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Leaked Memos Expose Deep Divisions in Matekane's Gvt Over M400 million Slush Fund

...Ministers fight for control

By: Staff Reporters

Two leaked cabinet memoranda have laid bare serious divisions inside Prime Minister Sam Matekane's administration, revealing how government first approved, then abruptly reversed, a multi-million-maloti plan to purchase 200 tractors for farmers.

The memos, dated 19 September 2025 and 9 October 2025, show a policy U-turn that insiders describe as the product of a bitter power struggle between senior ministers in the finance and agriculture portfolios. One of the memos was leaked to Lesotho Tribune by a cabinet member who opposed the initial decision, claiming it was "financially reckless and politically motivated."

In the 19 September memo, cabinet had approved an allocation of M174.95 million to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition for the procurement of 200 tractors and associated implements. The decision mandated the ministry to design a repayment model under a cost-sharing arrangement, offering a 30 percent government subsidy and a 60-month repayment plan for the remainder. The funds were to be drawn from the Contingencies

Fund, and the Law Office was instructed to prepare a supplementary budget bill.

Less than three weeks later, that entire framework was scrapped.

The 9 October memo records cabinet's decision to rescind the earlier approval and instead inject an additional M200 million into the Lesotho PostBank Credit Guarantee Facility (LPBCGF), extending its operation for another seven years. Control of the tractor and farm-equipment financing programme was thus transferred from the agriculture ministry to PostBank, a move one official said was "a win for the Finance Ministry and a blow to Agriculture."

The revised memorandum also instructs PostBank to accommodate youth and farmers who have not previously benefited from government subsidy schemes. While the change is presented as inclusive, critics say it masks a fierce contest for who controls the country's mechanisation funds.

An official familiar with the proceedings told Lesotho Tribune that the original scheme would have opened the door for politically connected suppliers to benefit through inflated tractor prices and ghost contracts. "There was no proper procurement plan or oversight mechanism. It was a recipe for scandal," the source said.

Yet others argue that moving the scheme to PostBank risks excluding smallholders who cannot meet lending requirements, undermining the very goal of agricultural mechanisation.

The episode underscores the fragile state of decision-making in Matekane's cabinet, where ministers often pull in different directions on economic policy. Analysts say the reversal reflects a deeper problem of inconsistency and lack of institutional discipline.

Economist Rethabile Moleko told Lesotho Tribune that such abrupt policy changes discourage investor confidence. "It signals uncertainty. When cabinet reverses its own decision within weeks, it suggests either inadequate preparation or internal sabotage," she said.

Political observers view the tractor saga as symptomatic of broader governance strains within Matekane's coalition, where rival power centres are emerging around key ministries. The decision also highlights how fiscal tools such as the Contingencies Fund can become political weapons rather than instruments of development.

For now, the Lesotho PostBank Credit Guarantee Facility will oversee the mechanisation programme, but the political cost of the U-turn is already showing. Within Matekane's own ranks, several ministers are said to be frustrated by what they describe as "decision-making by reversal" that leaves government credibility in tatters.

PAC Hearings Reveal Multi-Million Maloti Graft, Cronyism and Cover-Ups

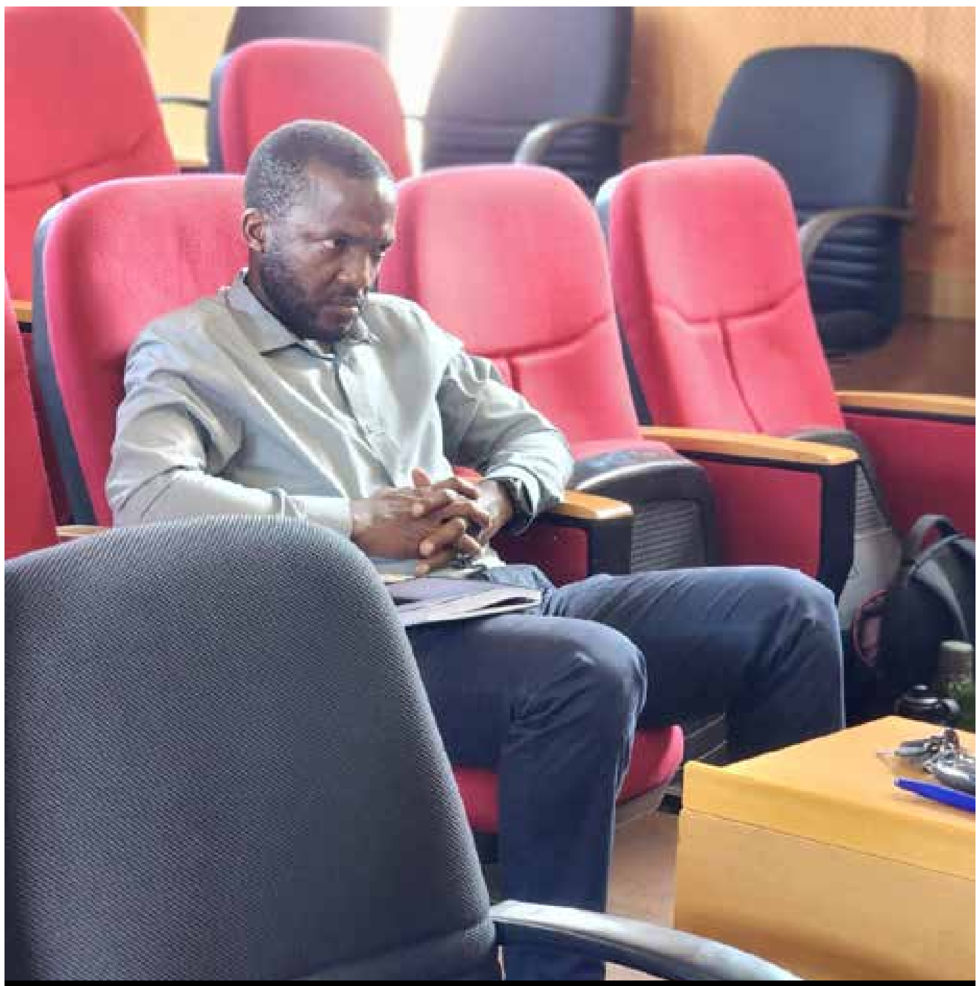
By: Staff Reporter

In a jaw dropping set of hearings this week, the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has exposed what appears to be systemic corruption inside the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), implicating its top leadership in illicit advance payments, shady tenders, kickback schemes, and cover-ups of procurement violations.

Leaks of internal LNDC reports presented to the PAC reveal that the agency advanced hundreds of millions of maloti in payments to contractors who failed to deliver, Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) politicians, tolerated procurement irregularities, and silenced internal critics.

Advance Payments That Never Delivered

One shocking revelation concerns Parkhomes and Mobile Offices. An advance of M500,000 was paid by Tšepo Putsoa to a South African firm which never delivered on the contract. According to the report, Interim CEO Molise Ramaili is accused of protecting a close associate, Property Manager Tsepo Putsoa, shielding him from disciplinary action despite his role in the corrupt deal.


Tsepo Putsoa, deep in thought before the PAC

Elsewhere, in Tikeo Industrial Paving Works, Ramaili, even before his appointment as acting CEO, is said to have been awarded work amounting to M594,269 without proper documentation such as tax clearance or a board resolution. The report claims Putsoa disregarded procurement rules as a favour to Ramaili.

In LNDC Block A (Lift Replacement), the company Otis, a South African lift firm, was paid an advance of M800,000 for work never performed. When the job never materialised, no refunds were made. Subsequently, Schindler, another South African firm, was awarded the same contract for M2.7 million. LNDC reportedly did not recover the initial advance. The report alleges that Ramaili and Putsoa received kickbacks in this scheme as well.

