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MASERU, LESOTHO

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**MOHAHLAULA**  
AIRLINES

# Justice Minister Under Fire Over Alleged Use of Inmates to Work His Fields

BY: Seipati Matobo

The Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Hon. Richard Ramoetsi, has been accused of using inmates incarcerated at Mohale's Hoek Correctional Facility as unpaid labourers to perform agricultural work, including weeding fields allegedly linked to him, raising fresh questions about abuse of state power and the exploitation of prisoners.

Two independent sources from Mekaling, the minister's constituency in the Mohale's Hoek district, told Lesotho Tribune that inmates from the correctional facility are routinely taken out to work in nearby fields. The sources allege that this labour benefits the minister directly and substitutes employment opportunities that could otherwise have gone to local villagers.

According to the sources, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal, the use of inmates amounts to free labour and reflects a broader pattern of political privilege, where access to state institutions is leveraged for personal benefit.

"This is not community service. These are in-



mates being used instead of employing people from the village who are desperate for work," one source said.

The allegations, if proven, would raise serious legal and ethical concerns. While Lesotho Correctional Services permits inmate labour under specific conditions, such work is typically restricted to prison-managed agricultural projects, rehabilitation programmes, or court-sanctioned activities. Using inmates to work private fields would potentially violate both correctional regulations and constitutional safeguards against forced labour.

Lesotho Tribune contacted Minister Ramoetsi for comment on the allegations. By the time of

publication, no response had been received.

However, Lesotho Correctional Services Public Relations Officer denied the claims, insisting that inmates are only engaged in agricultural work linked to prison-owned land.

"Not true," the LCS PRO said. "Bats'oarua ba ntse ba sebetsa masimong ao toronko e lemeng seahlolo le beng ba ona Maphutseng Mhoek. At least to my knowledge."

The PRO added that, to their understanding, inmates were not involved in any privately owned fields linked to the minister.

"Empa ha ke tsebe haeba masimo a letona le ona a kenelletse in that block farming, such that ho hlaha eka ho hlaoloa a

hae fela," the PRO said. Crucially, the LCS spokesperson acknowledged that such conduct would be unacceptable if it were taking place.

"It is not acceptable hore inmates baka hlaola masimo a letona. And entse sa etsahale joalo," the PRO said.

The statement introduces ambiguity rather than closure. While LCS denies knowledge of inmates working on the minister's personal fields, it concedes uncertainty about the boundaries of block farming activities and whether private land could be visually or operationally conflated with prison projects.

If proven that inmates being deployed for private benefit is damaging to Sam Matekane administration particularly in a country where unemployment is high and political office is frequently accused of blurring public and private interests.

The allegations come amid growing public scrutiny of how state resources are used by senior officials, and whether oversight institutions are sufficiently robust to prevent abuse.

Lesotho Tribune will continue to seek a response from Minister Ramoetsi.

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**Lesotho Tribune**  
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# Nation Mourns Malefetsane Nchaka

By: Tholoana Lesenya

## MASERU

**L**esotho is in mourning following the passing of former Principal Secretary, community leader and senior opposition figure, Malefetsane Nchaka, whose death late Saturday night has closed a chapter on a life deeply entwined into the country's public service and political history.

News of his death was confirmed on Sunday by All Basotho Convention (ABC) Secretary General, Thebe Mokoatle, who said Nchaka died at around 23:00 after a prolonged illness. He had been battling prostate cancer for some time. Nchaka's passing has sent ripples of sorrow through political circles, government institutions and communities where he was known not only as a senior official and politician, but also as a mentor, organiser and quiet mobiliser for development.

Those who worked closely with him describe a man whose life was shaped by an



enduring belief in service, service to the state, to his party and to ordinary citizens. Born and raised in Lesotho, Nchaka came of age in a period when the country's public institutions were evolving and often under strain. It was within this environment that he built a career in public administration,

steadily rising through the ranks to occupy some of the most demanding senior posts in government. Among the positions he held, he is perhaps best remembered for his tenure as Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. It was a role that placed him at the centre of one of

the most sensitive and strategic sectors of the national economy, food production, rural livelihoods and national resilience. Colleagues from that period recall a disciplined administrator who paid close attention to systems, policy detail and institutional order. He was known

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to insist on punctuality, proper procedure and accountability, not out of rigidity, they say, but from a conviction that effective governance depended on strong, well-run institutions.

Under his watch, the ministry navigated complex challenges linked to food security, climate pressures and rural development. While public service rarely brings visible applause, those within the ministry credit Nchaka with strengthening internal coordination and pushing for policies aimed at improving support to farmers and rural communities. Yet his life cannot be contained within job titles alone.

Beyond the corridors of government, Nchaka remained firmly rooted in community affairs. He was widely regarded as approachable, a senior figure who did not withdraw behind office doors, but who continued to attend local gatherings, party meetings and development discussions.

Mokoatle described him as “a committed public servant who

dedicated much of his life to serving the nation through public administration and political engagement.” He said Nchaka believed deeply in democratic participation and in the responsibility of leaders to remain connected to the people they served.

That belief found renewed expression in the later chapter of his life, when he stepped more visibly into partisan politics.

As a senior member of the ABC, Nchaka was part of the generation that helped shape and sustain the party during critical moments of Lesotho’s multiparty era. Within party structures, he was known as a stabilising presence, someone who valued internal dialogue, organisational discipline and grassroots mobilisation.

His decision to contest the 2022 National Assembly elections as the ABC candidate for Thaba-Putsoa Constituency reflected not ambition, but continuity. To those close to him, it was proof that he had not retreated from public life after government service, but had instead chosen to re-engage directly

with voters and community structures. Although electoral contests are, by nature, uncertain and often unforgiving, Nchaka’s campaign was widely viewed as an extension of his lifelong commitment to participation and representation. He spoke frequently about development, youth involvement and the need for experienced leadership that could bridge the gap between state institutions and everyday realities. In private life, friends and associates describe him as measured, thoughtful and respectful. He was not known for flamboyant speeches or dramatic gestures, but for careful listening and considered responses. In meetings, he preferred substance over spectacle, and he was often the one to remind colleagues of procedural detail or historical context.

