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**MOHAHLAULA
AIRLINES**

IEC Accused of Tampering With Recruitment Process

BY: Staff Reporter

The IEC has triggered a political firestorm after abruptly deregistering four political parties right in the middle of the recruitment of new commissioners. The decision has been condemned across the opposition, with many describing it as a calculated move that threatens the integrity of the entire electoral process.

The deregistered parties are Tjako Peli Movement Front, Basotho Democratic National Party, Basutoland Democratic Congress



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— Information Liberates

DCEO Reports Positive Highlights for 2024/25

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) has issued a progress report in the fight against corruption for the period of April to November 2025.

The national anti-corruption and economic crimes enforcement agency's strategic approach for the year 2025/26 was to be more preventative and proactive than reactive.

Delivering the report, the Director General of the directorate, Advocate Brigadier General Sello, said in the highlighted period, specifically the 13th to 21st November, they launched new regional offices in the districts of Butha-Buthe and Mohale's Hoek in a manner to serve the northern and southern districts to improve access for citizens and as a strategic push to bring anti-corruption efforts closer to local communities.

He said they also submitted the 2024/25 annual report to parliament which outlines the agency's activities for the said period.

The directorate has successfully sensitised, recruited and organised high school students to instil anti-corruption values in young people.

With all the outreach programmes that were enacted, including awareness campaigns and distribution of information mate-



rials, public understanding of corruption reporting mechanisms has improved, and this has been proven in the increased whistleblower tips, boosting the number of reports received through the DCEO's hotline and reporting platforms.

The directorate's annual case target in the discussed period was 72 cases but it only completed 42 cases, submitted 22 for prosecution and closed 20. Advocate Sello said they currently have 50 active cases in Court, with five completed, four pending directives and two pending remands.

He told the directorate's Asset Recovery Unit that deals with the acquisition of assets

suspected to be proceeds of crime obtained movable and immovable properties to the tune of M3,950,000.00 in preservation orders, a total of M7,500,00.00 in restraining orders and M33,601,142.53 in forfeiture orders.

The integrity and compliance audits unit, on the other hand, conducted high-risk sectors, including the Ministry of Social Development's old age pensions, where it discovered payments made to 187 deceased people who are suspected to have died a very long time ago. The unit detected three cases, and the most shocking was of a chief who claimed for two deceased

pensioners.

The directorate DG said they were in the middle of the asset declaration period that runs from April to March 2026, and so far they have received 280 submissions from the Prime Minister, Minister and heads of oversight bodies, to mention but a few.

He said for the first time in history, this year all the ministers declared their assets and properties, adding that they are awaiting submissions of security institutions and parliament.

The directorate said, despite the challenges it faced, it remains committed to promoting integrity, accountability and transparent governance.

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Human Rights Advocates Call Everyone to Action, Help Fight GBV

By: Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Law and Justice in collaboration with The People's Matrix, Sesotho Media & Development brought together government officials, civil society representatives and development partners to review Lesotho's human rights landscape in a first-ever National Symposium Human Rights held in Maseru this week.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the symposium aimed at reflecting on national progress, assessing current human rights initiatives and assessing their impact and identifying opportunities for improvement, with particular attention to combating GBV.

Speaking at the gathering, Deputy Attorney General Makhele Sekati reaffirmed the country's commitment to international and regional human rights treaties, highlighting notable achievements including the enactment of the National Human Rights Commission, progress in drafting human rights legislation and active engagement in regional and international forums.

Sekati said the LMPS was a witness to the harm that people endure to GBV, saying this harm steals dignity, shatters families and leaves scars unseen, yet unforgettable.

"We see it in the trembling hands of a woman seeking



Photo cred: The People's Matrix

help, in the eyes of a child who has watched violence unfold at home and in the quiet desperation of those who suffer in silence, hoping no one will notice," he said, adding that GBV is not just a statistics, an abstract problem but a wound that stabs the very soul of the nation.

He went on to explain the terror that GBV leaves in the hearts of victims, their homes and how it affects the lives of those around them, saying the alarming statistics of such cases call for rapid response from government and all stakeholders.

He said there was a time when the LMPS was not moving fast enough to help in cases of GBV, when systems that were meant to protect created more suffering for the victims, however pledging that they have introspected and are ready to listen to survivors with patience and humanity.

"We will respond with urgency because every minute matters. We will protect without hesitation or fear and we will pursue justice with every breath in our bodies," he pledged. Sekati said this work was not the sole responsibility of the police, calling on everyone to come together to help in the brutal fight. He pleaded with partners to not let the symposium be just a meeting but a rebirth-call to action and demand for transformation in the fight against GBV—urging them to confront the systemic issues that perpetuate violence and inequality.

"We must listen to the voices of those who've been silenced and amplify the power of those who've been marginalized," he pleaded. With its financial backing in the success of the symposium, Marcella Veneziani, the EU Country Representative expressed their commitment to help-

ing end GBV in Lesotho. She highlighted the urgent need for reflection, awareness and action, emphasising support for victims and strengthening of key institutions including the Lesotho Human Rights Unit and the LMPS.

Tampose Mothopeng, Human Rights Defender and Sexuality Activist, also weighed in, saying the symposium had presented a crucial platform for the government to reflect, account and take action towards a just and inclusive Lesotho.

Mothopeng emphasised inclusion of the LGBT community voices in decision making platforms, national reforms and committees, applauding government for passing the 10 th Amendment that expresses inclusivity.

The symposium, Mothopeng said, called for a development of a national policy against hate crimes—this policy will improve access to justice and ensure equitable health services for all.

The symposium meant to create a unified Lesotho, bringing together diverse voices to strengthen protection, accountability and inclusion across the country including local chiefs, community members from marginalized groups such as sex workers, LGBTI persons and people with disability.

