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THARI

# Khasipe Poised to Lead LNDC Amid Political Tensions

By Staff Reporter

The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) Board of Directors has reportedly selected Thabo Khasipe as the new Chief Executive Officer, succeeding Molise Ramaili, who has served



Thabo Khasipe

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# Dr Lipholo Takes High Court Fight Further as He Challenges Remand and Pleads for Bail

By: Staff Reporter

MASERU

The leader of the Basotho Covenant Movement (BCM), Dr Tsepo Lipholo, is stepping up his legal battle by launching two High Court applications, one to declare his remand unlawful and the other to secure his release on bail.

Lipholo has been in custody since last Friday following charges of sedition, contempt, and incitement arising from controversial remarks seen as disrespectful to the Royal Family.

## Challenge to Remand Raises Questions About Prosecutorial Powers

Represented by Advocates Fusi Schapi and Ramisima Lesenyeho, Lipholo contends that his remand was unconstitutional due to the absence of a valid directive from suspended Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Advocate Halefang Motinyane. His legal team argues that only the DPP has authority under Section 99(3) of the Constitution to authorize prosecutions. Without such authority, they claim the charges are void.

Advocate Lesenyeho insists that Crown Prosecutor Lehlanako Mofilikoane had no legal right to proceed in the DPP's absence

and criticizes Magistrate Itumeleng Letsika for failing to refer the constitutional questions to the High Court, as required by Sections 22(3) and 128 of the Constitution.

"The magistrate acknowledged that constitutional matters were raised, yet still chose not to refer them," the appeal reads. "This refusal rendered the entire remand process unlawful and without jurisdiction."

## Bail Plea Highlights Family Struggles and Political Duties

In his separate bail application, Lipholo underscores his dual role as a Member of Parliament and advocate for land reclamation from South Africa, a cause he refers to as a legitimate political struggle. He also points to his family's dependency on him. As a father of five

with an infant child and an unemployed wife, he argues that his continued detention brings undue hardship.

He proposes M5,000 bail, along with strict conditions, monthly police check-ins, attendance at all court hearings, and a pledge not to interfere with investigations.

Dismissing claims that he poses a flight risk, Lipholo jokes that as someone from Qoaling living in a landlocked country, fleeing would be particularly ironic, "especially since the very country I'm fighting is the one surrounding me."

## Constitutional Questions Remain Unanswered

His legal team further argues that keeping him in custody undermines the sub judice principle and prejudices ongoing judicial processes. The High

Court is expected to hear the bail application on Monday. The Crown had not yet submitted opposing papers at the time of writing.

## Background

Lipholo was arrested at his home in his Qoaling home by a combined team of armed soldiers and police Special Operations Unit (SOU) officers. He spent two nights in detention at Police Headquarters before being formally remanded. His legal team now seeks not just his release, but the complete invalidation of the charges.

As the legal battle unfolds, broader constitutional questions emerge. The outcome could set an important precedent on prosecutorial legitimacy, judicial independence, and the protection of individual rights under Lesotho's legal framework.

## Summary

- Lipholo is challenging the legality of his remand based on the suspended status of the DPP

- He is seeking bail, citing family obligations and parliamentary responsibilities

- The High Court is expected to hear the matter Monday, with constitutional questions unresolved



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# Dr. Moroke Grills Finance Officials Over M1.5 Billion Solar Project Irregularities

By: Malefo Thinyane

Maseru –

Officials at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning are reportedly being subjected to political pressure to approve major infrastructure projects that fail to meet regulatory standards and procedural requirements.

This troubling revelation was made on Wednesday before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) by Mthobi Letooane, Director of Project Cycle Management within the ministry.

Letooane explained that the ministry's role is to advise government departments on project planning and to mobilise funding. However, he revealed that political directives often override technical assessments and best practices. He was responding to a question posed by PAC member Dr. Tšelislo Moroke, who queried how the ministry had approved and secured funding for Phase I of the Ramarothole Solar Power Plant without an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from the Ministry of Energy.

The Ramarothole project was financed through a soft loan of M1.3 billion from the EXIM Bank of China, with the Government of Lesotho contributing an additional M220 million. The government's contribution included M57 million allocated for land compensation, as well as funding for tax obligations and operating costs under the Lesotho Genera-



tion Company (LEGCO), a parastatal within the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The solar plant, located on a 220-hectare site in Ha-Ramarothole, Likhoele, Mafeteng, was officially launched in June 2023. However, it is now grappling with significant environmental challenges, including severe soil erosion that has compromised the perimeter fencing and solar panel foundations—issues that could have been mitigated with a prior EIA.

Letooane admitted that the government had fast-tracked the project to secure funding and begin implementation, opting to conduct the EIA after construction had already commenced.

“To be honest, the EIA for Phase I was not conducted before implementation, and this has led to the se-

rious environmental issues we are now experiencing,” Letooane told the PAC. “We had advised that all requirements be met before appraisal, but we were under immense political pressure to greenlight the project.”

