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"Our turnover was M10,000 per day, invested over M100k now they're gone," street vendor

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Matekane's Government Destroys Roma Livelihoods Overnight

"Our turnover was M10,000 per day, invested over M100k now they're gone," street vendor

By: Seipati Matobo

Roma

In the early hours of Friday morning, government bulldozers tore through shacks and stalls of street vendors along the A5 road near the National University of Lesotho (NUL), leaving behind a trail of destruction and despair. The Roads Directorate, backed by police, moved in around 3am to demolish structures stretching from Ha-Sekauti to the Roma Police Station junction.

Officials say the action was necessary because vendors had illegally occupied the road reserve, turning it into what government described as an "eyesore." Police officers stood guard during the demolitions, ensuring that the operation proceeded without interruption.

Vendors Fight Back in Court

The Roma Street Vendors Association had been locked in a legal fight with the state over their removal. Through their lawyer, Advocate Thembu Lesupi, they had taken the Maseru District Administrator (DA), Mr. Lethobane, to court after he allegedly reneged on promises to relocate them to an alternative trading site.

On September 16, Justice Maseru ruled against the vendors, relying on a South African precedent where roadside traders were moved to allow road development. But the association immediately filed



an appeal, arguing that the judgement was unjust because their livelihoods depended on the stalls. Advocate Lesupi said the forceful removal was unlawful since the case was still before the Court of Appeal. He accused authorities of acting in bad faith, noting that the Registrar of the Appeal Court had yet to provide clarity from senior judges.

Broken Promises and Broken Lives

Vendors were particularly angered because the DA's office had, only hours before, renewed assurances that relocation would happen before any destruction. Instead, excavators rolled

in under cover of darkness. Some stalls that had been dismantled and placed in nearby yards were also destroyed. "They did not just clear the road reserve, they targeted everything," one vendor told Lesotho Tribune.

Human Cost of the Demolition

For many, the demolitions were more than the loss of structures, it was the collapse of livelihoods. Mr. Shampene Mehlala, one of the hardest hit, said:

- He had employed over 10 workers.
- He made roughly M10,000 per day in sales.
- He had

invested more than M100,000 into his business.

"We were only told last evening to remove our businesses, but by the time we woke up, the excavators were already here," he said, visibly shaken.

What Next for Roma?

The destruction has sparked outrage in the community, with calls for accountability and questions over whether the state acted with disregard for due process. For vendors, the battle is far from over. Their appeal is still pending, but with their stalls in ruins, their economic survival now hangs in the balance.



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Butha-Buthe passport office struggles with backlog of 4,338 passports



By: Tholoana Lesenya

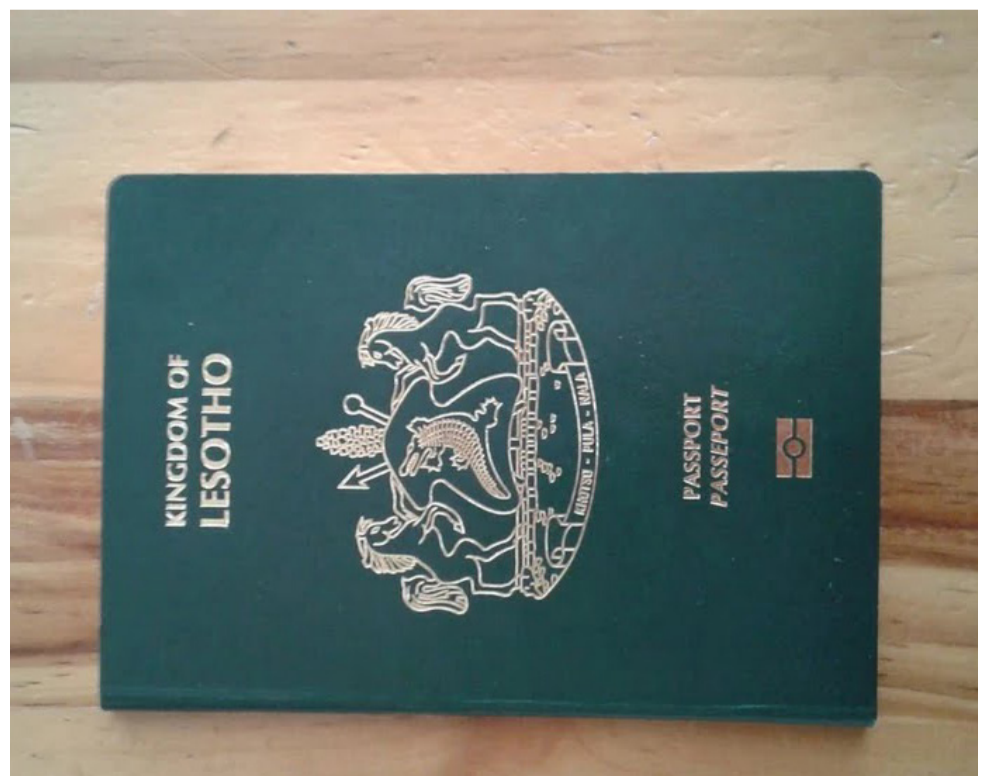
Butha-Buthe

The small passport office in Butha-Buthe is drowning under a mountain of unfinished work. Along the week, officials revealed that a shocking 4,338 passports are still waiting to be printed, leaving thousands of Basotho stranded without travel documents. The crisis came to light when Parliament's Law and Public Safety Committee visited the office to see conditions for themselves. What they found was a system under pressure, workers stretched thin and applicants losing hope. Passport officer Khotso Sepitla did not mince his words. He told the committee that the demand for passports has far outstripped the office's capacity. "Every district is given a printing quota of between 20 and 100 passports each day," Sepitla explained.

"But here in Botha-Bothe, we have more than 500 people applying daily, while we can only process about 30. We have no choice but to prioritize emergencies, like mine workers who need to travel for work or patients who must go abroad for medical treatment. Everyone else has to wait." The result, he said, is a crushing backlog that stretches back more than a year. "Some people who applied as far back as April 2024 are still waiting," he admitted. For those desperate to travel, the delays have become more than an inconvenience. Many have turned to illegal crossings at porous border points with South Africa, a dangerous option, but often their only way out. Sepitla also pointed to another headache which is uncollected passports. "A lot of people apply, but then they go back to South Africa without waiting for the documents. When the pass-

ports are ready, their relatives or friends try to collect them. That creates security risks, because the person who applied is not always the one who shows up," he said. But the problems at Butha-Buthe are not only about printing limits and absentee applicants. The office itself is in a state of decay. 'Mamokholoane Mhloboli, another officer, painted a grim picture of working conditions. "We are working in broken walls, sitting on faulty chairs and tables, and standing on worn-out floor mats. Even our computers are unreliable, breaking down in the middle of the workday. It makes our jobs even more stressful," she said. Her testimony drew murmurs from the parliamentary committee, some of whom shook their heads as they looked around the office. Committee member Mothejoa Metsing re-

sponded with concern. He acknowledged that many of the issues raised, especially passport shortages, are tied to central government systems. "We cannot ignore these challenges. We will engage the relevant ministries to find solutions. This backlog is not just Butha-Buthe's problem; it affects the whole country," he said. The passport delays have become a national crisis. They were even raised in a recent meeting of the Free State and Lesotho Cross-Border Crime Prevention Forum in Phokukhu, where participants warned that porous borders are being exploited as frustrated Basotho cross illegally into South Africa. For now, however, the Butha-Buthe passport office is left to fight a losing battle against the flood of applications. Staff continue to serve hundreds of people each day, knowing that most will walk away disappointed.