Renovations of LNDC Block A Level 4 were similarly abused. Shining Star Construction was granted advance payments exceeding 30 percent without following the proper process. The same names, Ramaili and Putsoa, are mentioned as beneficiaries of corrupt payments.

Culture of Impunity and Internal Weakness

The report paints a picture of an institution captured by an executive duo, Ramaili and Putsoa, who allegedly manipulated procurement rules, advanced state funds without delivery, and neutralised internal dissent.

Multiple projects granted advances never had proper Works Completion Certificates or formal Works Purchase Orders. In some cases, payment was made before execution of work or even before bids were evaluated.

The PAC has taken notice. In a separate but related move, it has ordered LNDC to fire its internal auditor for allegedly turning a blind eye to hiring malpractice and conflict of interest in staff appointments.

During the hearings, LNDC faced withering criticism, with PAC members accusing its leadership of treating the corporation as a personal slush fund and failing to produce key documents or justify decisions.

Political Overtones and Institutional Fragility

The timing of these revelations is politically charged, taking place in the backdrop of growing public concern over state agency corruption, fiscal mismanagement, and governance failures. Critics argue that LNDC has for years served as a vehicle for patronage under various administrations.

This scandal further erodes public confidence in reform, with many expecting that the institutional rot exposed at LNDC may mirror abuse in other development agencies.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Former WILSA Director Faces M5.6 Million Corruption and Money Laundering Charges

By: Staff Reporter

Former Women in Law Southern Africa (WILSA) Programmes Director, Mamosa Mohlabula-Nokoana, has appeared before the Maseru Magistrates' Court on charges of corruption and money laundering involving more than M5.6 million.

WILSA is a regional network of non-governmental organisations that advocates for the socio-economic, political, and legal empowerment of women and children. The organisation operates in Lesotho, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Eswatini, Zambia, and Zimbabwe through research, legal reform advocacy, and community-based programmes addressing issues such as gender inequality, inheritance, and gender-based violence.

According to the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), Ms Mohlabula-Nokoana and former WILSA Executive Director Libakiso Matlho allegedly siphoned M5,613,110. 10from the organisation's accounts between 2016 and 2022.

Crown Counsel Advocate Willy Makamane, appearing for the DCEO, told Magistrate Thabang Tapole that the accused carried out multiple illegal transactions from WILSA's bank accounts for personal enrichment. Ms Matlho, however, was not present in court. The Crown informed the bench that she is still abroad and that efforts are underway to facilitate her return to face trial.

The two are charged under section 25(1)(a)(b)(c) read with section 25(4) of the Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crimes Act No. 4 of 2008 (as amended).

Court documents show that the pair allegedly channelled WILSA funds through online transfers amounting to M1,078,542.05, cheque deposits totalling M2,471,568.05, and cash withdrawals of M1,548,000.00. They also reportedly sold a WILSA-funded property for M515,000.00 in an attempt to disguise the source of the funds.

On the second count of corruption, they are accused of violating section 21(3) of the Prevention of Corruption and Economic Crimes Act No. 5 of 1999 (as amended), read with section 26(1) of the Penal Code Act 2010. The charge alleges that the two misappropriated or diverted WILSA funds that had been entrusted to them by virtue of their positions.

Should the corruption and money-laundering charges fail, the DCEO is pursuing an alternative count of theft.

Advocate Qhalehang Letsika, appearing for Ms Mohlabula-Nokoana, applied for bail, proposing a M3,000 cash deposit, a M50,000 surety in movable or immovable property, and an undertaking that his client would attend trial and not interfere with witnesses. The Crown did not oppose the application, and Magistrate Tapole granted bail on those terms.

The court further ordered the Crown to expedite Ms Matlho's return or consider separating the trials to avoid further delays. The case was postponed to 12 November 2025 for remand.

This court appearance comes two weeks after the DCEO successfully applied for an order by Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane to freeze Ms Mohlabula-Nokoana's Nedbank account (No. 91000002327) and preserve her Masowe III property (Plot No. 12314-034) pending the outcome of the case.


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"Kobeli Did Not Buy The shares, They Were Handed Over To Him"

By: Staff Reporter

In a puzzling turn of events, Teboho Kobeli, the Managing Director of Afri Expo Textiles Pty Ltd and a prominent figure in Lesotho's political scene, found himself in hot water this week during a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) inquiry.

Instead of showcasing his business prowess, he left members with a strong impression that the 10,000 Duty Free shares he now holds were presented to him on a silver platter rather than purchased outright.

When pressed for evidence of his acquisition, Kobeli's responses seemed to dance around the issue. He truggled to recall how much he had actually paid for the shares, leaving the committee with more questions than answers. Ultimately, they were forced to conclude that these shares may have been obtained through dubious means, with allegations swirling that he exploited his political connections to benefit his company.

Kobeli's reluctance to provide proof of legitimacy was notable. He voiced a range of excuses, claiming not to be obligated to discuss certain matters, arriving unprepared for the hearing, And expressing concerns about protecting his clientele and business interests.

The Backstory of Duty Free Sourcing Inc.

Duty Free Sourcing Inc made its entrance into the South African market in 2014, quickly making headlines for its positive impact on the lives of many Basotho through job creation. However, the tides turned in November 2023 when the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) extended a M10 million loan to the company. Unfortunately, Duty Free has struggled to meet its repayment obligations, a situation that only escalated when Kobeli joined the company in January 2025, raising suspicion of political interference in a financially fraught transaction aimed at erasing debt.

How Kobeli Ended Up Before the PAC The drama began to unfold during a session with the LNDC, where Interim CEO Molise Ramaili revealed that a "special loan" was granted to Duty Free, a move that clearly contradicted corporate policy and legal advice. After Kobeli's takeover, the LNDC communicated its demands for compliance, but it was met with empty promises.

Adding to the intrigue, Thabiso Lekitla's name resurfaced in connection with the LNDC's proceedings, a familiar face linked to controversy. Apparently, Lekitla had challenged Kobeli's choice to invest in a company with a precarious financial standing. Employees of the LNDC had previously identified Lekitla in their Save LNDC Campaign as a key player behind Ramaili's interim appointment, thus making it imperative for him to protect his CEO amid questionable loan decisions.

In light of these revelations, Kobeli has been tasked with repaying the M6.5 million that Duty Free owes to the LNDC, along with 5 percent interest and a hefty additional 25 percent default fee, all by November 3.

ESG Lens

When Political Power Corrupts Corporate Purpose

By: Staff Reporter

The unfolding case of Duty Free Sourcing and its politically connected shareholder, Teboho Kobeli, mirrors a deeper structural ailment within Lesotho's governance landscape. It is not an isolated scandal but part of a pattern where political influence distorts institutional purpose and exposes systemic weaknesses in board independence, conflict of interest management, and regulatory compliance.

Board Independence: A Compromised Governance Architecture

At the centre of the controversy lies a decision that should never have survived basic scrutiny. The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) had initially declined Duty Free Sourcing's loan application because the company lacked Basotho ownership, a condition meant to promote domestic enterprise. Yet, the cabinet overrode this decision and forced the disbursement of M10 million, effectively undermining LNDC's board authority and independence.

This political intrusion is precisely what King IV warns against—governance boards must exercise independent judgment, insulated from undue influence by political or personal interests. When cabinet decisions dictate who receives corporate financing, the principle of accountability collapses. LNDC's duty to safeguard public funds was sacrificed for political convenience.

The parallel to the Cadiant-Mergence pension fund saga is striking. In both cases, public institutions designed to allocate resources impartially were captured by private interests operating under the shield of political connections. Whether it is a pension fund or a development corporation, the erosion of board independence leads to one outcome: governance failure.