Discussions of the day were also believed to have strengthened a shared commitment to building a safer, more equitable Lesotho.

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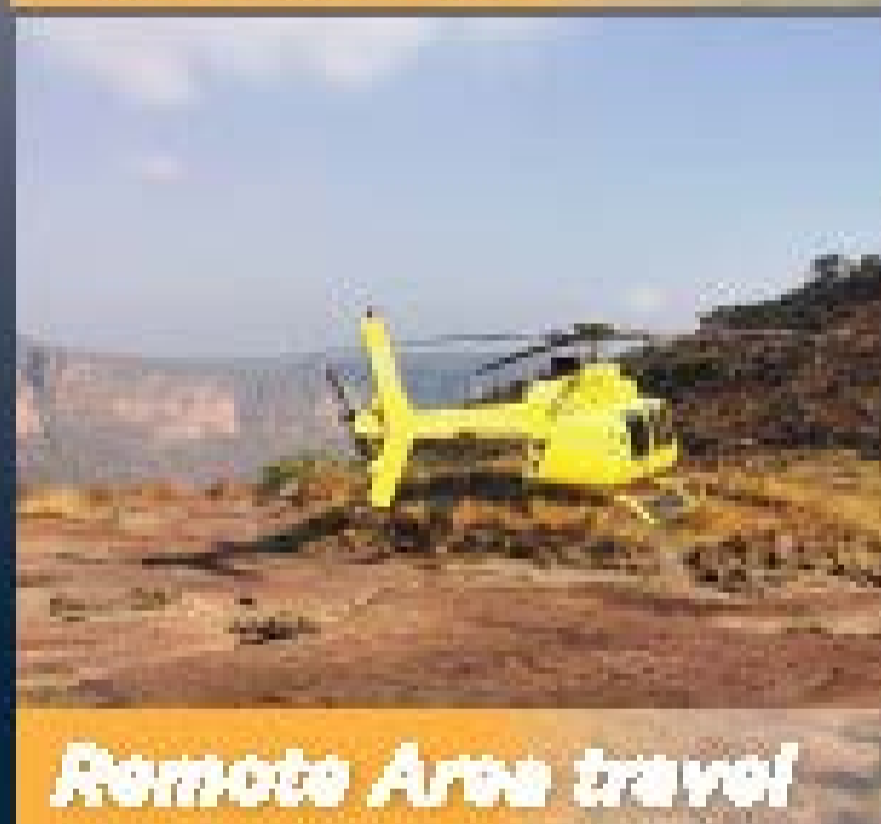


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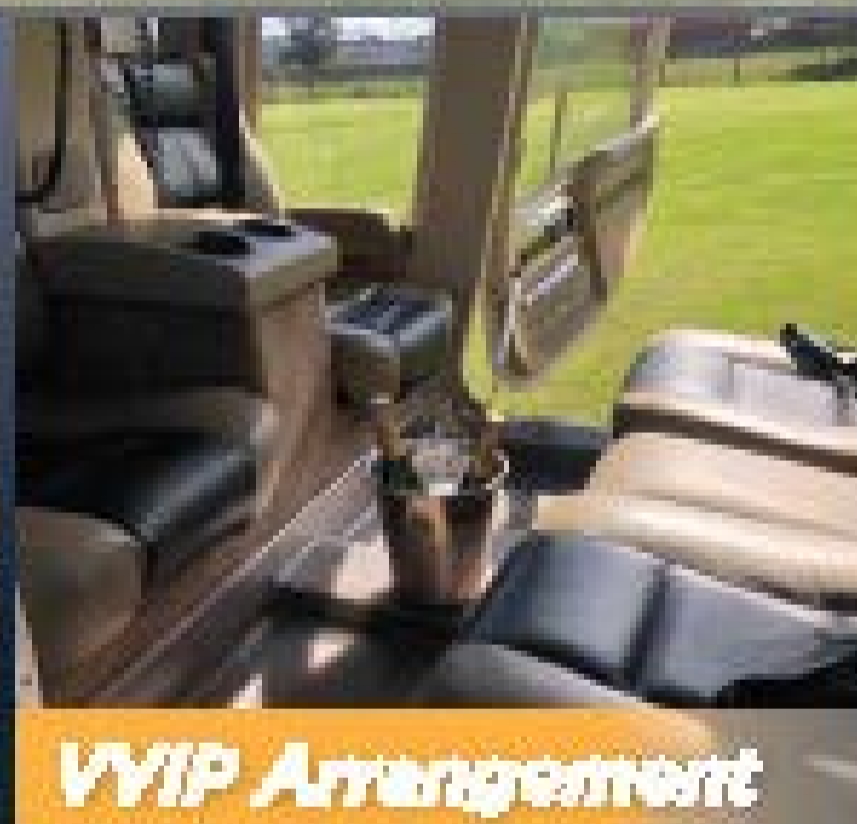
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ORASECOM Ministers Chart Course for Enhanced Transboundary Water Cooperation in Orange-Senqu Basin

By: Staff Reporter

Ministers responsible for water from the countries of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa assembled in Gaborone for the 8th Ordinary Meeting of the Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) Forum of the Parties this week to review substantial progress in the joint management and development of the shared water resources within the Orange-Senqu River Basin, providing strategic directions for the Commission's future endeavours.

The Ministers unanimously reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to transboundary water cooperation, acknowledging significant strides made since the last meeting in 2023. Among the most notable advancements, the forum celebrated progress towards the ratification of the 2018 revised ORASECOM Agreement, a crucial step set to modernise and bolster the Commission's legal and institutional framework while ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness in its operations.