His illness, though known to close associates, was largely borne with privacy and dignity. Even as his health declined, he remained in contact with party colleagues and friends, offering advice, encouragement and, at times, gentle humour.

The announcement of his death has prompted an outpouring of condolences from political figures, former colleagues and community members. Many speak of his consistency, a rare quality in public life, and of a man whose positions may have changed over time, but whose dedication to service did not.

As tributes continue to emerge, a portrait is forming of a leader who did not chase the spotlight, but who laboured within institutions, believing that progress is often built through patient administration, principled politics and sustained community engagement.

Funeral arrangements have not yet been announced, but the nation is already reflecting on a life marked by duty.

In Malefetsane Nchaka’s passing, Lesotho loses more than a former Principal Secretary or a senior party member. It loses a generation of leadership that understood public service not as a stage, but as a long, demanding journey, one that he walked with commitment until the very end.

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# Law Society Faces Constitutional Challenge Over NGO Lawyers and Access to Justice

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

A major constitutional confrontation has landed before the High Court of Lesotho, placing the Law Society of Lesotho, the Minister of Justice and Law, and the Attorney General under scrutiny over decisions that human-rights organisations argue threaten access to justice for the country's poorest and most marginalised communities. In an application filed under Constitutional Case No. 0030/2025, three applicants — Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust Lesotho (WLSA Lesotho), Advocate Bataung Ntoko, and Seinoli Legal Centre — are asking the court to review and set aside decisions by the Law Society that withdrew WLSA's accreditation to provide legal representation and refused to issue or renew practising certificates for lawyers employed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). At the centre of the dispute is the interpretation and application of sec-



tion 7(3) of the Law Society Act of 1983, which the applicants argue has been applied arbitrarily, irrationally, and in a manner inconsistent with the Constitution. Who is involved WLSA Lesotho, registered in 2000, is a long-established human-rights NGO providing free legal services, advocacy, research, and legal education, particularly to women, children, and indigent communities across Lesotho. Its

work spans litigation, community outreach, policy reform, and paralegal training, with an operational footprint extending into remote and hard-to-reach districts such as Quthing, Qacha's Nek, Thaba-Tseka, Makhohlong, Butha-Buthe, and Leribe.

The second applicant, Advocate Bataung Ntoko, is a duly admitted advocate of the courts of Lesotho who works within WLSA's legal department. The

third applicant, Seinoli Legal Centre, is another NGO engaged in legal services and public-interest litigation.

The respondents are the Law Society of Lesotho, cited as the statutory regulator of the legal profession; the Minister of Justice and Law; and the Attorney General, cited in his capacity as the principal legal adviser to the government.

What triggered the dis-

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pute  
According to the founding affidavit, tensions arose after a complaint was lodged against WLSA with the Law Society following the submission of a list of its admitted legal practitioners for the renewal of their practising certificates. The applicants contend that, following this complaint, the Law Society's attitude towards WLSA "changed drastically," culminating in the withdrawal of its accreditation and the refusal to renew or issue practising certificates to its lawyers. WLSA alleges that these steps were taken without affording it or its legal practitioners a proper hearing, and that requests for procedural fairness were dismissed on the basis that a hearing would "serve no purpose as it cannot reach any other conclusion but subverting illegality," a position the applicants describe as deeply irregular and unlawful.

**The legal challenge**

The applicants argue that the Law Society acted ultra vires, irrationally, and in breach of basic administrative-law principles by unilaterally withdrawing accreditation and withholding practising certificates without due process.

They further argue that section 7(3) of the Law

Society Act, properly interpreted, does not prohibit lawyers employed by NGOs from practising law or representing clients in court. To the extent that the provision is read as excluding such lawyers on the basis that they are "not in private practice," the applicants contend that this interpretation is unconstitutional.

In particular, they argue that such an interpretation violates constitutional guarantees of equality before the law and equal protection, as well as the right to a fair trial. They point out that denying indigent persons access to NGO-provided legal representation effectively shuts the courthouse doors to those who cannot afford private lawyers.

**Consequences for access to justice**

A significant portion of the court papers is devoted to outlining the practical consequences of the Law Society's decisions. WLSA warns that the refusal to issue practising certificates to NGO-employed lawyers could force retrenchments, exacerbate unemployment among law graduates, and dismantle one of the few functional access-to-justice mechanisms available to vulnerable communities in Lesotho.

The applicants reject

suggestions that affected clients could rely on pro bono services from private practitioners, describing such an approach as unrealistic and inadequate. They note that private legal practitioners are concentrated in urban centres, while NGOs often operate in rural and underserved areas where legal services are already scarce. Pro bono work, they argue, is neither compulsory nor systematically regulated in a way that could substitute for structured NGO legal aid.

They also point to the government's own admission that state-provided legal aid is under-resourced, understaffed, and overwhelmed, citing official reports acknowledging the inadequacy of legal aid provision across the country.

**Relief sought from the court**

Among the orders sought, the applicants ask the High Court to:

- Compel the Law Society to dispatch the full record of proceedings relating to the revocation of WLSA's accreditation;
- Review and set aside the withdrawal of WLSA's accreditation and the refusal to issue practising certificates to NGO-employed lawyers;
- Declare that duly admitted legal practitioners employed by

NGOs are entitled to practise law and represent clients in court;

- Alternatively, declare the impugned portion of section 7(3) of the Law Society Act unconstitutional to the extent that it excludes such practitioners;
- Order the issuance of practising certificates upon payment of the requisite fees

**A case with far-reaching implications**

While framed as a dispute between NGOs and the professional regulator, the case raises broader questions about who is entitled to practise law in Lesotho, how regulatory power is exercised, and whether statutory interpretation can lawfully narrow access to justice for the poor.

