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Sunday, 26 October 2025

Lesotho Tribune

www.lesothotribune.co.ls

Information Liberates

ISSN 2453-5419



VOL 5, ISSUE 8

M 22.00

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Maqelepo Denies Role in Alleged Witchcraft Killing

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

One of the men accused of killing a traditional healer in Sefikeng, Berea, has told the High Court that he had no part in the brutal attack that claimed the life of Mokola Lebakeng. Testifying before the court this week, Thokoane Maqelepo firmly denied taking part in the murder, saying he neither planned nor participated in the incident. Maqelepo is among several men accused of killing Lebakeng after accusing him of witchcraft.

He told the court that the deceased was more than a neighbour, he was like a brother. "We grew up together," he said. "I had no reason to harm him. He was a person I respected and cared about." Maqelepo insisted that he was not among those who chased and attacked the deceased. He said he could never take part in an act of violence, explaining that he is sensitive to injuries and cannot even bear to watch others get hurt.

He further denied claims that he led the group that attacked and killed Lebakeng. According to him, he had no knowledge of any plan to harm the deceased and was surprised to find a crowd already gathered at the scene.

Giving his evidence in



chief, Maqelepo recounted that he was on his way to visit his brother, Mathibeli Maqelepo, who is also one of the accused in the same case, when he came across a crowd of people near the home of the deceased's brother.

He said when he arrived, the mob appeared angry and was pelting stones at the house. "They were shouting and throwing stones. I stopped and watched, not knowing what was going on," he told the court. According to Maqelepo, the deceased later emerged from the house, running for his life. The angry crowd immediately chased after him. "People ran after him, but I did not follow them," he said. "I remained behind with the deceased's brother."

He told the court that while others went after the deceased, he stayed to

check on the family, particularly the children who were still inside the house as stones continued to hit the walls and windows.

"I wanted to make sure the children were safe," Maqelepo testified. "After things calmed down, I helped the deceased's brother to see what damage had been done to the house."

He added that after evaluating the damage, he and the deceased's brother left the scene together and went home. He said he did not see what happened after the crowd chased the deceased and only learned later that the traditional healer had been killed.

The accused maintained throughout his testimony that he did not take part in the killing, nor did he encourage anyone to do so. He rejected any suggestion that he had a leadership role in the events that

led to the death. Maqelepo told the court that accusations linking him to the attack were false and unfair.

"I am being blamed for something I did not do," he said. "People assumed I was involved because I was there, but I never took part". He also pointed out that his relationship with the deceased had always been peaceful and friendly. He said he had no quarrel with him and that rumours about witchcraft had nothing to do with him.

Throughout his testimony, Maqelepo appeared emotional as he described the events of that day. He told the court that the killing shocked him deeply and that he could not understand why anyone would believe he was involved.

"I was heartbroken when I heard that he was dead," he said quietly. "He was someone I knew well. I would never harm him." The court heard that the attack took place after community members accused the deceased of practicing witchcraft. It is alleged that the mob assaulted him before setting him on fire, resulting in his death.

He concluded his testimony by repeating his innocence and expressing confidence that the truth would clear his name.

The trial continues before Justice Tšeliso Mokoko with further witness testimonies expected.

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Court Hears Defence Evidence in Witchcraft Murder Trial

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The High Court continued hearing defence evidence in a murder case where several men from Sefikeng in Berea are accused of killing a traditional healer they suspected of witchcraft. Justice Tšeliso Mokoko presided over the proceedings as the third accused, Lesang Salemane, took the stand to give his side of the story.

The men are charged with the murder of Mokola Lebakeng, a traditional doctor who was allegedly attacked and killed by villagers who accused him of using witchcraft.

Salemane told the court that on the night Lebakeng was killed, he was in the company of Thato Matlosa and Tšepo Khomolishoele, both of whom have already testified for the State.

He said the three were walking near the home of the deceased when they noticed people gathered there.

"We did not know what was happening at first," Salemane said. He told the court that after a short while, they heard someone shouting for another person to be stopped.

"Even though it was dark, I managed to see some of the people present. I saw the brother of the deceased and the first accused. I also recognized the voice that was calling out, it was that of Molefi Ramothamo,

who one of my co-accused," Salemane testified. He said the situation was tense and confusing, adding that he did not take part in any assault or planning of the incident.

"There was shouting and movement all over the place. I got scared and left the scene," he added.

Earlier this week, the court heard evidence from the first and second accused, Thokoane Maqelepo and Mathibeli Maqelepo, who both denied any involvement in the killing. Thokoane told the court he was at home when the incident happened, insisting that he had been falsely accused. Mathibeli also denied participating

in the crime, claiming the accusations were based on rumours and personal grudges. Both accused persons argued that they were victims of false allegations spread by villagers who believed the deceased was responsible for mysterious illnesses and deaths in the community.

The killing of Mokola Lebakeng has left the Sefikeng community deeply divided. Some residents described the deceased as a humble man who helped people with traditional medicine. Others, however, claimed he used his powers for harmful purposes. The murder case has once again brought to light the growing problem of witch-

craft-related violence in Lesotho's rural areas, where superstition and fear often fuel mob justice.

Justice Mokoko listened carefully as Salemane gave his testimony and occasionally asked for clarification on some of his statements.

Meanwhile, the prosecution maintains that the accused men acted together when they attacked and killed Lebakeng. According to the prosecution, the accused believed the deceased was behind a series of unexplained misfortunes in the village.

The case is postponed to November 17 as the defence will be bringing its last witness to testify.



