reduction Around 250 jobs cut at Letseng, coupled with major operational downscaling, pregnant with social and economic ramifications locally. Symbolic leadership Elphick's offer could set a tone of shared sacrifice, encouraging other executives and stakeholders to participate in the recovery effort.

National interest of Lesotho Letseng's continued operation underpins local employment and government revenue; its preservation is of strategic importance to the nation.

In His Own Words As Elphick put it in a difficult earnings update: "While the company has met its production targets, it has not been immune to the sustained pressure on rough-diamond prices and adverse exchange rate movements." He reaffirmed that the restructuring including staff reductions and executive pay cuts was essential to "conserve cash and protect shareholder value".

If his personal salary cut proceeds, it will be a rare gesture from CEO to frontline workers a move aimed at preserving the place and people who have long defined Letseng's unique brand in the global diamond industry.

Conclusion Clifford Elphick's proposed sacrifice of his LSL 25–26 million salary is more than a financial adjustment it's a moral statement: that the survival of Letseng mine, its workforce, and its role in the Lesotho economy matters more than executive compensation. In these uncertain times for the diamond sector, it may just be the leadership move needed to help steer a recovery.

THE 2025 STATE OF THE ECONOMY IN LESOTHO: JOBLESS GROWTH AND SILENT FAILURES.

By Khotso Mahonko

Lesotho's economy in 2025 presents a complex and layered story, one that features encouraging fiscal numbers on the one hand, and deep structural cracks on the other. The economy has grown with 2.5% of the GDP in 2024/2025 fiscal year. Yet, beneath this headline, lies a narrow base for that growth, which is heavily dependent on public infrastructure projects, particularly the ongoing construction at Polihali under the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase II (LHWP-II). If you strip away the contribution of this single project, the rest of the economy barely grows at 2.0%, revealing an economy whose progress remains fragile and unevenly distributed. The LHWP-II has emerged not only as a water infrastructure initiative but also as a much needed stimulus engine. It has created over 8000 direct jobs. These gains have offered temporary relief to many Basotho families. However, the sustainability of this growth is questionable. Once the construction winds down, the question remains: what comes next to absorb this labor and maintain the growth momentum? Fiscal performance, on paper, is more encouraging than it has been in years. The government recorded a fiscal surplus, thanks in large part to windfall revenues from the Southern African



Customs Union (SACU), which reached nearly 27% of GDP, and water royalties that now stand at over 7.2% of GDP. Public debt has been reduced to 56.6%, and foreign reserves now cover six months of imports. But these achievements mask a more concerning reality: SACU transfers are highly volatile and non-guaranteed, while water royalties, though rising, are temporary. The risk, therefore, is that these gains will fund consumption or administration rather than investment in productive sectors. Yet the larger story is about structural stagnation, and no area illustrates this more clearly than foreign direct investment (FDI). Lesotho has not attracted any significant FDI in several years now, a stark reversal from the early 2000s when the country was hailed as a model of investment-driven industrial growth, especially in

manufacturing. Today, investor confidence is eroded by a combination of factors: a cumbersome regulatory environment, limited ease of doing business, persistent political uncertainty, and inadequate infrastructure outside of donor-supported megaprojects. But part of the blame must also be placed on the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC). Despite being the apex investment promotion agency, LNDC has not demonstrated the urgency or strategic aggression required to attract investors in a globally competitive landscape. It lacks a coherent investment promotion strategy, has weak aftercare support for existing investors, and has not adapted to the evolving needs of 21st-century capital which seeks not just tax holidays, but the entire ecosystem readiness. Compounding this stagnation

is the gradual collapse of a once-reliable income source for many families: remittances from Basotho working in South African mines. For decades, these

remittances served as the lifeblood of rural economies, supporting school fees, livestock purchases, retail spending, and even construction. However, declining mine employment, mechanization in South Africa's mining industry, and tightening immigration policies have led to a sharp fall in remittances. In the 1990s, more than 100,000 Basotho worked in South Africa's mines; today, that figure has dropped to under 35,000. As remittance flows shrink, so too does local liquidity in Lesotho's rural and peri-urban economies, resulting in weakened demand for goods, growing rural poverty, and a further contrac-