He further disclosed that the Ramarothole solar plant is not the only project affected by political interference. “This is not an isolated case. We’ve been pressured to appraise bridges and other infrastructure projects without proper design documentation or adherence to EIA protocols,” he said.

Letooane lamented that such interference compromises public service integrity and exposes the government to long-term financial and environmental risks. “As officials, we operate under orders. Unfortunately, we are caught in a system where deci-

sions are made above us, undermining our mandate to enforce due process and safeguard public resources.”

Dr. Moroke expressed grave concern over Letooane's testimony, warning that the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning appears to have developed a pattern of approving projects prematurely. “There is a list of projects that were approved without meeting necessary standards. These substandard outcomes end up costing the country more in the long run,” he said.

The PAC also noted that the Ministry of Energy has now requested an additional M26 million to repair damage to the Ramarothole facility—costs that could likely have been avoided.

When asked to identify those responsible for pressuring the ministry to bypass proper procedures, Letooane and his colleagues requested that such disclosures be made in camera, citing fear of political retaliation. In a bid to contain the environmental damage and secure the sustainability of Lesotho's renewable energy investments, ReNoka and LEGCO have since entered into a Public-Private Partnership and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). As part of this collaboration, local communities are implementing land restoration interventions aimed at controlling water runoff and preventing further soil degradation around the solar plant.

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# Justice System in Crisis as Judges Exit Leaving 218 Unfinished Cases ...some date as far back as **1994**



Justice Tseliso Monapathi and Justice Keketso Moahloli.

**By Seipati Matobo**

The High Court of Lesotho has been left scrambling to deal with a staggering 218 unresolved cases following the departure of two senior judges; Justice Tseliso Monapathi and Justice Keketso Moahloli. The backlog includes judgments and part-heard matters, some of which date as far back as 1994, now thrown into uncertainty due to missing litigants, lost files, and vanished witnesses.

## A Legacy of Delay

Justice Monapathi, who retired in August 2023 after an illustrious 30-year judicial career, left behind a remarkable 107 undelivered judgments, spanning civil and criminal cases. The actual number of incomplete matters is even higher; 116 in total, once part-heard cases are

accounted for. A detailed breakdown reveals a systemic failure in case finalisation:

- 37 civil trials
- 26 civil applications
- 2 civil appeals
- 2 criminal trials
- 7 criminal applications
- 1 criminal review
- 9 part-heard cases

Startlingly, five cases filed in 1994 remained unresolved at the time of his retirement. The bottleneck peaked between 2015 and 2021, with 62 cases stuck in limbo during that period alone.

## Forced Exit Amid Mounting Criticism

Justice Moahloli, who resigned abruptly in October 2023, left under a cloud of controversy. His resignation followed a

recommendation for impeachment by Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane over persistent delays. Moahloli left 84 undelivered judgments, predominantly civil applications, and 18 part-heard cases, bringing his total unfinished caseload to 102 matters. His annual backlog had shown a worrying trend, escalating from just one unresolved case in 2014 to 20 in 2021, suggesting chronic case mismanagement.

## Administrative Fallout

The departure of the two judges has triggered a judicial logistical nightmare. Chief Justice Sakoane has since reassigned all 218 abandoned cases to other sitting judges. Meanwhile, the Registrar of the High Court, Advocate Mathato Sekao, has issued a circular summoning litigants and lawyers to a roll call hearing scheduled for 4 August 2025 in an attempt to revive the dormant cases.

## But the path forward is fraught with obstacles:

- Some litigants and witnesses are now deceased or cannot be located.
- Evidence has been lost or destroyed over time.
- Police officers involved in investigations have either retired or left service.
- Memories have faded, and documents have gone missing, creating legal ambiguities and procedural voids.

## A System Near Collapse

These revelations come

as Lesotho's High Court continues to grapple with an already overwhelming backlog of nearly 4,000 pending cases. The addition of 218 complex, aged cases...many requiring re-litigation, further burdens a justice system that critics say is inching toward dysfunction. Legal experts and human rights advocates are calling this a crisis of confidence in the judiciary. "When cases take 30 years and still aren't resolved, the system isn't just inefficient, it's broken," remarked one veteran lawyer, speaking anonymously.

## What Happens Now?

While some cases may be salvaged, many are expected to collapse due to evidentiary and procedural decay. The Judiciary faces an uphill task...not only to catch up, but to restore public trust.

As roll call hearings begin next month, many families and businesses who've waited years, even decades, for justice will be watching closely. Whether this backlog will be cleared—or further buried in bureaucracy, remains to be seen.