If the applicants succeed, the ruling could clarify the legal status of NGO-employed lawyers and reaffirm the constitutional obligation to ensure meaningful access to justice. If they fail, human-rights organisations warn that the decision could hollow out public-interest litigation and leave thousands without practical legal recourse. The matter is expected to be closely watched by the legal profession, civil society, and policymakers alike, as it cuts to the heart of how justice is delivered — and to whom — in Lesotho

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# As Washington Retreats From Global Bodies, BNP's Mofomobe Urges Proactive Lesotho Strategy

By: Staff Reporter

In a sweeping foreign-policy move, U.S. President Donald Trump has directed the United States to withdraw from 66 international organisations, including key United Nations bodies and global governance frameworks that have shaped decades of post-war cooperation. The decision, formalised in a presidential memorandum on January 7, 2026, reflects a broader shift toward unilateralism and a reassertion of national sovereignty.

Among the most prominent international frameworks affected is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the legal backbone of coordinated global climate action and the 2015 Paris Agreement – along with related climate, development, and scientific bodies. The U.S. has characterised its exits as necessary to protect domestic interests, citing that many of these organisations promote agendas it finds counter to U.S. priorities.

The move has provoked international concern, not least from officials in vulnerable regions who rely on these frameworks



for technical support, disaster preparedness, and multilateral funding.

In Lesotho, the repercussions of these geopolitical shifts are already drawing political commentary. Hon. Machesetsa Mofomobe, leader of the Basotho National Party (BNP), spoke to Lesotho Tribune, pressing Prime Minister Sam Matekane to outline a comprehensive plan to mitigate the impact of anticipated closures or withdrawals of offices belonging to the affected organisations in Maseru.

“The cessation of U.S. aid in previous cycles,” Mofomobe noted, “demonstrated the fragility of

relying on external support for essential income streams and socio-economic benefits. We must not wait until Basotho households and service delivery systems are under extreme duress before we act.” He warned that without mitigation and domestic investment strategies, many Basotho could face heightened economic pressures. Mofomobe also referenced Lesotho’s national population census scheduled for later this year, cautioning that the withdrawal of support from bodies such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) threatens not only funding but the

technical capacity to conduct accurate demographic assessments. On climate change, Mofomobe offered a stark observation:

“When global mechanisms that support climate resilience dissolve, countries like ours – perched in fragile topographies with economies already stressed by drought, irregular rainfall patterns, and food insecurity – will be left without guidance or resources. Climate volatility is not a distant threat; it’s a present economic multiplier of hardship.”

GLOBAL RAMIFICA-

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**Continued from Page 9****TIONS AND LESOTHO'S POSITION**

International analysts warn that the U.S. withdrawal from these 66 bodies – half of which are U.N. affiliated – threatens to erode decades of multilateral institutional architecture. Critics argue that such retreats weaken global cooperation on climate, health, gender equality, and economic development. Proponents within the Trump administration maintain the moves prioritise national sovereignty and fiscal restraint. For Lesotho, which participates in regional development initiatives and depends on technical partnerships with international organisations, the challenge will be to redesign national frameworks of resilience and financing, in part through diversified partnerships beyond traditional bilateral supporters.

The 66 International Organisations From Which the United States Is Withdrawing Non-United Nations Organisations (35):

1. 24/7 Carbon-Free Energy Compact
2. Colombo Plan Council
3. Commission for Environmental Cooperation
4. Education Cannot Wait
5. European Centre of Excellence for Counter-Intelligence Hybrid Threats
6. Forum of European

- National Highway Research Laboratories
7. Freedom Online Coalition
8. Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
9. Global Counterterrorism Forum
10. Global Forum on Cyber Expertise
11. Global Forum on Migration and Development
12. Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research
13. Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals, and Sustainable Development
14. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
15. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
16. International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
17. International Cotton Advisory Committee
18. International Development Law Organization
19. International Energy Forum
20. International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies
21. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
22. International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law
23. International Lead and Zinc Study Group
24. International Renewable Energy Agency

25. International Solar Alliance
26. International Tropical Timber Organization
27. International Union for Conservation of Nature
28. Pan American Institute of Geography and History
29. Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation
30. Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
31. Regional Cooperation Council
32. Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century
33. Science and Technology Center in Ukraine
34. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
35. Venice Commission of the Council of Europe
- United Nations Organizations (31):
36. Department of Economic and Social Affairs
37. UN Economic and Social Council – Economic Commission for Africa
38. ECOSOC – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
39. ECOSOC – Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
40. ECOSOC – Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
41. International Law Commission
42. International Residual

- Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
43. International Trade Centre
44. Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
45. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict
46. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
47. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children
48. Peacebuilding Commission
49. Peacebuilding Fund
50. Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
51. UN Alliance of Civilizations
52. UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
53. UN Conference on Trade and Development
54. UN Democracy Fund
55. UN Energy
56. UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
57. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
58. UN Human Settlements Programme
59. UN Institute for Training and Research
60. UN Oceans
61. UN Population Fund
62. UN Register of Conventional Arms

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# 10

Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

The World Bank's latest economic projections for Lesotho paint a stark picture of an economy whose productive core is weakening rapidly. At the centre of this deteriora-

# BUSINESS & ECONOMY

## Lesotho's Manufacturing Sector Has Collapsed, World Bank Data Shows



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**Table 1: Recent History and Projections – Growth and Demand (%)**

Indicator	2022	2023	2024	2025e	2026e	2027e
Real GDP growth	2.4	1.8	-2.9	1.5	0.7	-1.1
Gross fixed capital investment	18.9	19.4	20.1	27.9	23.7	21.0
Exports (goods & services)	36.7	2.2	2.1	6.3	-0.6	-1.8
Imports (goods & services)	22.5	10.3	10.9	11.2	9.0	9.3

Growth briefly rebounds in 2024 but collapses thereafter, with exports turning negative and investment failing to sustain productive activity.