Conflict of Interest: The Rot Beneath the Surface

The revelation that Kobeli became a majority shareholder in Duty Free Sourcing after the loan was approved exposes a textbook case of conflict of interest. As RFP Chairperson, his dual role as a political leader and a beneficiary of state-directed financing raises grave ethical concerns. His refusal to provide proof of share purchase or tax clearance suggests a deliberate avoidance of transparency. This is the same behaviour that marred the pension fund scandals—executives and trustees using their proximity to power to secure contracts, conceal ownership structures, and manipulate compliance processes. In ESG terms, this is not just poor governance; it is a breach of fiduciary trust.

Conflict of interest corrodes investor confidence and repels genuine private capital. No responsible investor, domestic or foreign, will commit funds in a country where political elites can rewrite rules for themselves.

Regulatory Compliance: When the Law Becomes Optional

The PAC's findings are damning. The loan was approved "illegally through a cabinet decision," bypassing LNDC's internal lending criteria. This is a violation of both the corporation's founding regulations and Lesotho's financial management laws.

Such manoeuvres create a dangerous precedent where legality is conditional on political loyalty. The absence of timely enforcement from the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) and the silence of financial regulators further underscore the fragility of Lesotho's compliance ecosystem.

The ESG framework interprets this as a breakdown in the G—Governance—pillar. When oversight bodies fail to act, corruption becomes normalized, and the cost is borne by taxpayers, honest entrepreneurs, and the credibility of the state itself.

Purpose: Governance Without Integrity Is No Governance at All

Kobeli's defence rests on the company's alleged job creation impact. He claims Duty Free Sourcing has created 2000 jobs and plans 4000 more. While economic inclusion is commendable, it cannot substitute for ethical governance. Using social impact as a shield against accountability distorts the very notion of purpose.

True ESG alignment demands that purpose and governance reinforce each other. Jobs funded through irregular loans do not create sustainable value—they perpetuate dependency and political patronage.

Lesotho's governance challenge is therefore not a lack of policies or frameworks; it is a lack of integrity and independence in applying them. Whether in the LNDC case or the pension fund debacle, the pattern remains: powerful individuals bending public institutions to serve private gain. Until that pattern is broken, Lesotho's economy will remain hostage to political capture masquerading as development.

BUSINESS&ECONOMY

Lesotho Shines at Osaka Expo 2025: A Celebration of Culture and Sustainability

By: Staff Reporter

Lesotho has made an unforgettable impression at Expo 2025 in Osaka, Kansai, leaving visitors inspired by its vibrant message of sustainable living and rich cultural heritage.

Running from April 13 to October 13, 2025, Lesotho's pavilion—entitled "Connecting Lives"—invited attendees to explore the nation's unique identity, history and endless potential for trade, investment, and tourism.

Situated high in the clouds, Lesotho, known as "The Kingdom in the Sky," proudly showcased its breathtaking landscapes that rise over 1,400 meters. The pavilion provided an immersive experience that highlighted the deep connection between Basotho and their magnificent environment, presenting a living example of a society that thrives in harmony with nature.

Visitors were treated to engaging displays and interactive exhibits that emphasised the nation's distinctive geography as the foundation for its sustainable development strategies.

From innovative water management initiatives to exciting opportunities in agriculture, renewable energy and tourism, the pavilion illustrated the abundance of resources waiting to be explored.

One of the standout features of the expo was the iconic Lesotho Highlands Water Project. This showcase highlighted Lesotho's careful stewardship of its vital water resources, alongside advancements in hydropower and other renewable energy initiatives, underscoring the country's commitment to a greener future.

The climax of Lesotho's participation was on July 1, 2025, when the Lesotho Business Forum took centre stage, coinciding with a vibrant celebration of Lesotho's National Day.

"This expo was a remarkable success for us," exclaimed 'Mabasia Ntoi, the Director of the Lesotho Pavilion. "We didn't just exhibit our nation; we amplified its presence on the global stage, sharing our philosophy with the world. We came to Osaka to demonstrate that in Lesotho, life is all about connections—the bond between our people and the majestic landscape, between our ancient traditions and a forward-thinking future, and between our nation and the global community. This fundamental connection is the wisdom we aim to carry into the future." With its distinctive high-altitude geography, democratic values and rich natural resources, Lesotho stands out as a formidable player on the global stage, brimming with potential in water resources, renewable energy and tourism. The exhibition title for the country's pavilion, "Experience Elevation," perfectly encapsulated this spirit.

Through its vibrant showcase of cultural heritage and investment opportunities, Lesotho has left an indelible mark, firmly establishing itself in the hearts and minds of the world community at Expo 2025.

Lesotho's financial weather bleak

By: Staff Reporter

The country's economic outlook for the upcoming period appears somewhat bleak, characterized by a mix of fleeting positive signs amidst a broader backdrop of challenges facing various regions of the country.

A closer analysis of the budget for the fiscal year 2025/26, along with progress updates from international organizations, reveals that the government of Lesotho has set ambitious objectives cantered around fostering inclusive, private-sector-led economic growth and improving essential infrastructure.

While the nation has celebrated several significant achievements, particularly in attaining a robust fiscal surplus, it continues to grapple with ongoing issues in job creation, capacity building and the volatility of revenue streams. These persistent challenges indicate that several key objectives remain unfulfilled.

The government had wished to transition from a government-dependent to a private sector-driven economy by diversifying revenue away from reliance on SACU receipts.

It also aimed to boost key sectors like agriculture, manufacturing and energy, targeting investments in these sectors including water and ICT to support growth. Strengthening institutions, combating corruption and enhancing public financial management – promoting good governance and accountability – also formed part of the goals. However, shortfalls seem to have hindered progress in closing the year with a clean progress report, with limited impact on jobs and poverty.

The notable fiscal surplus for the previous financial year had reportedly enabled the government to reduce public debt and increase foreign investment. But despite this achievement, economic growth has failed to translate into widespread job creation, with poverty still high. The IMF has therefore described this growth as jobless and warned of a silent failure.

When delivering the Budget Speech early this year, DR Retselisitsoe Matlanyane had said her Ministry of Finance and Development Planning had projected a continued surplus albeit smaller and significantly increased capital budget to invest in infrastructure. But economic growth has been projected to slow primarily due to external factors affecting key sectors like mining and textiles; the main drivers of economy.

Nonetheless, notable progress has been identified in other key projects. In March, the Ha Belo Industrial Estate commission made headlines, promising thousands of jobs. This is one of the many projects that had been stalled for one or two unpleasant reasons, but the government still nonetheless struggles with project execution and implementing, resulting in lower-than-budgeted capital spending. This has been seen in a number of projects that had been dragging over for years from the past administrations up to the current one, starting with the Royal Palace revamping to the National Museum.

The IMF Staff Concluding Statements of the 2025 Article IV mission have stated that the government of Lesotho's growth model has long struggled to deliver on the authorities' growth and development goals, with additional set of external shocks further clouding the outlook.

It states that the peg to the rand continues to serve Lesotho well, helping bring inflation down from a peak of 8.2 percent in early 2024 to 4.0 percent in April 2025, further highlighting that prudent government spending, SACU transfers and water royalties resulted in a sizable fiscal surplus, enhancing longer-term fiscal sustainability that helped strengthen foreign reserves which serve the peg.

However, transforming these fiscal surpluses into sustainable and high-quality growth, an urgent thing today now in the light of recent shocks, remains a challenge for the authorities. The IMF therefore encourages that public funds be saved wisely and spend strategically.

A greater lesson from the high and lows of the financial outlook of the country is that despite notable achievements, one thing should be learned; a greater public spending is no guarantee for Higher living standards. With the country's government spending way above international norms, more than double the SACU average, the government needs to cut down a huge chunk of its spending budget.

It should consider the possible use of its surpluses to ensure that it saves and spends strategically. Greater savings will, however, require continued fiscal prudence, and therefore, authorities will be expected to maintain their utmost efforts to control recurrent spending and enhance capacity in tax revenue analysis and administration.

