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Central Bank Reserves Shrink by Over M1.4 Billion in May

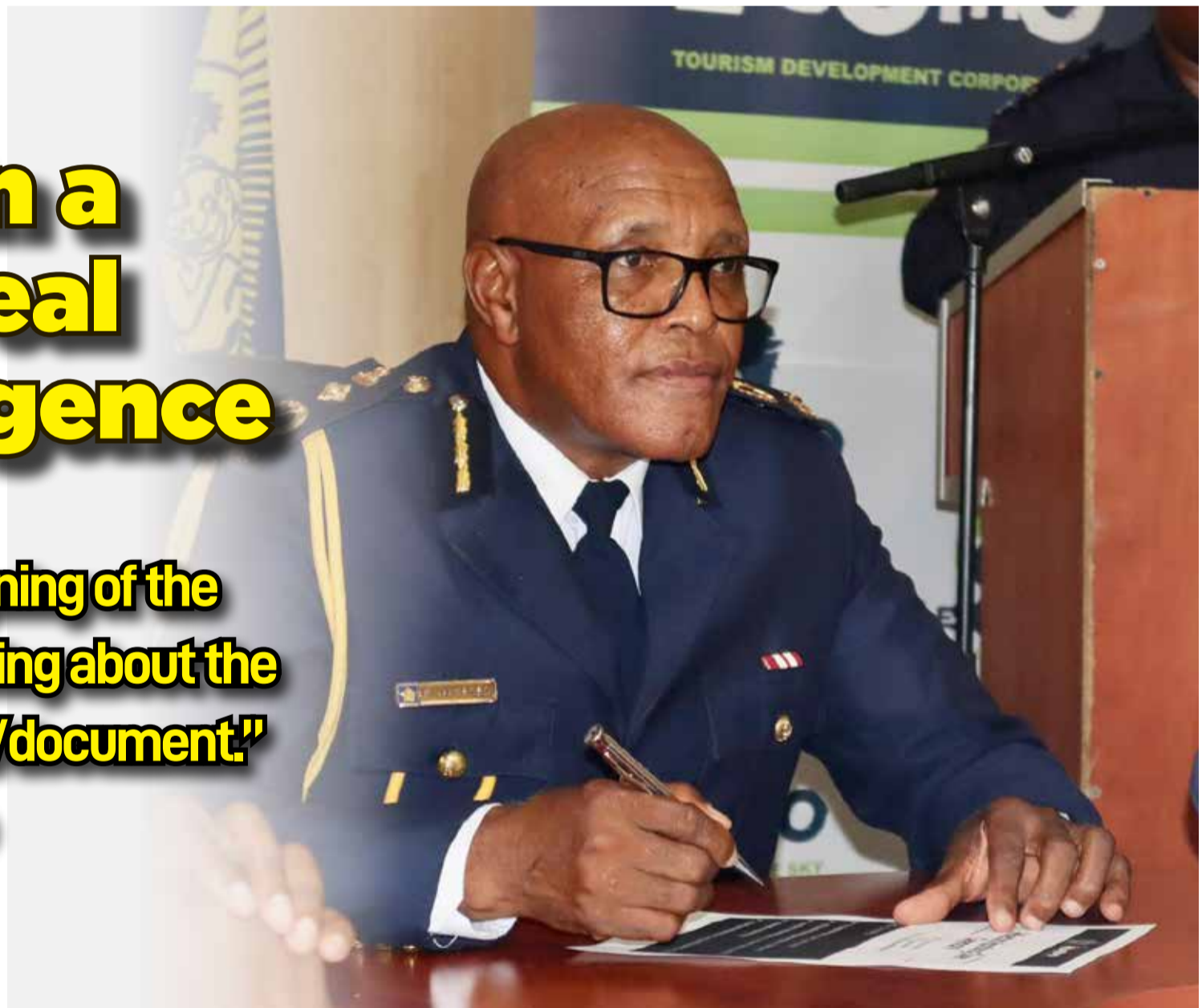
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LMPS in a Dodgy Deal with Mergence

"I did witness the signing of the MoU, but I know nothing about the contents of the MoU/document."

DGP Paseka Mokete

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LMPS in a Dodgy Deal with Mergence

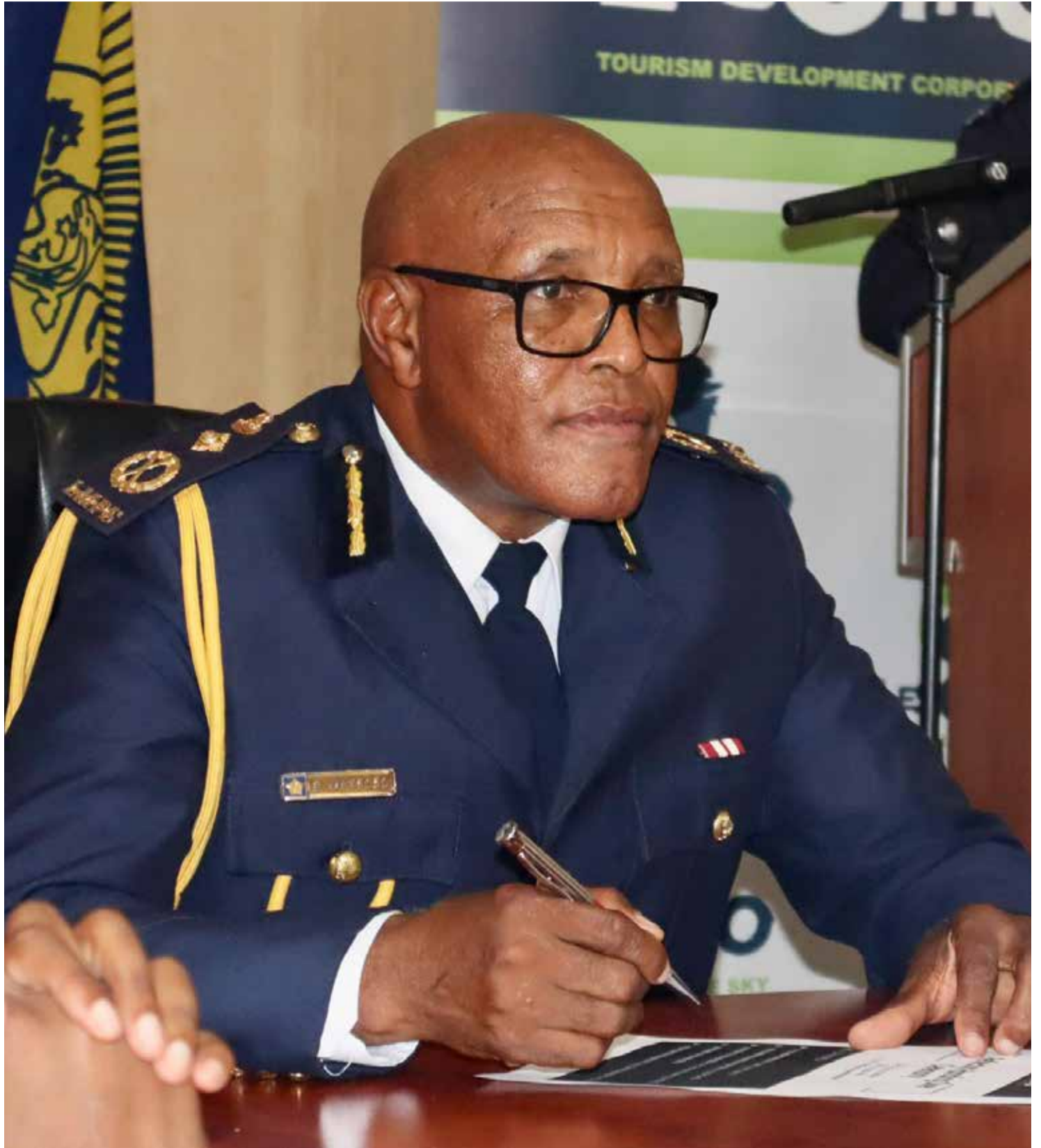
I did witness the signing of the MoU, but I know nothing about the contents of the MoU/document.”
DCP Paseka Mokete

By: Staff Reporter

Lesotho Tribune can exclusively reveal that the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) entered into a secret and highly irregular Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Mergence Investment Managers Lesotho, a company recently flagged by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for questionable dealings. The MoU, signed without proper authorization or legal clearances, effectively tied LMPS to a commercial development scheme on police-owned land, with LMPS providing land while Mergence would raise capital and run a retail shopping complex..