Second hand phone lands him in court

By Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

A second-hand mobile phone has landed 42-year-old Motlatsi Tšooana of Ha Sekete, Berea, in serious trouble with the law. This week, Tšooana stood before the High Court and told how what seemed like a small favour from a friend turned into a nightmare that continues to haunt him years later. Taking the stand in his own defence, Tšooana recalled how his life was first turned upside down on the night of August 28, 2018. That evening, he said, police officers shot him several times, leaving him critically injured. He was rushed to hospital and admitted into the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where he underwent two major operations.

“I stayed in hospital until October 5, 2018. Even when I was discharged, I could not walk,” he told the court.

He added that he later sued the police for the shooting and received compensation. It was during his hospital stay that Tšooana met a man who would later play a key role in his story, Thamae Lekhotla. According to his testimony, Lekhotla was introduced to him by a childhood friend, Tšepang Khosi. At the time, Tšooana no longer had a phone, as it disappeared during the police shooting.

Sensing his need, Lekhotla promised to help him get another phone. “One day, he told me his friend Khothatso Mpenyane could get me a phone, but I needed to pay him M300

because he had no transport money to go to South Africa in return,” Tšooana said.

He explained that the phone was eventually delivered and since it was locked, Lekhotla helped him to unlock it. From then on, Tšooana used the phone as his own.

“I started using it around November 2018 and I continued until early 2019, when I gave it away,” he testified.

According to him, he later exchanged the device with another man, Moorosi Lebajoa. Life moved on, or so he thought. But in 2020, a call came that pulled him back into a storm he never expected. The call, he said, was from a man who introduced himself as Mahlaha, a police officer from the Crim-

inal Investigation Division (CID) at Mabote Police Station.

“He told me I must report myself at the station. I told him I could not go because I was still unable to walk properly,” Tšooana said. Not long after, police officers came directly to his home. They demanded to see his phone, asking questions about where it came from. Tšooana told them he had already given it to Lebajoa. To prove this, the police even brought Lebajoa, who confirmed that he indeed got the phone from Tšooana.

The accused told the court he did not hide anything from the police. He explained clearly that he got the phone from Mpenyane, who in turn had been linked to Lekhotla. In his testimony, Tšooa-

na insisted that he never suspected the phone to be linked to crime. To him, it was simply a replacement for the one he lost during the shooting. Yet, years later, it became the very item dragging him before the High Court.

As the case continues, the court will have to decide whether Tšooana’s version of events clears him or if the phone really ties him to the crime he is accused of. For Tšooana, however, his words to the court were simple: “All I know is that I got the phone from Mpenyane. I never knew it would bring me here.” What started as a gesture of friendship has now become the centre of a legal battle. And for Tšooana, a second-hand phone has truly changed his life in ways he never imagined.



BNP Center Land Battle Heats Up as Legal Questions Cloud Asset Recovery Unit

By: Seipati Matobo

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is bracing for an explosive session tomorrow (on Monday) when the Prime Minister's Asset Recovery team is scheduled to present its case against the Basotho National Party (BNP). At the heart of the dispute is the BNP Center in Maseru, which the Matekane-led government insists was unlawfully built on state land. The government has issued a thirty-day ultimatum for the property to be returned. But the BNP is not taking the matter lying down. Speaking to Lesotho Tribune, party leader Hon. Machesetsa Mofomobe laughed off the move, describing it as "a desperate attempt by my counterpart, Hon. Sam Matekane, who is trying everything to destabilise and kill the BNP because of our stellar work in holding his corrupt regime to account." The controversy took a new twist on Thursday, 18 September 2025, when Minister in the Prime Minister's Office,



Hon. Limpho Tau, told Parliament that government had received legal advice from the Attorney General stating that the so-called Asset Recovery Unit had not been lawfully established. Tau explained that existing

statutes provide mechanisms for establishing such a body, but that process has not been followed, casting doubt on the legitimacy of the unit's operations. The showdown now raises deeper questions

about the legality of the government's approach, the political motives behind the land reclamation push, and the potential fallout should the PAC endorse or reject the Asset Recovery team's claims.

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SEBABATSO 2025 Resumes

By: Lemohang Botsane

The Ministry of Information, Communications, Technology, Science and Innovation and the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), launched the Sebatatso STEAM conference 2025 in Maseru this week.

The project is the prime minister's dynamic initiative for youth empowerment aimed at enhancing educational opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) for young people across the country. It seeks to equip youth with critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills, preparing them for future challenges.

The UNDP resident representative, Dr Jacqueline Olweya, congratulated the participants of the Sebatatso boot camp and encouraged those who did not go to the next level to never stop.

"Congratulations to all the 300, but remember you are all winners and have done amazing", said Olweya. She further advised the youth to never give up on their brilliant ideas.

"May we continue doing our best in this journey, thank you to all the partners and to the prime minister," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the



Ministry of Trade, Setlaba Monaheng from the LNDC said innovation is the action that propels industrialisation forms, emphasising that it absorbs ideas into practical solutions and enables the development of new industries. He said it was through innovations that jobs would be created.

"Innovations equip nations with the tools for industrialisation, sustainability and competitiveness. In essence, where innovation thrives, industrialisation accelerates," Monaheng said.

The Chinese ambassador to Lesotho, His Excellency Yang Xiaokun, highlighted the significance of Sebatatso, wishing the participants well in their journey. He said it was an honour to have been a part of the project, saying the Chinese embassy prides itself on driving modesty.

"This conference is a space where ideas meet opportunities and where innovation is not just

discussed but also actively demonstrated. We focus on STEAM because it encompasses more than just technical knowledge; it involves blending scientific discoveries, technological progress, engineering solutions, Mathematical accuracy and artistic creativity to address problems in practical, inclusive and visionary ways,"

Nthathi Moorosi, the Minister of Communications, said.

Meanwhile, Pitso Lesaolana, Minister of Youth, urged every young Mosotho to

register for this Sebatatso initiative, saying "It is when you're with Sebatatso that you get to see opportunities to see the world, to grow your business as well as to access financing."

Prime Minister Sam Matekane, the mastermind behind the programme, expressed his deep gratitude and highlighted that the initiative has been running

for three consecutive years since 2023.

"Over the past three years, Sebatatso has been a beacon of hope, innovation, entrepreneurship and empowerment for the young people of our nation. It is with deep pride that I congratulate each and every young person who has taken part in Sebatatso. Through this initiative I have seen hope, transformation and belief in the boundless potential of our youth," Matekane said. He said Sebatatso was born from a promise to empower youth and unlock their

potential as well as to create pathways for sustainable development.

"This is a platform where ideas are cultivated, talents are nurtured and futures are forged. Through this initiative, I firmly believe that we can turn the narrative of our youth around, setting a new course, one defined by hope, enterprise and achievement," the prime minister added.

The PM went on to urge Basotho youth to step forward, believe in themselves and seize the opportunities that Sebatatso brings.

"Through Sebatatso, we have witnessed countless Basotho break barriers, enter new markets and achieve things once thought impossible," he exclaimed.

He concluded by thanking the government and people of China for providing 30 Basotho youth with the opportunity to travel to China for a skills exchange programme.