The forum placed a significant focus on prioritising sanitation and water quality, as ministers acknowledged the successful integration of sanitation into the forthcoming Integrated Water Resources Management & Investment Plan (2026–2035). This plan aims to ensure coordinated



quality and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) across various sectors. In a move set to boost regional infrastructure, progress was noted on the Noordoewer/Vioolsdrift Dam Bridging Feasibility Study in the Lower Orange-Senqu region. ORASECOM was therefore appointed as the Project Executing Agency, with the procurement of a consultant already underway. The Forum commended the Commission for delivering a range of impactful basin-wide initiatives including the Lesotho-Botswana Water Transfer Project (L-BWTP) slated for conclusion by mid-2027, completion of the UNDP-GEF SAP Implementation Project and initiation of the ORASECOM Water

mechanism aimed at supporting basin restoration, water security and climate resilience, with a Project Identification Form (PIF) already submitted to the Global Environment Facility.

Ministers also reviewed the Commission's financial status, acknowledging invaluable support from International Cooperating Partners such as UNDP-GEF, the African Development Bank and the German Government. They encouraged ongoing resource mobilisation and deeper partnerships to sustain basin-wide programmes.

The Forum welcomed steady progress under existing bilateral and trilateral cooperation frameworks, including the Permanent Water Commission (Namib-

Highlands Water Commission (Lesotho-South Africa) and Botswana-South Africa Joint Permanent Technical Commission, underscoring the value of technical and political collaboration across the river basin.

All Ministers reiterated their shared commitment to safeguarding the Orange-Senqu River Basin as a strategic resource vital for regional water security, economic development and ecological sustainability, further calling for collective efforts to effectively tackle the escalating effects of climate change.

The 9th Ordinary Meeting of the Forum has already been scheduled to be hosted by Lesotho in 2026 and promises continued momentum in these critical regional efforts.

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ESG Lens

Lesotho Banking Industry: ESG Scorecard



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

This article presents a bank-by-bank ESG scorecard for Lesotho's banking industry, based solely on locally disclosed information as of December 2025.

1. ESG Scorecard Overview

Bank	ESG Reporting & Transparency	Environment & Climate	Social & Inclusion	Governance & Ethics	Overall ESG Integration
Standard Lesotho Bank	4	4	4	3	4
Lesotho PostBank	3	2	4	3	3
Nedbank Lesotho	2	3	3	3	3
FNB Lesotho	2	3	3	4	3

2. Standard Lesotho Bank (SLB)

ESG reporting & transparency – 4

SLB publishes a stand-alone ESG/Sustainability report with structured disclosures.

Environment & climate – 4

Visible environmental



programmes including tree-planting and partnerships on water resilience.

Social & inclusion – 4

Strong youth enterprise programmes and community development initiatives.

Governance & ethics – 3

Governance frameworks disclosed, though limited granular ESG-specific metrics.

3. Lesotho PostBank (LPB)

ESG reporting & transparency – 3

Integrated reports show SDG alignment though

not a full ESG report. Environment & climate – 2

Limited local environmental disclosure; climate-finance mainly through donor-supported programmes.

Social & inclusion – 4

Strong mandate for inclusion; broad CSI and SDG-linked projects. Governance & ethics – 3

Traditional governance structures with emerging ESG framing.

4. Nedbank Lesotho

ESG reporting & transparency – 2

Discloses sustainability references but lacks a comprehensive ESG report.

Environment & climate – 3

Positions itself as a 'green and caring bank' with energy-related programmes.

Social & inclusion – 3

Regular CSI engagement across sectors; SME empowerment narrative.

Governance & ethics – 3

Values and ethics documented though largely high-level locally.

5. FNB Lesotho

ESG reporting & transparency – 2

Financials and policies disclosed but no ESG-dedicated reporting. Environment & climate – 3

Has a visible Environmental & Social Risk Assessment (ESRA) process.

Social & inclusion – 3

SME competitions and community initiatives documented.

Governance & ethics – 4

Strong code of ethics and detailed governance policies.

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Bacha Entrepreneurship Project (BEP), a collaborative effort of the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), Standard Lesotho Bank (SLB) and Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO), concluded its 2025 journey by recognising outstanding entrepreneurs in this year's cohort in Maseru on Thursday.

Acting Commissioner General of the RSL, Rakokoana Makoa, said the awarding ceremony was a celebration to honour entrepreneurs who continue to shape the entrepreneurial landscape of Lesotho while also acknowledging their achievements

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

BEP Awards Top-5 Business with M963,746



in this remarkable journey.

He said the project has become more than just a funding initiative but "a platform where ideas are nurtured, potential is recognised and the future of our economy is steadily being rewritten by young

innovators with bold ambitions";

Just in the year 2025, a total of five exceptional startups joined the BEP, adding to the existing 38 businesses that have been supported by the initiative.

Each of these entrepreneurs, CG Makoa said,

represents a story of hope, determination and progress.

"The project has invested over 10.4 million in the same capital and generated more than 200 jobs," he informed, however,

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expressing disappointment in the 11 businesses that were financed by the initiative but closed down.

He said despite the challenges faced, they stay determined to strengthen their support systems as they continue to polish the project, an inspiration sparked by the rising number of businesses that continue to thrive, speaking to the resilience of entrepreneurs and the value of intentional, well-structured empowerment. CG Makoa applauded the power of collaboration, saying the milestones the project has reached were not achieved in isolation, extending gratitude to the collaborative partners that have always ensured the success of the BEP. "The collaboration between RSL, Standard Lesotho Bank and BEDCO remains at the heart of BEP's success. SLB and BEDCO have walked this journey with us since the beginning and they have done so with so much loyalty and dedication," Makoa said.