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tion of informal market activity. Meanwhile, Lesotho's education system continues to operate in a vacuum, producing thousands of graduates every year into a job market that is already saturated and structurally misaligned. Higher education institutions are flooding the market with degree holders in traditional fields without regard to current absorption capacity or economic relevance. Despite the transformation of the global economy, very little has changed in Lesotho's curriculum structure, pedagogy, or output expectations. The system still prioritizes rote learning and theory-heavy programs, rather than equipping learners with the skills and mindsets needed in modern economies; namely creators, problem-solvers, innovators, digital practitioners, and entrepreneurs. The result is a mismatch: a surplus of graduates chasing non-existent jobs, while the economy simultaneously suffers from deficits in technical, digital, and innovation oriented capabilities. On the ground, the average Mosotho continues to feel the weight of a jobs crisis that shows no signs of abating. Official youth unemployment is pegged at around 39%, but this figure is misleading. It is said that over 220,000 youth were excluded from labor force calculations in recent assessments, which significantly understates the true scale of youth joblessness. If these excluded youth are factored in, the real youth unemployment rate may exceed 60%. Among adults, job losses have been concentrated in key sectors

such as textiles and mining, the two pillars that have historically driven formal employment. The textile manufacturing sector, once the pride of Lesotho's industrial development under AGOA, has been shrinking since the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023 alone, over 10,000 jobs were lost, and by 2024 employment numbers had declined further to around 27,000. With the return of U.S. President Donald Trump and the imposition of steep tariffs—reportedly as high as 50%, a further 12,000 jobs are at risk this year if the negotiations to talk the U.S to a lower percentage fail. Factories could scale down, and in some cases, closing entirely, as exports become uncompetitive. In the mining sector, the situation is equally grim. Mothae and Lihobong mines are currently not operational. Letseng, the flagship mine, is struggling with low diamond sales, partly due to the rise of synthetic lab-grown diamonds, global price weakness, and foreign currency exchange challenges. The mine is cutting 20% of its workforce, amounting to about 300 jobs. These developments have meant that dividends from the mining sector are virtually non-existent or just extremely low this year despite the government holding 30% equity in these operations. Other state-linked enterprises like Lesotho Flour Mills have not declared dividends in years, while the dividend status of Econet and other government-shareholding entities remains unclear. Foreign aid, which has historically been a critical support structure for Leso-

tho, is also under strain. The closure of several U.S. funded initiatives, including USAID programs and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact, has not only slowed development work but also resulted in job losses. Although official figures remain difficult to verify, it is estimated that thousands of professionals and community-level workers were affected by the withdrawal or suspension of these projects. The broader economic landscape reveals deepening poverty and rising vulnerability. While macro-level poverty indicators show slight improvement, the lived experiences of Basotho tell a different story. According to Afrobarometer's 2025 survey, 85% of citizens experienced cash shortages, 61% went without food, and nearly half lacked access to clean water at some point during the year. Inflation, particularly food inflation, continues to erode real incomes, especially for the working poor and those in the informal economy who live hand to mouth, I cannot talk about those without income at all, it must be a disaster. Entrepreneurship, often touted as the solution to unemployment, struggles in this environment. The domestic market is weak. With only an estimated 350,000 people having steady income out of a potential 550,000 economically active population, local demand remains constrained. Most micro-entrepreneurs are trading in saturated markets, with little growth capital, no access to meaningful business development services, and limited state support. Entrepre-