## Quick Stats:

- Monapathi: 107 undelivered judgments, 116 total incomplete cases
- Moahloli: 84 undelivered judgments, 102 total incomplete cases
- Total reassigned cases: 218
- High Court backlog: Approaching 4,000 pending cases



# 9

Lesotho Tribune

By Lesotho Tribune Staff Writer

If you've followed developments at the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) over the past year, you might be wondering, how does a national utility end up in such a tangled mess?

To be fair, managing a public utility is no small task. But LEC's recent troubles seem less about complexity and more about, well, carelessness. Or perhaps it's something deeper-systemic governance breakdowns that no one really wants to take responsibility for. Whatever it is, the result is clear: millions of maloti gone, accountability missing, and public

# ESG Lens

## How Weak Oversight Is Undermining Public Investment in Lesotho



trust worn dangerously thin. Take the recent procurement scandal. LEC reportedly spent M13

million on electrical equipment, meters, keypads, transformers—that, bafflingly, doesn't work with the

company's current systems. That's not a small technical oversight. It's like buying diesel

*Continues in Page 16*

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Lesotho Tribune Staff  
Writer

Maseru

The Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) has once again extended the suspension of a senior employee as delays continue to plague the forensic audit commissioned by the company's Board earlier this year.

In a formal communication signed by Acting Managing Director Ntsie N. Maphathe, dated 10 July 2025, the employee—whose identity Lesotho Tribune has chosen to withhold due to the sensitivity of the matter—was informed that their suspension will now continue until 11 September 2025, unless the audit is completed earlier.

"The forensic audit is still in progress and it will not be possible to finalize it by the initially anticipated date," the letter reads, referencing earlier correspondence dated 12 March and 10

# BUSINESS & ECONOMY

## LEC Forensic Audit Extension Raises Eyebrows Over Audit Firm's Competence



Acting LEC Managing Director Ntsie N. Maphathe

June 2025, which originally confirmed and extended the suspension. "The Board remains committed to ensuring that all due processes are observed in a manner that is both fair and impartial."

Despite the stated commitment to due process, this marks the second extension of both the suspension and the forensic audit, prompting public speculation and raising concerns about the efficiency and competence of the auditing firm involved.

Although LEC has not officially disclosed the identity of the audit firm, Lesotho Tribune has learned through unconfirmed sources that KPMG was selected

to carry out the forensic investigation. Questions directed by Lesotho Tribune to the Office of the Auditor General—particularly regarding the scope and oversight of the forensic audit—remain unanswered at the time of publication. The repeated delays are likely to reignite debate over governance and transparency within state-owned enterprises, especially given that forensic audits are typically commissioned in response to allegations of serious misconduct, financial irregularities, or operational failures. Stakeholders in the energy sector and public accountability advocates have expressed concern that the continued ex-

tensions without clear timelines or public disclosures undermine the credibility of the audit process. A governance expert familiar with parastatal oversight, who asked not to be named, stated:

"If this is indeed KPMG, we are not questioning their global reputation—but rather the clarity of the terms of reference, and the level of institutional cooperation that has been given. When an audit drags on this long without transparency, it fuels suspicion rather than confidence."

The case also reflects poorly on internal controls within LEC and raises the stakes for the Board, which may find itself under scrutiny if the audit eventually reveals mismanagement or if it fails to meet the expectations of the public and regulators.

As the country grapples with ongoing energy challenges, the need for a well-managed, transparent, and accountable LEC is more critical than ever. The outcome of this forensic audit—and how the company communicates it—will likely set a precedent for other state-owned entities under similar scrutiny.

# ETL launches advanced Wi-Fi with easy accessibility

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

**E**conet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) has launched a Fixed Mobile

Convergence (FMC), known as Wi-Fi PLUS this week at Thabeng Hotel in Maseru along the week. Intended for both home and business, Wi-Fi PLUS guarantees quick, steadfast internet for all clients' needs. From teleworking to streaming and video games, Wi-Fi Plus is an opening that connects all without any clash.

In his opening remarks at the launch, Chief Executive Officer of Econet Telecom Lesotho, Denis Plaatjies stated that the newly introduced product will allow users to stay connected in a faster and more appropriate way. He said that this innovative breakthrough represents more than just improvement, as it marks a turning point in Lesotho's digital progress in general.

"Wi-Fi Plus permits us to reach even the most inaccessible communities, giving them access to the same quality of service enjoyed in urban areas. It also simplifies the customer experience by packaging voice, data, and SIM services into one convenient solution. By building on our ex-



isting fixed infrastructure, we are delivering consummate network reliability and efficiency. This is an essential moment in our journey to make digital access truly widespread," Plaatjies remarked.

He showed that it is also an extension of the 4G internet connectivity that ETL is already having across the country especially in remote areas. Moreover, the Product Manager, Ntina Sehlooho said that Wi-Fi PLUS is a product with which ETL

is targeting to allow its users to stay connected with different channels not only at a fixed place as it will also enable mobile connectivity.