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“We Are No Longer Toothless, We Bite,” PAC Chairperson

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Machabana Lemphane Letsie, has declared that the committee is no longer a “toothless dog,” but a powerful watchdog that now bites where it must. She said the committee, which once struggled to make an impact, is now operating with strength, authority and real results. As she unpacked the committee’s role within the Southern African Development Community Organization of Public Accounts Committees (SADCO-PAC), Lemphane-Letsie said the PAC has transformed from a body that was once ignored to one that now commands respect and fear among public officials who mishandle government funds.

“There was a time when people viewed the PAC as a sleeping dog. Those days are over,” she said firmly. “Today, the PAC works and people know that we mean business.” Lemphane-Letsie explained that in the past, the committee’s findings and recommendations were often disregarded, and those implicated in the misuse of public money faced no real consequences. But now, she said, the tide has turned. According to the Chairperson, the PAC has strengthened its oversight role by demanding accountability from ministries, state-owned enterprises, and other public institutions. She said the committee’s sessions are no longer rou-



tine meetings but serious hearings where evidence is presented and tough questions are asked. “People used to think PAC’s job was to make noise and do nothing,” she said. “Now, they realise that we have the legal power to call anyone to account and to make recommendations that have weight.” She added that the committee operates strictly within the law, following proper parliamentary procedures when interrogating witnesses or summoning accounting officers. “We are accused of being harsh or overreaching,” she said. “But we only apply the law as it is. Our responsibility is to ensure that taxpayers’ money is used for the purpose it was intended for, not for personal enrichment.” Lemphane Letsie admitted that the committee’s firm stance has not been welcomed by everyone. Some individuals and institutions, she said, complain that the PAC has become too aggressive or political. She dismissed such criti-

cism, saying the committee’s duty is not to please people but to protect the public purse.

“When we summon people who misused funds, some claim we are targeting them,” she said. “But the truth is simple, if you manage public money, you must be ready to explain how you used it. That’s accountability.” The Chairperson said it is unfortunate that some officials try to hide behind technicalities or legal excuses instead of simply telling the truth about how they handled funds.

“We deal with cases where millions of maloti go missing, and yet some people want to convince us that nothing happened,” she said. “We cannot allow that. The era of impunity is ending.” Lemphane Letsie highlighted that a strong and fearless PAC is crucial for restoring public confidence in how government funds are managed. She said citizens must know that Parliament is watching and that wrongdoing will not go unnoticed.

“People must trust that their money is safe and used properly,” she said. “Every maloti collected from taxpayers must go to services, not to pockets.” She added that the committee’s growing reputation for firm action is already influencing how ministries and agencies handle their financial records. “We have seen improvement in how some departments prepare for audits,” she noted.

“They now know that if they ignore audit recommendations, they will have to face the PAC.”

Lemphane Letsie concluded by calling on all public servants to work with integrity and accountability. She said the PAC will continue to act without fear or favour, ensuring that every cent of public money is properly accounted for.

“The PAC is not your enemy,” she said.

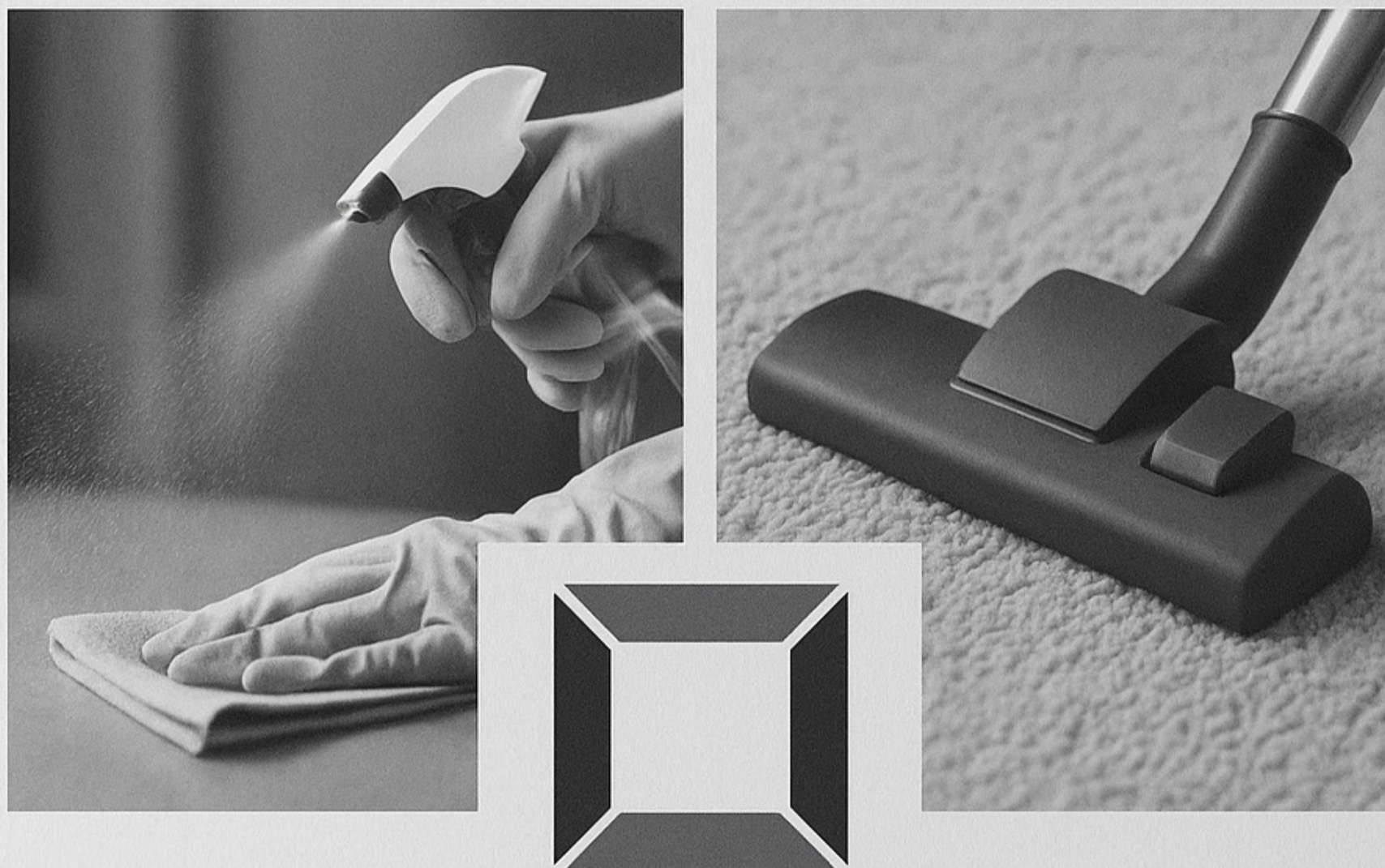
“We are here to safeguard public funds for the benefit of the people. But if you misuse those funds, we will not hesitate to act.” She said the committee’s effectiveness lies not in its power to punish, but in its ability to expose wrongdoing and push for corrective measures.