**Table 2: Sectoral Growth at Constant Factor Prices (%)**

Sector	2022	2023	2024	2025e	2026e	2027e
Agriculture	12.5	2.4	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.8
Industry (incl. manufacturing)	5.0	5.0	5.3	3.2	2.8	2.8
Services	0.9	0.8	2.1	0.6	-0.1	0.7

Manufacturing-led growth peaks in 2024 before steadily weakening, while services stagnate and agriculture remains marginal.

**Table 3: Employment, Inflation and External Position**

Indicator	2022	2023	2024	2025e	2026e	2027e
Employment rate (% of 15+)	45.5	45.2	44.4	44.3	44.4	43.4
Inflation (CPI %)	6.3	6.1	6.1	4.5	5.0	5.1
Current account (% GDP)	11.7	4.5	5.8	-1.7	-3.8	-1.8

Employment remains frozen below half of the working-age population despite moderating inflation and episodic external relief.

**Table 4: Fiscal indicators (% of GDP)**

Indicator	2022	2023	2024	2025e	2026e	2027e
Fiscal balance	1.7	0.7	7.2	3.4	1.0	1.0
Public debt	66.5	60.7	51.0	50.5	50.1	49.5

Strong fiscal surpluses and falling debt mask deeper weaknesses in productive capacity and employment creation.

**Table 5: Poverty Rates at International Thresholds (%)**

Poverty line	2022	2023
\$1.90/day (2021 PPP)	45.7	45.0
\$4.20/day (2021 PPP)	15.8	15.0
\$8.30/day (2021 PPP)	6.8	6.9

Poverty levels remain effectively unchanged, confirming that fiscal stability and investment-led growth have not translated into welfare gains.

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# Ministry Revives National Quality Awards

By: Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development (MTIBD) has announced the re-start and launch of the 2026 National Quality Awards. This initiative shows the government's plan to promote quality standards, make local businesses more competitive and raise Lesotho's global reputation. The National Quality Awards commenced in 2013 to encourage excellence, innovation and continuous improvement in Lesotho's business sector.

The awards took a break in 2017 and are now being brought back to match the Southern African Development Community (SADC) 2025 call for stronger regional quality systems.

The reinstatement means Lesotho wants its companies to meet international best practices to promote excellence and better quality management to recognise businesses that perform at world-class levels and encourage companies to use global quality standards for products and services.

In preparation for the 2026 awards, the Ministry held technical workshops and awareness campaigns from March



to November 2025 across the country. These events helped businesses understand quality standards and get ready to enter the competition aiming to strengthen Lesotho's quality infrastructure and help local enterprises grow in the regional market.

The 2026 Awards ceremony is therefore set for January 28, 2026 and will honour five categories: Product of the Year, Exporter of the Year, Service of the Year, Individual Contributor of the Year and Company of the Year – highlighting excellence and lifting standards across Lesotho's businesses. The Ministry urged Qualifying firms to apply for national recognition and a stronger, more competitive economy.

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# Stanlib fund manager Nicolas Lyle resigns

By: GONTSE PHALA

**F**und manager and analyst Nicolas Lyle has resigned from Stanlib after more than six years. He contributed to investment decision-making during his tenure and, prior to the role, covered global real estate investment trusts (Reits) at the firm for three years. Stanlib Asset Management confirmed the resignation to Citywire South Africa. It added that the firm is strengthening how it manages listed property by incorporating the offering into its Systematic Solutions capability. 'This approach has been met with great support from clients, investors and other stakeholders,' it added.

'Integrating SA listed property into our Systematic Solutions framework will ensure greater precision, efficiency and risk management, while unlocking broader opportunities for innovation,' said head of investments Mark Lovett. The firm said that in 2023 it changed to an active, systematic process over traditional fundamental management for listed SA equities.' This global best-practice ap-



proach uses quantitative techniques to deliver consistent results, as demonstrated by the performance track record achieved by top-rated portfolio manager Rademeyer Vermaak and the Systematic Solutions team.

It added that the Systematic Solutions team had the scale, technology and expertise to manage additional strategies without compromising quality.

Before joining Stanlib,

Lyle built extensive experience across real estate, investment and financial management roles in Africa. He was an adviser to the RMB Westport Africa real estate development funds, served as interim chief financial officer at Profica, and worked as a consultant to Afprops, the property advisory firm he founded and led as chief executive officer, alongside advisory roles linked to pension investment structures.

Lyle is a CFA charterholder and a chartered accountant, having qualified with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland. His academic background includes a master's in arts and an undergraduate in Spanish and Portuguese, with a focus on language and business studies, from the University of Edinburgh.

Update: The original article did not include comment from Stanlib and has been updated

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# LMPS moves to calm breathalyser storm