neurship, in this case, becomes a survival mechanism rather than a catalyst for wealth creation. Agriculture remains an underperforming sector. While livestock showed some resilience, crop production was again hit by climate-related challenges and market inefficiencies. Government efforts toward improving inputs and irrigation remain fragmented. Lesotho still imports more than 90% of its food, even while thousands go hungry, a tragic contradiction in an agriculturally endowed country. Despite these sobering realities, not all is bleak. Tourism, often overlooked in previous national strategies, is showing signs of promise. In 2024, nearly one million tourists visited Lesotho, a figure that signals both recovery and opportunity if you ask me. The country's unique mountain landscapes, cultural heritage, and growing eco-tourism ventures present a chance to build a more inclusive and locally-rooted economy. If developed carefully, tourism could emerge as a top-three contributor to GDP in the coming years. However, this will require coordinated investment in infrastructure, hospitality training, and marketing alongside measures to ensure community participation and benefit-sharing. The time for talk is over. What Lesotho now needs is practical delivery, inclusive policymaking, and bold leadership. The choices made between now and 2027 will define whether the country remains stuck in the loop of dependency or charts a new path toward sustainable, people-centered growth.



13

Lesotho Tribune

By Pheello Mosesi

As part of united efforts to help curb unemployment in Lesotho, the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Honourable Thabo Mofosi, launched a youth Mentorship Program for 1000 Young Farmers under the Second Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II) at the Agric College in Maseru this week.

The SADP II monitored initiative is designed to foster development and sustainable job creation for young Basotho Farmers aged between 18 and 35 who are already engaged in agriculture and agribusiness, formally trained or not and those interested in the farming field. The Minister said the programme seeks to enhance the effective use of grants granted to the young farmers while boosting business performance and encouraging greater youth involvement in agriculture.

Honourable Mofosi commenced his speech by highlighting the importance of Agriculture as a

FARMERS CORNER

Mofosi promises 1000 jobs to Basotho youth



business and a means of food consumption. He proceeded to indicate that unlike other countries globally, Lesotho is slowly starting to recognise the importance of agriculture.

“When we talk of Agriculture, we often label it as a cornerstone of the country. However, it goes beyond that, it is actually the cornerstone of life in general. Consumption of food is not a voluntary act but it is actually an obligatory necessity of every person,” Mofosi said in his introduction speech.

“Another fundamental angle of life in this day and age is money. We all seek out platforms that can help us earn money as businesses and companies. Agriculture is a business that does not have a lot of limitations and extended requirements, the only requirement is for a person to be active in it for production,” he added.

Mofosi said he wished for

the beneficiaries of the programme to be youth driven by passion and love for agriculture, saying the aim of the ministry is to have sustainable growth through the programme.

The programme is set to incubate an intake of 1000 agriculturally active young farmers across the country with each district having a representation of 100. Key focus areas for this support are potato production, broiler chicken production, egg production and vegetable production and nursery growers for the first intake.

“We have studied where there is a higher demand in the market,” he said, adding that the selection criterion of the project is going to be very strict and selected participants of the programme will be expected to be just participants within their district programme centre.

The programme encom-

passes a variety of potential approaches and interventions for applicants; a combination of both theoretical and practical information. These approaches include apprenticeships which will see the applicants receiving grants. It will also include an incubation approach set for applicants who failed in the Matching Grants, therefore preparing them for their next call.

Another approach will be Farmer Field Schools and this approach is specifically designed for those who fail in the Matching Grants, hence they will be exposed to one-on-one coaching, technical training, group sessions and peer coaching by field experts.

Beyond the conference, Mofosi requested that another conference be held at a later stage of the programme where the core agenda will be to reshape and re-channel the youth’s mindset about agriculture as a business. The programme, taking place at the highest esteemed agriculture tutoring institution in Lesotho, was graced by the attendance of District Agricultural Officers from all 10 districts, the Agric College lecturers, other ministry officials, media personnel and agriculture students.

Matekane turns the lights on in Mokema

By:Pheello Mosesi

Mokema, a village some tens of kilometres out of the city of Maseru, is a whole lot brighter after a total of 744 homes were electrified this week.

The commemoration towards this infrastructure advancement was spearheaded by the Prime Minister, Sam Matekane and the Minister of Energy Mhloni Moleko. Giving the background of how the lack of electricity presented obstacles in the everyday lives of Mokema, Mphatlalatsane Committee member Masilo Masilo said their story started back in 1985.

“We started to pull straws, fighting in desperation to be gifted with services to improve our livelihoods.” He said they not only faced the crisis of lacking electricity, but also hinted that other basic services like water and sanitation proved to be problematic.