“Our job is to shine a light where there is darkness,” she said.

“When we do that, we make sure the system becomes stronger.”

With a renewed sense of purpose, the PAC under Mrs. Lemphane Letsie’s leadership has become one of Parliament’s most active committees, proving that it is indeed no longer a toothless dog, but a watchdog with both bark and bite.

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UN Calls Basotho to Action

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The United Nations Day 2025 was marked by a powerful address from Amanda Mukwashi, the UN Resident Coordinator in Maseru this week, highlighting both the achievements and the ongoing challenges faced by the people of Lesotho.

Mukwashi emphasized the core values of the United Nations: peace, dignity and opportunity for all while underscoring the UN's commitment to standing alongside the government and people of Lesotho for nearly sixty years- a partnership rooted in shared aspirations for peace and development.

She painted a vivid picture of the daily realities of life in Lesotho, referencing the dreams, determination, and the dedication of people from different corners of Lesotho. These stories, Mukwashi said, served to emphasize the UN's focus on people and the importance of its charter. She identified climate change and economic hardship as major



challenges, noting the parched fields in Qacha's Nek and the scarcity of opportunities for young people and stressing the difficult choices families face between providing food and sending children to school. Despite these struggles, the Mukwashi emphasized the enduring hope and resilience within Lesotho showcased by

women's cooperatives creating reusable products and young innovators using technology to connect farmers and health workers. She called Basotho to action, urging them to continue building a nation where every person can live with dignity and hope. She highlighted the importance of unity and

collective action in carrying forward the promise of humanity, emphasizing that progress begins at the grassroots level, in the hands of Basotho. Referencing a local saying, "When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind," she celebrated Lesotho's deep-rooted culture, resilience and shared values.

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Lesotho Commemorates UN Day

By: Pheello Mosesi

Constructed and founded around restoring global peace and security in 1945 after World War II, the United Nations commemorated another anniversary in style in Maseru this week. In the United States of America, San Francisco, delegates from 50 nations met with the main objective of producing a document that would be acceptable to all countries – the UN Charter – that would serve as guidance for the work of this new unity.

The delegates were driven by determination to establish an organisation that would preserve peace and help build a better world.

Despite some disagreements and clashes of opinion, the delegates were resolved to come together and set aside their differences to create the new global organisation. That is when, on 25 June 1945, the UN Charter was unanimously adopted.

The Charter is the founding document of the UN and to this day, the UN operates under the guidelines and parameters laid out in it.

Some of the goals entailed in the global leading document include to save succeeding generations from the devastation of war, reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,



establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained and to promote social progress and better standards of living.

In her speech, the UN Resident Coordinator, Amanda Mukwashi, emphasised that one of the pressing concerns that Lesotho is currently facing is the impacts of climate change, urging the government, the private sector and the people in their individual capacities to be active in initiatives that have been designed to fight climate change.

“When we work together, we prove that progress doesn’t begin in the roles

of power – it begins here in the hands of Basotho who choose action over doubt and hope over hesitation,” Mukwashi said intending to inspire Basotho.

Prime Minister Sam Matekane highlighted that the birth of the UN has acted as a beacon of hope that “humanity can choose cooperation over conflict, unity over division and hope over despair.”

“For eight decades, the UN has championed the fundamental rights and freedoms for all. This year, for the first time in our nation’s history, Lesotho has been elected as one of the vice presidents of the UN General Assembly,” Matekane ech-

oed, his face beaming with pride.

“As Lesotho, we pledge to apply the values of inclusivity and good governance in our tenure as vice president” he affirmed.

The commemoration kick-started with a UN exhibition in Maseru Central, followed by a discussion that dissected the issues of how Lesotho is to be seen partaking in the implementation of the UN’s manifestos.

Initiative organisations and clubs were awarded and recognised as game changers that have been active in driving change at the grassroots level in issues like women empowerment, youth, vulnerable groups and conservation of natural resources.

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Maseu

The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) has suffered a dramatic financial loss, shifting from an M82.9 million profit in 2018/19 to a staggering M54.4 million loss in 2023/24. This represents a decline of more than 165 percent in just five years, raising deep questions about management, efficiency, and the Corporation's relevance to Lesotho's industrial agenda.

Assets Rising, Value Sinking

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

LNDC Profits Plummet by a Record 165%

From M82.9 Million Profit in 2018/19 To M54.4 Million Loss today



LNDC Interim CEO, Advocate Molise Ramaili

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RSL EMBRACES INNOVATION, BOOST TAXPAYER EXPERIENCE

By: Lemohang Botsane

Maseru

To improve service delivery and meet the needs of taxpayers, the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) is utilising the power of innovation. The authority believes innovation goes beyond technology it's about people, learning from experiences and engaging with valued taxpayers.