The work of the three institutes in the project is to ensure that funded businesses receive guidance, monitoring and financial stewardship,

all essential elements needed for the sake of growth.

For RSL, Makoa said, initiatives like the BEP reflect a broader mandate that goes beyond BEDCO. The authority supports entrepreneurship with an understanding that this is a way to strengthen the foundation of the country's economy, widen the tax base in a sustainable way and contribute to the long-term national development.

The CG said the authority currently has about 150,000 taxpayers and the wish is to grow this number to 200,000, a target that will ensure everyone pays their fair share of tax.

"Therefore, every thriving business is a building block for a stronger result," he said.

In the eyes of the RSL, the awarding ceremony was a recognition of potential and readiness for entrepreneurs to grab the opportunity presented to them and the advantage of the open business landscape. 'Mamotipi Raletlala, one of the adjudicators in the selection criterion of the finalists, said this year alone they had 465 entrepreneur applications, but they only assessed 200.

"After the screening process, each applicant had to assess 80 business plans, from which the top 50 had to be selected," she said, saying that from this selection, the applicants had to undergo training to function or refine their business plans to be assessed for the top 15 which qualified them for the next level.

The top five winners were supported with a combined funding value of more than 1 million pounds, an investment that represented more than just financial support but an affirmation of a belief in the potential and creativity of the pursuit of Basotho youth.

It was revealed that the success rate of entrepreneurs under the BEP is more than 70 percent, with projections indicating that entrepreneurship development, especially in small businesses, has an extremely high failure rate. Therefore, achieving a success rate of more than 70 percent is remarkable. Acting CEO- BEDCO, Ts'epang Tlali, highlighted their role in the project, informing that it entails coordinating all project activities.

He said the programme

has existed for over a decade and although it is often classified as relatively small in terms of funding, it has recorded tremendous impacts. One example of the notable impacts is the successful incubation of more than 100 enterprises, an achievement that ushered in new entrepreneurship components in the programme. Since 2014, the project has invested over M10 million, supported 33 youth-led businesses and created over 200 jobs. The BEP, as celebrated in this milestone, continues to be a cornerstone of collective commitments in measuring innovation, empowering young people, and stimulating sustainable economic growth in Lesotho. It targets Basotho youth aged between 21 and 35 who have completed their high school studies, are unemployed and have a passion for entrepreneurship. The project represents possibility, partnership and progress for entrepreneurs in Lesotho. The strides that were celebrated were therefore meant to fuel the determination to remain innovative, collaborative and committed to creating opportunities for many others to innovate.

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Lesotho Tribune

AFRICA

Skepticism grows over DR Congo-Rwanda peace deal

Washington hails a “historic” US-brokered Rwanda-DR Congo peace deal, but renewed clashes, mistrust between leaders, and warnings of US mineral ambitions reveal a fragile reality on the ground.

By Mimi Mefo Newuh

The ink is barely dry on the US-brokered peace agreement between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but reactions reveal skepticism over whether the deal can deliver anything resembling peace — or whether it primarily serves US geopolitical and commercial interests.

On Thursday, US President Donald Trump hosted Presidents Felix Tshisekedi of the DRC and Paul Kagame of Rwanda in Washington for a signing ceremony the White House hailed as “historic.” Trump proclaimed the deal a “great day for Africa, a great day for the world.” “They spent a lot of time killing each other,” Trump added. “And now they’re going to spend a lot of time hugging, holding hands and taking advantage of the United States of America economically like every other country does.”



He then linked the peace signing directly to US access to minerals. “We’re going to take out some of the rare earth,” Trump said. “Everybody’s going to make a lot of money.” Optimism and caution shape DR Congo’s peace

narrative
Congolese Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba defended the government’s decision to sign the deal. “Our President has been very transparent about the principles that will be guiding the agreement,”

she said, describing the Washington accord as part of a sequence of diplomatic milestones achieved in recent months. Asked whether the Congolese public truly knows what was signed, she ex-

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pressed her optimism. “Do the Congolese people stand behind it? I believe so, because this is our pathway to long-lasting peace and peaceful cohabitation with our neighbors,” Kayikwamba told DW, while acknowledging the ongoing debate.

“Does this mean that all of the expectations are reflected in the instruments as they exist? Probably not... but it is important to emphasize that this agreement is bringing us closer to peace and accountability.”

On Trump’s interest in critical raw materials, many currently located in conflict zones under rebel control, Kayikwamba was cautious.

“There is a strong link between economic opportunities and security... We can’t project ourselves into a future where partners benefit from our natural resources when the safety of our people is not addressed.”

Skepticism over Washington’s peace push For some Congolese civil society leaders, the optimism displayed in Washington rings hollow.

Referring to ongoing violence in the region after a June peace treaty was signed in Washington, Maurice Carney, co-founder and executive director of Friends of the Congo, an NGO that advocates for peace-

ful and lasting change in the DRC, said he did not believe ratifying it would have much impact.

“If the past five months [are] any indication, we do not expect anything to fundamentally change in the near future,” Carney told DW, insisting that commercial interests rather than peace sit at the heart of the deal.

“The economic interests of local elites in Kigali and Kinshasa and global elites in Washington... they converge, and those are the interests being met, not those of the Congolese people at all,” he said. He pointed specifically to US tech and investment figures who stand to benefit from access to lithium and coltan mines in eastern Congo. One such coltan site, he noted, is currently held by M23 rebels.

Carney warned that ordinary Congolese, especially the 70 million living on less than \$2.15 a day, according to the World Bank, will see no benefit.