Econet General Manager Sales and Services, Lebohang Ramaisa, said they are progressing out committed packages for both Residential and Small, Medium & Micro Enterprises (SMME) customers. Ramaisa said they offer a residential package which is perfect for families and shared households that can connect

up to seven users, each receiving mobile data, On-Net call minutes, and a free SIM card – all under one flexible, shared account.

In addition, Ramaisa stated that the Business (SMME) Package is designed for small businesses to connect up to five employees, with each receiving 10GB of data and two hours of On-Net talk time monthly for up to 24 months. Well-suited with prepaid SIM cards, this package is designed for ease operation with enough resources.

"This launch is a true evidence to Econet's commitment to inclusive digital access and innovation. By joining the connectivity gap, Econet is allowing families, entrepreneurs, and communities to flourish in a digitally connected Lesotho," Ramaisa emphasised.



# SA annuity pricing system fails the poor, say actuaries

*New actuarial research has found that the local retail market rates penalise low-income retirees by up to 37% compared to institutional rates, just as compulsory annuitisation kicks in.*

BY: RUAN JOOSTE

After South Africa's two-pot retirement reform came into effect in September 2024, new actuarial research raised red flags about the fairness of annuity pricing for low-income earners.

Joanna Combrink, an actuary at Actuarial Benefits and Consulting Solutions, presented, at the 2025 Joint Colloquium of the International Actuarial Association in São Paulo, a paper titled Fairness of Annuity Pricing for Low-Income Earners in South Africa in May.

Co-authored with Dale Taylor, investment consultant and actuary at the same company, the paper – first delivered at the Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA) Convention in October 2023 – investigated whether annuity pricing in the local retail market adequately reflected the risks and needs of poorer retirees. It concluded that it did not.

‘With South Africa



moving from a world of voluntary participation and voluntary annuitisation to one where annuitisation and preservation are mandatory, it became essential that the products available at retirement were appropriate and fairly priced,’ Combrink said in a LinkedIn post after her presentation.

The researchers found that institutional annuity pricing, where pension funds or employers bulk-purchased annuities on behalf of retirees, reflected income differences through the use of differentiated mortality assumptions. In contrast, the retail an-

nuity market – where individuals purchased annuities directly, often with the help of advisers – applied a flat pricing basis regardless of income. This created a ‘reverse subsidy’, according to the paper – where low-income individuals ended up paying substantially more relative to the pension benefit they were likely to receive over their lifetimes. Quantifying the gap Using data gathered from five major South African insurers, the authors compared annuity rates between the retail and institutional markets. They found that low-income individu-

als paid between 19% and 37% more for an equivalent annuity in the retail space than they would have paid in the institutional market. Some of this discrepancy – estimated at 10% to 14% – could be explained by anti-selection, as less healthy individuals were more likely to purchase annuities. However, the remainder stemmed from expense loadings and profit margins.

‘Though there may be technical grounds for it, it was unfair that a low-income individual was charged this much more in the retail market than in the institutional market,’ the paper stated.

By contrast, in the institutional annuity market, higher-income retirees typically paid 17% to 28% more than their lower-income counterparts, as a direct result of more favourable mortality assumptions for wealthier individuals.

‘Not allowing for income rating in the retail annuity market resulted in unfair

*Continues in page 13*



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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporter

The announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump of a 30% tariff on South African goods and produce entering the United States from 1 August 2025 is deeply troubling. The economic consequences of this decision could be widespread and severe. While not explicitly stated, this move may signal the effective end of South Africa's participation in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which currently allows duty-free access for over 6,000 products, including automobiles, agricultural goods, and textiles.

Thousands of South African exporters, across farming, manufacturing, mining, and other sectors are now facing profound uncertainty. The impact on jobs and

# FARMERS CORNER

## US Tariffs on South African Exports Pose Major Threat to Jobs and Economy



livelihoods could be devastating, particularly in a country already burdened by one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. Billions of rands in export revenue are at stake. Given the potential fallout, South Africa must now accelerate urgent economic reforms that strengthen resilience, protect jobs, and position the country more competitively in the global marketplace. Among these critical reforms are:

- Removing regulatory and infrastructure barriers to private sector participation

in electricity generation and transmission

- Concessioning ports to improve logistics efficiency and reduce turnaround times

- Expanding private participation in freight rail, supported by investment in infrastructure and stronger security measures

- Reviewing property legislation to reinforce investor confidence and protect private ownership

- Reforming empowerment policies to more effectively tackle poverty and inequality

- Strengthening local government performance to improve service delivery and ensure financial accountability

- Taking decisive steps to combat corruption, which continues to undermine public trust and development

The brief extension granted, from 9 July to 1 August offers a narrow but vital opportunity to engage constructively and seek clarity from the United States. It is essential that this window is used wisely, with a focus on diplomacy, reform, and long-term economic stability.