A key example of this commitment to innovation is the new online refunds application. This digital solution is part of the company's drive for digital transformation and operational efficiency. By maximising technology and taxpayers' feedback, RSL seeks to provide a smooth and productive experience for taxpayers. Thus growth stresses the organisation's devotion to continuous improvement and excellence in service delivery.

With this product, the RSL has taken an important step towards improving its services. Building on years of process enhancement, the tax collector has implemented the digital system to automate refunds, enhance accuracy and reduce turnaround times.

This development highlights the RSL's commitment to efficient, transparent and client-centric delivery. The new system is expected to benefit tax-



payers by providing faster and more reliable refunds.

This new growth marks a significant milestone in the RSL's mission to improve taxpayers' experience. More than just a digital platform, this system represents dedication, efficiency, accountability and continuous improvement. And by embracing innovation, the authority is ensuring that taxpayers receive real value and seamless services.

The new online refunds application aims to make the refund process easier, faster and more reliable for taxpayers. It's stipulated that refunds between

M20.00 and M1000.00 with no issues will be processed automatically, applications with issues will be marked "pending" until resolved, after which they will move to processing and finalisation, and refunds above M1000.00 requiring further checks will show "audit in progress" before proceeding.

Applications may be rejected or cancelled if documents are missing or returns are outstanding, with clear reasons displayed on the taxpayer's dashboard. If a taxpayer has an outstanding tax liability, the refund will automatically be offset to

ensure compliance with revenue laws.

The RSL remains committed to ensuring that all taxpayers can access its services. Recognising that not everyone is familiar with digital platforms, RSL's mobile tax office continues to travel the country, bringing services closer to the people, and trained teams will also provide assistance to taxpayers in using the online platform.

By combining digital innovation with traditional outreach, RSL aims to make tax compliance easier and more convenient for all Basotho, regardless of their location.

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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporter

Malawi's new president, Peter Mutharika, has announced that no unprocessed mineral resources will be allowed to leave the country. The move is part of a broader strategy to stimulate industrial growth and maximize the value of Malawi's natural resources. With abundant deposits of bauxite, uranium, and graphite, Malawi stands to earn an estimated \$500 million annually by developing its mineral sector before exporting.

The government is currently investing in key mining sites, including the rutile deposits in Kasiya, Lilongwe, and the rare earth elements at Kangankunde in Balaka.

He described the current system—where minerals are extracted and exported without local value addition—as a major loss to the national economy, depriving Malawians of jobs and government of much-needed revenue.

Speaking during a press briefing at Kamuzu Palace in Lilongwe, Mutharika emphasized that the government will now prioritize

AFRICA

Malawi to ban export of unprocessed minerals



local beneficiation, mineral value addition, and downstream processing as key pillars of its mining policy. He said Malawi can no longer afford to continue exporting raw minerals while importing finished products made from the same materials at high cost. "This practice has been undermining our industrial growth and keeping our people in poverty," Mutharika said. "We must add value to our minerals right here in Malawi, create jobs, and keep the profits within our borders." The President revealed that his administration will soon establish a National Mining Corporation to oversee mineral production, processing, and export to ensure transparency and accountability in the sector.

He added that Malawi must build strategic partnerships with credible international investors who can help develop local capacity while respecting the

country's resource sovereignty.

According to mining experts, the Kasiya rutile deposit, managed by Sovereign Metals Limited, is one of the largest undeveloped rutile reserves in the world, with the potential to make Malawi a key player in the global titanium market. Similarly, the Kangankunde rare earth deposit in Balaka is considered one of the most promising sources of rare earth elements, which are critical in the production of electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, and high-end electronics.

Analysts have long argued that Malawi's dependence on exporting raw minerals has limited its economic potential, as the country earns minimal revenue while foreign companies profit from processing and selling refined products abroad.

The ban on raw mineral exports is therefore seen as a bold and strategic move

to reverse this trend and establish a strong industrial base rooted in mineral value addition.

Economists have, however, cautioned that implementing the policy will require massive investment in processing infrastructure, technology, and skilled labor to ensure Malawi can handle large-scale mineral refining locally.

They have also urged the government to ensure that the new policy framework promotes transparency, environmental sustainability, and community participation, especially in areas affected by mining activities.

Civil society organizations have welcomed the announcement but called for strict oversight mechanisms to prevent corruption and exploitation in the sector. They emphasized that mineral wealth should directly benefit Malawians through improved public services, infrastructure, and job creation rather than enriching a few individuals or companies.

President Mutharika's directive marks a significant milestone in Malawi's quest to transform its natural resources into a driver of sustainable economic growth and industrialization.

As the country moves to implement the export ban, the spotlight now turns to how effectively the government will translate this vision into action and ensure that Malawi's mineral wealth truly works for its people.

Lesotho Faces Alarming Food Insecurity Crisis

...IPC Report Highlights Urgent Need for Action

By: Staff Reporter

A recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) paints a concerning picture of food security in Lesotho, revealing that a significant portion of the rural population is grappling with high levels of acute food insecurity.

The report, dated October 9, 2025, underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to mitigate the crisis.

According to it, approximately 258,000 people (17 percent of the rural population, are currently classified as facing IPC Phase 3 or above (crisis or worse) of acute food insecurity.

The districts of Mafeteng, Maseru and Mochale's Hoek are said to be particularly affected and also classified in the IPC Phase 3 (crisis) as a result of prolonged dry spells and high temperatures that were experienced between November 2024 and January 2025, leading to crop failure that is a major driver of food insecurity. The reports highlights high food prices as contributing factors too, emphasising their continuity to undermine household purchasing power.