“It’s certainly not an agreement between equal partners,” he noted. Minerals put Congo at center of power play Carney and other analysts argue the agreement reflects a wider US geopolitical strategy to counter China’s dominance in global mineral supply chains. Access to Congolese cobalt, lithium, and coltan, essential for fighter jets,

electric vehicles and artificial intelligence technologies, has become central to Washington’s strategy.

“The geostrategic battle with China is also very, very important,” Carney said. He noted that even under Biden, the US launched the Lobito Corridor through the G7 and EU as a direct effort to undermine China’s Belt and Road Initiative — “not just in the Congo, but in the Global South.” Despite diplomatic smiles, Kagame and Tshisekedi keep their distance. While Trump spoke of reconciliation during Thursday’s ceremony, Kagame and Tshisekedi did not shake hands and barely exchanged glances. For many citizens watching from the region, the leaders’ behavior spoke louder than the signing ceremony itself.

“The presidents of both countries did not shake hands. That is very bad for the signing of the peace deal,” said Rwandan Marie-Louise Uwizeyimana. “As a citizen who is living in this region, it shows that there is no peace yet.” Kagame offered a measured outlook, saying that there will be “ups and downs on the road ahead, there is no doubt about it.”

While Tshisekedi called the agreement the beginning of a new and difficult path. But not everyone was convinced by Tshise-

kedzi’s assurances.

“They call it a wonderful step, but I’m reluctant to use that word,” said Ildéphonse Sinabubariraga, a Rwandan observer. “I fear the implementation. Even when you see President Tshisekedi, his reactions, he was not so confident about the signing. It’s like he’s being forced.” Renewed clashes reported Hours before Thursday’s ceremony, there were reports of fighting in the Congolese province of South Kivu.

Shelling in the M23-controlled town of Kaziba left “many dead,” according to local official Rene Chubaka Kalembire.

Since the peace agreement was signed, residents of eastern Congo said fighting had intensified.

“We are still at war,” Amani Chibalonza Edith told the Associated Press (AP) news agency. “There can be no peace as long as the front lines remain active,” added the 32-year-old resident of Goma, eastern Congo’s key city seized by rebels early this year.

“Yesterday, we saw that agreements were signed, but we don’t see any positive impact on this situation, and that worries us,” Samson Alimasi, from the town of Kamanyola near the border with Rwanda and Burundi, told AP.

“We only see bombs falling without knowing which side they are coming from.”

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EDITORIAL

They buried the corruption report. Basotho must bury their careers



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

Parliament received a report that exposes one of the most corrupt procurement scandals at Queen Mamo-hato Memorial Hospital. A report backed by evidence. A report that documents serious violations of the Procurement Act. A report that reveals how Foreign Affairs Minister's wife manipulated processes, ignored procedures and signed an agreement with a company that NEVER participated in the procurement stages at all. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) did its work. It interviewed witnesses. It reviewed procurement documents. It examined every decision that led to this mess. Its recommendations were simple, lawful and urgent:

1. Terminate the contract between QMMH and Tsebo Health Solutions within 30 days, because it was improperly awarded.

2. Order the Auditor General to conduct a full audit within 60 days, to determine financial exposure and confirm any legal breaches.

3. Institute disciplinary action against all officials involved in conflicts of interest and procedural violations.

4. Seek expert guidance before attempting to lease private healthcare services in future, to protect public funds and ensure compliance.

These were not radical demands. They were the minimum standard for accountability. Yet twenty three Members of Parliament fought to bury this report. They chose secrecy instead of transparency. Protection instead of truth. Political survival instead of public interest.



Here are the twenty three who stood against accountability:

Nthomeng Majara (RFP)

Ntoi Rapapa (AD)

Mootsi Lehata (RFP)

Nthati Moorosi (RFP)

Pitso Lesaoana (RFP)

Thuso Makhalanyane (RFP)

Letsema Adonts'i (RFP)

Mamoipone Senauoane (RFP)

Tello Kibane (RFP)

Nku Mohlalise (RFP)

Lehlohonolo Hlapise (RFP)

Maimane Maphathe (RFP)

Lejone Mpotjoane (RFP)

M Ramakatsa (RFP)

Karabo Pholosa (RFP)

Chabaseile Mabusela (MEC)

Matankiso Nyaniso (RFP)

Vuyeswa Tsheka (RFP)

Teboho Malataliana

(RFP)

Bolala Khesa (RFP)

Lehlohonolo Hlaphisi (RFP)

Malothoane (RFP)

M. Ramakatsa (RFP)

These are the MPs who believed Basotho did not deserve to know how their hospital was handed over through an irregular procurement process. They looked at a report exposing conflicts of interest, misleading documentation, procedural violations, and a contract signed by a company that did not even submit an Expression of Interest. Then they chose to hide it.

This is not leadership. It is corruption.

When these MPs come to your villages with polished speeches and warm handshakes, remember where they stood when the truth mattered. Remember that they hid evidence of wrongdoing in the health sector. Remember that they protected a broken system instead of protecting the people who elected them.

Lesotho cannot grow under leaders who defend secrecy at the expense of national wellbeing. The twenty three made their choice. Now Basotho must make theirs.

Their political careers should end exactly where the report they buried begins. With honesty. With accountability. With the people refusing to reward those who chose corruption over the nation.

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Silence Charumbira

In Hengdian, China's answer to Hollywood, the future of filmmaking is already here. Elsewhere in Zhejiang Province, productions that would traditionally require months of work, dozens of crew members and actors are now completed in a week. Where Western film industries nervously debate artificial intelligence's role in creative work, China has decisively moved forward—not by replacing human creativity, but by retraining its workforce to harness AI as a tool for enhancement rather than replacement.