In 1989, we started to prioritise the electricity demand. I went to places like Mofoka and Korokoro, Mokema and many others to try to unite people to make a stronger case. In 1992, the LEC advised us to create a committee and we named it Mphatlalatsane. Today I stand with pride because this is finally a reality that we have electricity.”

In between the speeches, the festivities included artists’ performances as well as a school choir performance by Mokema Primary School, which, within their song, requested to have computers installed in the school premises for the students to learn. Their request was swiftly replied to by the Prime Minister in his re-



marks.

“I am ordering the Minister of Education, who is with us today, to ensure that the students have computers. I have also heard the woes made by the locals about water, I promise that this request shall be met.”

“Electricity is one of the main objectives of the government. We are aiming to ensure that every Mosotho has access to basic human services. We want to make Basotho lives easier. By 2030, every Mosotho should have electricity. We will attain this by supplying the Ministry of Energy with the much required funding.” Matekane noted that the installation of electricity in these communities will not only

make lives simpler at homes but indicated that it is going to extend business opportunities and better health care services.

It was reported that the villagers of Mokema benefited from the project by securing entry-level jobs that required no advanced skills.

The Minister of Energy, Mhloni Moleko, stressed that Lesotho is working tirelessly to fully own its electrical power. He said that before the end of 2027, Lesotho will have an adequate supply, reaching places that are currently powered by the South African-based electricity company Eskom. “The imported electricity is very costly, we have been

mandated by the Prime Minister as the ministry to ensure that we use local electricity companies. This is in the pipeline to get into another phase of power supply at Ha Ramarothole power station. This power station will supply electricity from Ha Mofoka all the way to Qacha’s Nek,” he said.

Four communities that are beneficiaries of this project valued at the sum of M22 652 307.52 are Mokema, Ha Ramaqhanyane, Ha Liile and Ha Lekete, supplying a total of 744 families. The project took a duration of 11 months to reach completion by a Mosotho-owned construction company, BNG Electrical Company.



15

Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

In recent weeks, the socio-economic challenges facing Lesotho have intensified, particularly with escalating unemployment rates casting a long shadow over the lives of many Basotho. As citizens relentlessly strive for a better future, hoping for equitable access to opportunities, social media this week erupted with the emergence of a leaked “secret deployment list.” This document has sparked significant outrage and discussions, as many perceive it to exemplify blatant nepotism within the realm of foreign mission appointments linked to influential members of the ruling party.

The leaked “Resubmitted Memorandum C3 (2025/11)66 by the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations”, Lejone Mpotjoane, bluntly outlines a series of appointments. Key figures with alleged ties to the ruling party, the Revolution For Prosperity (RFP), have been controversially approved by Cabinet for

EDITORIAL

Nepotism and Corruption: The Normalisation of Unfair Practices in Lesotho’s Governments



various vacant positions as First Secretaries within Lesotho Missions located in cities worldwide, including New York, Kuwait, Pretoria, Dublin, Addis Ababa, Ottawa, Brussels, Beijing, Johannesburg, and Rome. Among those named in the memorandum are Ms Ntsieleng Molise, set to assume the role of Consul in Johannesburg and Mr Tsebo Ntlhakana, who will serve as her vice. These appointments, which have allegedly been shrouded in controversy and secrecy, have led many commentators on social media to suggest that they epitomize a troubling trend in Lesotho’s governance where familial connections and political loyalty are prioritized

over professional qualifications and transparency. This trend, many had hoped, would have been left behind with previous administrations. They expected way better from the current administration led by the RFP.

Interestingly, one of the newly appointed individuals participated as a panelist at a youth engagement summit that was called by the Prime Minister in June at the ‘Manthabiseng Convention Centre. The summit focused on collaborative strategies to tackle the pressing issue

of youth unemployment in Lesotho. The irony is conspicuous: a speaker advocating for the unemployed youth of the nation was subsequently rewarded with a prestigious position as a First Secretary in a foreign mission. This move sends a bewildering message to the youth who attended the summit, suggesting that activism for personal and collective rights may surprisingly lead to unexpected opportunities, albeit through methods that many deem unethical.