The IPC therefore projects the worst case scenario, with an estimated 334,000 people (22% of



the rural population) projected to face IPC Phase 3 or above of food insecurity between October 2025 and March 2026. Nine out of 10 districts are likely to be classified in Phase 3, with only Leribe projected to remain in Phase 2. Erratic climatic conditions, including heavy rainfalls, high temperatures and prolonged dry spells continue to pose significant threats. The IPC has identified several key drivers contributing to the escalating food insecurity- climate shocks, economic shocks and reduced crop production that has dropped to 19 percent as compared to the previous year.

To help fight these devastating disaster, it emphasized the importance of a multi-faceted response to address the crisis, recommending immediate humanitarian assistance in the form of provision of aid to food-insecure populations, implementation of initiatives that will encourage farmers to participate in market trade and improve access to agricultural inputs and early warning systems in cases of crisis.

It also encourages implementation of geographical and profile-related targeting criteria for investments in risk financing, adoption of recommended actions to fully

operationalize the National Resilience Building Strategic Framework and collaboration among key stakeholders to avoid duplication and promote effective response and complementation.

The report serves as a stark reminder of the challenges facing Lesotho, especially Basotho in the rural communities.

With the situation expected to escalate with time, concerted efforts from the government, international organizations and local stakeholders are essential to address the underlying drivers of food insecurity and build a more resilient future for the people of Lesotho.

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SABA LAUNCHES TERTIARY EDITION, EMPOWERS AFRICAN YOUTH

By: Lemohang Botsane

Maseru

In a significant move for education and entrepreneurship in Lesotho, Spell A Business Africa (SABA) officially launched its tertiary edition this week in Maseru.

This initiative comes at a time when nine esteemed institutes of higher learning in Lesotho are engaged in healthy competition, all aiming to cultivate innovation and drive economic growth through the empowerment of young minds.

Tefo Sefothane, the president of SABA, articulated the organization's vision, emphasizing that the future prosperity of Africa is intrinsically linked to the ideas and skills possessed by its youth.

He highlighted that SABA aims to foster connections among young Africans who share a common goal: building a self-sustaining and prosperous continent.

This vision is rooted in collaboration and the sharing of resources and knowledge across national boundaries.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Lejone Mpotjoane, provided insightful context about the origin of this initiative. He revealed that it was first conceived in 2023 within his Hololo constituency in Butha-Buthe, initially involving



just 10 local high schools under the auspices of the Hololo Development Foundation.

Mpotjoane expressed pride in the rapid growth of the programme, noting that by 2024, the initiative had expanded to include 17 schools.

His aspirations for the project are ambitious, as he hopes to eventually encourage the African Union to participate as an observer, highlighting the importance of continental collaboration.

Supporting these efforts, the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Training commended the strides made by higher education institutions in Lesotho.

He specifically noted their emphasis on fostering research-based inno-

vative solutions. These solutions are seen as crucial for driving both economic growth and community development within the country. He underscored that the initiative serves as an essential complement to technical and vocational education and training programs, advocating for a model of innovation that is firmly rooted in research and aims to address pressing community challenges.

The launch event was honoured by the attendance of several dignitaries, including the Chinese Ambassador to Lesotho, Yang Xiaokun and the UNDP Resident Representative, Dr Jacqueline Olweya.

Their participation underscored the international interest in developing youth entrepreneurship in the region.

Additionally, the Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development, Pitso Lesaoana, spoke passionately about the initiative's strategic significance. He articulated that it is designed to nurture a new generation of leaders who are equipped to spearhead Lesotho's economic transformation.

Lesaoana inspired the young learners present, urging them to seize this transformative opportunity that could redefine their futures.

As the inaugural phase of SABA's tertiary edition unfolds, the commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and self-reliance among the youth of Lesotho stands as a beacon of hope for the nation and the broader African continent.



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Silence Charumbira

XIAMEN, CHINA – The 2025 China-Africa Internet Development and Cooperation Forum in Xiamen marked a significant milestone in digital cooperation between the two regions, with the launch of ambitious action plans centered on China's comprehensive commitments to African digital transformation. The forum's sub-forum on "Internet Media Cooperation and Promoting People-to-People Connectivity," held on September 29 at the Xiamen International Conference Center, brought together policymakers, scholars, media professionals, and technology experts from across China and Africa to chart a course for deeper collaboration in cyberspace.

The forum coincided with the release of China's "Plan of Actions on Jointly Building a China-Africa Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace (2025-2026)," which provides a detailed roadmap for cooperation across five

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

China-Africa Digital Partnership: Xiamen Forum Charts Bold Course for Cyber Cooperation



key areas. Digital Infrastructure and Economy China has committed to cooperating with African countries in communication infrastructure, promoting Chinese communication equipment manufacturers to strengthen cooperation with African counterparts, and enabling Chinese basic telecommunication enterprises to invest in international submarine cable projects in Africa. The plan includes encouraging Chinese enterprises to work with African telecommunication operators in 5G network deployment and application innovation to advance African countries' ICT development and global interconnectivity. A "Cooperation Network of Chinese Internet Enterprises in Africa" will be estab-

lished to facilitate more Chinese Internet enterprises to expand their cooperation business to Africa.

On e-commerce, China has pledged to expand "Silk Road E-Commerce" cooperation to establish bilateral e-commerce cooperation mechanisms with more African countries, host online lectures for Africa, organize online shopping festivals featuring quality African products and tourism e-commerce promotion activities, and launch a campaign to market 100 African stores and 1,000 African products on e-commerce platforms. With Africa's digital economy projected to reach \$712 billion by 2030 and China's digital exports exceeding \$2 trillion last year, the economic potential of this partnership is

substantial.