I witnessed this transformation first-hand during a CHINA-AID Educational Training Centre-sponsored month-long visit to Zhejiang province, and the implications for African storytellers are profound. The Training Program on Professional Skills for African Film and Audio-visual Industry Practitioners was a robust initiative which proved that

OPINION

Why African storytellers must look East, leverage on China's AI-driven revolution



while we, in Africa, remain tethered to outdated paradigms – debating whether to embrace or resist technological change – China has leaped ahead by decades. The lectures received from Zhejiang Normal University's film school proved that indeed AI is being embraced at every level and it is enhancing efficiency. The question facing African filmmakers isn't whether to adopt these innovations, but how quickly we can do so while also learning from them.

The irony of my own education illustrates our predicament perfectly. When I graduated in 2007, I held a distinction in typewriting. Typewriters had already vanished from newsrooms.

This disconnect between what we teach and what the world demands persists across much of Africa in 2025. We're preparing students for industries that no longer exist while the tools reshaping global storytelling remain largely unexplored on our continent.

The Hengdian model What China has built in Hengdian represents more than just infrastructure—it's a complete reimagining of the production ecosystem. The scale is staggering, but what struck me most was the integration of AI and new technology at every level. AI doesn't simply speed up post-production; it's woven into all processes. The result isn't soulless automation but rather the democratization of high-quality production capabilities. Companies

like Versatile are achieving staggering results.

This matters for Africa because our stories have always struggled against resource constraints. Limited budgets mean limited ambition. But if AI can compress production timelines and reduce costs without sacrificing quality, suddenly the economics of African storytelling shift dramatically. A film that might have been impossible at \$500,000 becomes viable at \$50,000, a mere fraction. More stories can be told, more voices can be heard, and more perspectives can reach global audiences.

And unlike what Zimbabwe did decades ago by diminishing the role of the gatekeeper in the music sector opting for mere quantity and not quality,

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Lesotho Pushes Forward with National Financing Strategy

By: Lemohang Botsane

Lesotho is taking steps to strengthen its financial framework amid multiple economic challenges, including downturns, fiscal gaps, external shocks and vulnerabilities linked to climate change and global conflicts. These pressures exacerbate issues like low investment, weak production capacity, income inequality and high youth unemployment. These issues were discussed in a two-day stakeholder engagement conducted by the government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in Maseru this week. Supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the workshop aimed to validate the country's Integrated National Financing Strategy (INFS), with representatives from government, private sector, civil society and international partners in attendance.

Discussions of the day focused on setting financing priorities, optimising resource use, and exploring innovative financing options, such as green bonds and diaspora capital, to boost development



funding. Maelene Lobusa-Ntepe, Director of AIDS Coordination for the Ministry of Finance, highlighted the strategy's goals, informing that the INFS promotes private-sector growth, public-private, partnerships and gender-sensitive investments for inclusive resilience. She said it also builds on the NSDP II, aligning with global financing frameworks like those from the Fourth International Conference on

Financing for Development. This alignment, Lobusa-Ntepe said, boosts Lesotho's ability to manage financing effectively.

The workshop validated governance, policy priorities, financing roadmap and monitoring to enhance transparency and accountability. It was said that stakeholder input will also make the INFS a practical tool for guiding investments.

Outcomes of the workshop are expected to

impact Lesotho's development long-term, supporting growth, poverty reduction and fiscal stability amid external shocks.

This milestone advances the INFS, moving Lesotho closer to a financing architecture supporting development ambitions and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through collaboration and innovation, Lesotho aims for an inclusive, resilient and prosperous future.

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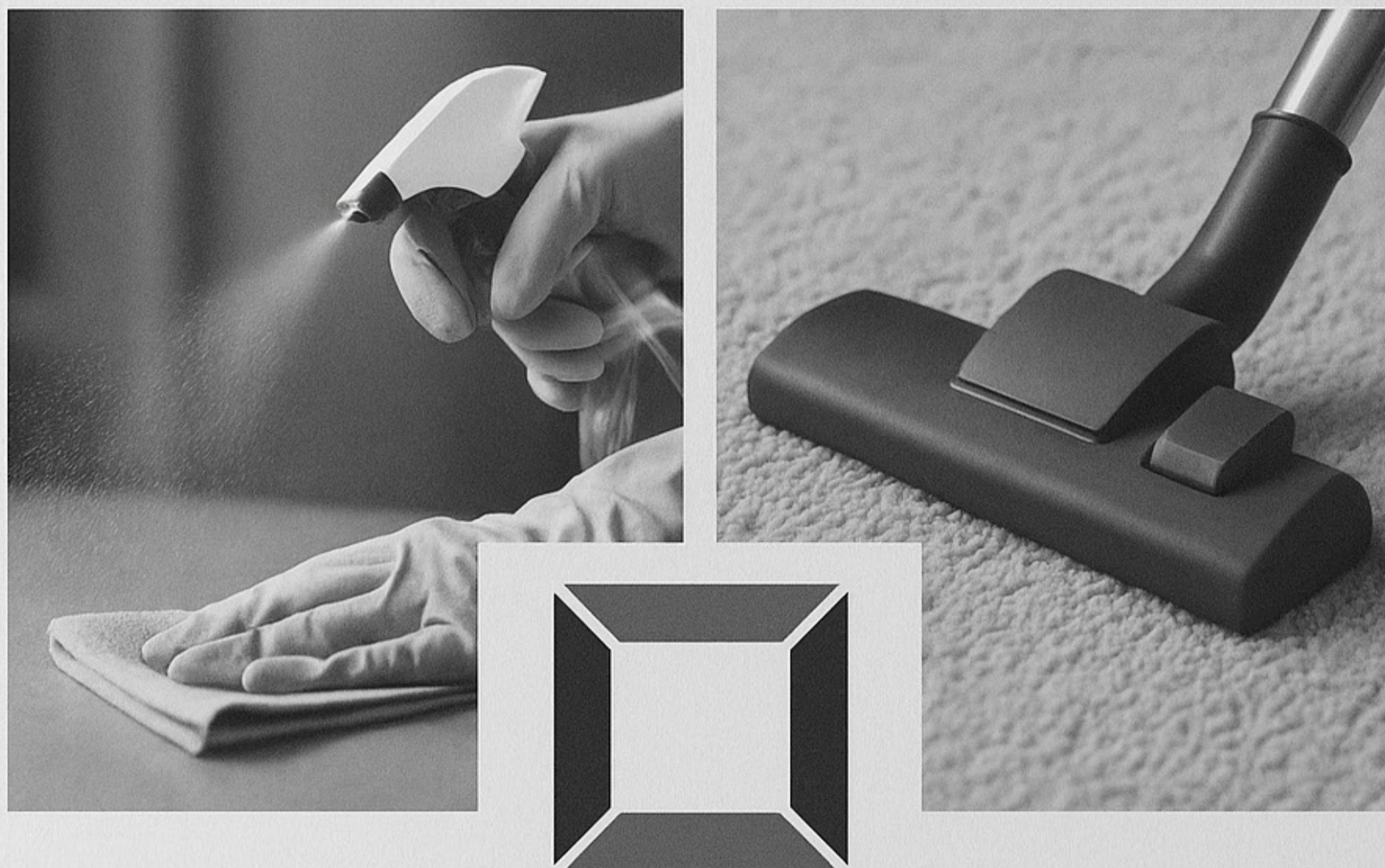
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the quality that is being achieved is staggering. True, getting rid of gatekeepers does help one way, but without caution and care, societal and cultural values that distinguish any people may be eroded thereby doing more harm than good.