In a surprising twist, public reactions to these appointments have been mixed. Some segments of the population have expressed approval, hailing the government’s actions as steps toward achieving fairness and justice in job

placements within governmental institutions. This response uncovers a troubling reality: in Lesotho, the intertwining of nepotism and corruption has become so ingrained that it pervades political and administrative life, often overlooked in favour of personal gain.

History reveals that this troubling phenomenon is however not a novel occurrence. Past administrations, irrespective of their political orientations, have faced accusations of favouring personal connections over merit in diplomatic appointments. Such practices have the potential to result in inefficiency and the elevation of individuals lacking essential qualifications

to hold significant roles. These trends foster a public sentiment that places more emphasis on personal relationships than on prioritizing the best interests of the nation and its populace. Despite the historical context and the facts laid bare, celebrating these developments is misguided. Instances like this frequently entail ignoring qualified candidates in favour of family members or party loyalists. Should this scenario be accurate, it will undoubtedly lead to a further erosion of public trust in the government.

Rather than envy directed at the appointed individuals, the prevailing sentiment is one of scepticism regarding the ruling party’s commitment to transparency and meritocracy, principles the RFP famously championed during its 2022 election campaign, which voters eagerly supported in hopes of significant change.

In response to these developments, citizens are urging the government to explain the document and clarify the selection criteria employed in appointing individuals to serve in foreign missions. While it remains uncertain whether such transparency will restore public confidence in the government, it is essential that the administration strive to address the concerns raised by the populace. The growing distrust among Basotho toward the current administration signals a pressing need for accountability and reform within its system.



16

Lesotho Tribune

By Hlalele 'Neko

There comes a moment in the life of every public official when they must choose between personal ambition and public dignity. For Lesotho's current Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) commissioners, that moment came in 2023 and they failed spectacularly. Yet, in Lesotho accountability is more performance than principle, we now face the grotesque absurdity of these same commissioners seeking reappointment. It is a national embarrassment. Let me be blunt: no self-respecting professional who presided over the botched allocation of Proportional Representation (PR) seats in a general election would even dare to entertain the idea of reappointment. In countries with a shred of democratic integrity, they would have resigned the moment the Constitutional Court ruled that they had failed to properly execute their constitutional mandate.

OPINION

After Botching the Vote, They Want Another Term? Spare Us the Insult



But in Lesotho, the culture of consequence has decayed into farce. These commissioners... who oversaw one of the most egregious electoral blunders in recent memory, now have the audacity to imagine they deserve a second chance. On what grounds? Familiarity with failure?

The 2023 PR allocation debacle was not a clerical error. It was a fundamental failure of electoral management, one that not only distorted the will of the people but also undermined the legitimacy of the entire democratic process. It triggered costly litigation, delayed parliamentary functionality, and embarrassed the country regionally. Worse still, it eroded public trust in one of the most sacred institutions in a democracy: the electoral commission.

In any serious democracy, such a failure would be career-ending. Not in Lesotho. Here, officials cling to power like it is

a birthright, immune to shame and unbothered by failure.

Let me put this into perspective: the IEC is not a village development committee. It is a constitutional body tasked with administering free, fair, and credible elections. Its integrity must be beyond question. That integrity was shattered when the commission failed to get the most basic arithmetic of democracy right and instead of stepping aside, the commissioners now want a reward. Please!

This is not merely about incompetence. It is about arrogance. A refusal to accept that with great responsibility comes the possibility...no, the certainty...of accountability. Seeking reappointment after such a monumental failure is a direct insult to us... Basotho. It communicates that even the most catastrophic errors carry no consequence in our public institutions.

Where is the remorse? Where is the professional

conscience? Where is the simple, human decency to say, "We failed. We are sorry. We will make way for others"?

The answer is nowhere. Because Lesotho has normalized impunity at every level of governance. We see it in this current cabinet, which self deals, unpunished corruption at LEC, Public Works & Transport and now, in an electoral body that mismanaged an election and wants to keep their jobs as if nothing happened.