Cybersecurity and Data Protection China has committed to strengthening cooperation with African countries in cybersecurity emergency response, with CNCERT reaching out to more African CERTs for joint handling of cross-border incidents, experience sharing, and signing of cooperation documents. The plan includes inviting African partners to attend World Internet Conference events and CNCERT International Partnership Conference activities to enhance mutual trust through dialogue. China has also pledged to conduct exchanges and cooperation with Africa in data security and cross-border data flows to jointly address related risks and challenges and pro-

Continues in Page 19

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mote secure and orderly cross-border flows of data. Digital Capacity Building and Talent Development By leveraging the China-Africa Exchange and Cooperation Center on Cybersecurity and Digital Economy, China will explore and carry out more cooperation on digital sector development, taking Africa's needs into consideration, for the cultivation of more African talents in digital economy, e-commerce, information communication, cybersecurity and AI. China will organize the China-Africa Digital Economy Seminar and the China-Africa Cybersecurity Seminar on an annual basis to enhance understanding and mutual trust through targeted exchanges and training and to contribute to the digital transformation of Africa.

The plan includes deepening dialogue and exchanges with African countries on AI, rules related to cross-border data flows, compliant and secure application of new technologies, personal privacy protection, and formulation and implementation of Internet-related laws and regulations.

AI Governance and Innovation China has committed to deepening dialogue, cooperation, exchanges and mutual learning in AI with Africa, exploring ways to empower AI to play a bigger role in the public sector and promoting intelligent technologies that benefit all of humanity. The plan includes implementing the Global AI Governance Initiative by carrying out communication, exchanges and pragmatic cooperation with Africa on addressing AI-related risks and security governance standardization to jointly prevent the abusive use of AI technologies.

China will continue to engage with UN, G20 and BRICS in AI governance, and strengthen position coordination with African countries for joint formulation of global AI governance rules.

The forum witnessed the launch of "Ubuntu AI," an intelligent application for African regional and area studies presented by Yang Jidong, Director of the Integrated Media Innovation Space at Zhejiang Daily Press Group. According to China Daily, the Ubuntu AI platform represents "a significant step in leveraging artificial intelligence to enhance understanding of African studies and facilitate knowledge exchange between China and Africa." Online Media Cooperation China is ready to deepen exchanges with African online media for pragmatic cooperation by establishing effective mechanisms, step up cooperation in joint interviews and exchange of products, and communicate the achievements made in promoting high-quality Belt and Road cooperation between China and Africa.

The plan includes bringing together the young, the media and think tanks for joint coverage of regional and international affairs through enhanced cooperation in local channelization and personnel exchanges. China has pledged to scale up cooperation with Africa in talent development and technological innovation, promote the development of online media and platforms of both sides, and work hand in hand for the development of an all-round media communication system to jointly shape a global communication order that is more open, inclusive and just. Strategic Implications and Proposed Initiatives

During keynote speeches, speakers including myself addressed the theme "Implementing the Four Major Global Initiatives and Jointly Building a Favorable International Communication Environment." The presentation argued that partnership between China and Africa representing over 40% of humanity—offers an alternative to what was termed technological dependency on external powers.

Building on China's action plan, five specific initiatives were proposed: launching a China-Africa Digital Platform Initiative within six months; establishing Africa-China Creator Exchange Programs with a target of 1,000 content creators exchanging annually by 2027; creating Joint Innovation Hubs in five African cities and five Chinese cities; building Direct Digital Trade Corridors; and launching African

languages on Chinese platforms and Chinese content on African platforms. Opportunities for African Nations For African nations, particularly smaller economies like Lesotho, China's action plan represents an unprecedented opportunity to leapfrog traditional development stages and build modern digital infrastructure. The commitments to 5G deployment, submarine cable investments, and e-commerce platform development could transform countries that currently lag in digital connectivity. The emphasis on talent cultivation is particularly significant. With Africa's 1.4 billion people 70% under 30 representing the world's fastest-growing digital market, access to training and expertise through China's commitments could accelerate digital transformation across the continent.

The forum highlighted the role of young people in driving China-Africa digital cooperation. The presence of numerous African doctoral candidates and young professionals studying and working in China demonstrates the foundation being built for long-term collaboration. Beyond the aspirations The Plan of Actions provides a concrete framework with specific commitments and timelines, moving beyond aspirational statements to actionable programs. Chinese officials emphasized that the forum aims to strengthen digital cooperation, enhance mutual understanding through media exchanges, and build a shared future in cyberspace between China and African nations.

For African countries, the message is clear: the tools for digital transformation are being offered through China's commitments to infrastructure investment, capacity building, platform development, and knowledge transfer. What remains is for Africa nations to actively engage with these opportunities, develop clear strategies for implementation, and ensure that cooperation delivers tangible benefits to their populations. The 2025 China-Africa Internet Development and Cooperation Forum in Xiamen may well be remembered as a turning point the moment when digital cooperation between the regions moved from aspiration to action, from rhetoric to results. For countries like Lesotho and other African nations, the opportunity is clear: engage actively with China's Plan of Actions, leverage the commitments made, and build the digital infrastructure and capacity needed to thrive in the 21st century digital economy.

End of the Road for Coach Leslie Notsi?



By: Litšitso Letsunyane

Senior national team head coach Makhetha Leslie Notsi and his technical team are reportedly nearing the end of their tenure with the Lesotho senior national team, Likuena. According to insiders, Notsi is unlikely to return to the position once the current international cycle concludes.

Earlier this year, LeFA leadership notified Notsi and his staff that their assignment would conclude after the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers. The Association indicated that

a possible return would only be considered if the team's performance met expectations.