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ESG Lens

Pension Fund



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Lesotho Tribune
Reporters

Most people hear the words “pension fund” and immediately switch off. It sounds technical, something reserved for actuaries and accountants buried in spreadsheets. But if you work, pay into a retirement fund, or even just hope to retire one day, you have a stake in understanding this world. Let us strip it down to basics.

Quick Facts: Pension Fund Liabilities

- Actuarial Liability

The real cost of all future pensions, calculated with assumptions about life expectancy, inflation, and investment returns.

- Accounting Liability

The number shown in financial statements, shaped by reporting rules and sometimes smaller than the actuarial one.

- Why They Differ

Actuaries want to capture full economic reality. Accountants must follow strict standards that can understate obligations.

- Why It Mat-



ters
If your fund looks 75% funded on paper but is only 60% funded in reality, there may not be enough money to pay everyone’s pension in full.

- Simple Analogy

Actuarial = the actual grocery bill at the till.

Accounting = the rough shopping list estimate.
What are actuarial liabilities?

Imagine you are promised a steady monthly income once you retire. The pension fund must figure out how much money it needs today to pay you and thousands of others for years to come. Actuaries do this by looking into the future. They ask: How long will people live? How much will salaries and inflation rise? What return will investments earn? Then they discount all those future payments back to today’s value. That big number is called an actuarial liability.

It is not random guesswork. It is a careful calculation of what the fund should have if it wants to

honour its promises.

And what about accounting liabilities?

Here is where the waters get muddy. Accountants also measure the pension fund’s obligations but they follow strict reporting rules. They may use a different discount rate or exclude certain assumptions that actuaries prefer to include. The result is that the accounting liability can look smaller than the actuarial one.

This is important because it shapes how healthy or unhealthy the fund looks on paper.

How the game is played
Suppose a pension fund has M1.2 billion in assets. Actuaries calculate that it owes M2 billion in future benefits. That means it is only 60 percent funded, which is a crisis. But under accounting rules, the liability might be recorded as M1.6 billion. Suddenly the same fund looks 75 percent funded. Still under water, but not nearly as frightening.

By adjusting assumptions about investment returns, inflation, or even how long

pensioners will live, the picture can be softened. Managers and sponsors then avoid facing the true size of the hole.

Why you should care

If you are a member of a pension fund, the actuarial liability shows the financial reality of your retirement promise. The accounting liability shows what the fund is allowed to report in its financial statements. One is about what should be there. The other is about what has to be disclosed.

When there is a gap between the two, the danger is that members are lulled into a false sense of security. Employers and government may also feel less pressure to contribute more. But the day of reckoning cannot be postponed forever.

A simple way to think about it

Think of actuarial liabilities as the real grocery bill you will face at the till. Accounting liabilities are like the estimate you wrote on a piece of paper before shopping. If you underestimate, you may walk around thinking you are fine until the cashier tells you the real total.

Closing thought

Understanding this difference is not about becoming an actuary or accountant. It is about knowing how to ask the right questions. The next time someone tells you your fund is “well funded,” ask if they are talking about actuarial or accounting terms. The answer could reveal whether your retirement is safe or sitting on shaky ground.



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Lemohang Botsane

Maseru

The Central Bank of Lesotho alongside partners in the financial sector including insurance companies this week wrapped up a money month campaign that was launched in March 2025 in Leribe. The First Deputy Governor of the CBL, Lehlo-mela Mohapi, said from 2013 they have seen continuing evolution in this campaign that started in 2013 as money week.

“Money is a global initiative by OBCD. So many nations have learnt to align themselves with that call and Lesotho did the same,” Mohapi said, adding that having observed the needs of societies and nation, they are still very much far from financial wellness.

The Leribe campaign was a huge success according to attendees and

demonstrators as people contributed a lot to its execution. Street vendors and school children had weighed in heavily, participating in the campaign.

Ephraim Moremoholo, Chairperson of the Financial Education Steering Committee reported on the campaign, highlighting that they started in Leribe where leaders came in to pay courtesy, setting the tone and mood for the big work. He said what the leaders did was paving way for them to then alert the people about the campaign and spread word. Moremoholo advised people to be aware of scams, that they must do thorough research whenever they get in-

visites to competitions that requires them to pay or about certain investments. He said the youth specifically need to be skilled on efficient financial management.

Representatives from various organisations reflected on the major activities of this campaign, with Thabang Mapena from Letshego Financial Services commending the initiative.

Mapena said the money campaign has really been helpful as questions they receive from their clients and potential clients are much more different from the ones they would receive before.

Mafa Letsoela from the Ministry of Education added on to the conversation,

expressing his gratitude that teachers were grateful for the financial literacy training that is always offered.

Dr. Maluke Letete, the Governor’s of the CBL, highlighted the importance of this campaign, stressing its importance in equipong Basotho with financial literacy skills.

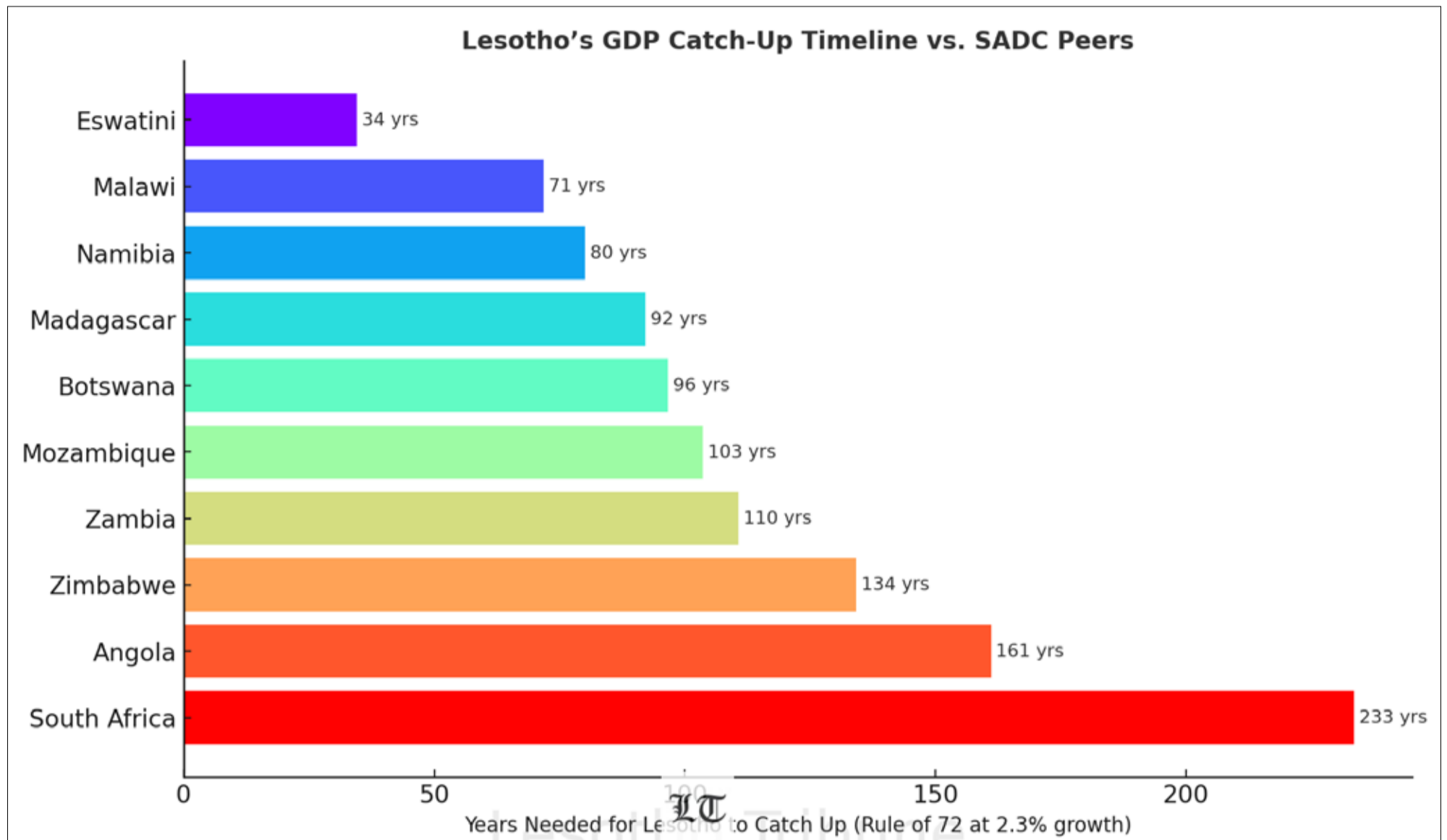
“We don’t know when the financial challenges in this country will end, hence we have to give Basotho the education, teach them how to spend,” Letete said. He continued to say that when people’s salaries are stagnant there’s no way they can never be indebted. “Do not borrow beyond your means.” Letete warned.