Learning from Lanxi and beyond During my time in Zhejiang, I visited Lanxi, a city that exemplifies how China balances reverence for history and luminaries littered therein with aggressive modernization. Traditional architecture provides authentic backdrops for contemporary narratives. The past isn't treated as a museum piece but as living inspiration for present creativity.

This approach offers a template for African storytelling. We too possess rich cultural traditions, complex histories, and diverse narratives that deserve global platforms.

Yet we've often struggled to package these stories in ways that compete internationally-not because our stories lack merit, but because we lack the technical infrastructure and distribution networks to present them compellingly.

The vocational film school I visited in Zhejiang produces graduates who aren't just theoretically trained but practically experienced. Their portfolios include work that has achieved national and international recognition while they're still students. The curriculum not included boy adapts rapidly to industry changes but also drives it.

When new platforms emerge or technologies evolve, the training evolves with them.

Compare this to many African film schools, where equipment is outdated, industry connections are limited, and graduates emerge with skills the market no longer values. The typewriting distinction I earned nearly two decades ago exemplifies this pattern repeated across disciplines. We cannot continue training for yesterday's industries while tomorrow's opportunities pass us by.

The China University of Zhejiang At CUZ, I encountered an institution that treats filmmaking not as fine art alone but as an integrated discipline combining technology, business, and culture. Students learn traditional cinematography alongside AI-assisted production techniques. They study distribution strategies for emerging platforms that didn't exist five years ago.

They're prepared not just to work in the industry as it exists but to shape the industry as it evolves.

This holistic approach is what African institutions must adopt. We need film programs that teach both craft and commerce, tradition and innovation, local storytelling and global distribution. Our graduates must be as comfortable navigating Chinese social media platforms as they are shooting on location in rural villages.

The collaboration imperative The shortage of African stories in China represents both a challenge

and an opportunity. The few African narratives that have reached Chinese audiences-whether through film, television, or digital platforms-have attracted strong viewership. The appetite exists; what's missing is the pipeline. This requires collaboration, not competition. We should invite Chinese filmmakers, technicians, and producers to Africa, immersing them in our contexts and stories. Simultaneously, we must send African storytellers to China-not as tourists but as serious students of their methods, technologies, and distribution strategies. The goal isn't to mimic Chinese content but to learn their processes. How

do they integrate AI without losing human creativity? How do they develop new platforms rather than depending on Western gatekeepers like Netflix and YouTube? How do they monetize content across diverse distribution channels? These are technical and business questions, and China has developed compelling answers.

Beyond Western gatekeepers Consider the mathematics of the current system. A Lesotho-produced film uploaded to YouTube might realistically achieve 100,000 views, primarily from neighbouring South Africa where local content naturally takes precedence. Netflix, meanwhile, imposes demands that effec-

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tively exclude most African productions from their platform. There is a new form they call micro-film that is garnering billions of views

for a single film. On some platforms, a single stream is worth RMB2. If a Lesotho

production gets 200 million views on such a platform, that amounts to RMB400 million. That is almost US\$60 million or M1 billion.

One of the things that make such films attractive is their riveting storylines, high production value and short episodes. But wishing it does not make it happen. We must start working.

The revenue from such viewership transforms filmmaking from a financially

precarious passion project into a sustainable industry. It revitalizes a whole economic ecosystem. It builds producer confidence.

Success breeds investment, investment enables quality, and quality attracts larger audiences-creating a virtuous cycle that's impossible within current Western-dominated distribution systems.

China has created dozens of platforms where content that might not suit traditional broadcasters generates millions in streaming revenue. These platforms reflect Chinese preferences and viewing habits, but their success demonstrates

that alternatives to YouTube and Netflix are viable. Africa needs similar platforms tailored to our contexts, languages, and storytelling traditions.