Unlike previous national team setups, Notsi and his technical staff have been working without written contracts throughout their tenure, a situation that has kept the relationship purely on a service basis rather than a binding agreement. With no contractual commitments in place, insiders suggest the decision to move in a new direction will be straightforward for the Association.

Lesotho Tribune has learned that South African

coach Moeketsi Abram Mongoya has emerged as the leading candidate to take over as Likuena head coach. Moeketsi Mongoya was co-opted into the national team technical setup during the final stages of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, where he reportedly left a strong impression on the LeFA National Executive Committee (NEC). Mongoya's coaching credentials include a CAF A license along with a successful stint with Bantu FC, where he previously worked under Mr. Caswell Moru, who is now LeFA Technical Director. This

long-standing professional relationship is widely believed to strengthen Mongoya's prospects for the role.

Speculation has escalated following recent developments in South Africa, where Uppington City, previously under Mongoya's guidance, appointed Musa Nyatama as their new head coach in the Motsepe Foundation Championship. The timing of that coaching change has also raised eyebrows and fueled belief that Mongoya is poised to take over the national reins.

The Chronicle of the Iron Grove: When the Roots Remember



By: The Watcher Beneath the Mountain

In The Chronicle of the Iron Grove: When the Roots Remember, The Watcher Beneath the Mountain spins a lyrical allegory about power, tradition, and quiet rebellion. Set in a mythical forest ruled by ancient elders, the tale follows a mysterious figure who challenges the order of things without raising his voice. It is a haunting reflection on how societies cling to old ways even as change quietly takes root beneath

them. In the realm of the Iron Grove, where the wind once bowed to the will of the old oaks, a new figure emerged—quiet as snowfall, firm as obsidian. He bore no sigils of the elder clans, nor did he drink from their ancestral chalice. Yet the land stirred at his arrival, as if the soil itself recalled a promise long buried. The Circle of Elders, long seated at the Hollow Table, watched with wary eyes. Their tongues, silvered by age and sharpened by cus-

tom, whispered of order and balance. But beneath their cloaks of tradition, a tremor of envy stirred. For the Grove, once theirs to prune and shape, now leaned toward the stranger who spoke less and did more. When the newcomer etched a new glyph into the Stone of Accord—subtle, deliberate, unannounced—the Hollow Lords recoiled. They summoned the winds of protest, conjured storms of parchment and decree, and called upon the old rites to bind the Grove

to their rhythm. They claimed to guard the sacred canopy, but their roots thirsted for dominion.

The Sovereign, however, did not answer with thunder. He let the winds howl.

He walked the Grove in silence, his steps flanked by the Watchers in blue and the Guardians in green. Their presence was not loud, but it was known. The Bells of the High Spire rang in his favor. The Flamekeepers offered their incense. Even the Crowned One, whose voice rarely stirred, nodded in the hush.

Beyond the borders, the Stars took notice. They did not speak, but their gaze lingered. The Grove, once divided by shadow and sun, now tilted toward a new dawn.

The Hollow Lords, though cloaked in the language of the old ways, found their echoes fading. Their scrolls, once binding, now fluttered like brittle leaves. The Sovereign had not broken the rules—he had simply walked where they feared to tread.

And so, the Grove stands—its roots shifting, its canopy trembling. The tale is not yet done. But the wind, once owned by the old oaks, now carries a different name.

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Cabbage has worn many hats over the centuries. A war-time lifesaver. A symbol of endurance. Even a term of affection in France. Yet in South Africa, it is something simpler and more profound — a daily staple that fills plates, nourishes families, and stretches household budgets when times are tight. And Shoprite, Africa's largest food retailer, has quietly decided that this humble vegetable deserves protection.

The quiet subsidy behind the green leaves

Over the past two and a half years, the Shoprite Group has been investing millions to keep cabbage affordable for its customers. Between June 2024 and July 2025 alone, the Group spent R24 million subsidising cabbage prices across its stores.

That investment ensured that a head of cabbage cost no more than R12.99 at Usave and R14.99 at Shoprite, even when the wholesale price climbed to R25 during the year. In some outlets, shoppers paid even less. It was a

FARMERS CORNER

The R24 Million Cabbage: Shoprite's Quiet Battle to Keep South Africa's Superfood Within Reach



deliberate move to shield consumers from market volatility and preserve one of the country's most accessible sources of nutrition.

A South African staple worth defending

Cabbage is not just another vegetable lining supermarket shelves. It is a food of history and endurance. During the Second World War, it was cultivated in "Victory Gardens" because it was easy to grow, survived harsh conditions, and provided essential nutrients when meat and other staples were scarce. Decades later, its role has not changed much. It remains rich in vitamins C and K, fibre, antioxidants, and minerals — a nutritional powerhouse that can feed a family for a fraction of the cost of other produce. It is also one of the few vegetables that thrives across South Africa's diverse climates, from the subtropical soils

of Limpopo to the temperate plains of the Western Cape.

Because of this adaptability, cabbage has become an anchor of informal food markets and backyard gardens. It is, in many ways, the people's vegetable — resilient, abundant, and quietly powerful.

Why Shoprite took the initiative

South Africa produced more than 160,000 tons of cabbage for the formal market in 2024, with far more grown by smallholders and informal producers. But abundance does not always guarantee affordability. Rising input costs — fuel, fertiliser, water, and transport — have made it difficult for farmers and retailers to keep prices low.

Shoprite's intervention through price capping was not merely a commercial decision. It was a social one. By absorbing part of the cost, the Group en-

sured that millions of families could still put fresh vegetables on their tables without sacrificing quality or nutrition.