BUSINESS & ECONOMY

LESOTHO WRAPS UP MONEY MONTH CAMPAIGN 2025

Is Lesotho Still Economically Viable as a Country?



By Staff Reporter

Lesotho has been left languishing at the very bottom of Southern Africa's economic ladder. With a GDP of just \$2.27 billion in 2024, it is not only dwarfed by its neighbours but also faces a timeline of stagnation that, when examined through the Rule of 72, paints a dire picture of national viability.

The Rule of 72 Exposes the Depth of the Problem
The Rule of 72 is a simple calculation: divide 72 by a country's annual growth rate to estimate how many years it will take for its economy to double. In Lesotho's case, the World Bank reported 2.3% growth in 2024. That means Lesotho's economy doubles every 31 years. At that pace, the numbers are brutal:

- To catch Eswatini (GDP \$4.9bn),

Lesotho would need ~35 years.

- To catch Malawi (\$11bn), ~71 years.

- To catch Namibia (\$13.3bn), ~80 years.

- To catch Botswana (\$19.4bn), ~97 years.

- To catch South Africa (\$400bn), a staggering 234 years.

And that assumes the neighbours stand still. In reality, they are also growing, which means the gap is not closing...it is widening.

A Nation Out of Time
Lesotho's economy is smaller than many South African municipalities. It relies heavily on SACU transfers and remittances, neither of which build lasting resilience. The country has no sizeable manufacturing base, no night-time economy, and limited natural resource rents compared to Angola, Botswana, or Namibia.

The math tells the truth policymakers avoid: at current growth rates, Lesotho will not even catch Eswatini in this generation. By the time the economy doubles once, neighbours like Botswana and Namibia will have doubled as well, keeping Lesotho stuck in last place.

What This Means for Viability

A country's viability is not measured only by its GDP. But size matters when:

- Funding state functions: defence, health, education, infrastructure.

- Attracting investment: investors want scale, stability, and consumer markets.

- Maintaining sovereignty: economic weakness forces reliance on South Africa for jobs, food, electricity, even basic imports.

If Lesotho cannot accelerate to 5–7% sustained growth, the numbers point to a future where it is a

state in name but economically indistinguishable from a province of South Africa.

What Must Change
To avoid slipping into irrelevance, Lesotho needs to:

- Build an export engine beyond textiles and remittances.

- Convert construction-led booms like LHWP-II into long-term productivity gains.

- Fix the basics; power, logistics, governance to attract serious private investment.

- Put agriculture and services into regional value chains that create scale.

The Bottom Line

The Rule of 72 does not lie. At 2.3% growth, Lesotho is on a 31-year clock for a single doubling. By then, peers will have pulled even further ahead. The uncomfortable question is Lesotho still viable as a country? Is not rhetorical. It is written in the mathematics of compound growth.

Mokhotlong People Call For Suspension of LHWP Phase II

By: Staff Reporter

About 1,600 Basotho from 18 rural communities in Mokhotlong had filed a complaint with the African Development Bank (AfDB) that funds the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). These communities, international news outlets have said, demand transparency over forced displacements, inadequate compensations, environmental harm and intimidation linked to Phase II of the LHWP.

Through their legal representative, Seinolu Legal Centre and the Accountability Counsel, a US-based NGO, the communities have also requested the suspension of the project until all their concerns are resolved.

The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) this week then responded to the stated allegations, asserting that no household had been relocated without comprehensive consultation. It said all households affected by the project were involved in asset registration and entitlement confirmation to ensure all are aware of their compensation.

‘To date, over 93 percent of private asset compensation has been completed, with more than LSL154 million paid,’ the LHDA statement read, however admitting that it acknowledges that delays are due to missing documents, absence of



beneficiaries and or internal disputes.

It said that despite these hiccups, compensation dates for communal assets had been agreed upon and will be implemented in the next year.

On the issue of environmental harm, the authority said the project was guided by the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIAs) with mitigation measures, stating that independent environmental audits are conducted annually and made available to regulators and key stakeholders.

‘Engagement with communities is a central pillar. Since 2012, LHDA has held numerous consultations with affected villages,’ the statement further reads, saying management and other project overseers

are also always available to listen to communities’ grievances.

The LHDA says it recognises the role of civil society organisations and has formalised a broader engagement platform for NGOs. Its response to the allegations aims to reassure the public that the project continues to be carried out responsibly, addressing potential negative impacts while ensuring community engagement and environmental protection.

Since its implementation, the LHWP has faced scrutiny due to its significant social and environmental impacts. This is not the first time communities in the project area have raised concerns over the project. It has become a regular thing or normality to hear of communities re-

questing that the project be suspended.

The Accountability Counsel has also long been involved in raising concerns to ensure that affected people have access to fair and just compensation.

But despite all the allegations and dissatisfactions by the Mokhotlong people, the authority stands still on its emphasis of being committed to mitigating negative impacts and ensuring community rights.

While it presents a positive view of its operations, sources and organisations provide critical perspectives on the project’s challenges and impacts.

The LHWP is scheduled for completion by 2029, nearly four years from now, a decade later than it was initially planned to come to completion.

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Lemohang Botsane

Mohale's Hoek

Mamafole Rakuba, a farmer based in Ha-Potsane, Mohale's Hoek hosted the Smallholders Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) this week. It was at this event that she shared her farming success since becoming part of the project.

"We are gathered here today to celebrate my success, how it all started and how I got the SADP II grant. I started at home with just four small plots. I would take to work vegetables from my garden and one-day coworkers asked if I didn't bring them vegetables that day. That's how the journey started. I'd go to the street vendors and note their needs. My former colleagues from the Nedbank encouraged this idea," Rakuba narrated her farming story. She says one day she discovered that clients were opening SADP bank accounts.

"That's how I discovered this project," she said. She continued to say that when she inquired about the project, there were

FARMERS CORNER

Farmers Field Day



some restrictions, but that did not stop her. She made her way into the project and made it among the top 10 candidates who received grants to improve themselves.