CAFI Celebrates Years of Clean Records

By Staff Reporter

Under the vigilant management of Chaba Mokuku, the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project has garnered praise not only for its project delivery but also for its financial management, a distinction highlighted by its consistent clean audit reports.

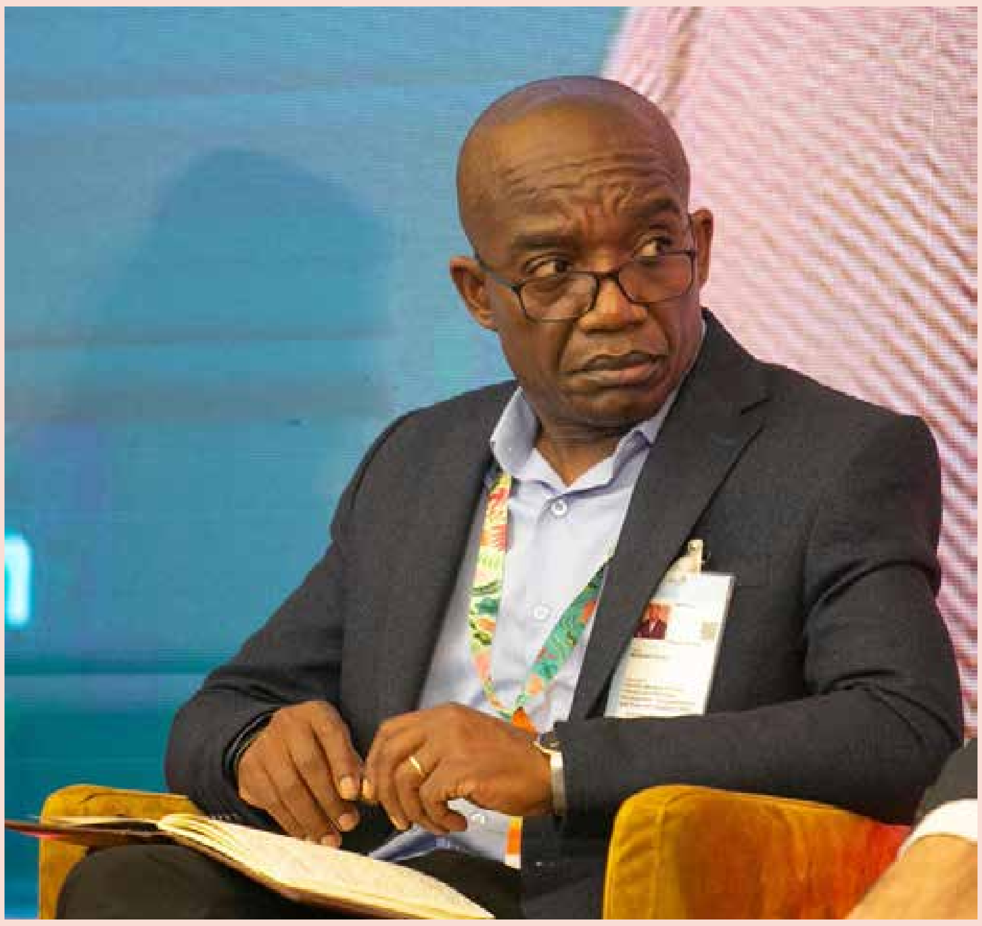
Launched in 2022, CAFI) still remains one of the few projects in the country responsibly managed while carrying out its task of entrepreneurial growth. This initiative of the government of Lesotho and the World Bank has marked a new chapter of success with this impeccable reputation and tangible impact on the country's economic landscape.

Following a media workshop held by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development (MTIBD) in Maseru this week, the project is being celebrated not just for this milestone in its financial affairs but also for its developments and achievements.

The project was conceptualised during the COVID-19 pandemic to create a supportive environment for Basotho entrepreneurs to increase access to business support services and financial products for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), with a focus on women and youth but not leaving behind men.

This week's workshop, therefore, provided a platform to reflect on the project's achievements and underscored its role in Lesotho's development.

'Mamoriti Phangoa, the Entrepreneurship Hub and



Seed Financing Facility Manager of the project said as a public owned but privately managed project, the Hub which was launched in June 2023 to support women and youth through incubation, mentorship and access to finance in the manner to drive inclusive growth has incubated 150 enterprises in key sectors like manufacturing, ICT, tourism and textiles, creating 1 250 permanent and temporary jobs for Basotho.

These entrepreneurs, Phangoa noted, received customised assistance including business development, financial management and market access training, thanks to the dedicated business mentors who always pour out their dedication in the programme to ensure fruitful results.

According to the Horticulture Value Chain Manager Nthako Supu, CAFI also supports the growth of commercial horticulture farming, helping to build a thriving fruit industry in Lesotho including providing training and establishing a horticulture incubation hub and training centre.

It was noted that the project, in partnerships with various ministries, has been working to improve government-to-business systems for processes such as business registration and trade facilitation. On a lighter note, the project has successfully incubated the current online single window for business facilitation, migrating from the prototype of registering businesses to eRegistration, ensuring that Basotho, wherever they are in the country, can access business registration facilities without physically visiting the MTIB facilities.

In its early stages, this single window for trade facilitation had only connected the ministry's One-stop Business Facilitation Centre (OBFC) for business licensing and the Revenue Services Lesotho for tax clearance certificates.

Lehlohonolo Mpholle, the project's M&E Specialist, said they currently incorporate four more departments in their G2B Digital Services, connecting the department of livestock, marketing, agri-business and the dairy board.

The wish, according to Mpholle, is to connect six more agencies, including tourism, health, traffic and others, to bring the total number of connected agencies to 10 in just the year 2025.

To ensure the smooth running of these added services to the one-stop shop, the project in partnership has trained about 240 staff members to equip them with the necessary skills to use the new registration models; the single one-time processing, real-time processing and digital CPLs with QR codes. It was also noted that the Minister of Trade, Mokhethi Shelile had expressed his satisfaction with the growth and achievements he witnessed after conducting a site visit to some of the youth-owned businesses supported by CAFI.

As a financing mechanism, navigating a field filled with risks and business uncertainties, the project has taken extensive measures to integrate disaster risk financing activities to strengthen the financial resilience of MSMEs against any shocks that may arise in the journey. Up to this far, there had only been a total of 21 claims and all of them were responsibly resolved, no matter what was escalated to the ministry. This is evidence that CAFI strives to prove to be a very responsible project, vigilant and caring to Basotho.

The CAFI project's transparency and responsible use of funds have set a high standard, demonstrating effective governance in development projects.

With its conclusion nearing in a few years, the project continues to build a legacy of sustainable economic growth and opportunity for Lesotho's entrepreneurs.

AFRICA

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Lesotho Tribune

SADC Condemns Instability in Madagascar, Calls for Urgent Dialogue

By Staff Reporter

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has expressed deep concern over the political and social turmoil unfolding in Madagascar, calling for an immediate end to violence and a return to constitutional order.

In a communiqué issued after the Extraordinary Summit of the SADC Organ Troika on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, held virtually on 16 October 2025, regional leaders reaffirmed their commitment to help restore peace and democratic governance in the island nation.

The meeting, chaired by Malawi's President Arthur Peter Mutharika in his capacity as Chairperson of the Organ, was attended by Tanzania's Vice President Dr. Philip Isdor Mpango and Eswatini's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator Polile Shakantu. Also present were ministers from the SADC Troika member states and the SADC Executive Secretary.

Appeal for Calm and Inclusive Dialogue

The summit urged all political actors in Madagascar to engage in inclusive dialogue as the only path toward lasting peace. It further called on all sides to refrain from violence, looting, and the destruction of property.