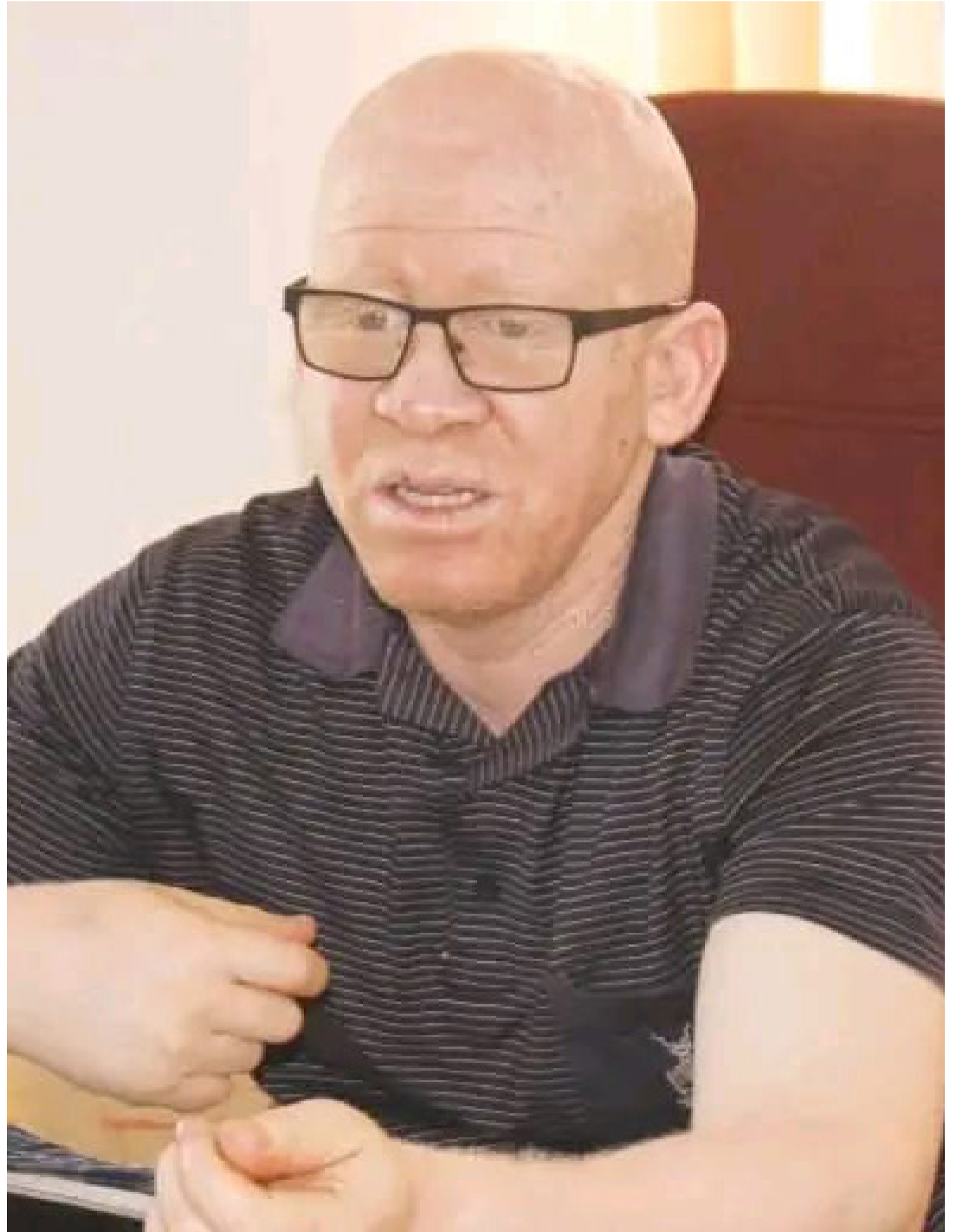
By: Tholoana Lesenya

## MASERU

The Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) has moved to calm growing public unease over the hygiene and credibility of breathalyser tests used in drunk-driving arrests, firmly rejecting claims that motorists are made to blow into the same unclean device.

The police response follows public allegations by Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) Executive Director, Tsikoane Peshoane, who suggested that officers routinely use one breathalyser on several motorists without changing any components, raising fears about both health risks and the reliability of the results.

In a statement circulated on its official platforms, LMPS said the reports spreading on social media were misleading and risked creating unnecessary panic. The police clarified that while the breathalyser machine itself is reused, each suspect is required to blow into a new, disposable straw, which is immediately thrown away



after use.

“Every motorist is provided with a fresh straw before taking a breathalyser test,” the statement reads. “These straws are single-use and are dis-

posed of straight after each test. This procedure is followed to ensure hygiene, safety and the integrity of the results.” LMPS stressed that no driver is expected to

blow directly into the device and that the service remains committed to upholding professional standards in traffic law enforcement.

However, the police  
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Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

There is something profoundly revealing about what governments choose to celebrate when the economy is struggling.

This week, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development proudly “relaunched” the 2026 National Quality Awards. A press conference was convened. A ceremony date announced. Categories unveiled. Application forms printed. Deadlines set.

And one is left wondering: is this really where the state believes its intervention is most needed?

Lesotho is facing stagnant production, a collapsing manufacturing base, deepening import dependence and a private sector that survives more by resilience than by policy support. Access to finance remains constrained. Infrastructure is weak. Energy is unreliable. Markets are small and fragmented.

Bureaucracy is heavy. Regulation is inconsistent. Confidence is fragile.

And in response, the state offers trophies. We are told the awards were reinstated to “motivate and uplift the spirits of businesses”. That alone should worry us. Businesses do not need emotional uplift from the Ministry of Trade. They need working industrial policy. They need predictable regulation. They need functioning export support, reliable standards enforcement, cheaper logistics, and access to capital.

Motivation does not fix structural failure. The irony is painful. The same government that cannot ensure timely VAT refunds, cannot meaningfully support local producers, and cannot protect emerging industries from being wiped out by imports, is confident in its ability to judge who the “Best Exporter of the Year” is. Best exporter to where, exactly? Under what conditions? With what

support? Using which trade facilitation mechanisms?

Awards without substance are not recognition. They are performance art.

Even the framing is telling. The awards were paused due to financial challenges. Fair enough. But their “reinstatement” is now presented as evidence of seriousness. As if restarting a ceremony is equivalent to restarting an economy. As if business confidence is built through applause rather than policy.

There is also something quietly insulting about asking struggling businesses to fill in application forms by 12 January, barely days into the new year, as if what entrepreneurs lack most is paperwork and deadlines from ministries that have delivered little else. What exactly is being rewarded here? Survival? Compliance? Obedience? Visibility?

If the Ministry were serious, the press conference would have announced concrete measures.



Sector-specific incentives. Targeted import controls. Export credit guarantees. Industrial clustering. Cold-chain investments. Market access agreements. Skills pipelines. Anything measurable. Anything structural.

Instead, we get categories and certificates. This is not to say excellence should not be recognised. But recognition must follow achievement that was enabled by policy, not substitute for it. When awards come before strategy, they expose a government more interested in optics than outcomes.

The deeper problem is philosophical. Lesotho’s state has become far more comfortable celebrating activity than delivering impact. Launches, relaunches, ceremonies and announcements have replaced execution. It is governance by event calendar.

The business community does not need to be “uplifted”. It needs to be taken seriously. Until the Ministry of Trade can demonstrate that it understands the difference between encouragement and intervention, between symbolism and substance, and between governance and theatre, these awards will remain what they truly are.