The MoU That Should Never Have Been Signed

The MoU, seen by Lesotho Tribune, sets out that Mergence would raise capital, manage construction, and operate a retail centre on police land, while LMPS would contribute the land itself. Profits would be shared. The terms were bold and commercial. Yet the Police Act No. 7 of 1998 is clear: the role of LMPS is to uphold the law, preserve peace, protect life and property, and bring offenders to justice. Nowhere does it empower the police to repurpose state land into joint ven-



tures with private financiers. The document itself acknowledges that such agreements must be cleared by the Ministry of Police, the Attorney General, and other relevant authorities. But there is no evidence that these approvals were ever sought. Instead, the MoU was executed in the shadows, sidestepping the checks that

safeguard public assets.

Witness to a Deal, But Not Its Contents?

The MoU was signed on behalf of the Commissioner of Police, Compol Borotho Matsoso. His deputy, DCP Paseka Mokete, signed as a witness.

When Lesotho Tribune questioned DCP Mokete about his role, his response was startling:

“I did witness the signing

of the MoU, but I know nothing about the contents of the MoU/document.”

The answer raises more questions than it answers. How could a senior police officer, entrusted with the highest duties of law enforcement, affix his signature to a binding document yet plead igno-

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Continued from Page 2

rance of its contents? Was he misled, sidelined, or now attempting to distance himself from a controversial deal? Whatever the explanation, it speaks to institutional negligence at best and complicity at worst.

A Compromised Partner

Even more troubling is the choice of partner. Mergence Investment Managers Lesotho has been a recurring feature in PAC inquiries into the management of pension funds. Questions of conflicts of interest, opaque structures, and possible capture have dogged the company. To hand over police land to such a firm shows a reckless disregard for governance. It also entrenches suspicions that the LMPS, rather than protecting state resources, is now entangling itself with private interests whose track record is already under scrutiny.

“He Believes He Is Untouchable”

One senior cabinet member, speaking to Lesotho Tribune on condition of anonymity, said he was “not shocked” by Compol Matsoso’s involvement. “This is not surprising at all. Compol Matsoso has long acted as if he is untouchable. He undertakes deals that no accountable public officer should touch, and yet he carries on as though laws and institutions do not apply to him.”

Such remarks underscore a deepening perception that the leadership of LMPS has drifted into dangerous territory, insulated from oversight and emboldened

by impunity.

Ministries and Mergence Stay Silent

Lesotho Tribune put questions to both the Ministry of Police and the Ministry of Finance, asking whether they had knowledge of or authorized the MoU. Neither responded. Mergence itself also did not comment, despite repeated requests. The silence is telling. If the deal were above board, the parties would have no reason to withhold explanations. Instead, the absence of accountability only heightens suspicions that the MoU was deliberately concealed.

A Pattern of Capture

This deal is not an isolated episode. It forms part of a disturbing pattern in which public institutions in Lesotho are repeatedly roped into irregular partnerships with politically connected companies. The pension fund scandals, also involving Mergence, revealed how public savings were exposed to conflicts of interest. Now, with LMPS land at stake, even the country’s police force—the very institution meant to uphold the law—appears ensnared in the machinery of capture. What makes this case particularly egregious is the symbolism: if even the police, guardians of the law, are seen to be cutting illegal deals, what message does that send to ordinary Basotho about the state of governance?

Where Was Oversight?

By law, the Ministry of Police and Public Safety, the Attorney General, and Parliament should have been consulted before any land-based agreements

were signed. These institutions are the gatekeepers meant to prevent precisely this kind of misuse of state assets.

Their failure to intervene raises serious questions:

- Were they deliberately bypassed, or did they choose to look away?

- Why did the Ministry of Police remain silent when its own department was implicated?

- And why did the Ministry of Finance, custodian of state assets, not issue any caution?

Legal and Financial Risks

The MoU as it stands is legally unenforceable. Without statutory approval, it lacks legitimacy and can be voided at any time. But the risks are broader. If Mergence invested money on the basis of this document, disputes could arise that drag LMPS into costly litigation. Public land could become entangled in court cases, delaying its rightful use and exposing taxpayers to unnecessary liability. Meanwhile, the reputational damage to LMPS is immense. A force already struggling with public trust now faces accusations of being complicit in the very forms of corruption and capture it is supposed to fight.

Questions That Demand Answers

This unfolding scandal leaves urgent questions on the table:

- Who initiated the discussions with Mergence?

- Did Compol Matsoso act alone, or was there political backing for this deal?

- Why did DCP Mokete sign as a wit-

ness without knowing the contents of the MoU?

- What due diligence was done on Mergence before handing them police land?

- And most importantly, will anyone be held accountable?

A Dangerous Precedent

If allowed to stand, the LMPS–Mergence deal sets a precedent where any public body can sign away state assets under the cover of “joint ventures,” with no legal authority or oversight. This is not only illegal; it is corrosive to democracy.

For ordinary Basotho, the consequences are far-reaching. Land that should serve the public interest risks being diverted to private enrichment. A police service that should be beyond reproach now appears compromised.

The Road Ahead

The MoU is still just a piece of paper. It can and should be nullified. But that alone is not enough. There must be accountability. Those who abused their positions to sign unauthorized deals must face consequences.

Parliament, civil society, and watchdog institutions must insist on answers. Silence from ministries and Mergence cannot be tolerated. The integrity of public assets—and public trust in the police—depends on it.

What is clear is this: the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, whose mandate is to uphold the law, has itself broken it. In doing so, it has handed the country yet another reminder of how far state capture has spread, and how urgently accountability is needed.



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Three Ranges Trail Preparations Underway

By: Pheello Mosesi

Maseru

The third 3 Ranges Trail, organised by Thapoha Hiking Club, is set to make a return this October to test the endurance of hikers and travellers in Lesotho. This was announced by the club this week.

Mushroomed within Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC), the club announced that the preparations towards the third episode of the tourism and hiking excursion have reached completion, with the first trail hiking piloted in 2023.

The tour offers hikers an experience like no other, filled with rich Basotho culture, history, as well as exposure to the beauty of the Mountain Kingdom. The starting point of the hike is marked at the lowest point in Lesotho, 389 metres above sea level and escalating to the peak of mountain Thabana-Ntlenayana which is positioned at 3,482 metres above sea level.

The Chairperson of Lesotho Council for Tourism (LCT) Advocate Makhetha Motšoari,

revealed that this challenging terrain brings a one-of-a-kind experience that will sell Lesotho, placing it as a tourist attraction to be considered.

“Lesotho is the only country in the world entirely above 1,000 metres in elevation. This gives us a rare gift: pure mountain air, unspoiled natural landscapes and breath taking views that few places can match. We are not competing on beaches or on the



savannah wildlife. We are competing on altitude, endurance, culture and the raw beauty of our mountains. This is our comparative advantage,” Advocate Motšoari said.

“We are talking about an experience that will attract international hikers, domestic adventurers and regional visitors, each of whom contributes to our economy and our people’s livelihoods. This is why today we boldly declare: Lesotho is Africa’s premier high-altitude hiking destination.”