"The summit reaffirmed its commitment to supporting efforts aimed at restoring peace, stability, and democratic governance," the communiqué read. It also emphasised the importance of protecting vulnerable groups, especially youth, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Deployment of Fact-Finding Mission

SADC has endorsed the deployment of a technical fact-finding mission to Madagascar by 22 October 2025, supported by the SADC Secretariat. The mission is expected to gather information on the ground and report back to the Chairperson of the Organ by 31 October 2025.

Following the mission, SADC will convene another Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit to deliberate on the findings and determine further steps to address the political crisis.

Coordination with International Partners

The communiqué also directed the SADC Secretariat to coordinate closely with the African Union, the United Nations, and the Indian Ocean Commission to ensure a unified and complementary regional approach to stabilising Madagascar.

A comprehensive roadmap to end the crisis is expected to be developed with input from SADC's Panel of Elders, the Mediation Reference Group, and the Secretariat. This plan will outline the necessary assistance and interventions required to support a return to democratic governance.

A United Front for Regional Stability

The summit extended appreciation to President Mutharika for his leadership in convening the urgent meeting and reaffirmed the bloc's commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region.

"The Chairperson of the Organ Troika extended gratitude to Heads of State and Government for their participation and their continued commitment to promoting stability, peace, and security in the region, and the Republic of Madagascar in particular," the statement concluded.

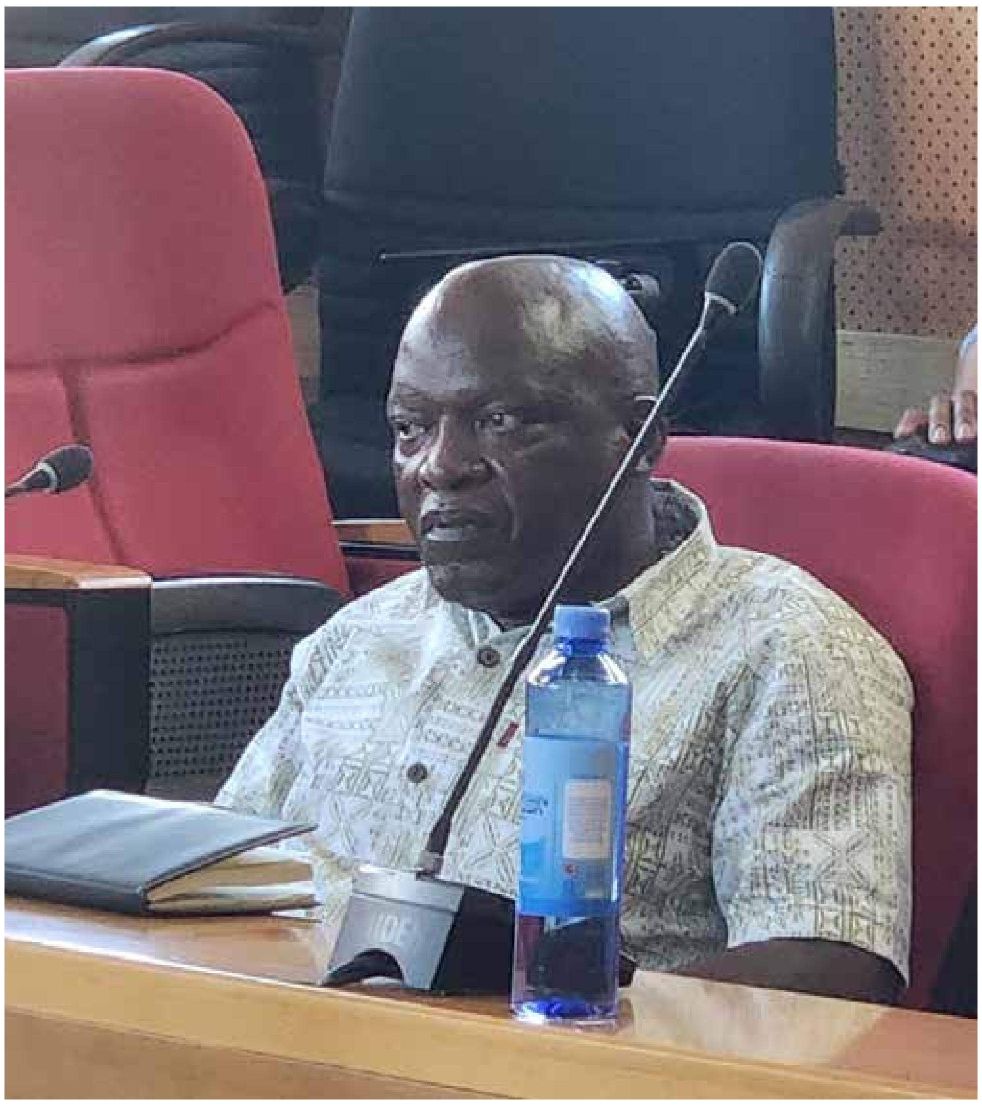
SADC's intervention comes amid rising international concern about the political crisis in Madagascar, following reports of protests, alleged electoral disputes, and deepening divisions among the country's political elite.

PAC Rebukes Duty-Free Boss for Disobedience Before Parliament

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Tensions ran high in Parliament this week when the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) called Teboho Kobeli, Executive Director of Duty-Free Sourcing Company, to order after he appeared reluctant to cooperate during questioning.
The incident unfolded during the Committee's sitting as Kobeli, who also serves as the company's majority shareholder, hesitated to share serious financial details requested by the Committee. He claimed he was not bound to provide certain information and that he had attended the meeting unprepared, saying he was unsure what he had been called for. His response, however, did not sit well with PAC Chairperson 'Machabana Lemphane Letsie, who firmly reminded him that appearing before Parliament is a matter of law and accountability.
"You are bound to cooperate. This is a Parliamentary Committee, not a private meeting," she told him.
"We expect full disclosure from anyone entrusted with public resources or transactions involving state institutions."
The Committee pressed Kobeli to explain key financial issues surrounding his company's dealings with the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC). In particular, PAC demanded clarity on how much money he personally used to purchase shares in Duty-Free ourcing Company and when the company intends to repay its M6.5 million debt to LNDC.



The debt, the Committee noted, carries 5 percent interest and an additional 2.5 percent penalty for default, costs that have continued to accumulate over time. Letsie stressed that the Committee's goal is to ensure accountability for public funds and transparency in all transactions involving state-linked entities. "We cannot overlook a case where public money is tied up in private business dealings without a clear repayment plan," she said.
As the exchanges grew tense, the PAC Chairperson reminded Kobeli that his company benefited from financial assistance connected to a public institution, making it subject to parliamentary oversight. She further cautioned him that refusing to cooperate or withholding information could be interpreted as barrier of parliamentary work, an act that carries serious implications.
"When public money is involved, there is no room for secrecy," she said. "You must account for every loti, every transaction, because taxpayers have a right to know how their money is being used." Other PAC members joined in, expressing frustration at Kobeli's lack of preparedness and his reluctance to provide straightforward answers.
One member described his conduct as "disrespectful to Parliament", while another urged him to take the Committee seriously and submit a detailed financial report. The Committee emphasized that it expects Duty-Free Sourcing Company to present clear records of its financial dealings with LNDC, including the repayment timeline, the source of the company's capital, and the current status of the outstanding debt.
Letsie further directed that Kobeli submit all requested documentation before the next meeting to avoid further summons or possible sanctions. The PAC's encounter with Duty-Free Sourcing Company adds to a growing list of cases where state-linked entities and private partners are being called to account for their financial conduct.
The Duty-Free Sourcing Company case, in particular, has raised eyebrows due to the size of the debt and the slow pace of repayment.
The Committee's involvement aims to ensure that no public funds are lost through negligence, poor management, or lack of oversight. Letsie closed the session with a stern reminder that all individuals and entities who appear before the PAC are legally obligated to cooperate.
"This Committee does not operate on assumptions or excuses," she said. "We demand facts, figures, and accountability. That is the only way to protect the interests of Basotho and ensure that public money serves the people, not private pockets."