A shiny distraction from an economy still waiting for leadership.

# EDITORIAL

## When the State Runs Out of Ideas, It Hands Out Awards



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Malefo Thinyane

The honest answer must begin with an uncomfortable admission: Lesotho does not produce most of the fresh food it consumes. The shelves of our supermarkets tell that story daily. South African produce dominates because, in truth, there is often no local alternative.

But there are exceptions. And those exceptions matter.

In recent years, and sometimes only in specific seasons, Lesotho has begun producing eggs, tomatoes, potatoes and cabbages in meaningful quantities. Not consistently. Not at scale. But enough to raise a question that policymakers have avoided for too long: what happens when local production finally emerges in a market that never pauses for it?

The moment Basotho farmers manage to produce tomatoes in season, they discover that imported tomatoes keep coming anyway. When local potatoes

# OPINION

## Should Lesotho Ban Importation of Fresh Produce Available in Lesotho?



reach the market, cheaper imports remain stacked beside them. The signal to the farmer is unmistakable. Even when you succeed, the market will not adjust. So the question is not whether Lesotho should ban imports because it is self-sufficient. It is not. The real question is whether Lesotho should reward the act of producing by temporarily protecting it when it finally happens. No country develops agriculture by waiting until farmers are perfect before offering protection. That logic guarantees permanent dependence. Development works in the opposite direction. Protection creates the space to learn, invest, fail, improve and eventually compete.

Lesotho's current policy does the reverse. It demands competitiveness from farmers before they have scale, infrastructure, storage, finance or market power. When they fail, we

call it inefficiency. When they succeed briefly, we drown them in imports. The result is predictable. Farmers hesitate to expand. Banks hesitate to lend. Young people hesitate to enter agriculture. Why invest in a sector where success is punished by price collapse and market saturation?

Critics will argue that import restrictions raise prices for consumers. That risk is real. But it is not the full story. Prices are already high, despite imports. Food insecurity persists, despite imports. Rural poverty deepens, despite imports. Import dependence has not delivered the outcomes it promised. What it has delivered is convenience without capacity.

This is not an argument for permanent bans or isolation. It is an argument for discipline. Seasonal import controls tied to verified local supply. Clear thresh-

olds. Transparent rules. When domestic tomatoes are available between November and March, imports pause. When the season ends, they resume. Farmers know the rules. Traders know the rules. Consumers understand the trade-off.

Many countries do this quietly. They do not call it nationalism. They call it planning.

There is also a moral dimension we rarely confront. A country that says "we will import everything until you are competitive" is really saying "we are comfortable never becoming productive." That is not realism. It is surrender dressed up as pragmatism. Lesotho's problem is not that it produces too much. It is that it produces too little, and even when it does produce, it receives no policy signal that the effort is valued.

Perhaps Lesotho should not ban the importation of fresh produce available locally. Or perhaps it should, selectively and seasonally. But what cannot continue is a system where the appearance of local production is treated as irrelevant. If producing food does not change the rules of the market, then producing food will eventually stop. And when that happens, imports will not save us. They will simply own us.

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clarification has done little to silence the legal and public debate ignited by Peshoane's arrest in Mafeteng, where he was allegedly apprehended on suspicion of drunk driving.

According to his legal team, Peshoane repeatedly demanded a "clean breathalyser" at the time of his arrest, insisting that he would not submit to a test unless he was satisfied that proper sanitary precautions were in place. The lawyers maintain that their client was not provided with what he considered a clean device and that this formed part of the reason he refused to blow into the breathalyser.

Beyond the question of disposable straws, the defence has raised broader concerns about the way the police handled the matter.

In their submissions, Peshoane's lawyers argue that despite the dispute surrounding the breathalyser, police failed to offer any explanation as to why no blood or urine samples were taken for laboratory analysis. They say such tests could have provided an independent and scientifically verifiable basis for determining whether their client had

consumed alcohol.

The legal team points to what they describe as "conflicting interpretations" of Section 94 of the Road Traffic Act No. 8 of 1981, which deals with the testing of motorists suspected of driving under the influence. They argue that in circumstances where a breath test is contested, alternative testing methods should be considered to safeguard

both the rights of suspects and the credibility of the prosecution.

According to the defence, police records in the matter indicate that no positive alcohol test results were obtained in relation to Peshoane. They further note that, at this stage, they have not challenged the adequacy of the proceedings that followed before the Magistrate's Court, particularly in relation to the Section 128 application.

However, the lawyers insist that deeper questions surrounding the functionality and reliability of the breathalyser allegedly used cannot be adequately dealt with at the level of the Magistrate's Court.

They contend that where allegations of abuse of prosecutorial discretion have been raised, and where the scientific reli-

ability of equipment is called into question, the issues transcend ordinary criminal procedure.

In this regard, the defence argues that matters such as the accreditation of breathalyser manufacturers, the calibration of devices, and the scientific validity of the technology employed fall within the purview of the Constitutional Court.

"These are not merely factual disputes," the legal submissions state in substance. "They go to the heart of whether the tools being used by the State meet constitutional standards of fairness, legality and scientific credibility." Adding to the controversy, Peshoane's lawyers claim that police officers labelled their client a drunkard based on breathalyser readings allegedly obtained from tests conducted on other motorists.

They argue that such conduct, if proven, would be deeply prejudicial and incompatible with basic principles of justice, as no person can lawfully be declared intoxicated on the basis of another individual's test results.

The defence maintains that their client's arrest was tainted by procedural irregularities and that public statements made in connection with the

case have unfairly damaged his reputation.

For its part, LMPS has not commented directly on the specific legal claims surrounding Peshoane's arrest, focusing instead on correcting what it describes as false impressions about its general breathalyser procedures.

The police reiterate that breathalyser machines are standard law-enforcement tools

worldwide and that their effectiveness depends on strict adherence to operational guidelines, including the use of disposable mouthpieces or straws. They have urged the public not to rely on "unverified narratives" circulating online, warning that misinformation undermines trust in institutions and may discourage cooperation with road safety operations.