This moment calls for a reset. Not just of personnel, but of standards. We must stop rewarding mediocrity. We must insist that public office be a platform for service, not a sanctuary from shame. The IEC commissioners had their chance. They failed. And by failing to resign, they forfeited the public's trust.

We deserve better. Democracy demands better. And dignity...that vanishing virtue in our public life requires that these commissioners do the honourable thing and walk away.

We do not need recycled failure. We need a new generation of electoral leadership; competent, accountable, and above all, humble enough to know when their time is up. That time came in 2023.

Let them go.



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In pursuit of continuous improvement and enhanced service delivery in a dynamic information and communications environment, the Authority has identified the need to review its spectrum management and licensing systems in line with the evolving market trends.

Therefore, the Authority invites competent and qualified vendors (registered companies or firms), to respond to this Request for Information (RFI) by submitting proposals demonstrating their expertise in the supply and implementation of an integrated spectrum management, licensing and tariff system.

Interested Vendors must drop their submissions in a zipped folder on the link below:

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Proposals must be submitted on or before **Monday 18 August at 1100Hrs. Late**


submissions will not be accepted, and incomplete submissions will be disqualified.

Detailed RFI is available at the Authority's website at: www.lca.org.ls.

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Lesotho takes a step towards fighting climate change

By: Staff Reporter

On July 25, 2025, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), together with the Ministries of Trade and Industry and Education and Training, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement licensing and quota systems to enforce the Ozone and Non-Ozone Regulations 2024. At the same event, held in Maseru, the Refrigeration and air-conditioning curriculum was launched.

Meant to be pioneered at four institutes country-wide; Lerotholi Polytechnic, Technical School of Leloaleng, Thaba Tseka Technical Institute and Catholic Comprehensive Community College, eligible qualifiers for the programme are people who have successfully completed their COSC and LSCE studies. The programme is meant to run for 2 and a half years, with the first 24 months meant for theoretical studies and the remaining 6 for apprenticeships where students will practically apply their skills.

Speaking at the event, the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) Acting Commissioner General #39;Manneheng Mopeli, said the MoU marked a new chapter of collaboration and shared responsibility in implementing and enforcing the Ozone and non-Ozone Depleting Substances Regulations in supporting Lesotho's compliance with



the Montreal Protocol. "As RSL, we recognise that protecting our environment is not only a moral obligation but a legal imperative, aligned with our international commitments. Environmental integrity, economic development and revenue mobilisation are not mutually exclusive pursuits, they must and can reinforce one another," Mopeli said. She said the authority, in the partnership, will play a strong role in strengthening controls around the importation and exportation of controlled substances, emphasising that their border management role puts them in a unique and strategic position to keep Lesotho's environment safe from harmful and illegal substances.

"We therefore welcome the cooperation and technical support that will be extended by the Ministry of Environment and other partners in this regard," she added.

Lesotho is a Party to the 1985 Vienna and 1987 Montreal Protocols on the protection of the ozone layer and it passed the instrument of accession to both in 1994., mandating Lesotho to phase out substances that deplete the Ozone Layer's Ozone Depleting Substances' and accord to both agreements by controlling consumption of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) and report under article 7 of the Montreal Protocol by the end of July and March every year.

The country's consumption of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) and ODS is said to be currently predominantly in the servicing of refrigeration and Air-Conditioning (FAC) equipment hence its HFC and ODS are dominantly accounted for by the RAC sector.

Partners gathered at the ceremony agreed that the signing of the MoU was the beginning of a journey of action, vigilance and collaboration in the interest of Lesotho's environment, economy and future generations.



LEC Procurement Manager Faces Suspension over Procurement Irregularities

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) is once again under public scrutiny following fresh revelations that its Procurement Manager, Peo Mputsoe, is facing suspension over suspected procurement irregularities. The development came to light during a sitting of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) earlier this week, where the acting Head of Finance at LEC, Lintle Thamae, confirmed that a suspension letter was in the final stages of preparation. Thamae told the committee that the pending suspension follows a disciplinary process initiated by LEC after concerns were raised about Mputsoe's handling of procurement procedures within the state-owned enterprise. According to Thamae, the utility had issued a show-cause letter to Mputsoe, demanding an explanation for his alleged conduct. However, the committee was told that his response was deemed unsatisfactory by the company's leadership, prompting them to escalate the matter toward suspension.