**Continued from page 12**

pricing as the price did not reflect the expected benefit,' the authors wrote. They recommended that income, or a suitable proxy for income, should be used as a pricing factor in the retail market – and that doing so might require regulation, as insurers were unlikely to apply income-based pricing voluntarily. Two-pot implications

These findings acquired fresh urgency with the arrival of South Africa's two-pot retirement system in September 2024. Under the new structure, two-thirds of all retirement contributions were locked into a 'retirement pot' that could not be accessed before retirement and had to be annuitised at retirement. While retirees could still choose between life and living annuities, they no longer had the option of taking the full amount as cash. Combrink and Taylor warned that the structural unfairness of current annuity pricing could result in significantly poorer outcomes for retirees forced into the retail market. 'The level of discrepancy between retail and institutional pricing was unlikely to be explained by anti-selection alone,' they said.

They also noted that living annuities, which allowed individuals to draw down income at flexible rates and select investment portfolios, were often ill-suited to lower-income retirees. These products required ongoing decision-making, financial literacy, and advice – all of which were less accessible to poorer segments of the population. 'The need for financial advice alone made living annuities inappropriate,' the paper stated. The authors recommended that a standardised life annuity with inflation protection and optional death benefits be made the default for low-income retirees. This, they said, would provide income security, reduce decision-making complexity, and transfer longevity risk away from the retiree. Toward a fairer system

The researchers also criticised the current incentive structures in the financial advice industry, noting that advisers often earned higher commissions on living annuities, both upfront and on an ongoing basis. In contrast, life annuities offered only a once-off commission. This dynamic contributed to poor product-matching at re-

tirement. While a life annuity was often the better option for income security, particularly for smaller retirement pots, advisers and product providers had little incentive to recommend them. 'There was a high level of vulnerability and information asymmetry in the retiree-financial adviser relationship,' the authors warned. Combrink and Taylor concluded their paper with a call for systemic reform: they proposed that a national minimum pension should be secured by a regulated life annuity, with pricing based on a pooled,

income-rated system. They also recommended that living annuities be more tightly regulated in the context of compulsory annuitisation, and that commission structures be revisited to remove sales distortions. They argued that retirement income security should be treated as a social good, and that the retirement system should aim to deliver outcomes aligned with that purpose. An updated version of the paper is due to be released later in 2025 to reflect further changes in the regulatory and market environment.



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

The entry of Starlink into Lesotho's internet market has sent shockwaves through the telecommunications sector and consumers are the real winners. In a matter of weeks, Vodacom Lesotho and Econet Telecom Lesotho have slashed prices and rolled out competitive new packages, proving once again that nothing drives innovation and affordability like good old-fashioned competition.

A quick check of the latest internet pricing reveals dramatic shifts. Before Starlink's arrival, mobile data and home broadband prices in Lesotho were relatively stagnant, with limited incentives for providers to undercut each other. Now, Vodacom and Econet are scrambling to retain customers with better deals. Vodacom Lesotho recently introduced larger data bundles at reduced rates, including a 30% price cut on some monthly LTE packages. Econet Telecom Lesotho responded with double-data promotions and expanded coverage in rural areas, previously underserved. Both providers are now offering uncapped overnight

# EDITORIAL

## "You Gotta Love Competition"



Vodacom  
Lesotho



data and loyalty discounts, a clear attempt to match Starlink's high-speed, unlimited offerings.

This is Economics 101: When monopolies or oligopolies dominate, prices stay high, service lags, and innovation stalls. The moment a disruptive player like Starlink enters, incumbents are forced to improve or lose market share. Consumers benefit immediately as companies fight for their business. Network upgrades and customer ser-

vice improvements follow. Providers expand coverage to avoid losing subscribers. Lesotho's internet penetration has long lagged behind regional peers, partly due to limited competition. Starlink's satellite-based service bypasses traditional infrastructure barriers, forcing local ISPs to rethink their strategies. If this trend continues, more Basotho will come online, boosting digital inclusion and economic growth.

Regulators must ensure a

level playing field...preventing anti-competitive behavior while encouraging further investment. Meanwhile, consumers should enjoy this moment, compare offers, and switch if they get a better deal.

Competition works. You gotta love it.

Note: For exact pricing details, check Vodacom Lesotho and Econet's latest packages, as promotions may change frequently in response to Starlink's roll-out.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

engines for an electric train. According to reports, 3,000 meters and keypads were bought from Landis+Gyr for M6 million. They now sit unused. Same with nine transformers from Power Link Holdings—ordered as Type 11400, delivered as 1142. Wrong specs. Still delivered. No one seems sure why.

And that's not even the whole story. Apparently, the utility also spent another M5 million on meter-reading software from a company called Jagei (Pty) Ltd. It never worked. Then the company vanished... liquidated. It's almost farcical. You'd think someone, somewhere, would've tested the system or checked if the vendor had staying power. But maybe no one asked. Or maybe they did and pushed ahead anyway.