The controversy unfolds at a time when road safety remains a major concern in Lesotho, with alcohol-related accidents continuing to claim lives and strain emergency services. Drunk-driving roadblocks and spot checks have become a regular feature on major routes, often drawing both praise for their deterrent effect and criticism over alleged heavy-handedness.

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Lesotho Tribune

By JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE

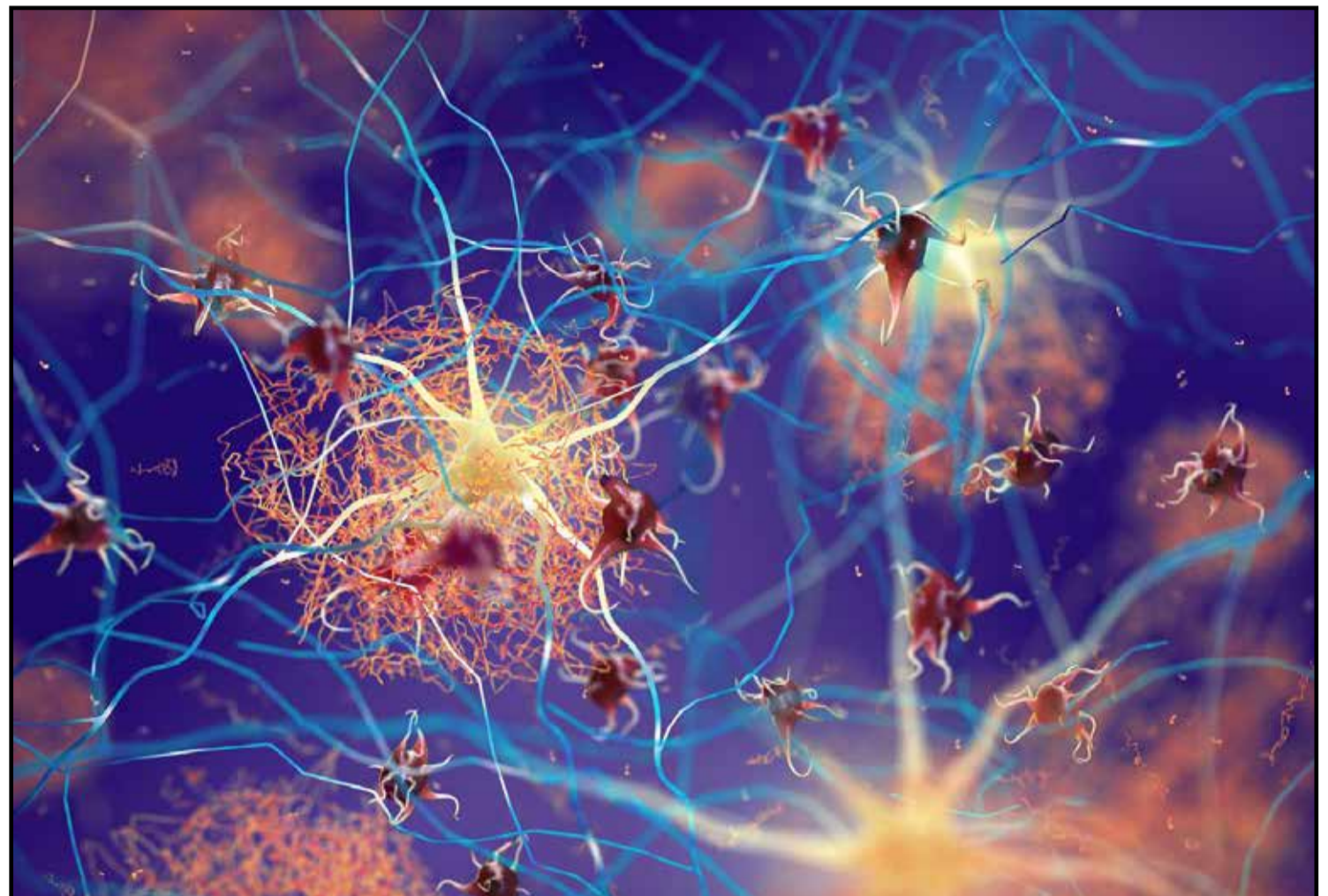
**R**esearchers have identified a brain protein whose absence leads to memory loss and Alzheimer's-like damage in mice.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins Medicine report that findings from a new study funded by the National Institutes of Health are helping to identify a promising new biological target for Alzheimer's disease. The focus is a protein that produces a crucial gas within the brain.

Studies in genetically engineered mice show that the protein Cystathionine  $\gamma$ -lyase, also known as CSE, plays an essential role in forming memories, says Bindu Paul, M.S., Ph.D., an as-

# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## Johns Hopkins Scientists Identify Key Brain Protein That May Slow Alzheimer's



Scientists are uncovering evidence that a subtle chemical process in the brain may be far more important to memory than previously recognized. When this process breaks down in mice, multiple systems involved in learning and brain protection begin to fail. Credit: Shutterstock

sociate professor of pharmacology, psychiatry and neuroscience at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine who led the research. CSE is best known for generating hydrogen sulfide, the gas responsible for the smell of rotten eggs, but the new findings highlight its importance in brain function.

Understanding CSE as a drug target

The study, published

in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, was designed to clarify how this protein functions at a basic biological level and to assess its potential as a target for drugs. Such treatments could increase CSE expression in people, with the goal of supporting brain cell health and slowing the progression of neurodegenerative disease.

Earlier research has sug-

gested that hydrogen sulfide can protect neurons in mice, Paul says. However, because the gas becomes toxic at high concentrations and cannot be safely delivered directly to the brain, scientists must determine how to regulate and maintain it at the extremely low levels naturally present in neurons.

Loss of CSE mimics Alzheimer's hallmarks

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The new findings show that mice engineered to lack the CSE enzyme develop memory and learning deficits along with increased oxidative stress, DNA damage, and weakened blood-brain barrier integrity, says Paul, the study's corresponding author. These features are widely recognized as key characteristics of Alzheimer's disease.