"The success you all see today is because of the SADP II. If it were not for this project, I would not be where I am today. To all the departments from the Ministry of Agriculture, I am grateful, and for the irrigation, I am grateful for the pipes provided. As farmers, let us not be afraid to approach appropriate offices for our farming needs," Rakuba alerted. Because of their DAO in the South, Rakuba said, while farmers from other regions were struggling to get manure, they were, however, able to get manure. "At Fole's Evergreen Farm, we have four permanent and about 20 temporary employees. I can proudly say that we're also a school. We educate and motivate children," Rakuba beamed with pride. Rakuba said she was able to grow tomatoes in winter because she used a frost blanket, and that resulted in the harvest of 80 boxes of tomatoes.

However, even though she succeeded, she said the produce was not as satisfactory as it often is in the summer. Besides tomatoes, Rakuba also produces cabbage and supplies Shoprite stores, schools, street vendors and the community.

Rethabile Tlalinyane, a Nedbank employee, emphasized the importance of opening bank accounts for small businesses, advising farmers to also use speed point for convenience. Maselikane Makhenene from the Ministry of Finance commented on Rakuba's success, saying this was a big milestone for the Ministry of Agriculture. "It is only today that I have learnt that farmers can produce all year round," Makhenene said.

She explained that the government does not create jobs but rather helps the private sector to create jobs, adding that "SADP II is one of the initiatives that the government invented to extend assistance to the private sector to eradicate unemployment. If farmers continue like this, SADP III will definitely be there." SADP II Program Director, Mabafokeng Mangope, said the event was meant to

track progress made by the farmer thus far.

"What I love about this particular farmer is that she works hard. She not only used the greenhouses provided but also ploughed outside. Farmers, if we can all be able to grow tomatoes in winter, there won't be any reason to import," Mangope said.

Mangope said she believes that farming will curb unemployment if farmers can produce like this.

"We are here today to track progress since her (Rakuba) contract with SADP II is coming to a finish. We have really learnt a lot from this farmer. We had no idea that tomatoes could grow in winter in Lesotho. We have also learnt the difference between growing plants inside a greenhouse and outside."

"I stand here to congratulate this farmer on this achievement. We have really learnt a lot, and I urge every farmer to take it from her. This will surely curb unemployment. If farmers can all grow vegetables, the ministry will stop granting permits to outsource vegetables," Malerato Lekhoaa added to the comments. Lereko Masupha, speaking for the Director Field Services, said he believes at these in kind of events there has to be representatives from every ministry since the government is all about helping the nation through its different ministries.

"As directors, we are here to showcase progress made by SADP II recipients," Masupha said, adding that they wish more farmers could be as dedicated as Rakuba.



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EDITORIAL

Whatever to Hide From the Truth... Did you know ungazetted laws can be practised even before they are approved in Lesotho?

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

This week, the opposition came forward strongly in parliament, highlighting concerns about how the Matekane-led government may be misusing the Constitution to inhibit peaceful protests. Since time immemorial, marches or protests, peaceful, have always been the public's way of expressing complaints to the government.

Throughout history, the people have expressed their grievances this way, exercising their right to communicate their concerns to those in power. Traditionally, Basotho have been granted permits by the police for peaceful demonstrations.

However, there seems to be a newly proposed law, yet to be gazetted, maybe, that requires individuals to seek permission directly from the prime minister before obtaining approval from the police to march.

The police boss, Compol Borotho Matsoso, was heard on local radio stations reinforcing this law, suggesting that those denied permission are wel-

come to seek resolution through the courts of law. I bet we all heard him silently laugh after uttering these words. Opposition MPs like Machesetsa Mofomobe, leader of the Basotho National Party (BNP), voiced their disbelief at this development, citing countries like Israel and South Africa that support the right to protest. He cautioned the government that imposing such restrictions could draw negative attention from international bodies and development partners.

Questions have started arising about the independence of the police; are their decisions made autonomously or influenced by political motives? Many Basotho have taken to social media to express their views on the matter, suggesting that it is probably high time the police take off their uniform and dress in political regalia because they are clearly failing to distinguish be-



tween being protectors of the law and being political enforcers.

The public is questioning the motives of the current government and how it aligns with its promises of transparent governance aimed at creating the Lesotho that the people desire. But where is the transparency in blocking citizens from voicing their concerns to the prime minister without just cause? How can we envision the Lesotho of our dreams when the police are positioned as gatekeepers undermining the people's voices? Just recently, an unarmed student at the National University of Lesotho lost their life due to police action during a protest over educational rights. This tragic event serves as a reminder of the urgent need for dialogue and open communication.

Or perhaps this is the kind of stability the government seeks—where citizens feel compelled to protest without permits, driven by their concerns. As civil citizens,

we merit the right to express our needs without fear or any restrictions. But we do understand, when this happens, protesting illegally, the police can finally be useful, shoot and kill protestors and add more names to their victims list.

We will, however, expect a statement that will later read something like “no permit was granted for the march, therefore we had to act to eliminate any possible danger that could come with the march. We do not wish to have a repeat of the 1998 massacre.”

But there isn't much we can say to advise this government on how to handle its matters. Anyway, it is always alert to play victim; we are being fought from all angles.

But it must recognise urgency in addressing these issues and many others before it is too late. The growing disconnect between the government and its people needs immediate attention to rebuild the lost confidence.

But if this is indeed the path of revolution, then we, the humble citizens, whose rights are forever violated, whose voices can not even be heard in the corridors of the state house, must remain hopeful and engaged, for we possess no power to contribute towards meaningful change. We are the children of the nation in its literal sense. Let us obey the rules of our leaders and follow in their commands.



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Lesotho Tribune

by:Khosi Mahonko

Lesotho is apparently sending a high-level delegation of negotiators to Washington in a bold attempt to secure relief from the newly imposed U.S. tariffs. Our garment exports, which are the heartbeat of our manufacturing sector, now face a 15% duty under America's revised trade policy. The mission is ambitious: to persuade the United States to lower that tariff, ideally to zero while also pushing for AGOA's renewal for another ten years. These talks arrive at a decisive moment when AGOA itself expires this month, and without an extension, the foundations of Lesotho's export economy could be shaken to the core.

What makes the story more complex is the journey we have traveled in just a few months. In April, Lesotho was suddenly struck with a crippling 50% tariff on U.S. exports, a blow that threatened to wipe out the industry overnight. When Washington revised the structure in August, pulling that rate down to 15%, there was a moment

OPINION

CAN AGOA REALLY BE RENEWED SPECIFICALLY FOR LESOTHO?



of relief, even gratitude. But the truth is sobering: while 15% is certainly better than 50%, it remains unbearably steep for a low-margin garment sector where Profit margins often hover between three and seven percent. In practical terms, that means most of our factories are now producing at a loss whenever their garments land in American ports. And these are not abstract numbers. We are talking about 11 factories in Lesotho that supply the U.S. market, together

employing around 12,000 Basotho workers. These are mothers, fathers, young people and most importantly the breadwinners whose monthly wages sustain households, educate children, and inject life into local economies. Their livelihoods hang in the balance of these negotiations. If we fail, it will not just be an economic setback, it will be a human crisis. Even Kenya, a much larger economy placed at the baseline tariff of 10%, has raised alarm bells that it

cannot sustain competitiveness under the new system. If Kenya is "crying" at 10%, how much more desperate is Lesotho at 15%? This perspective is important: our country is not asking for extraordinary favours out of greed, but rather fighting for survival in a sector where even a modest duty becomes suffocating. The danger is simple but brutal. If buyers cannot make orders viable in Lesotho, they will not hesi-

Continues in page 17

Continues in page 17

tate to redirect their sourcing elsewhere. Ethiopia offers one such destination. Over the last decade, Ethiopia has deliberately built competitive industrial parks such as Hawassa, combining ultra-low labour costs, subsidised utilities, and integrated logistics to lure global apparel brands.