Motšoari also highlighted that the initiative is set to play a pivotal role in reflection tourism and economic impact, citing that it is a development tool which is going to bring opportunities for local guides, homestays and village communities who will provide food, accommodation and cultural storytelling.

“It creates jobs in guiding, transport, logistics, hospitality and eco-conservation. It puts Lesotho firmly on the global adventure tourism map, alongside

destinations like the Inca Trail in Peru or Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania,” he supplemented.

He further reiterated that the Trail is not just about walking, but about re-discovering the spirit of humanity in nature as this trail has been defined as the most challenging of all hiking in the Southern Africa region.

The 288.3-kilometre trail name was ingeniously derived from the three mountain ranges through which the trail traverses. These are the Thaba-Putsoa, Takalatsa (Central) and Drakensberg mountain ranges.

Motšoari noted that this trail gives the best of both worlds, by promoting a healthy lifestyle in hiking as well as promoting tourism, giving the participants exposure to some of Lesotho’s most renowned natural attractions and showcasing the best of the country’s picturesque beauty and cultural heritage.

Hikers will be treated to exceptional views, passing through rivers and all four ecological zones of Lesotho and five districts.

In this hiking episode, the club has partnered with corporate sponsors with an additional backing of M40,000.00 from Standard Lesotho Bank.

The LTDC noted that forging partnerships will help the corporation to create development impacts on the locations that form part of the route, citing plans to reinforce and do renovations on some of the schools that are used as shelters during the course.

It noted that the hike has also been tailored to be enjoyable and challenge hikers. It has however also been designed to fit every hiker depending on whether one is at a beginner, intermediate or professional level of hiking.

The route is divided into manageable sections to accommodate varying levels of strength and endurance. It is divided into three sections: a 4-day section, a 6-day section and a 4-day section. The purpose is to accommodate hikers with different fitness levels as well as commitments.

“Our voices are erased,” Chief Peete

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Principal Chief Peete Lesaoana Peete has launched a cynical attack on the National Assembly, accusing it of repeatedly dismissing the input of traditional leaders in key national reforms.

Speaking after the passage of the 10th Amendment Bill to the Constitution, Chief Peete expressed deep frustration that suggestions from the College of Chiefs were ignored, warning that the tendency is not only disrespectful but dangerous for the future of Lesotho.

“We pour our energy into this work, only for our efforts to be erased. It is senseless,” he said.

The Chief argued that while politicians often serve party interests, traditional leaders act as neutral guardians of the people’s welfare. Yet, their advice and recommendations are repeatedly side-lined in favour of political gain.

One of the most serious omissions, according to



Chief Peete, was a proposal to clearly define the roles of Chiefs versus Councillors. He warned that political influence has shifted too much power to councillors, leaving chiefs stripped of their authority.

“We are being reduced to spectators in our own communities,” he lamented.

Chief Peete cautioned that sidelining traditional leaders risks creating deep divisions in society, as communities lose confidence in chiefs who no longer have power to act on their behalf.

He accused Parliament of weakening traditional

structures that have long provided stability in Lesotho, simply to satisfy short-term political interests.

On a positive note, the Chief welcomed Lesotho’s removal from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) watch list, saying it was a sign of progress. However, he remained vigilant, insisting that reforms must include the voices of chiefs if they are to succeed.

His tone darkened again when he spoke about the Inheritance Bill, which was recently passed by Parliament. He described it as “a wound

left open,” claiming policy maker rushed it through to attract foreign funding, particularly from the United States.

“This Bill was not properly researched. Its long-term effects on Basotho families have not been studied, and yet it was pushed through in the name of progress,” he said.

Traditional leaders have long complained of being side-lined in national politics, but Chief Peete’s comments mark one of the strongest public criticisms yet. His warning

suggests growing frustration within the chieftainship, which still orders deep respect among rural communities.

As Parliament moves forward with new laws and reforms, the battle between traditional authority and modern politics is likely to intensify.

For now, Chief Peete’s voice has shone a spotlight on an issue many say cannot be ignored: the place of chiefs in a changing Lesotho.

“We must be heard, or history will judge us harshly,” he concluded.

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Trade Introduces Lesotho Standards Institute

By: Lemohang Botsane

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development held a one-day Mediaworkshop in Maseru this week to introduce the Lesotho Standards Institute, a foundation of the government of Lesotho. This significant media workshop aimed to boost alliance and provide insights into some of the government's steps to build standards and quality infrastructure. The project also aims to start a robust standardisation certification and accreditation framework.

Honourable Mokhehi Shellie, the Minister of Trade, when launching the workshop highlighted the significance of the media in linking the information gap between the state and the public. He spotlighted that through precise and on-time coverage, journalists help assure that people are informed about developments that shape their livelihoods.

"In my ministry, one of the strategic objectives is to obtain sustainable market access for our products and services particularly in the international arena. This is not attainable without the conducive quality infrastructure and standards regime," Shelile said. He continued to say that people are supposed to be informed of any kind of



developments through the media, adding that the media must be fully informed of developments as part of its mandate, as reporting to the nation plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and inspiring meaningful change within the private sector.

It was at this workshop that the ministry revealed that the country's quality infrastructure, inclusive of standardisation, testing, certification and accreditation, remains in its infancy. Despite the government's attempt to establish the Lesotho Standards Institute, the current plan lacks support in the industry and business sectors as expected.

This insufficiency generates a significant hurdle for local businesses, blocking their potential to compete globally and ensure product quality. However, experts advocate for the government to favour investments in this pivotal area to boost economic growth and development. "The ministry acknowledges the gaps and is working

towards strengthening the institution to meet international standards. However, more needs to be done to address the pressing needs of the industry and business sectors," Shelile added.

He commended Basotho for diving deep in the business world and shared that recently many Basotho have stepped up in remarkable ways by tapping into the manufacturing space, producing from bottled water to dried fruits.

"These entrepreneurs are not only seeking a local market share but also aspire to reach regional and international markets. To successfully access these markets, their products must meet market requirements mostly set out in standards. They require support in proper labelling, testing, certification and other quality assurance services.

They are prerequisites for entry into regulated markets," he affirmed.

George Zizhou, a Senior Surveyor on site said the project is supposed

to go on for the next 12 months, saying "As soon as this building is complete, every essential equipment is going to be in the building. Right now we have excavated about 3M from where we are standing. We are also going to do piling. Currently, we are done with about 20 percent of our project, which commenced in January 2025."

"We have had two challenges since this project started, the first one was no

payments. We have not been paid for 7 months and we hope that gets fixed. The

second challenge is the unforeseen ground conditions. When we started doing the foundation, we realised that the water table was close to the service, so there was a

redesign of the foundation, but it is now completed," Zizhou said, stressing their hurdles on the project.

He said they are awaiting a South African contractor to do the piling, mentioning that the building will have car parks, toilets suitable for disabled people as well as ramps for easy movement.

"Everything from the procurement side is ready and if payments are processed on time, this building will be ready in 12 months from now as expected," Zizhou said.

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ESG Lens

LEC Board Dumps Audit to Protect Politicians



9

Lesotho Tribune

By: Lesotho Tribune
Reporters

The Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) is once again in the spotlight for the wrong reasons. The board of directors appears to be abandoning the forensic audit that justified the suspension of nearly the entire executive committee earlier this year. In its place, the board has introduced a series of disciplinary charges against members of management that insiders describe as both frivolous and misdirected.

How the Suspensions Began

The crisis began when the LEC board announced a sweeping forensic investigation in response to allegations of deep-rooted corruption, irregular procurement, and the misuse of company funds. The move was presented as a turning point in the governance of the state-owned utility.

On the back of those allegations, the board suspended almost the entire executive committee, including senior managers responsible for finance, customer services, human resources, and operations.



The suspensions were justified as necessary to protect the integrity of the forensic audit and to prevent interference with investigators.