EDITORIAL

The Real Failure Is Not the PAC, It Is DCEO and LMPS

By: Editorial

We have been watching with a mix of anger and disappointment as Basotho turn their frustration toward the Public Accounts Committee for exposing corruption and yet doing “nothing.” But that judgment is misplaced.

The PAC has done its part. It has called witnesses, exposed evidence, and tabled reports that have shaken the public sector. The real failure lies elsewhere, in the institutions that were created to fight crime and corruption, the DCEO and the LMPS.

This year alone, two state-owned enterprises, the Lesotho Electricity Company and the Lesotho National Development Corporation, were hauled before the PAC. Corruption, not speculation but fact, was laid bare. Yet nothing has followed.

The PAC cannot arrest, it cannot prosecute, it cannot confiscate assets. That is the work of the DCEO and the police. And on that front, both institutions have failed spectacularly.

Let us start with LEC. Internal audit reports released in May 2025 revealed how agents and staff colluded to credit customer accounts with money that was never deposited. A single deposit was used several times to justify fake credits. The company lost about M1.8 million. Even worse, LEC’s procurement unit could not produce proper documentation for multi-million maloti contracts. Prices were inflated beyond the original quotations. Suppliers were paid more than they bid. When the auditors asked for justification, there was none.

Then there is LNDC. During its hearing before the PAC, the Committee discovered that the Corporation’s internal auditor was unqualified for the position and related to the board chairperson. The PAC demanded that she be dismissed immediately. That was bold oversight, but what happened next? Nothing.

These are not rumours. They are facts recorded in official hearings. The PAC has done what it could. It has investigated, questioned, and exposed. The problem is that when the cameras switch off and the reports are published, the institutions that should take over vanish into silence.

DCEO and LMPS are the real story here. The agencies that should pursue suspects, freeze assets, and lay charges have instead become guardians of the powerful. The DCEO appears timid when dealing with senior officials, but aggressive when chasing small cases or intimidating the media. The police, on the other hand, seem to find their energy only when journalists report inconvenient truths.

We sometimes think Basotho do not fully understand how limited the PAC’s powers are. It can shine a light, but it cannot act on what it finds. It cannot arrest anyone. It cannot freeze a single bank account. The baton is supposed to be passed to the DCEO and the police, but both institutions drop it every time. That is why the same corrupt networks keep resurfacing in different ministries and parastatals.

We have seen this pattern before. Remember the Tsolo affair, where millions were mismanaged under the guise of renewable energy projects. The DCEO opened an investigation, but it dragged on until the case was struck off the roll. Witnesses disappeared, evidence went missing, and by the time anyone cared, the public had moved on. That is not incompetence by accident, it is incompetence by design.

The DCEO itself is in a state of decay. Its leadership is weak, its independence questionable, and its priorities confused. Instead of following money trails, it spends time issuing statements defending the government. Instead of targeting corruption in ministries, it targets the media. The LMPS has followed a similar path. When corruption involves ordinary officers, arrests come fast. When it touches the politically connected, investigations stall. Files vanish. Dockets are lost.

What frustrates me most is that Basotho still think the PAC can fix this. It cannot. The PAC’s job is to reveal, not to punish. If we want justice, we must demand it from the institutions that hold that power. The DCEO and LMPS have budgets, laws, and mandates that give them teeth, yet they behave like house pets.

We have spoken to a few people who work in these institutions. Some are honest and frustrated. They speak of interference, files that must “go upstairs,” and instructions to slow things down. Others have simply given up. That is the tragedy of our state. Even the honest ones are trapped in a culture of paralysis.

So, before we shout at the PAC for “doing nothing,” let us look closely at those who should be acting. The DCEO and the LMPS have become protectors of the same corruption they were created to fight. Their silence is not neutral; it is betrayal.

And while they sleep, the country bleeds. Projects are inflated, money disappears, and no one goes to jail. Journalists who try to report are threatened. The public grows more cynical. The only people who thrive are those who know someone powerful enough to call off the investigators.

Lesotho does not need new speeches about fighting corruption. It needs institutions that actually believe in their mandates. The DCEO and LMPS must be rebuilt, restructured, and insulated from political influence. Until that happens, the PAC will continue to shout into the void, and Basotho will continue to mistake exposure for justice.

For now, the truth is uncomfortable but clear. The PAC is not the problem. The rot is deeper. It lives in the very institutions that should be cleaning the system, but have instead learned how to survive within it.

OPINION

Incompetent Maqutu Oversteps... Again!

by:Hlalele 'Neko

It is alarming and deeply troubling to see the Director of Elections at the IEC thrusting himself into a process he constitutionally has no business managing. The invitation he issued for a press briefing on an "IEC Commissioners' Electoral Process" is not just an ordinary move, it is an attempt to muddy constitutional lines, usurp authority, and taint what should be a dignified, transparent appointment process….Delay the process and create a constitutional crisis!

Lesotho's Constitution makes one thing abundantly clear: the IEC commissioners are not recruited by the Director of Elections or the IEC bureaucracy. They are appointed by the King acting on advice of the Council of State, chosen from not fewer than five nominations submitted by POLITICAL PARTIES. The law is clear, the Director's office has no role in the shortlisting, the advising, or the final appointment.By issuing an invitation to "an IEC Commissioners' Electoral Process," the Director is attempting foolishly to rewrite the institutional script, positioning himself and his office as an arbiter of a selection process he does not constitutionally control. It is an overreach disguised in bureaucratic language.

Tomorrow, (20 October 2025), political party leaders are themselves finalising the required list of five names from which the Council of State and the King will choose three. The IEC Director, by staging a media briefing on 21 October, signals that he intends to influence or comment on the nomination-to-appointment phase while it is still underway. That timing is not innocent, it is malicious. It creates an impression that the Director is not neutral but is lobbying, micromanaging, or shaping outcomes. That undermines the confidence that the public, political parties, and even donors must have in the independence and fairness of the IEC.

Even in better-intentioned hands, the IEC's executive arm, the staff, Director, and secretariat, should not assume a voice in appointing commissioners. Their job is administration, implementation, and oversight after the constitutional actors do their work. The moment they position themselves as a participant in the constitutional act of appointment, they walk into a conflict of interest. The IEC may be empowered to employ its staff after consultation with the Public Service Commission and to manage operations. But that empowerment does not extend into the domain of political-constitutional appointments of its own leadership.

This is not an isolated misstep. The IEC under his supervision has repeatedly come under fire for administrative lapses. In 2022, the IEC admitted it made substantial errors in allocating parliamentary seats after the general election and had to ask the courts to correct them. That kind of error shows a shaky internal control environment and threatens legitimacy. Moreover, electoral analysts have criticized IEC readiness, resource constraints, late decisions, and weak communications during past polls. To now add constitutional overreach to a record of operational missteps is both reckless and irresponsible.

The Director's behavior has eroded public trust. Once the public perceives him as part of the political game, he ceases to be a neutral guardian of elections and becomes a suspect player. His invitation undermines the constitutional separation of roles and angers political parties who must submit nominees in good faith, now fearing undue interference in what is supposed to be their prerogative. A head of electoral administration who pretends to influence appointments fractures internal morale, invites legal challenges, and precipitates instability in leadership transitions.

If allowed to stand, this act opens the door for future Directors or commissioners to intrude on appointment processes, turning the IEC into another political actor rather than a neutral arbiter.