Firms there enjoy structural advantages that Lesotho does not yet match. Add in Asia with Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Cambodia leading the pack through economies of scale, integrated textile value chains, and world-class shipping networks and you see how fragile Lesotho's position has become. Global buyers are pragmatic: they will not wait for us to solve our problems when alternatives are already waiting with open arms.

That is why these negotiations in Washington carry such urgency. Without relief, closures in factories in Lesotho are almost inevitable. Thousands of Basotho families will suddenly face unemployment, and the knock-on effects will ripple through schools, small shops, taxis, and entire communities. Lesotho's economy leans heavily on textiles as a core pillar of export earnings, and any collapse here will shake the country's already fragile economic foundations. Importantly, Lesotho is not crying alone. South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Kenya have all mobilised to press their own cases to Washington. Madagascar, for example, has openly warned that 60,000 jobs in its textile sector are at risk. Kenya has dusted off its earlier pursuit of a bilateral trade deal with the U.S. to seek protection for its industries. This continental mobilisation shows that

Lesotho's plea is part of a larger African alarm. Washington cannot ignore this chorus without undermining its Africa strategy, especially at a time when China and other powers are actively deepening their influence on the continent.

But here lies the central tension: can the U.S. realistically bend on its 10% baseline? That's what I doubt could happen. In Washington, that floor has been presented as a matter of principle, a demonstration of "reciprocity" designed to quiet domestic critics who argue that AGOA gave Africa free rides for too long. To roll it back for one country risks setting a precedent, if America compromises on its 10% baseline tariffs for Lesotho even if it's on a humanitarian card, they would have set a precedent that other countries can beg USA to give them 0% as well. Politically, it is a hard sell and I really don't think USA will give Lesotho anything below 10% baseline no matter how we can sell a desperate case of vulnerability.

Yet again, trade policy is never carved in stone. The U.S. has a track record of making surgical exceptions when the humanitarian costs are severe and the financial costs are minimal. Lesotho fits that profile perfectly: our export volume is tiny in the grand scheme of U.S. trade, but the livelihood impact is colossal at home. Granting relief to Lesotho would not shake American industries, but it would save thousands of jobs here and generate goodwill that strengthens Washington's standing in Africa.

So what is realistically possible? We should not dream of a wholesale exemption, but we can hope for carefully designed carve-outs. The U.S. might reduce tariffs to zero only

on specific apparel lines, or grant temporary waivers for two or three years to allow breathing space.

Another possibility is quota-based relief, letting a fixed volume of Lesotho's garments enter duty-free. Each of these models would let Washington preserve its political principle while also demonstrating flexibility.

But let us not be naïve: America does not give without taking. Relief will almost certainly come with conditions. Some will be symbolic, others substantive. On the softer side, Washington may expect Lesotho to deliver public diplomacy wins like high-profile visits, public thanks, and statements aligning with U.S. narratives. But there may also be tougher requests: like voting alignment at the United Nations, greater security cooperation, or opening our procurement markets to American firms. At worst, they might even push us to loosen our ties with China, given the U.S. and China rivalry.

For a small country negotiating from desperation, these demands are dangerous. The challenge is to give away symbols, not sovereignty. Public gestures and UN votes are cheap but binding economic concessions that limit our future development choices are not. Our negotiators must be vigilant in drawing red lines. What happens if Lesotho succeeds? At best, we save 12,000 jobs, stabilise our export base, and buy time to build competitiveness. But that time must not be wasted. Relief should be coupled with reforms: investing in local textile inputs, diversifying products, raising productivity, improving our environment for a successful industrialization that can attract investors and I

would argue even diversifying our exports to other markets outside the U.S. Only then will Lesotho stand a chance to compete without leaning permanently on mercy.

And what if we fail? Well, the consequences will be immediate and devastating. Factories will close down. Jobs will vanish. Export revenues will shrink, straining foreign reserves and weakening the loti. Investor confidence will crumble. The deindustrialisation of our garment sector would not just be an economic loss; it would be a social catastrophe that could take generations to repair.

That is why this delegation's mission is not a technical exercise, it is a fight for Lesotho's future. We must present a case that is firm, evidence-based, and compassionate. We must make Washington see not just trade statistics but human lives: the 12,000 Basotho workers who risk losing everything, the families who depend on their wages, the fragile stability that hangs in the balance. And we must also show a plan, a commitment that any reprieve we receive will be used as a springboard for real transformation.

At the end of the day, AGOA or any American mercy cannot carry us forever. At best, it can buy us time. And what we do with that time will define whether our garment sector survives or fades into history. If we use it to strengthen our foundations, we can stand taller in the global economy as a textile production powerhouse. If we squander it, we will find ourselves back here again, only weaker. Lesotho must hope for mercy. But more importantly, Lesotho must prepare for transformation.

LESOTHO COMMEMORATES IDENTITY DAY



By: Lemohang Botsane

The Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police commemorated the national identity document day, focused on education, themed “My Identity. My Umbrella”.

‘Mamphaka Mabesa, the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government said the event was meant to celebrate and understand the correlation between identity and education.

“Today in particular, we are focused on the education sector and I am hopeful that we will all learn the importance of education and identity, their relationship as well as the opportunities surrounding identity and education, not forgetting the challenges,” said Mabesa.

She went on to explain that ID day was celebrated particularly for inclusion, protection and employment.

“ID day is not only a celebration but a moment of reflection and action on how legal identity can improve service delivery in key sectors, especially education,” Mabesa informed.

Dr Makhube Ralenkoane, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Education, bestowed his appreciation to the ministry of Local government for the supportive and generous endeavour where the ministry tried to strike balance between education and identity.

“We are highly grateful for this thoughtful subject. Through education, we influence values that tell us who we are. We are journeying this pathway from the ECCD up to tertiary level,” Ralenkoane said.

Director of National Identity Civil Registry, Napo Khuele, explained the purpose of commemorating ID day, saying the day focuses on identity in terms of education.

“It is also a hurdle when someone is registered with a certain name and surname and other names on different identity documents, as this may lead to one missing out on opportunities such as scholarships.”

Khuele urged every parent to ensure that their children do not miss out on opportunities for such reasons, adding that those who already have problems with their identities can be helped.

Representatives from Council on Higher Education (CHE), National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS), Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) as well as representatives from primary schools, tertiary and non-formal education also

weighed in and showed the importance of identity in education and how it affects school children, highlighting challenges presented and how to overcome them.

Acting UNICEF country representative Bob Muchabaiwa encouraged the ministry to digitalise the registration of identity documents since the world is evolving. He commended the government of Lesotho for having implemented the registration of birth rights at birth.

“A legal identity is the foundation upon which individuals can access essential services, exercise their rights and participate fully in society. It is crucial for social and economic inclusion, enabling citizens to contribute to their communities and countries. In Lesotho, education plays a vital role in promoting identity and citizenship,” Minister of Education, Professor Ntoi Rapapa lamented.