An internal audit didn't paint a prettier picture. Around M1.8 million in revenue was lost due to what auditors diplomatically call "collusion" between sales staff and clients. Electricity credits were being loaded without proper authorization. Weak controls, again. And in another corner of the organization, some

suppliers were quietly being paid more than they were owed, well above contract prices. There's little explanation on record. Just missing invoices. It's that kind of thing that makes you wonder whether incompetence or something less innocent is at play.

You might expect, given this chaos, that Parliament would step in. It did. But LEC's board, instead of cooperating, tried to stop a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) probe by going to court. Their urgent application to block the investigation was denied. That was back in June. Since then, the PAC, chaired by 'Machabana Lemphane-Letsie, has been digging deeper. But the mere fact that the board tried to halt oversight says a lot, doesn't it?

Now, here's where things get tricky, because it's not just about one or two bad procurement decisions. This all touches on deeper governance issues, the kind ESG frameworks are meant to highlight: board independence, conflict of interest, and regulatory compliance.

Let's start with the board. By law and by principle, it should act

in the public's interest. But when a board tries to dodge accountability, or defends questionable procurement, its independence comes into question. Who is it protecting; stakeholders or itself?

On conflicts of interest, there's no smoking gun here. But the repeated failures in procurement and contract management create an uncomfortable fog. For example, how do incompatible products get approved unless decision-makers are either not paying attention or benefiting in ways we can't see? It's hard not to be suspicious.

And then there's compliance. The Auditor-General issued a disclaimer opinion, the most severe audit conclusion...for LEC's financial statements. That means auditors couldn't verify basic figures. They didn't even have enough documentation to give an opinion. That's not just poor bookkeeping. That's a breach of public trust.

Of course, governance reform isn't easy. It's slow, messy, and, frankly unpopular with those benefiting from the status quo. Some insiders argue that the utility is "too politicized" to fix. Maybe.

But that also feels like a convenient excuse. Surely there's a way to insist on transparency without shutting the whole place down? At the very least, the LEC saga should push for stronger oversight mechanisms. Maybe a real-time digital procurement platform. Maybe an empowered audit committee that actually enforces consequences. Or perhaps, and this might sound too hopeful...a culture shift within public enterprises, one that prioritizes service delivery over internal protectionism.

Still, despite all that's been exposed, there's a strange sense of resignation in the public. These stories come and go. The outrage flares up, fades, and then, business as usual. It shouldn't be that way. Because at the end of the day, these aren't just accounting errors or procurement quirks. They represent the failure to safeguard public investment in one of Lesotho's most essential sectors, energy.

And without energy, everything else stalls. This article is part of Lesotho Tribune's ESG Governance Series. For tips or leads, write to [editor@lesothotribune.co.ls](mailto:editor@lesothotribune.co.ls)

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Lesotho Tribune

By Ramahooana Matlosa

**I**n January 10, 2025, a notable and unexpected development quietly entered the public domain: His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho is now a businessman. His Majesty is a founding shareholder in His Majesty King Letsie III Just Energy Transition Limited (HMKLIII JET), a UK-registered company, with a declared focus on the energy sector. The company's registered address in Ruislip, London, makes it clear that the venture is serious and internationally positioned. Then, on July 02, 2025, the King addressed an energy transition forum in Tokyo, Japan, organized by the United Nations University. In his keynote, His Majesty outlined the company's vision and his personal dream of transforming

# OPINION

## The King goes into business, a right move, but on whose money?



Lesotho's energy sector. Admirably ambitious. But here's the catch, his travel, accommodation, and costs for this business-focused engagement were sponsored not by his private enterprise, but by public funds, in other words by our taxes. Let me say this upfront:

I have no objection to His Majesty venturing into the world of business. In fact, I welcome it. For too long, our monarchy has been ceremonial and disconnected from the gritty realities of economic life. In this sense, the King's participation in the energy sector, an

area where Lesotho faces significant challenges, is refreshing. It could even be a catalyst for change and innovation in an industry that desperately needs it. But the critical question remains: Should a monarch, now in business, still be carried on the back of the

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Lesotho Tribune

By NUL Innovation Hub

Let's take a trip to the beautiful mountain villages of Motete in Butha-Buthe and Linakaneng in Thaba-Tseka. For a long time, these places had no electricity. People used candles for light, chopped firewood to cook, and walked long distances just to charge their phones. But that all changed when the National University of Lesotho (NUL) Energy Research Centre (ERC) showed up...with a plan. They were bringing in something called mini-grids, powered by the sun.