"Cabbage is an integral part of many South African diets. It is resilient, nutritious, tasty, and familiar. By keeping it affordable, we are investing in food security, dignity, and health for millions," says Quintin Paladin, General Manager: Freshmark & Fresh Foods.

Beyond the checkout counter

In a country where food insecurity remains a pressing concern, Shoprite's R24 million subsidy may seem small in the scale of national economics, but it represents a profound statement of intent. It reflects an understanding that sustainability is not only about supply chains and logistics — it is about people.

By ensuring that the price of cabbage stays within reach, Shoprite has reaffirmed its role not just as a retailer but as a participant in South Africa's broader food security ecosystem. The result is both practical and symbolic: a simple green vegetable standing at the intersection of commerce, nutrition, and dignity.

And perhaps that is the real story — that sometimes, doing something extraordinary for millions can start with something as ordinary as a cabbage.

594 Bikes Bound for Lesotho to Boost Cycling Access and Skills



By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

A shipment of 594 bicycles is on its way to the Lesotho National Olympic Committee, marking another milestone in the ongoing partnership between Bikes for Lesotho and Working Bikes. This latest container, the 14th for Bikes for Lesotho and the 13th supplied by Working Bikes,

was loaded with the help of Christopher B. Burke Engineering, which also served as a 26th Anniversary sponsor. The bikes will be used by the Lesotho National Olympic Committee to promote cycling across all age groups. Plans include lessons on how to ride and repair bicycles, as well as hosting community races aimed at building a stronger cycling culture

in the country. Dave Gorman, the founder of Bikes for Lesotho and current Board President, received a special mention for his ongoing commitment to the initiative. Gorman founded the organization after serving in Lesotho with the Peace Corps as a civil engineer, where he witnessed firsthand the scarcity of bicycles. His efforts have since made

bike transportation significantly more accessible across the mountain kingdom. The partnership continues to strengthen community mobility and youth development in Lesotho, proving that a single container of bicycles can carry far more than metal and rubber—it carries opportunity, independence, and the spirit of sport.

Meshu's Portrait Delayed from Auction as Auctioneer Awaits Valuation



By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The much-anticipated auction of Meshu Mokitimi's portrait will not be taking place next week after all. Lescor Auctioneers, which had been expected to list the 99-year-old artist's work among its featured items, says the painting is still undergoing valuation and cannot yet be assigned a proper reserve price.

Phoka Lithebe, a representative of Lescor, told Lesotho Tribune that the company is "still in the process of having it valued" and will only include it in a future sale once the "correct reserve price" has been established. He added, "Yes, there is good potential for the art market in

Lesotho. If a Mosotho artist can sell his art for 2 million maloti, it is possible."

The postponement reinforces a deeper issue that has long haunted Lesotho's art scene. The country lacks a formal system for valuing and trading creative works. Art has traditionally existed outside structured economic frameworks. There are no recognized art indices, few professional curators, and almost no commercial galleries. Prices are often set by sentiment rather than by standardized valuation.

Lescor's decision to delay the sale until the portrait is properly appraised could mark a turning point. It signals a cautious but necessary move toward professionalizing the creative sector, where

art is not only appreciated for its beauty but also treated as a legitimate economic asset.

For decades, Meshu Mokitimi's paintings have lived quietly in private homes, galleries, and memory. He belongs to that fading generation of Basotho artists who created for the love of form, not the promise of fortune. That his work now requires formal valuation shows how far Lesotho's art market still has to go before it can confidently price its own talent. Lesotho, lacks the infrastructure to ensure its artists receive fair recognition or compensation. The delay in auctioning Meshu's work is therefore more than a scheduling matter. It is symbolic. It highlights both the potential and the fragility of Lesotho's creative

economy. Without proper archives, provenance systems, and valuation experts, even priceless works risk being undervalued or lost to informal trade.

For Mokitimi, who has witnessed Lesotho's transformation through nearly a century of art, this moment is not a setback but a reflection of progress in motion. His portrait may not go under the hammer next week, but its story already challenges the nation to think differently about the value of creativity.

When it finally does reach the auction floor, the figure it commands will not just represent what a buyer is willing to pay. It will measure what Lesotho believes its art and its artists are truly worth.



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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

The Premier League Management Committee (PLMC) has sanctioned Matlama Football Club following misconduct by the club's supporters during the final of the Maluti Mountain Cement Charity Cup 2025 at Bambatha Sports Arena.

More than two weeks ago, frustration boiled over in the stands when supporters believed their team had been denied a clear penalty. Instead, the referee awarded Matlama a free kick just outside the box, a decision that sparked outrage and led to objects being thrown onto the field. As a result, Matlama FC were then fined M20,000, with

ARTS & SPORTS

PLMC Punishes Matlama FC and the Fans Pay the Price



M10,000 of that amount suspended for the remainder of the 2025/2026 season, provided no similar offence occurs again.

Matlama FC responded with an official statement shared on their social media platforms, confirming receipt of the sanction dated 21 October 2025. The club detailed that:

- M10,000 must be paid within 14 days
- The remaining M10,000 is suspended on condition of good conduct throughout the

season

In their communication, the Matlama Executive Committee acknowledged a key resolution made during a meeting attended by representatives from Branches, the Supporters Committee, and EXCO, where it was unanimously agreed that supporters would mobilize funds should a penalty be imposed.

This publication has reliably learned that Matlama supporters have indeed lived up to that promise. Fans from all branches have

assured club leadership that they will cover the fine themselves, relieving management of financial pressure. Collection of contributions began yesterday, with payments already being channeled directly to the club's finance office in a collective effort to bail out the team.

The sanction brings a stern reminder from the PLMC regarding fan behavior, but for Matlama, it has also highlighted the solidarity and loyalty that continues to define their passionate fanbase.

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