At the time, public perception was that the board was taking a decisive step toward accountability. Yet even then there were murmurs of political influence. Sources close to the process suggested that the audit was being used as a political weapon to target certain executives who had fallen out of favor with ruling elites.

Audit Abandoned Before Findings

Months later, no audit findings have been produced. Lesotho Tribune has reliably learned that the forensic process is being quietly shelved. The reason, according to multiple insiders, is that the audit no longer serves the board's or government's political purpose.

Two factors appear central to this decision:

I. The individuals whom the board wanted to implicate are unlikely to be named in the audit.

II. Evidence is pointing

toward ruling Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) cabinet members and NEC figures who have been fingered in the plundering of the power utility.

Allowing the audit to reach its conclusion would risk exposing politically powerful actors.

New Charges Against Suspended Executives

Instead of publishing the audit's findings, the board has opted to charge suspended executives with internal misconduct. Charge sheets seen by Lesotho Tribune outline allegations ranging from failing to maintain proper employee records, to neglecting to file reports on financial losses, to inadequate oversight of payroll and refunds.

What is striking is that these charges are administrative in nature. They revolve around alleged negligence, poor record keeping, or delays in reporting, rather than corruption or fraud. Crucially, they make no reference to the forensic audit or to the allegations that justified the executives' suspension in the first place.

A Misguided Strategy
The board's actions suggest misdirection. The original mandate was to get to the bottom of alleged large-scale corruption at LEC. By quietly abandoning the audit and pressing technical charges instead, the board risks undermining both corporate governance and public trust.

Observers warn that this approach carries three risks:

- It erodes confidence among stakeholders who expected a transparent audit.
- It shields political figures from accountability by diverting focus onto mid-level negligence.
- It destabilizes the utility by prolonging the uncertainty of leadership and weakening the morale of staff.

A Larger Governance Crisis

The LEC saga is more than an internal company issue. It is another chapter in the governance failures of state-owned enterprises in Lesotho. Boards are often captured by political interests and end up using oversight mechanisms for political maneuvering rather than accountability. The decision to abandon the forensic audit and replace it with weaker charges against suspended executives sends a troubling message. It leaves unanswered questions about the scale of financial impropriety at LEC and reinforces the perception that accountability ends where political interests begin.



10

Lesotho Tribune

By: Seipati Matobo

The Central Bank of Lesotho has reported a significant drop in its assets for May 2025, with foreign reserves falling sharply even as the Bank posted stronger profits.

According to the official return of assets and liabilities, total assets stood at M22.3 billion at the end of May, down from M23.7 billion in April. The decline of more than M1.4 billion was mainly due to lower balances with foreign banks and a reduction in rand notes and coins held by the Bank.

Balances with banks abroad fell to M6.17 billion from M7.79 billion in April, while rand holdings dropped to M262 million from over M510 million. The figures suggest the Bank had to draw heavily on reserves during the month, either to defend the loti or to meet external obligations.

Despite the tighter reserves, the Central Bank still managed to grow

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Central Bank Reserves Shrink by Over M1.4 Billion in May



its operating profit. The Bank recorded a profit of M201 million for May, up from M138 million in April. This reflects stronger returns on investments, which rose slightly to M10.37 billion from M10.06 billion.

On the domestic side, internal assets remained broadly stable at M1.2 billion, with currency inventory increasing as more notes were printed or prepared for circulation. Currency already in circulation rose modestly to M1.91 billion, indicating an increase in cash flowing within the economy. Reserves, which form the Bank's buffer against shocks, slipped to M6.97 billion from M7.03 billion in April. Deposits held at the Bank also dropped to M7.93 billion from M9.12 billion, reflecting a general

tightening of liquidity.

The monthly returns are published in line with section 53(3) of the Central Bank of Lesotho Act, 2000. The notice was signed by Finance and Development Planning Minister Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, who is required to table the Bank's financial position for public record.

Why It Matters
Lesotho's financial system is tightly linked to South Africa's through the Common Monetary Area. The loti is pegged at parity with the rand, which means the Central Bank must hold adequate foreign reserves to back every loti in circulation. The rule of thumb is that reserves should cover at least three months of imports, giving the country breathing space in times of economic stress.

Over the years, Lesotho

has faced challenges maintaining strong reserves. Sharp declines in Southern African Customs Union (SACU) revenues or sudden increases in government spending have often placed pressure on the Central Bank's position. In the early 2010s, for example, the Bank was forced to intervene heavily to maintain stability when SACU receipts fell. Similar pressures resurfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when reserves were drawn down to cushion the economy.

Against this backdrop, the May 2025 figures highlight a familiar concern. While the Bank's profitability is encouraging, the erosion of reserves in a single month by more than a billion maloti is a reminder of how vulnerable the country remains to external shocks. For an economy that depends heavily on imports and remittances, any weakening of the reserve position can undermine confidence in the loti and put strain on the peg with the rand.

Economists argue that stronger fiscal discipline, better export growth, and careful management of SACU revenues are critical to ensure the reserves remain at healthy levels. Without that, the Central Bank may find itself under pressure to defend the currency more often, at a time when global conditions are already uncertain.

M300 000 for St Bernadette

By Pheello Mosesi

Vodacom Lesotho, through its Vodacom Lesotho Foundation, has donated M300,000 to St Bernadette Resource Centre for the Blind. The handover of the cheque was made on the centre's premises this week.

St Bernadette Resource Centre for the Blind has been an educational shelter for children living with disability for 54 years. It is dedicated to promoting inclusive education for children living with disabilities to help level the playing field of opportunities, ensuring that children are not left behind as far as granting them the right to learn.

The centre has a total of 6 teachers, a nurse and a social worker caring for the first and second graders and is attached to the third grade, St Bernadette Primary School. It offers lessons on life skills, mobility, and orientation for the visually impaired, accommodating both girls and boys from ages 6 to 18.

When receiving the cheque, the centre's headmaster, Mamoliehi Tamako, said the centre is very challenging to run as the children require extensive attention and care.

"Our main target as the school is to prepare the children to a point of setting them up to be fully independent from the point they graduate from us," she said.

In this mission they have set up for themselves, she mentioned that some factors come into play to make the task daunting, adding that "The challenge we have is the size of the site, which is limited. This becomes evident when more students are admitted into the school." She further hinted that



one other challenge is that the centre has no playing grounds.

"Games are very essential in both the growth of the body and mind for a child," emphasised. Among other challenges, Tamako stipulated that there are children who have, beyond blindness, other disabilities. Other challenges include children who are not going to school as well as children who drop out of school.

The dropout prevalence as she explained, is most common among the students who have combined disabilities.

"The cause of this is typically because parents lack an understanding of the condition of their children. These parents tend to have expectations that are traditional to school learn, which they hope to see being portrayed by their child: to read and write. Should they not see these attributes prevail, they assume there is no development in the child's education without taking note that these children have acquired other habits and skills like better hygiene and better communication skills," she said.

Tamako further challenged the education system, especially in higher learning, to review how students are fed education, citing that at the centre and other schools that care for children living with blindness, oral examinations and assessment were used; however, this

method of approach is yet to be adopted at the tertiary level, hence limiting these students from furthering their studies. The M300 000 donation is a reinforcement of Vodacom Lesotho Foundation's commitment towards inclusive education.

The handover marked the latest phase of a multi-year partnership launched in 2022, directly aligning with education, access and inclusion; the three pillars of the foundation's social investment strategy.

This funding provides vital support at a critical time for the Centre, which has been navigating significant operational challenges, exacerbated by the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Head Regulatory & External Affairs at Vodacom Lesotho, Tšepo Ntaopane, emphasised that one of the core beliefs of the company is that every child, irrespective of whether they have disability or not, deserves equal opportunity to education.