Cultural resonance One view I have always held is that any two peoples must always focus on their similarities instead of their differences. It was refreshing that Africans indeed share a lot of similarities with the Chinese. Our dishes differ, but we essentially eat the same things-grains, vegetables, meat prepared with care and shared communally. Our lives revolve around family, respect for elders, and collective rather than purely individual success.

These similarities suggest our stories might resonate with Chinese audiences more naturally than they do with Western ones.

Where Hollywood has often reduced Africa to poverty, conflict, and exoticism, Chinese audiences might recognize the universal human experiences our stories contain-family obligations, generational tensions, economic aspirations, romantic complications, and the eternal dance between tradition and modernity.

The work must start now We must start from where we are, pursuing excellence with available resources while building toward more ambitious goals. This means several concrete steps.

First, African governments and private investors must fund exchanges that send filmmakers, technicians, and students to Chinese institutions for extended training.

Brief tourism-style visits accomplish little; we need immersive programs lasting months or years.

Second, we should invite Chinese production companies to establish African operations, not extracting our stories but collaborating on their telling. Joint ventures that combine Chinese technical expertise with African creative vision could produce work that succeeds in both markets.

Third, African entrepreneurs must develop continent-specific streaming platforms and social media networks. We cannot depend indefinitely on Western companies that don't prioritize our content or Chinese platforms designed for Chinese users. We need infrastructure we control.

Finally, African film schools require comprehensive reform. Curricula must evolve continuously, incorporating new technologies and platforms as they emerge.

Partnerships with Chinese institutions could accelerate this process, bringing cutting-edge training to African students without requiring everyone to travel abroad.

The choice facing African storytellers isn't whether to embrace AI and emerging technologies but whether we'll do so proactively or find ourselves marginalized by another generation of innovations we failed to adopt. China's example demonstrates that technological advancement need not obliterate tradition or eliminate jobs-it can enhance human creativity and multiply opportunities.

Our stories deserve global audiences. Our filmmakers deserve world-class training

and tools. Our entrepreneurs deserve platforms that serve our interests.

Looking east, we can find models that make all of this possible. The question is whether we'll act while the opportunity remains, or whether we'll still be debating the merits of change while the world moves forward without us.

Silence Charumbira is an international journalist based in Maseru, Lesotho. He is former Deputy Editor of the Lesotho Times and Sunday Express. He has also worked with multiple reputable organisations like China Daily, Guangming, Associated Press (AP) The Guardian and CNN, among others. He writes on diverse topics including China-Africa relations. Views expressed in this article are his own and do not necessarily represent those of the publication.

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“Police shut us out”, forensic expert reveals troubling details in 2014 bombing trial

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Few details have emerged in the high-profile 2014 bombings trial, after a forensic expert told the court that police officers made it difficult for civilian forensic teams to properly investigate the scenes of two deadly explosions. The testimony, delivered this week before the High Court, has raised fresh questions about how the investigations were handled at the time.

Mofu Setloboko, who in 2014 served as a Senior Lab Technologist in the Forensic Laboratory under the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), took the stand as the 27th state witness in the case against former Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) Commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli and four army members. The five face charges relating to bomb attacks at the home of Liabiloe Ramoholi (also known as Maesiah Thabane) at Moshoeshoe II and at the home of former Police Commissioner Khothatso Tsooana at Ha Abia.

The explosions, which rocked the nation more than a decade ago, remain among the most politically charged incidents in Lesotho's recent history. This week's testimony shed new light on what happened behind the scenes as investigators tried to piece together the events of January 2014.

“They did not want us there”, Witness describes tension at crime scenes Setloboko told the court that when he and his civilian forensic team arrived at Moshoeshoe II and Ha



Abia on January 27, 2014, they immediately felt unwelcome.

Instead of cooperation, he said they were met with resistance from police officers already at the scene. According to him, the police made it clear they did not want the civilian forensic specialists involved.

He described the working environment as hostile and said they were constantly pressured and restricted from performing their duties freely. “There was no cooperation at all. The police did not want the civilian team at the crime scenes,” he told the court. “We were victimised and forced to work under pressure, and some items were hidden from us.”

The court heard that the strained relationship between the investigative teams created gaps in what should have been a coordinated and professional examination of the crime scenes.

During his testimony, Setloboko was shown a photograph of an unexploded bomb that police officers said had been found at Ha

Abia. To the court's surprise, he stated he had never seen the device, even though he was one of the forensic experts assigned to the investigation. He explained that if the device had indeed been found at the scene, and if the civilian team had been given access to it, he would have included it in his official findings.

“I did not see that unexploded bomb,” he said. “If it was on the scene and we were given the chance to examine it, I would have documented it in my report.” His statement suggested that important evidence may have been withheld from the civilian forensic team, raising concerns about how the police handled key materials in the investigation.

Setloboko explained to the court that his team collected several metal pieces from both crime scenes. These fragments appeared to have come from explosive devices and contained visible burn marks. The items were taken to the forensic laboratory for testing. After conducting

examinations, he discovered that the fragments contained a plasticizer, a chemical compound commonly used to increase the power of an explosive. He explained that when added to an explosive mixture, a plasticizer ensures maximum heat and pressure, resulting in a stronger and more destructive blast. His findings, he said, were consistent with the type of explosions reported at the two homes. The results showed that the devices were not simple makeshift bombs but rather powerful, carefully assembled explosives.

With Setloboko's testimony completed, the court adjourned the case to Monday next week, when the trial will resume. The state is expected to call more witnesses as it continues to build its case against Kamoli and the four soldiers. The 2014 bombings case has been one of the longest-running and most significant trials in Lesotho, involving senior security figures and allegations of politically motivated attacks.