"The company took the decision to act after it was not satisfied with the explanations provided. As of now, the suspension letter is being finalized," said Thamae, responding to questions from PAC members who expressed concern over ongoing procurement issues at LEC.

The PAC, chaired by Hon. Lekhetho Mosito, has been



a consistent watchdog over the financial practices of public institutions, with LEC frequently appearing before the committee due to recurring issues related to governance and fiscal discipline. Members of the committee noted with concern that the power utility continues to exhibit signs of deep-rooted management challenges, of which procurement irregularities are only one part. The committee also highlighted the need for stronger oversight mechanisms to prevent maladministration and ensure accountability within parastatals. "This is not the first time LEC is before us

for similar matters. We are concerned about the culture of impunity and lack of clear consequence management," said one member during the hearing. Although full details of the alleged irregularities were not disclosed during the session, the PAC indicated that a formal inquiry may be necessary to probe deeper into the company's procurement activities and overall financial governance. The committee also hinted at the possibility of summoning Mputsoe to give his side of the story in subsequent sessions. LEC has for years been battling public perceptions of mismanagement, with

repeated reports of inefficiency, financial misappropriation, and poor service delivery. The latest revelations only add to the challenges faced by the utility, which is central to the country's energy infrastructure. As the suspension process unfolds, stakeholders are watching closely to see whether LEC will finally implement effective corrective measures. Meanwhile, the PAC has vowed to continue its oversight role in holding public officials accountable and ensuring that governance standards are upheld in all state-owned entities.



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23

Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

Maroala Football Club is making waves in the transfer market scene following its promotion to the Vodacom Premier League (VPL) for the first time since its founding in 1947. After clinching the 2024/25 A Division League, Northern Stream title with 43 points, the Maqhaka-based side is showing no signs of slowing down as they aggressively bolster their squad and front office in preparation for class football. The newly promoted team has embarked on a recruitment spree, signing a series of promising players to strengthen key positions. In their bid to reinforce their goalkeeping department, Maroala FC pursued former Manonyane FC goalkeeper, Utloanang Leoma. A loan agreement was successfully reached between Maroala and Lijabatho FC, securing Leoma's services

ARTS & SPORTS

Maroala FC Reinforces Squad Ahead of Vodacom Premier League Debut



for the upcoming season. Midfield creativity and depth were also high on the club's priority list. Linare FC's Koenehelo "Copper" Mothala joined Maroala on a one-year deal following the expiry of his contract with his former club. Mothala, who had spent his entire professional career with Linare, brings much needed experience and leadership to Maroala's midfield. Joining him is fellow former Linare midfielder Siyabonga Mkhize, who also signed a one-year deal with the club. Mkhize, having parted ways with Linare earlier this season, will aim to revitalize his career with the newly promoted side.

But Maroala FC's recruitment drive isn't over yet. Reports indicate that the club is expecting two more additions from Ghana a central defender and a striker to further bolster their squad ahead of the new season. Maroala FC has already started making its mark on the national stage. In May 2025, the club reached the final of the Top 8 Cup after a solid 2-0 semi-final victory over Kick4Life Juventude. Although they fell short in the final against Members FC, their fourth-place finish in the competition earned them prize money and valuable top-flight experience. They also clinched the 2024/25

A division league. As the club sets its sights on its maiden VPL campaign, efforts off the field have also been ramped up. In June 2025, Maroala FC elected a new 11 member executive committee to meet the administrative standards required at the premier league level. Relebohile Obza Thelingoane was retained as the club's Public Relations Officer, ensuring continuity in media and public affairs. With this fresh committee, new talent, and ambitious vision, Maroala FC is not just looking to survive in the Vodacom Premier League they seem ready to compete.

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