He also urged people to commit to universal legal identity by agreeing to collaborate to strengthen identity systems, especially documentation processes and access to identification, promote education and awareness in communities and schools about the importance of legal identity as well as to empower marginalised communities by ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to identification and related essential services.

“As we celebrate, let us recognise the significance of legal identity in enabling learners’ progression and the eventual education success which promises wealth and happiness for us all. Together we can create a future where every individual has the opportunity to thrive,” Rapapa said. The acting Minister of Local Government, Stephen Mputi, also weighed in, reflecting on the importance of this communication.

“Today we reflect on the power of legal identity as a tool of empowerment, inclusion and national development. Over the years, Lesotho has made remarkable progress in ensuring that our people have access to civil registration and national identity.

Between 2019 and 2023, the birth registration rate rose from 21 per cent to 61 percent, with 81.6 percent of children under five now registered. At the same time, around 90 percent of the population aged 16 and above holds a national ID card,” highlighted Mputi.

“However, the education sector still lags behind. Despite the wide availability of legal identity documents, schools continue to face challenges in fully integrating it’s use in enrollment and examinations. This is why, as we celebrate this ID Day 2025, we shine a spotlight on the education sector. It is time for all schools at all levels and other educational institutions to fully embrace the use of identity in the enrollment and examination process,” concluded Mputi.

SECTION 2 Condemns Unlawful Restrictions on Public Processions

BY: Staff Reporter

SECTION 2, notoriously known for taking the law seriously as The Advocates for the Supremacy of the Constitution, could not just sit and watch the Matekane-led administration use unjust practices to shut down Basotho's grievances undemocratically this week.

The advocates strongly condemned what they described as "unlawful practices" by the police and the prime minister's Office regarding public processions. They alleged that these actions violate human rights and undermine constitutional rights and democratic principles. This came after MPs in parliament this week engaged in a bitter debate, expressing their displeasure at how the prime minister was allegedly doing things against the law to protect himself from public protests.

The debate was motivated by several attempts by different groups who wished to protest against the government but were rejected by the police on some excuse that they needed to first seek permission from the prime minister himself before marching to him; a new thing everyone has ever seen until the current government.

"Instead of denying the workers the right (to protest), the police should set conditions to ensure nothing is vandalised and people's lives are not put in danger," Tiso Cheba, MP for Makhoroana, who later tabled an urgent motion condemning police



restrictions on demonstrations, said.

'Machabana Lemphane-Letsie, leader of HOPE and Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), weighed in heavily in the debate, saying there are laws that have been designed to govern protests, assuming that the conditions that the police are giving, signalling instability, do not appear in any of the laws.

In its statement, just like the house, SECTION 2 says it was deeply concerned about these reports of police contradicting the Public Meetings and Processions Act No. 14 of 2010.

According to them, the decision to grant or refuse permission lies with the police who are entrusted to provide written reasons for any refusal based on exceptional and compelling circumstances.

The advocates of the Supremacy of the law alleged that by denying the Basotho this permit, the prime minister's office was actively working to suppress the right to peaceful assembly, claiming that officials in his office are tasked with persuading the people to

abandon their plans, an act that Section 2 describes as a "blatant abuse of authority."

The advocates have now raised concerns about the appointment process of the individuals within the prime minister's Office who are allegedly interfering with the right to protest. They raise concerns of transparency in their recruitment process, demonstration of competence or merit involved in their appointment.

To strengthen their accusations, SECTION 2 cites the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Others vs the Commissioner of Police and Others case where Justice Peete held that police should generally grant permission for marches/

protests or processions unless there are exceptional circumstances related to public safety and order.

Therefore, disagreement with the purpose of any of these or its political sensitivity should not be grounds for refusal.

SECTION 2 demands that the police make decisions on notices within two days,

provide written reasons for any refusal of permission and that the police cease referring individuals to the Prime Minister's Office and start doing their job.

They encourage individuals whose previous notices were frustrated by these alleged practices to resubmit their notices of intention to hold processions at least seven days in advance, urging the police to prioritise these notices and make decisions as required by law.

This statement by SECTION 2 underscores the importance of upholding constitutional rights and ensuring that public officials act within the bounds of the law.

Their demands call for greater transparency and accountability in the handling of public assemblies and processions.



Senators warn of illegal liquor trade, endangering community members' lives

BY: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Tempers flared in the Senate this week as lawmakers sounded the alarm over what they described as a “lawless liquor trade” that is spiralling out of control and endangering lives across Lesotho.

The debate, which quickly grew heated, laid bare deep concerns that liquor traders are operating without respect for the law, opening late into the night and creating hotbeds of

crime and risky behaviour in local communities.

Leading the charge was Senator ‘Mabataung Mokhathala who stood up to press the Leader of the House, Matjato Moteane, on what action government is taking through the

Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, the ministry responsible for licensing and regulating liquor outlets.

“Every day, as members of these communities, we see what is happening,” Mokhathala declared.

“Liquor businesses open whenever they want and no one seems to stop them. Around these places, prostitution is rampant and used condoms are being thrown everywhere. This careless behaviour is a direct danger to public health.” Her blunt words drew nods of agreement from other Senators who argued that the growing culture of unregulated drinking is tearing at the fabric of society.



Senator ‘Makholu Moshoeshe added her voice, warning that the consequences go far beyond noise and disorder.

“These establishments are hazardous,” she said.

“They do not just harm the people living nearby, even the customers themselves are at risk. The reckless behaviour that happens in and around these places is putting everyone in danger. We need action now, not later.”

The Senators painted a miserable picture, neighbourhoods disturbed late into the night, families worried about children walking past drinking spots and vulnerable people drawn into cycles of alcohol abuse and risky sexual encounters.

Some Senators noted that while the law clearly sets limits on when liquor can be sold, in practice, those rules are widely ignored. Traders often keep their doors open well past legal hours, some operating as though they are untouchable.

Mokhathala pressed further, asking Moteane whether the ministry has inspectors or monitoring

systems in place.

“Communities feel abandoned,” she said.

“We cannot continue watching while our people’s health and safety are put at risk.” The Leader of the House acknowledged the seriousness of the concerns and promised to convey them to the ministry. However, Senators insisted that words are no longer enough.

They demanded visible enforcement, from shutting down illegal outlets to holding business owners accountable.

The debate also touched on the public health crisis that unchecked liquor trading fuels.

Easy access to alcohol, Senators argued, worsens domestic violence, increases road accidents and exposes young people to exploitation.

“Too many young men and women are falling victim,” Moshoeshe said.

“What starts as a night out too often ends in violence, disease or broken homes. That is the reality on the ground.”

The Senate discussion comes at a time when many Basotho are voicing

frustrations about alcohol outlets mushrooming in every corner, from small villages to busy towns.

Community leaders have long complained that these businesses are eroding social values and putting pressure on an already fragile health and policing system.

By the end of the debate, Senators were united on one point; government can no longer look the other way. They urged the ministry to roll out clear enforcement measures, tighten licensing procedures and work hand-in-hand with police and local councils to bring back order.

For now, though, residents continue to live with the noise, litter and dangers that accompany unregulated drinking spots. And unless swift action follows, Senators warned, the lawless liquor trade will keep thriving at the expense of public safety.

“Every day we delay is another day our people suffer,” Mokhathala concluded.

“The ministry must step in before it is too late.”