These mini-grids now light up over 110 homes in Motete and more than 75 in Linakaneng. That means families can cook, study, listen to the radio, and charge phones, all from clean energy. "It cost us over M14 million to make it happen,"

# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## NUL ERC SCIENTISTS TAKE CLEAN ELECTRICITY TO 185 HOMES IN THE MOUNTAINS!



says Mr. Tšita Molapo, a physics lecturer at NUL and one of the people leading the project. "It wasn't easy. These villages are very remote, and we were introducing high-tech systems in places that never had anything like this before." Luckily, NUL wasn't working alone. The mini-grids were funded by Innovate UK, and NUL teamed up with Smart

Villages from the UK, Gram Oorja from India, and MOSCET from Lesotho. You could say it was a worldwide team effort to help Lesotho's mountains shine. So how does the system actually work? Well, it all starts with the sun. Big steel structures with solar panels are installed out in open areas where they can soak up all that beautiful

sunshine. When sunlight hits the panels, something clever happens inside...tiny particles of light (called photons) knock around electrons inside the solar cells. This produces direct current (DC) electricity. Now, DC electricity isn't quite what most home appliances need. Before it reaches the houses, the

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electricity goes through something called an inverter, which turns it into alternating current (AC), the kind that lights your bulb and powers your fridge.

But what if no one is using the electricity during the day? No problem.

The system includes batteries, which are like giant power banks. Any electricity that isn't used right away is stored in these batteries for use at night, when people are home and using lights, charging phones, or watching TV.

Each village has a community committee that runs the system. Villagers don't need fancy apps or bank cards. They just go to a local committee member with a laptop, buy electricity units for M5.00 per unit, and boom! The lights come on at home. No long queues, no complications.

"It's something we never even dreamed about before NUL came knocking on our doors," says Mr. Letšohla Mapentjane, one of the community leaders in Motete. But just when things were about to get moving, guess what happened?

Covid-19 hit!

Everything stopped. Roads were closed. Moving equipment into the mountains? Forget it. For a while, people feared the project was gone for good.

But like we say in Sesotho, *sesa-feleng se a*



*hlola*, everything comes to an end.

And sure enough, when Covid restrictions lifted, the project came back to life. The NUL team returned with their tools and technology, and in just a few months, homes began to glow at night. Radios played. Phones charged. Children studied under real lights for the first time.

"To say it was tough would be putting it lightly," Mapentjane laughs.

"None of us knew a thing about mini-grids when we started. But we were ready to learn. And with help from the NUL team and their international and local partners, we made it happen."

Now here's the really cool part. NUL scientists can monitor the whole system from their phones. Each mini-grid has a smart little device called a data logger. It watches everything happening in the system, how much energy the panels are collecting, how full the batteries are and so on. All this info is sent

through the internet to NUL scientists, who can check the system from their laptops or phones, whether they're sitting at the university or traveling abroad.

They know, from miles away, when something ain't going right. Most of the power use happens in the evening. That's when people switch on their lights, charge phones, or run small appliances. During the day, the sun does its job, filling up the batteries and preparing the system for the busy night ahead, even while sharing some power to day users. Both Motete and Linakaneng now take full

ownership of their mini-grids. The villagers handle the money, check the systems, and even teach each other how to use power wisely.

And just like that, these mountain communities are no longer left behind. They're part of a global energy shift, one where power doesn't come from burning coal or diesel, but from the sun above and science on the ground.

"As the world moves toward clean energy," says Mr. Molapo, "these villages are leading the way. And that's something we're proud to be part of."





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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporter

The uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party has opened a criminal case against Minister Senzo Mchunu and Major-General Shadrack Sibiya at the Brooklyn Police Station in Pretoria, accusing them of perjury.

The charges stem from allegations that Mchunu misled Parliament's Portfolio Committee on March 5, claiming that instructions to disband a specialized police unit came from the National Commissioner. However, the National Commissioner later denied any knowledge of the decision.

A spokesperson for the MK Party stated that newly uncovered evidence, including a letter from Mchunu, contradicts his earlier testimony. "The minister lied to us as

# AFRICA

## uMkhonto weSizwe Party Files Criminal Case Against Mchunu and Major-General Sibiya for Perjury



members of the Portfolio Committee," the spokesperson said. "He claimed the directive came from the National Commissioner, but now we see a letter where he admits he personally disbanded the task force."

The case also implicates Major-General Sibiya, with the MK Party alleging his in-

volvement in unlawful surveillance activities. "How can the minister authorize the downloading of cell phone data without proper legal grounds?" the spokesperson questioned. "These actions must be tested by all means possible." The MK Party has vowed to pursue legal action, asserting that

both officials must be held accountable. Authorities have confirmed receipt of the complaint, and investigations are expected to proceed.

This development adds to growing scrutiny over government accountability and transparency in South Africa's law enforcement operations.

Continued from Page 17

taxpayer?

We are entering a complex and unprecedented era in Lesotho. We now have a sitting monarch who is both a ceremonial head of state and an active participant in private enterprise. And not just any enterprise, a highly strategic and politically sensitive sector: energy. The optics are problematic. While His Majesty is within his rights as a private citizen to invest or form a company, we must consider the implications of him using public funds to finance what appears to be a private commercial venture.