"We are determined to assist in the development of other resource centres for children living with disabilities." To show and lead by example in the inclusion of people living with disabilities in various fields, Ntaopane announced that the company has committed itself to being diverse and absorbing people with special needs as part of the company staff. He further reiterated that

the inclusion should be taken a step further and be visible even in the development of products and devices used on a day-to-day basis to make it easier for them to be used by everyone, people living with disabilities included.

In the absence of the Minister of Education and Training, the initiative was commended by Ratšiu Majara, who addressed witnesses at the handover, saying, "It is such a heartfelt gesture to see companies like Vodacom Lesotho showing commitment like this. We have also, as the ministry, injected the sum of M200 000 earlier this year towards this school to see into its development. Seeing private companies and the government sharing the same vision sparks hope for a brighter future." Majara expressed that he has been witness to seeing how devoted people living with disabilities become in workplaces, excelling in their tasks.

He added that not only should traditional education be placed as a measure of achievement for them, as a good deal of them have portrayed that they possess talents which he challenged they should be invested in. The centre has succeeded in having an alumni of over 20 graduates who are assigned to various fields. Its pupils also participate in regional and international sporting events while a suite of self-reliance projects, including agriculture and livestock initiatives, fosters entrepreneurial acumen.

To keep the momentum going, the Vodacom Lesotho Foundation has vowed to install Wi-Fi connections starting this coming week, as well as injecting a further M900 000 over the next 3 years.

Storm Mountain Diamonds Confirms Job Cuts as Prices Stay Low

By Malefo Thinyane

Storm Mountain Diamonds (SMD), operator of the Kao Mine, has warned employees that the company is being forced into painful cost-cutting measures as the global diamond market shows no sign of recovery. In a memo dated 8 September 2025, the Chairman of the Board, Robert Cowley, said low diamond prices now appear to be permanent and the company must adapt.

Cowley confirmed that although the company had completed its high-pressure grinding roll (HPGR) expansion project to improve efficiency, SMD could not continue without additional capital injections. To extend the life of the mine, SMD requires capital projects such as waste stripping estimated at M150 million per year. Without these investments, the mine is likely to run out of ore. The board has already engaged the Government of Lesotho for possible financial relief. Despite extensive consultations, no firm commitments have been secured.

Mine Closure Considered

SMD's board admitted that closure of the mine had been actively



considered due to the dire outlook. However, it has resolved to keep operations running while pursuing aggressive cost reductions. One of the most immediate measures is a 20 percent reduction in overall costs across the business.

The board has also instructed management to cut employment costs by 30 percent. This could trigger large-scale dismissals for operational reasons. Employees will receive formal notices, and dismissals will follow Lesotho's Labour Code of 1992, as well as international best practice.

Operations Continue Under Pressure

While the cuts are rolled out, mining and production will continue. SMD is renegotiating contracts with its mining contractor and other suppliers to reduce costs further. Cowley urged employees to remain focused and to continue working safely, noting that the compa-

ny's survival depends on a collective effort.

The memo underscores the scale of the challenge facing Lesotho's mining sector. The diamond industry has been a key

source of revenue and jobs, but with global demand weak and prices subdued, even established players such as SMD are struggling to remain afloat.

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Agriculture has unveiled its strategy for the 2025/26 summer cropping season, announcing dates, subsidy levels, and procedures meant to ensure that farmers across the country access seeds, fertilizer, and chemicals on time. According to the plan, distribution of subsidized inputs began in the highlands and foothills on 11 August and is scheduled to commence in the lowlands on 22 September. Subsidy levels remain at 80 percent for fertilizers and 70 percent for seeds and chemicals. Farmers are required to present proof of identity and a supervisor's letter showing field sizes and contact details before they can access inputs. To prevent congestion at district centers, farmers will be serviced through their nearest Resource Centers. The government says block farmers will initially receive 40 percent of their total

FARMERS CORNER

Summer Cropping Inputs Plan Risks Repeating Old Failures



requirements to allow them to start planting. On paper, the plan is detailed and appears orderly. Inputs will be dispatched through all ten districts with extension officers expected to guide farmers and supervise usage. Government has also emphasized that all supplies must go directly to the fields and not be stored for resale. Yet, as with similar announcements in the past, the plan faces a credibility problem. Previous efforts of the same nature struggled with delays, corruption, and logistical bottlenecks. Distribution calendars were often ignored. Farmers queued for weeks without receiving inputs. Extension officers lacked capacity to monitor use of inputs. The result was that production gains promised never ma-

terialized.

The question therefore lingers: why should this year be any different? What structural changes have been made to ensure that seed and fertilizer reach farmers at the right time? Government has not explained how it intends to tackle long-standing problems of transport, procurement delays, and accountability in the chain of distribution. Without such reforms, the cycle of late delivery and poor yields is likely to continue. Lesotho's food security challenge is too severe for repeated mistakes. The country imports the bulk of its maize and wheat requirements every year, leaving households vulnerable to external price shocks. Subsidizing inputs is supposed to help farmers expand production

and reduce dependency, but subsidies without efficiency are little more than wasteful expenditure. For many farmers, the stakes are high. Rainfall forecasts suggest a normal to above-normal season, which would be an opportunity for strong harvests if inputs are in place. If delays persist as in previous years, that opportunity will slip away. The government's message is that it is serious about agriculture. The reality is that seriousness will only be measured in whether inputs arrive before the first rains and whether systems prevent leakages and favoritism. Farmers are watching closely. Without visible improvement, this year's plan risks being another expensive promise that fails to deliver.



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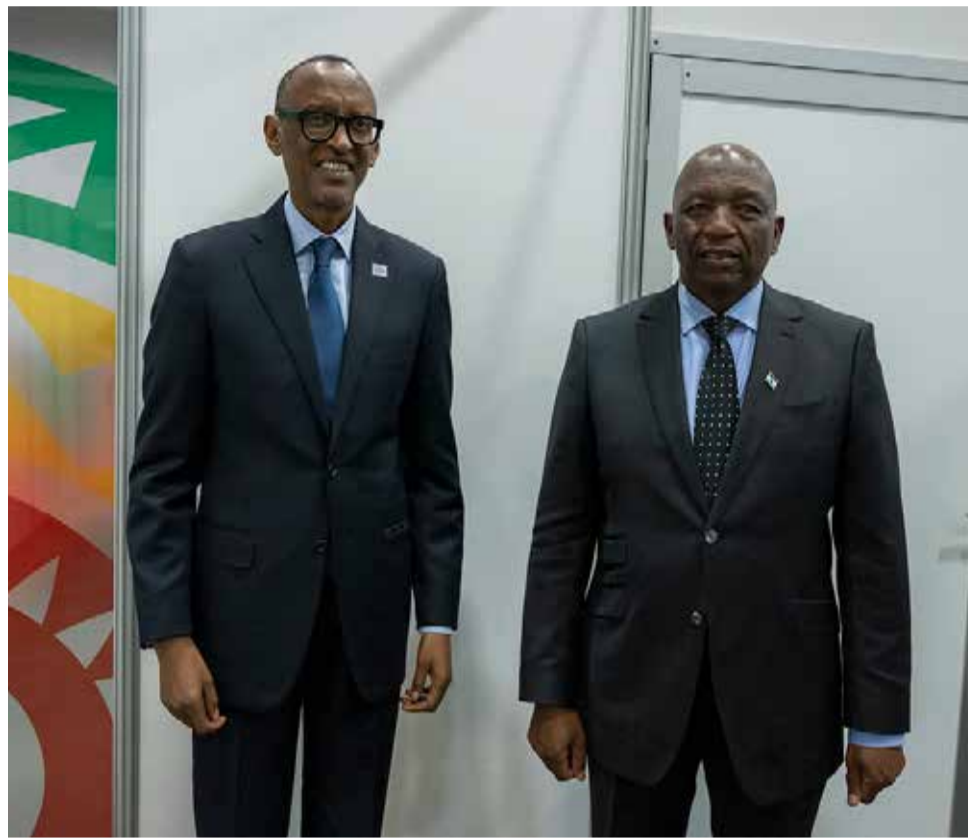
Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

The “decision” by Prime Minister Sam Matekane’s administration to ban public demonstrations is one of the most reckless and short-sighted moves since he came into office. It is not only a constitutional blunder but also a betrayal of the very spirit of democracy he claims to defend. Demonstrations are not a privilege bestowed by leaders on the people. They are a right. A right that sits at the core of every functioning democracy. What kind of democratic leader looks at citizens voicing their concerns and responds with a ban? What does it say about Matekane’s understanding of the office he holds? Or perhaps the better question is, does he even care to understand? Democracy is not tidy. It is not meant to be comfortable for those in power. It is meant to be noisy, messy, sometimes disruptive.