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Using Music Therapy to Decrease Maternal Mortality

By: Staff Reporter

Did you know music has been used in child development and literacy to counter short concentration spans and improve memory and vocabulary? It has also been used in health campaigns to promote HIV/AIDS prevention messaging, encouraging community engagement and raising awareness.

This was revealed this Friday in Masru during the Lesotho Alliance for Maternal Mental Health Launch.

‘Mateboho Refiloe Makote, founder of Love Maternity Lesotho, said the launch was a groundbreaking milestone for maternal health in Lesotho.

“And this is happening because the Community Health Interventions through Musical Engagement for Maternal Mental Health (CHIME) project joined hands,” Makote said.

CHIME is a four-year global research project that works towards improving the mental health and well-being of antenatal women in The Gambia, South Africa and Lesotho. It aims to generate evidence on how culturally embedded music-based interventions can be used to improve maternal mental health. Dr Maama, Director Primary Health Care, speaking on behalf of the Minis-



try of Health, said mental health was a huge concern for Lesotho.

“We are facing high maternal mortality as well as neonatal mortality,” she said, adding that this has been a concern for the ministry, hence the launch of the project.

Dr Maama said before implementing the project, the ministry explored and dug more into Basotho indigenous practices, gathering evidence to make interventions evidence-based.

“Some of the things that we have been practising as Basotho, I think we’re just taking them for granted because we were saying, What can music do? So we are very grateful for this moment because as we address maternal health we are going to achieve good maternal health outcomes,” Dr Maama asserted.

Dr Zulu, speaking on behalf of Dr Innocent Nwanjira, the World Health

Organisation (WHO) representative for Lesotho, said many women experienced changes in their mental health during pregnancy and a year after birth, saying one in five women will experience mental health conditions during pregnancy and also one year after that birth. “Pregnancy, birth, any parenthood may change and may be stressful because it causes change to the woman’s identity, physical health and economic situations,” Dr Zulu highlighted.

He stated that perinatal anxiety and depression in this period are also very common, affecting one in 10 women in high-income countries and one in five women in low and middle-income countries. Dr Zulu said there were many gaps in the Lesotho health sector legal framework, policy, infrastructure, skilled workforce and the quality of service delivery,

especially in the maternal mental health.

“However, he applauded the ministry for making strides in addressing the gaps through the development of the mental strategy, building of mental treatment units and all difficulties there are within hospitals and strategies to be implemented to change the course. Mental and child services are in a unique position to offer support for the women and their mental health,” he emphasised.

It was said that the CHIME project came at an opportune time and will surely be a game changer, calling the ministry and all partners to join hands to ensure the good mental health of mothers and their healthier lives and best development outcomes for children.

The project chapter in Lesotho aims to explore the role of traditional music in promoting maternal mental health since its strong traditions make it an ideal setting to explore the potential of music-based approaches to support maternal mental health.

It is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Global Health Programme using UK international development funding from the UK government to support global health research.

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Pirates Punish Lioli in Bloemfontein with Ruthless 3-0 Win



By: Litšitso Letsunyane

Bloemfontein -

Orlando Pirates showed no mercy. In front of a buzzing Toyota Stadium, the Soweto giants handed Lesotho's Lioli FC a harsh footballing lesson, running out 3-0 winners in the first leg of the CAF Champions League tie.

For Lioli, it was a night that started with hope but ended in a brutal reminder of the gulf between domestic dominance and continental demands.

A Tale of Two Halves
Lioli managed to hold the Buccaneers at bay for the first 45 minutes, thanks largely to the reflexes of goalkeeper William Huni. He denied Thabiso Lebitso with a fine save and saw

Appollis waste a golden chance from close range. By halftime, Tse Nala had done the improbable: keep the scoreline goalless. But football rarely rewards resistance without counterpunches. Four minutes into the second half, Tshegofatso Mabasa broke the deadlock with a bullet header from Deon Hoto's corner. Soon after, the striker struck again—this time latching onto a pass from Relebohile Mofokeng and drilling low past Huni. Pirates had found their rhythm, and Lioli had no answer.

Mabasa nearly sealed his hat trick minutes later, but his header grazed past the post. By then, the damage was already decisive. Pirates controlled the remainder of the game and cruised to a statement win. What It

Means for Lioli
For the champions of Lesotho, the scoreline is a bitter pill. Domestically, they are flying high at the top of the Vodacom Premier League, fresh from beating Bantu FC. But continental football is a different battlefield. This is Lioli's fifth taste of CAF Champions League action since their debut in 1986, when they were thrashed by Tanzania's Maji Maji. Nearly four decades later, the dream of making a deep run remains elusive. The return leg at Orlando Stadium on 27 September will demand nothing short of a miracle. Overturning a three-goal deficit against a side in rampant form feels near impossible. Pirates, after all, are riding the momentum of five straight wins, including their 3-0 triumph in the MTN 8

final against Stellenbosch. The Bigger Picture
Lioli's defeat is not just about 90 minutes of football. It is about the hard truth of where Lesotho clubs stand in African competition. Pirates had the depth, the speed, and the ruthlessness. Lioli had pride and effort, but little else. For Lesotho football lovers, the second leg will still matter. Not as a chance of turning the tie, but as a test of character. Can Tse Nala at least restore dignity, or will Pirates tighten the screw further? Either way, Saturday afternoon in Bloemfontein told a familiar story: the Champions League is unforgiving, and Lesotho clubs still have a long way to go before they can dream of belonging.



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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

Former Minister of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation, Dr. Mahali Phamotse, has unveiled a groundbreaking sponsorship package worth M5.4 million for Lesotho's B Division League. The three-year partnership with the Lesotho Football Association (LEFA) will provide M1.8 million annually to support the league.

This is the first time a third-tier league in Lesotho has secured a long-term, dedicated sponsorship. To honor her commitment, the league will now be called the Dr. Mahali Phamotse B Division League.

A long-time advocate for youth empowerment and a supporter of local sport, Dr. Phamotse described the sponsorship as a per-

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Dr. Mahali Phamotse Injects Over M5 Million into Lesotho Football's B Division



sonal mission.

"What I want to see is football grow in Lesotho," she said at the unveiling. "I want to see our players feature in leagues in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and beyond—not only in Africa but across the world."

Her vision goes beyond football. The sponsorship also introduces community-based development initiatives across all ten districts of Lesotho, including:

- M10,000 allocated to each district
- Eight football kits per district
- Two free

driver's licenses for selected youth each year

- Career guidance sessions for players and young people

- Free safeguarding courses on lightning safety
- These measures are designed to give players life skills, protect them on and off the field, and create opportunities for personal growth.

Dr. Phamotse urged fellow politicians and officials to take sports development more seriously, noting that the absence of proper infrastructure continues to hold the country back.

"With this support, I want to set an example to colleagues and officials in government. This cannot happen if we don't have infrastructure. All sporting codes in the country need it, and that requires political will," she stressed.

She also expressed regret over the state of football facilities.

"It is painful to play outside the country and call it a home game. I am embarrassed because I was once minister, I tried to do this and was not successful, and that still embarrasses me," she admitted.

The establishment of the Dr. Mahali Phamotse B Division League marks a turning point for grassroots football. The financial backing will strengthen the league's competitiveness, channel resources into communities, and give young players hope and structure. Through her leadership and personal investment, Dr. Phamotse has demonstrated how sport can be more than a game, it can be a tool for national pride, youth empowerment, and lasting change.

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