There's a clear distinction between a royal duty and a business interest. If His Majesty was attending a United Nations political summit as part of his constitutional role, that would be well within expectations and justifiable use of public funds. But in this case, he was promoting a private business, pitching to potential investors, and outlining a commercial vision, one that he stands to personally benefit from.

This dual role places him in a grey area that is neither entirely royal nor entirely private. On one hand, we continue to pay for his lifestyle, his travels, and his security as a head of state. On the other, he is entering a market where ordinary citi-

zens, entrepreneurs, and start-ups must compete, often without the same access, networks, or state-funded exposure. How are ordinary citizens supposed to feel when we fund the King's travels for business purposes while we ourselves struggle to secure small grants or loans to support our own entrepreneurial dreams? How do we reconcile the principles of fair competition with a market player whose platform is amplified by royal privilege?

To be fair, the energy sector in Lesotho is in dire need of investment, innovation, and leadership. The idea of a "just energy transition" is timely and important. Load shedding, unstable grid supply, and dependency on imports continue to hold our economy hostage. If His Majesty's involvement brings global investors to the table or shines a spotlight on renewable initiatives in the country, that would be a net positive. But transparency and fairness must accompany this involvement.

Public trust in our institutions is delicate. If we are to support His Majesty's new role, we must be assured that there will be no conflict of interest, no unfair advantages, and most importantly, no misuse of public funds. The King has a choice: either he remains a constitutional monarch support-

ed by the state, or he becomes a businessman responsible for funding his own ventures.

As citizens, we deserve clarity. Will His Majesty recuse himself from certain state privileges when acting in a business capacity? Will there be publicly disclosed financial boundaries between his royal duties and private investments? Will the companies he owns or is associated with be subject to the same regulatory and taxation frameworks as ours?

This is not about disrespecting the monarchy or denying His Majesty the right to evolve with the times. It is about fairness, accountability, and the principle that no one, no matter how revered, should operate above or outside the norms expected of every Mosotho.

So yes, I welcome His Majesty to the business world. Let him hustle. Let him show the youth that entrepreneurship is noble, necessary, and powerful. Let him contribute solutions to our energy crisis. But let him also finance his hustle like the rest of us, without leaning on the taxpayer.

If His Majesty is serious about being a businessman, perhaps it is also time he relieved us of the burden of maintaining his royal salary and privileges. A full transition into private enterprise could be the

most powerful example of leadership in a new Lesotho, where even a King is willing to stand or fall on the merit of his ideas and investments, just like the rest of us. That would be a truly just transition.

In conclusion, I strongly argue that the Constitution of Lesotho does not permit the King to engage in business, primarily because His Majesty is granted immunity from legal proceedings. This immunity is meant to protect the dignity and impartiality of the monarchy.

However, the situation becomes even more concerning with the revelation that the business in question is registered in the United Kingdom. This not only places the King within a foreign legal jurisdiction but also effectively strips him of the constitutional protection he enjoys at home. Should a business registered under his name breach a contract, it would inevitably raise serious legal and constitutional questions. The result is a potential constitutional crisis, one that threatens the very foundation of the monarchy's role in Lesotho. For the sake of constitutional integrity and national stability, the King must make a clear choice: to be a sovereign above legal entanglements or a businessman subject to the law. He cannot be both.



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# Opening ceremony of the Africa Union Sports Council (AUSC) Region 5 Youth Games at the Independence Stadium in Windhoek Namibia.

Photo credit: Supplied





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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

After a stellar 2024/25 campaign, Lioli FC's players and technical team are set to receive a well-earned M200,000 bonus in recognition of their achievements this season.

The club's management has decided to reward the team following their successful defence of the Vodacom Premier League (VPL) title and victory in the TJ Nthane Brothers Tournament.

In total, Lioli FC walked away with M650,000 for their league triumph and an additional M200,000 from the cup competition.

Announcing the bonus at a press conference held at Blue Mountain Inn (BMI) this week, club president Lebohang Thotanyana said

# ARTS & SPORTS

## Lioli FC to Share M200,000 Bonus After Remarkable Season



Lioli FC President, Lebohang Thotanyana

the reward reflects the club's appreciation for the team's dedication and consistent performance throughout the season. "After such an exceptional season, it was only right for the club to acknowledge the hard work and contributions of both the players and technical staff," Thotanyana said. To further celebrate the team's success, Lioli will also host its annual awards ceremony this

Saturday at BMI. The event aims to highlight individual excellence and dedication during the 2024/25 campaign. Award categories this year include:

- Most Disciplined Player
- Outstanding Young Player
- Most Improved Player
- Players' Player of the Season
- Golden

Glove

- Golden Boot
- Player of the Year

For the first time, the club is also introducing a new fan-driven category — Supporters' Player of the Season — to give fans a chance to take part in celebrating the team's journey and standout performances.

The celebrations cap off a season to remember for Tse Nala.

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