EDITORIAL

Matekane’s Ban on Demonstrations is a Fool’s Errand Betrayal of Democracy



That is the nature of citizens demanding accountability.

When a government denies its people the right to demonstrate, it strips away a critical safeguard against authoritarian drift. Is Matekane trying to signal that his government cannot withstand criticism? Is this the beginning of a slow march toward abolishing democracy altogether?

The irony is painful. This is the same Matekane who rode into State House on the wave of public hope and citizen enthusiasm. He branded himself as a fresh alternative to the politics of old. Yet now he is proving to be no different, if not worse, because

he cloaks repressive actions in the language of order and governance. A ban on demonstrations is not order. It is fear. It reveals a government too insecure to face its people and too arrogant to learn from dissent. Instead of listening to what citizens are saying, Matekane’s administration has chosen to silence them. This is not strength. It is stupidity of the highest order. History does not forget leaders who confused the silence of the people with peace. Silence can be a dangerous illusion. It builds resentment beneath the surface until it erupts. Is Matekane prepared for that moment? Is he prepared to deal with the

consequences of denying citizens their most basic democratic right? If this government had wise counsel around it, they would have reminded the Prime Minister that demonstrations are not the problem. They are the thermometer of society. They show where anger is rising and where government is failing. Banning them does not solve the problem. It hides it. And any leader who chooses to hide problems rather than confront them is setting himself up for failure. Matekane may think he is tightening control, but in reality he is losing legitimacy. Once people believe their right to protest has been stolen, they begin to question whether their vote has any meaning either. From there, it is only a matter of time before trust evaporates. Lesotho’s democracy is fragile. For Matekane to tamper with it in this way is not only foolish but dangerous. If the Prime Minister truly sees himself as a democrat, then he must reverse this decision immediately. Otherwise, we are left to wonder: is he planning to lead a democracy or abolish it?



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Lesotho Tribune

by: Staff Reporter

The glitter of diamonds has long defined wealth, prestige and the promise of national prosperity. For countries like Lesotho, whose soil has given birth to some of the world's most extraordinary stones and adopted other mineral deposits, diamonds are not just commodities; they are symbols of sovereignty, survival and status. Yet, the future is becoming increasingly blurry. The rise of synthetic diamonds and alternative minerals signals a dramatic shift in the global economy of value, one that threatens to reduce Lesotho's crown jewel to little more than a relic of nostalgia. Globally, laboratories can now replicate what the earth took billions of years to forge. Lab-grown diamonds are cheaper, cleaner and marketed as ethically superior. The consumer, once enchanted by the myth of natural rarity, is being

OPINION

Blurry Future for Natural Diamonds and Minerals



persuaded by science and sustainability. It is no longer the "blood diamond" debate that shames African mines it is the very irrelevance of digging into the ground when machines can deliver the same sparkle. Other minerals are facing similar fates. From synthetic graphite to alternative rare earth substitutes, industries are leaning into innovation. In energy, battery technologies are experimenting with chemistries that bypass traditional cobalt or lithium. The trend is unmistakable: nature's exclusivity is being rewritten by laboratories and factories. For Lesotho, the tragedy is layered. Diamonds, once touted as the country's passport to prosperity,

now represent a fragile dependence on a vanishing market. The political leadership, often accused of incompetence and short-sightedness, seems unable to grasp the magnitude of this global transformation. "Woe to the land (Lesotho) where slaves become kings" a bitter biblical phrase fit for a country where

governance is more about survival than strategy, where leadership is reactive rather than visionary. This is not merely an economic challenge; it is a civilizational warning. If synthetics dominate the future, then Lesotho must urgently ask: what comes after diamonds? Yet, within the walls of power, the question is drowned in factional fights, corruption scandals, and performativity politics. The rulers mistake glitter for growth while the world silently shifts beneath their feet. The blurry future is not about the stone itself, but about the choices unmade. Nations that innovate will thrive, while those that cling to extractive myths will sink. For Lesotho, the writing is on the wall. Diamonds may no longer be forever.



The Future of Textile Companies Hangs in the Balance

By: Staff Reporter

The Lesotho textile industry, once buoyed by the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) introduced around 25 years ago, now finds itself at a critical juncture. AGOA allowed Lesotho and several other nations to export textile goods to the US market without the burden of tariffs, serving as a lifeline for the industry and a vital pillar of the country's economy. However, a shadow has been cast over this once-thriving sector with the recent announcement of a staggering 15 percent tariff on exported goods, a policy shift engineered by the Trump administration. This decision marks the end of AGOA, sending ripples of uncertainty through the textile industry, particularly in Lesotho where countless lives and livelihoods depend on it.

For many Basotho, the termination of this agreement threatens to dismantle their economic foundations. The impending job losses loom large as numerous textile factories brace for closure, leaving workers in dire straits.

One such factory facing bleak prospects is Hippo Knitting, a company that has long prided itself on providing stable em-



Photo cred: Oregon Public Broadcasting

ployment for around 800 individuals.

Due to plummeting orders from overseas buyers, Hippo has announced a heart-breaking decision to halve its workforce.

However, in a bid to navigate these turbulent waters, the company had previously attempted to keep operations afloat by rotating staff, scheduling some employees to work limited days while permanently releasing others from their duties.

In the midst of this distressing situation, factory workers' unions have stepped in, advocating for those set to be laid off to receive their rightful compensation.

These unions said they are

trying to engage with key stakeholders in hopes of finding solutions to avert further job losses and stabilise employment levels. The devastating news of impending job cuts only adds to the mounting frustrations shared by many Basotho, as the country grapples with an escalating unemployment crisis.

A few months ago, Prime Minister Sam Matekane's government declared the high unemployment rate in Lesotho a state of emergency, rallying citizens around the urgent need for collective action to address this pressing issue. In an ambitious pledge, the government announced plans to generate over 6,000 jobs for the

Basotho. Yet, as if caught in a relentless cycle, the attempts to heal one wound seem to lead to another, causing the employment landscape to spiral further out of control, threatening mass disillusionment.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, the Lesotho textile industry employed approximately 45,000 individuals, making it the largest formal private employer in the nation. But in the wake of the US tariffs and resulting turmoil, that number has dipped to around 35,000, leaving many to wonder what the future holds for this once-vibrant sector and the families it sustains.

MoH LAUNCHES NCDIS COORDINATING MECHANISM

BY: Lemohang Botsane

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the World Health Organisation and other partners in the health sector, this week launched a multisectoral coordinating mechanism for Non-Communicable Diseases and Injuries (NCDIs).

The launch aimed at founding multisectoral NCDIs insights in the country, outlining a roadmap for prevention, detection, control and treatment of diseases and injuries and discussing awareness mechanisms and actions on NCDIs prevention and control.

Currently, Lesotho is wrestling with a rising health crisis propelled by NCDIs which are steadily becoming the leading causes of death and disability in the country.

These silent killers include cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, different forms of cancer, mental health conditions and injuries, all of which are subtly linked to wider societal hurdles.