The Director of Elections may cloak his actions in official stationery and polite language, but make no mistake, this is an authoritarian pivot masquerading as institutional initiative. The IEC's credibility, integrity, and independence are at stake. He should be swiftly removed or disciplined, and an independent review established to reaffirm that no IEC official, however ambitious, must ever again attempt to steal the constitutional prerogative of commissioner appointment.

PAC Orders LNDC to Undo Auditor Appointment, Slams Incomplete Financial Report

By: Staff Reporter

MASERU

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has issued a strong directive to the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) Board to reverse the appointment of its Internal Auditor, citing failure to meet the advertised job requirements.

The order, delivered during a tense parliamentary session, came from PAC Chairperson 'Machabana Lemphane Letsie, who did not mince her words as she questioned the Corporation's recruitment decisions and its handling of key financial documents.

According to the Committee, the appointment of the current Internal Auditor raised red flags because she does not meet all the stipulated qualifications in the job advertisement. The position, Letsie explained, required a candidate with a Master's Degree in Internal Auditing, Master's Degree in Accounting, or Chartered Accounting (CA), along with active membership in the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA).

However, the appointed officer, though holding a Chartered Accountant qualification, was found not to be a registered member of the Institute of Internal Auditors, a requirement that the Committee emphasized could not be overlooked.

Letsie expressed concern that the LNDC Board had gone ahead with the appointment regardless of this important shortage. "If none of the applicants met the full requirements, the Corporation should have re-advertised the position instead of settling for someone who does not qualify," she said firmly.

Her remarks highlighted the Committee's

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SCIENCE&TECHNOLOGY

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Lesotho Tribune

Namibia Looks to Lesotho for Digital Policing Inspiration

By: Seipati Matobo

Maseru

When Lesotho tech firm EngiData first visited Police Headquarters in 2019, they were not greeted by sleek servers or computer screens but by stacks of thick paper books, handwritten records of every spotfine issued across shifts. According to Neo Kolobe, Managing Director at EngiData, that moment sparked a revolutionary idea.

"We were told there was no money to digitize the process," Kolobe recalled. "But we showed them that the money was right there in those books. The unpaid fines themselves could fund the technology."

That vision became eSpotfine, a homegrown system that has not only digitized how Lesotho's police manage traffic fines but has now drawn international attention.

This week, a high-powered Namibian delegation arrived in Maseru to study both the eSpotfine and the Traffic Case Management Systems, both developed by EngiData and implemented by the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS). The visiting team includes senior representatives from the Namibian National Police, the National Road Safety Council, the Prosecution Office, the Judiciary, and the Municipal Police.

Their visit marks a proud moment for Lesotho, now being recognised as a leader in digital law enforcement across Southern Africa.

The System That Changed Everything

Senior Inspector Moeketsi Mahetlane, a key figure in the Automated Traffic Justice System within LMPS's IT Department, said the journey began between August and September 2019. "That is when the eSpotfine was successfully introduced," he explained. "From that moment, the traffic department started living its dream of operating in a technologically advanced era."

Funded by the Road Fund and powered by EngiData's design, eSpotfine has become one of the most efficient and transparent traffic enforcement systems in the region. It allows officers to issue fines electronically, track offenders in real time, and link payments directly to the justice system, cutting out the delays and leakages that plagued the manual system.

"This system has changed how we work," Mahetlane said. "We can now hold people accountable, trace those who fail to comply, and maintain proper digital records. For years, we dreamed of this system but financial constraints stood in our way."

Regional Recognition

EngiData's innovation first caught regional attention when Botswana's law enforcement officialsvisited Lesotho in May 2022 to study the system. This week's Namibian visit builds on that growing interest.

On Thursday, the Namibian delegation visited traffic police roadblocks around Maseru, the Pitso Ground Police Station, and several eSpotfine payment points. They observed how real time data collection and automation have reduced human error and improved accountability. Later in the day, the group met with officials from the Ministry of Law and the Judiciary to understand how the system integrates with court and prosecution workflows.

Tomorrow, the team will meet with system developers, the Road Fund, and transport regulators to explore how similar models could be adapted in Namibia.

Protecting Innovation and Preserving Security

While the visitors were given hands-on exposure to the system, the LMPS was careful not to reveal sensitive operational details. The IT and traffic departments maintained strict confidentiality to ensure no security breaches occurred.

Even so, the guests were impressed by the system's sophistication and the professionalism of the Lesotho team. "The visits have given our officers a sense of pride," said Mahetlane. "It motivates us to work even harder and continue raising the bar."

A Basotho Solution with Global Potential

For EngiData, the Namibian visit is not just a validation of technical excellence but a celebration of Basotho ingenuity. "This system was built by Basotho for Basotho," said Kolobe. "And now, it is inspiring others beyond our borders."

In a continent where digital transformation is often outsourced, EngiData's achievement stands as proof that homegrown innovation can solve complex public sector challenges.

As one LMPS officer put it, "What we have achieved with eSpotfine is proof that African solutions can come from within Africa. We are proud that Lesotho is setting the pace."

With EngiData's innovation now under the regional spotlight, Lesotho is not just catching up with the digital age; it is helping define it.

Continued from page 17

growing frustration over what it sees as a pattern of disregard for proper recruitment procedures in state-owned institutions. The PAC Chairperson further warned that such actions could expose the Corporation to governance risks and weaken accountability in financial oversight.
The LNDC Board was therefore instructed to revisit and undo the appointment immediately, ensuring that future recruitment strictly follows advertised criteria.
The argument over the internal auditor's appointment was not the only issue that put the LNDC under fire. The Committee also criticized the Corporation for submitting an incomplete financial report, a document that shockingly lacked figures despite repeated instructions to correct it. During the same meeting, Letsie lectured LNDC for presenting a report that failed to meet the Committee's expectations, despite being given additional time to make necessary corrections.
"We received a composition without figures last week, which led to the postponement of the meeting. Yet, even now, what you have brought still lacks the required details," she said with evident frustration.
The PAC Chairperson explained that the report was essential for the Auditor General's review of LNDC's financial performance for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022. Its incompleteness, she said, hinders the Committee's ability to compile an accurate account of how public resources were used by the Corporation. Adding to the Committee's list of complaints. Letsie revealed that the LNDC had also failed to provide a comprehensive report on international trips undertaken by its officials.
According to her, the Committee had previously requested a detailed breakdown that should include who traveled, the purpose of each trip, and how much was spent.
However, the report provided by LNDC still fell short of those details.
"The Committee wants to know how taxpayers' money was used," she emphasized. "It is not enough to say there were trips; we need to know what value those trips brought to the Corporation and to the country."
Her comments reflect wider public concerns about transparency and accountability within government agencies, where spending on foreign travel has often come under inspection. The PAC's firm stance on LNDC's administrative and financial conduct underscores Parliament's growing demand for strict compliance with governance standards across public institutions.
Letsie said the Committee would not tolerate reports that fail to meet the standards required for public accountability. "Every report submitted to this Committee must be complete, verifiable, and backed by figures. Anything less will be sent back," she warned.
She further stated that the PAC's role is to ensure that every cent of public money is accounted for and that officials who fail in their responsibilities face consequences.
The LNDC, established to promote industrial and economic development in Lesotho, has been under the spotlight in recent years for financial management issues and slow implementation of audit recommendations.
In closing, the PAC Chairperson retold the Committee's order that the LNDC Board must take immediate corrective action regarding the Internal Auditor's appointment. She emphasized that such oversight lapses undermine not only the integrity of the Corporation but also public confidence in state institutions. "The law and procedure exist for a reason. You cannot bend them to suit individuals," she said. "The position of Internal Auditor is one of trust, and therefore it must be occupied by someone who fully meets the qualifications and ethical requirements." Letsie also warned that failure to comply with the Committee's directive would result in further parliamentary intervention.
As the meeting concluded, the PAC urged LNDC to return with a corrected report, complete with figures, justifications for expenditures, and clear records of all international activities. The tone of the session left little doubt that the Committee is tightening its grip on accountability, with the LNDC's leadership now under pressure to prove that it can manage public resources responsibly and transparently.