It was said that a significant fundamental factor that worsens the weakness of individuals to NCDIs in Lesotho is poverty. Air pollution, lack of green spaces and insufficient housing also contribute to the growth of NCDIs and poor diets, physical inactivity and extreme alcohol consumption were listed as the primary risk factors. Speaking from the global and regional perspective, the WHO representative Dr Sirak Hailu said almost ¾ of deaths in the world are caused by NCDs, causing approximately 75 percent of mortality.

“Four diseases account for 80 percent of premature



NCDI deaths: cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, as well as diabetes,” Dr Hailu said, adding that about 5.6 million deaths are rooted in air pollution-related NCDIs. “Africa still faces a double burden of diseases, struggling with both the rising NCDs and existing communicable Diseases. More than 2.8 million NCD-related deaths and mortality increased from 24.2 percent in 2000 to 37.1 percent in 2019. NCDs are the largest cause of productivity losses in the African Region (37 percent) followed by communicable Diseases (36 percent). They are set to overtake communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional diseases combined as the leading cause of death in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030. Changing consumption patterns, household and outdoor air pollution have contributed to an increase in NCDIs”, concluded Dr Hailu.

Dr Malitaba Litaba from the Ministry of Health also weighed in on the perspective of the country, saying “As Lesotho, we are on 43-45 percent of the NCDs burden and apparently number one in the African region for the standard age mortality.

We are here today to act and make sure that we are not the leading country in Africa in terms of mobility and mortality.” “In Lesotho, the leading NCD is hypertension and we can all

attest that most of our patients and loved ones succumbed to strokes because of heart failure caused by hypertension. Hypertension is a problem and if we can make hypertension management and control our proxy, we will be able to reduce most of the burdens, mobility and mortality,” Dr Litaba said.

She continued to reveal that the second leading disease is cancer, saying it has become apparent that cancer kills at a high rate, with cervical cancer seemingly being the leading killer. Dr Litaba said the other pandemic that needs to be looked at is road accidents, saying these accidents are mostly caused by alcohol consumption.

“We need to prioritise hypertension, Cancer and road accidents to reduce the burdens, Dr” Litaba alarmed.

Dr Collin Pfaff expressed his excitement to have been part of the event, sharing insights on the matter under discussion. “The 4 by 4 diseases usually affect young populations and more marginalised populations, and it is often neglected in the healthcare programmes. I hope this initiative will change that,” he said.

Other Doctors weighed in with their comments, saying tackling NCDs can not only be a single sector responsibility, but rather a multisectoral one because contributing and facili-

tating factors come from different sectors.

They showed that police and law enforcement agencies also need to be lured in to ensure that they contribute towards the anticipated victory.

Honourable Selibe Mochoboroane, Minister of Health, said NCDIs are more than just health issues, “they are a reflection of systemic failures that are claiming lives unnecessarily.”

“The harsh reality is that most of these deaths are preventable and the human cost is felt deeply across families and communities.

These are not inevitable fates, we have the power to change this narrative. Evidence from other countries demonstrates that preventing NCDIs is achievable through a combination of community-driven actions and informed policies,” Mochoboroane said.

He said by tackling NCDIs head-on, Lesotho can prevent unnecessary deaths and improve the quality of life for its citizens, boost the economy and align with the national vision, which is to advance the country’s goal of becoming a thriving United Nations where all citizens can live healthy, productive lives.

He said his ministry’s aim is to lead a bold nationwide effort to prevent these illnesses before they take hold, treat those already affected and build a culture of health and wellbeing for every Mosotho.

“Establishing the NCDIs coordinating mechanism is a team effort for bringing together the government, communities and partners to turn our shared vision into action,” the minister exclaimed.

UNFPA LANDS A HELPING HAND

BY: Lemohang Botsane

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) handed tablets and other merchandise to the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in preparation for the upcoming digital 2026 population and housing census in Lesotho.

The Deputy Principal Secretary in the office of the Minister of Finance, Mahlape Ramoseme, expressed her deepest gratitude for the gifts.

“This is a momentous occasion, which is the ceremonial receipt of a generous donation from our valued partner, UNFPA. Today marks not just the beginning of a data collection exercise, but the reaffirmation of our collective commitment to understanding inclusive development, evidence-based planning and the empowerment of every citizen through visibility and presentation. Census is more than just numbers, it is a mirror reflecting our diversity, our challenges as well as our aspirations” she said.

“As we embark on this journey, we recognise the vital role each citizen plays. Every Household Counted is a step towards better schools, stronger healthcare, improved infrastructure and more responsive governance. This is our opportunity to make sure that no voice is left unheard and no community is left behind. I extend my gratitude to UNFPA, your support is not only financial but a vote of confidence in our mission,” she added.

The Bureau of Statistics director, Malehloa Molato, spotlighted the signifi-



cance of the 2026 census and progress that has already been made, saying the gathering was an observation of the launch of the population and housing census and handover of the equipment that will be used.

Lesotho has been conducting scientific census since 1966 and has been conducting work of the same nature every 10 years. The importance of the data collected is to help with development agendas, guiding governments in their planning and policies.

“The census data is very rich as it includes each and every person in this country. It also includes all the structures, hence it’s called the population and housing census,” Molato added. He said it is through this census that analysts can analyse the data, showing structures of the county’s population. “This (census) also supports urban and rural developments, facilitates research and empowers the private sector. The census mainly covers the population characteristic demographics that are age, sex, education, status, employment migration, fertility, mortality and so forth,” he clarified.

John Kennedy Mosoti, a UNFPA representative, bestowed his gratitude to the minister and all attendees, saying the upcoming cen-

sus is a new round of census and Lesotho is among the very first countries in the world to undertake it, therefore, a lot of countries are looking up to Lesotho to see how it will conduct it since it will be digital.

He added that the census is by far the most important type of data collection where they can see all the characteristics of the population.

“Regardless of who you are, where you are and what you do, everyone deserves to be counted and this is where UNFPA comes in. It’s a great pleasure to say we are now launching that road to April 2026 with the honourable minister. Supporting the government of Lesotho is really what we’re supposed to be doing and we are happy to be doing it,” Mosoti exclaimed.

He thanked the government of Lesotho for working with the UNFPA, adding that they are hopeful that training for those who will be entrusted with the job will be conducted to furnish their digital skills.

“This partnership has been nothing short of amazing, I really look forward to continuing to work together.” The Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr Rets’elisitsoe Matlanyane, proudly launched the 2026

population and housing census, saying “I stand before you today to mark a pivotal moment in our nation’s journey towards inclusive development and evidence based planning with the official launch of the 2026 population and housing census and the ceremonial handover of digital tablets generously provided by our esteemed partner, UNFPA.” “This upcoming census will be Lesotho’s first fully digital census, a historic leap forward in efficiency, accuracy and transparency. UNFPA has been a steadfast partner in our development journey, from supporting maternal and neonatal health to advancing menstrual hygiene management and combating gender-based violence,” Dr Matlanyane said.

She pleaded with the nation to cooperate and be welcoming, and also warned scammers who might go around pretending to be the ones deployed to count people, saying this is important for the country, hence they must not disrupt the process.

“I call upon every Mosotho to participate fully and truthfully. Let us embrace this opportunity and welcome these fieldworkers with open hearts and provide them with truthful information to shape our future,” she lamented.

“On behalf of the government of Lesotho, I rise with deep gratitude to extend to you all our sincere thanks for gracing our ministry with your presence. We are especially grateful to our partner, UNFPA, for their unshakeable aid in the implementation of population-related activities.”



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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporter

Live from Strasbourg, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivered the State of the Union (SOTEU) this week, emphasizing the need for intervention in the ongoing fight between Russia and Ukraine.

Taking place one year after the European elections, SOTEU is a key moment in the EU's democratic life that offers an opportunity to review the achievements of the past year, highlight ongoing challenges and outline the priorities for the year ahead.