DPP Signs Off Explosive Cases Targeting Top Police Chiefs

...Minister of Police also implicated

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The corridors of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) were abuzz late Friday afternoon as Acting DPP Mofilikoane signed two high-profile prosecution directives that could shake Lesotho's police leadership. Lesotho Tribune can confirm that both directives relate to senior police officials, Commissioner of Police Borotho Matsoso and Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Paseka Mokete, in separate criminal cases scheduled to be heard early next week.

According to sources inside the DPP's office, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) has filed a case against Commissioner Matsoso for embezzlement of police informers' funds, estimated to be between M60,000 and M100,000. The funds were allegedly misused and diverted from operations meant to support intelligence gathering.

When contacted for comment, Commissioner Matsoso responded briefly, saying, "Not at all Madame, and if there is a case I will face it as it comes."

In the second matter, the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) itself has launched proceedings against Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Paseka Mokete, who is accused of trafficking in illicit drugs. The case is also set to appear in court next week, marking an extraordinary moment in Lesotho's policing history as both the head of the police and his deputy face serious criminal allegations at the same time.

Speaking to Lesotho Tribune, DCP Mokete strongly denied the allegations, calling them part of a sustained campaign to discredit him. "If there is a case for me, I will defend myself fiercely before the court of law. I know that there are perpetual efforts to get me indicted on anything," he said.

Police sources which spoke to Lesotho Tribune on condition of anonymity alleged that Mokete's privacy and communications have been violated in an orchestrated attempt to frame him. "Recently, his WhatsApp was hacked in an effort to find out whom he was communicating with. There are two well-known police officers who have been given tasks to do everything to nail him down. Some police officers have been suspended simply because they refused to incriminate him in this orchestrated effort to get him criminally charged."

Both cases have sent shockwaves through the law enforcement community, with insiders describing the developments as unprecedented and a test of institutional integrity.

If these prosecutions proceed as expected, they will mark the first time in recent memory that two of Lesotho's highest-ranking police officials face criminal charges simultaneously, one for corruption and the other for drug trafficking.

Shockingly sources within the LMPS alleged that there is corruption case against Minister of Police, Hon. Lebona Lephema, related to procurement of police vehicles and issuance of citizenship visas.

Asked to comment, Minister of Police, Lebona Lephema's mobile phone went unanswered.

DEFENCE FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE AS KHETHENG MURDER TRIAL DRAGS ON

BY: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The long and emotionally charged trial of four police officers accused of murdering their colleague, Police Constable Mokalekale Khetheng, has once again been pushed forward, this time to November 4, 6, 10,11 and 13, 2025, as the defence battles to have its voice heard in a case that has gripped the nation for nearly a decade.

The latest postponement came as the High Court, presided over by Justice Charles Hungwe, continued hearing the defense's side of the story. For Superintendent Thabo Tšukulu, the first accused and one of the four police officers standing trial, the struggle has been nothing short of distressing. Arrested eight years ago, Tšukulu maintains his innocence, but his fate, like that of his three co-accused, remains hanging in the balance.

This week, the defence, led by Advocate Karabo Mohau (KC), began leading its witnesses after the prosecution closed its case. The court had earlier dismissed an application for discharge brought under Section 175 (3) of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act of 1981. The section allows the court to acquit an accused person if there is no evidence linking them to the offence. But Justice Hungwe ruled otherwise, stating that the prosecution had made out a prima facie case requiring the accused to respond.

That decision set the stage for the defence to finally speak. And when it did, it was clear that its frustration had been building for years. Before calling their first witness, Advocate Mohau KC raised a serious concern, one that has now become central to the defense's strategy. He told the court that they had made numerous unsuccessful attempts to access the occurrence books from the Leribe Police Station, where key records from the time of Khetheng's disappearance and death are believed to be stored.

"These books," he argued, "contain vital information that could clarify the movements of police officers during that period. Without them, our hands are tied." Despite multiple requests, the defence claims the prosecution has failed to produce the documents. Adv. Mohau told the court that the absence of these records has crippled their ability to present a complete and fair defence. "It has been eight long years since my client was arrested," he said in a firm but weary tone. "This case has dragged on for far too long. Justice delayed is justice denied." Justice Hungwe listened carefully but urged the defence to proceed with the witnesses they could call, even as the issue of the missing documents remained unresolved.

The first witness to testify for the defence was Senior Superintendent 'Malichaba Talasi, who in 2016 was stationed at Leribe Police Station. Her testimony focused on operational procedures and record-keeping at the station, giving the court insight into how documents such as the occurrence books were maintained, or, in some cases, misplaced. Her appearance marked the official beginning of the defence case, one that many observers say will determine the ultimate direction of the trial.

By the time proceedings reached midweek, Retired Superintendent Thabo Tšukulu himself took the stand as the third defence witness. Calm but clearly burdened by years of accusation, Tšukulu began giving evidence in his own defence. His testimony is expected to continue when the case resumes in November.

ARTS & SPORTS

Jane Thaba-Ntšo Announces Retirement from International Football

By Litšitso Letsunyane

The curtain may have fallen on one of Lesotho's most decorated football careers, as veteran midfielder Jane Thaba-Ntšo, famously known as Morena oa Thaba, has officially announced his retirement from international football.

The 29-year-old Matlama FC star formally submitted his retirement letter to the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA), signaling his decision to end his participation in the national team setup and focus solely on his club career. The move could mean that his recent appearance against Zimbabwe was the last time football lovers saw him donning the Likuena colours.

"I believe it is time to grant young players the opportunity to represent the nation. At this stage, my desire is to continue playing for Matlama only, as my tenure with the senior national team has come to an end," Thaba-Ntšo said. "One cannot remain in the national team indefinitely. When the moment arrives, it is only fitting to step aside and allow the next generation to rise," he added.

Born in Thaba-Bosiu, Thaba-Ntšo's football journey began in the Thaba-Bosiu B Division League, where his talent was quickly noticed through outstanding performances in local and high school tournaments. His rose from grassroots football to the international stage quickly. He made his senior international debut on 19 November 2014 in a 2015 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifier against Gabon. Since then, Thaba-Ntšo has been a cornerstone of the national team, amassing over 94 international capsand scoring 17 goals, which makes him both Lesotho's most capped player and its all-time leading goal scorer. Amongst his many achievements, Thaba-Ntšo also holds a remarkable record from the 2016 COSAFA Cup, where he scored against Mauritius after just 34 seconds, the fastest goal ever recorded in the tournament's history.

The maestro is also known for his consistency and commitment, Thaba-Ntšo has been a key figure in Lesotho's top-flight football for over a decade. His leadership and experience have made him a respected figure both on and off the pitch. However, recent months have brought challenges. Earlier this year, Thaba-Ntšo lost his wife to illness, a personal tragedy that deeply affected him. Additionally, during the 2025 COSAFA Cup, he dislocated his elbow in a match against Namibia and was hospitalized with a soft tissue injury. These personal and physical setbacks may have contributed to his decision to step away from the international scene.

Sources within the Lesotho Football Association have indicated that the federation's leadership plans to meet with Thaba-Ntšo in an attempt to persuade him to reconsider his decision, as his influence and experience are still viewed as vital to the national team. However, insiders suggest that the midfielder appears resolute about his retirement.

Jane Thaba-Ntšo leaves behind a legacy of excellence, dedication, and history-making moments. His departure marks the end of an era for Likuena, with fans and officials alike acknowledging the void his absence will create. While his international boots may be hung up, Thaba-Ntšo's contribution to Lesotho football will be remembered for generations to come, as a symbol of passion, perseverance, and pride.