In this year's review, the president not only looked back on the previous achievements but also presented new initiatives, setting the agenda for what the EU plans to deliver to meet the needs of its people.

In this year's section, the President, Members of Parliament and the elect-

AFRICA

Putin Won't Give Up the Fight to Ukraine

...we have all seen what Russia means by diplomacy

...We need more pressure on Russia to come to the negotiating table

...We are looking at phasing out Russian fossil fuels



ed representatives of EU citizens had the chance to debate the plans and

hold the Commission accountable for addressing Europeans'

most pressing concerns. This address was a mo-

Continues in page 22

Vodacom Remembers Mofolo, Celebrates GBV Survivors

By: Pheello Mosesi

The Afro Barometer reports of 2022 studies found that 53 per cent of Basotho said violence against women is “somewhat common” while 28 per cent found it a “very common” occurrence within their communities. In Lesotho, it is reported that 86 per cent of women endure the bitterness that comes with GBV. The 2024 Studies by LDHS uncovered that 36 per cent of women in Lesotho have experienced violence committed by their recent intimate partner. This week, the Vodacom Women Network Forum held an event in remembrance of the late Rethabile Mofolo, who died five years ago at the hands of her husband. The event was not only meant to cherish Mofolo but also to extend consolation and support to other GBV survivors.

A Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS) representative assured women at the event that even if the victims may feel like at some point they are not given a just reception by the law, they should be courageous enough to seek help from other members of the police until justice is served. The memorial hosted the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Amanda Mukwashi, who detailed in her remarks that the importance of recalling that



there are people behind the statistics of GBV year in, year out. “What happens to another woman happens to me. If she is naked, then I am naked” she uttered. Mukwashi added that to make it easier to eliminate chances of GBV occurring, the new culture could be shifted by engaging in talks about GBV regularly. “It does not matter what kind of conversations or setting we are in, we should

regularly speak of GBV. We should also teach a boy child about how to best care for a woman with dignity and respect they deserves.” Mohale Ralebitso, Vodacom Lesotho CEO, emphasised the importance of having men as partners in the fight against GBV. “As men, we have to be on the front line fighting so that GBV is ended, whether the perpetrators of these tragic acts are our friends or

not, we have to report in an instant and have those men handed over to the law.” “There is no plausible explanation that could define why we still live in a world that has GBV. We should all come in collective to eradicate it,” Mohale reiterated. The event encompassed some of the GBV survivors who shared their tales, which have impacted their lives, to get vocal on the topic.

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ment to pay tribute to everyday European heroes from Paralympic athletes who inspire resilience to humanitarian workers supporting communities on the frontlines.

The president, in his speech, echoed heartfelt words, saying Europe is in a fight.

“A fight for a continent that is whole and at peace. For a free and independent Europe. A fight for our values and our democracies. A fight for our liberty and our ability to determine our destiny for ourselves,” these were some of the words quoted from the speech of President von der Leyen, however encouraging that the fight will benefit Europeans in the future.

“I thought long and hard about whether to start this State of the Union address with such a stark appraisal. After all, we Europeans are not used to or comfortable with talking in such terms because our Union is fundamentally a peace project,” the president continued.

With all the devastating scenes in Gaza to the relentless Russian barrage on Ukraine, Europe is not immune to the tension caused by the crisis. The president said the weight is felt mostly in the high cost of living and the speed of change affecting lives and careers.

“We simply cannot wait for this storm to pass. This summer showed us

that there is simply no room or time for nostalgia. Battle lines for a new world order based on power are being drawn right now.

So, yes, Europe must fight. For its place in a world in which many major powers are either ambivalent or openly hostile to Europe,” President von der Leyen said.

He reminded the Europeans in his speech that they are a nation of imperial ambitions and wars where dependencies are ruthlessly weaponised, encouraging them to stand up and fight for a new Europe. He reminded that the EU’s mission had always been to be able to take care of its own defence and security, take control over the technologies and energies that will fuel its economies and to be open to the world and choose partnerships with old and new allies.

“Ultimately, it is about having the freedom and the power to determine our own destiny. And we know we can do it,” he said confidently.

“I have lost count of the number of times that I was told that Europe could not do this or that.

During the pandemic, on the recovery plan, on defence, on supporting Ukraine, on energy security, the list goes on. Every time, Europe stood united and made it. And we need to do the same now.”

The agenda in the pres-

ident’s speech was very clear and straight to the point: whether Europe had the unity and sense of energy to stomach the fight, the political will and skill to compromise or to fight against one another and be paralysed by the divisions.

In his opinion however, everything is clear. He told members of parliament that “my pitch today is a pitch for unity. Unity between Member States. Unity between EU institutions. Unity between the pro-European democratic forces in this House.”

He made it a point to remind the members of parliament that the Ukrainians were not fighting for much but for freedom and independence, urging everyone present to unite in an effort to support the people of Ukraine, especially children who are trapped in the fight, threatened and forced to deny their identities.

“This is why I can announce that, together with Ukraine and other partners, I will host a Summit of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children. Every abducted child must be returned,” the president emphasized.

The Russia-Ukraine War has been going on for a good three years since the fall of February 22, 2022 and the president of Europe said it was about time it ended with a just and lasting peace for Ukraine because

Ukraine’s freedom is Europe’s freedom.

It was said that 26 countries from different parts of the world had come together in the Coalition of the Willing saying they were ready to be part of a reassurance force in Ukraine or participate financially in the context of a ceasefire.

“We will continue to support all diplomatic efforts to end this war. But we have all seen what Russia means by “diplomacy”. Putin refuses to meet President Zelenskyy,” the president said.

He said with the recent drones and ballistic missiles attacks that killed more than 20 people in Ukraine, Putin’s message is clear, adding that the Coalition’s response should be clear too.

“We need more pressure on Russia to come to the negotiating table. We need more sanctions. We are now working on the 19th package in coordination with partners. We are particularly looking at phasing out Russian fossil fuels faster, the shadow fleet and third countries. And at the same time we need more support for Ukraine,” the president said.

Europe has contributed approximately €170 billion of military and financial aid in efforts to ceasefire in the ongoing war. Hopefully, Russia will have a heart some day and down weapons, give up the fight and let the people of Ukraine live free.

Senate returns to work after recess with promise of action

By: Tholoana Lesenya

The Senate of Lesotho has reconvened after its winter recess, marking the start of the seventh meeting of the first session of the Eleventh Parliament.

Vice-President of the Senate, Tsukutlane Au, welcomed members back, urging them to return to work with new energy and determination. He reminded them that break is not just a holiday, but a time to reconnect with communities and bring their concerns to Parliament. In his opening remarks, Au expressed hopefulness that senators were ready to wrestle the heavy workload ahead. He praised the passage of the 10th Amendment to the Constitution, which has been described as a milestone in Lesotho's reform journey.

That amendment, he said, played a vital role in removing Lesotho from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) watch list on political instability. "This is a sign that our country is slowly moving towards



stability and maturity in democracy," he noted.

But Au was quick to caution that much more needs to be done. He reminded members that while one area of reform has been completed, six others remain untouched.

"It has taken us more than ten years to get this far," he said, with a concerned tone.

"How long will it take us to get to the next ones?"

He stressed that eco-

nomie reforms must now be given priority, calling them "the most critical" of all. Without them, he warned, Lesotho will struggle to address unemployment, poverty, and the growing frustration of ordinary citizens.

Political analysts say the Senate's return is happening at a delicate time. With the economy under pressure and many families struggling, the public expects lawmakers to

move quickly and deliver results.

Au's message was clear: the reform journey is far from over, and the Senate must fast-track its work if the nation is to benefit. As the seventh meeting gets underway, Basotho will be watching closely to see whether Parliament can build on its past achievements and take bold steps towards reforms that will change daily life for ordinary people.

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