These recent experiments grew out of a 2014 report from the laboratory of Solomon Snyder, M.D., D.Sc., D.Phil., professor emeritus of neuroscience, pharmacology, and psychiatry, in which CSE was shown to benefit brain health in mice with Huntington's disease. For this, scientists used genetically engineered mice lacking the CSE protein, originally generated in 2008, when CSE was shown to be important for vascular function and blood pressure regulation. In 2021, the team showed that CSE malfunctioned in mice with Alzheimer's disease and that minuscule amounts of hydrogen sulfide injections helped protect brain health.

Those previous studies, however, were conducted in mice genetically engineered with other mutations known to cause

neurodegenerative disease and did not focus on CSE by itself.

CSE alone drives cognitive decline

"This most recent work indicates that CSE alone is a major player in cognitive function and could provide a new avenue for treatment pathways in Alzheimer's disease," says co-corresponding author Snyder, who retired from the Johns Hopkins Medicine faculty in 2023.

Using the same line of CSE-lacking mice from the 2008 study in this recent study, scientists compared the spatial memory (ability to remember directions and follow cues) in CSE-lacking mice and in normal mice.

In the experiments, scientists placed mice on a platform known as the Barnes maze, in which the mice learned to seek shelter when a bright light appeared. At the age of two months, both the CSE-lacking mice and normal mice avoided the bright light and consistently found the shelter within a three-minute period. At the age of six months, however, these CSE-lacking mice were unable to find the escape route, while normal six-month-old mice continued to do so.

"The decline in spatial memory indicates a progressive onset of neuro-

degenerative disease that we can attribute to CSE loss," says first author Suwarna Chakraborty, a researcher in Paul's lab.

Cellular damage across brain systems

Disruptions in the formation of new neurons in the hippocampus region of the brain (critical to learning and memory) are thought to be a hallmark of neurodegenerative disease, the scientists say. Using biochemical and analytical techniques, the researchers determined that neurogenesis-related proteins were expressed less often or not at all in mice lacking CSE when compared with normal mice.

Then, using high-powered electron microscopes, the scientists observed the brains of CSE-lacking mice and found big breaks in blood vessels, indicating that they had suffered damage to the blood-brain barrier, another symptom seen in people with Alzheimer's disease. Furthermore, new neurons had a difficult time migrating to the hippocampus region, where they would ordinarily help form new memories.

"The mice lacking CSE were compromised at multiple levels, which correlated with symptoms that we see in Alzheimer's disease," says co-first author Sunil

Jamuna Tripathi, a researcher in Paul's lab. More than 6 million people in the United States have Alzheimer's disease, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and prevalence is on the rise. To date, there are no cures or treatments that have been proven to consistently slow disease progression. Harnessing CSE and its production of hydrogen sulfide could be an avenue for therapeutic benefit, the scientists say.

Reference: "Cystathionine  $\gamma$ -lyase is a major regulator of cognitive function through neurotrophin signaling and neurogenesis" by Suwarna Chakraborty, Sunil Jamuna Tripathi, Edwin Vázquez-Rosa, Kalyani Chaubey, Hisashi Fujio-ka, Emiko Miller, Richa Tyagi, Thibaut Vignane, Sudarshana M. Sharma, Bobby Thomas, Zachary M. Weil, Randy J. Nelson, Milos R. Filipovic, Benjamin C. Orsburn, Solomon H. Snyder, Andrew A. Pieper and Bindu D. Paul, 26 December 2025, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2528478122  
Funding support for this research was provided by the National Institutes of Health (1R01AG071512, P50

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# Judge vows to oversee destruction of gun exhibits

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Three firearms that vanished from court custody in a high-profile murder case have been recovered and formally presented to the High Court, but not before a stern rebuke from a judge who has warned that mishandled weapons are fueling violent crime in the country.

The weapons had mysteriously disappeared after they were handed over to police as exhibits in the murder trial of Ralikonelo 'Leqhashasha' Joki, Mothibe Mothibe and Thomello Ntsane. A ruling by Justice Tšeliso Mokoko compelled the Commissioner of Police and investigating officers to explain how the firearms went missing. This week, following efforts to trace them, the recovered guns were brought into court as ordered. During proceedings, Justice Mokoko recounted that the court had earlier directed the firearms to be presented before the hearing. But when the case was called, the weapons could not be produced, and officers present began blaming one another for their disappearance. The situ-



ation alarmed the judge, who noted that firearms released into police custody have at times later been linked to new crimes.

Commissioner of Police Advocate Borotho Matsoso acknowledged the mishap. He told the court the firearms had been misplaced due to negligence, termed the lapse careless, and promised that measures were taken to recover them. Matsoso said the police had learned a lesson from the incident. Still, he conceded that there had been past misconduct in which officers unlawfully disposed of firearms instead of destroying them, a practice that runs counter to official policy.

The court stressed that all firearms exhibits are

to be destroyed as ordered, emphasizing that the continued circulation of illegal weapons poses a grave threat to public safety. In a new directive, Justice Mokoko ordered that the Commissioner must inform the court in advance of the date on which firearms exhibits will be destroyed. The judge also indicated an intention to personally observe the destruction to ensure compliance. The episode comes against a backdrop of public concern over missing or mishandled weapons. Earlier reporting on the same matter detailed tense courtroom exchanges after the guns vanished, with Justice Mokoko expressing suspicion that the police could be involved in trafficking

or careless handling of such evidence. A December report described a confrontation in which officers could not agree on who had custody of the firearms, and the judge's accusations that the missing weapons might already be in criminal hands.

With the directive issued, all eyes now turn to the next stages, the scheduling of destruction, the court's observation of that process, and the ongoing efforts to ensure that any firearms used as exhibits have no chance of re-entering illegal circulation. The recovered firearms are a reminder of what can go wrong, but the court's response may become a blueprint for preventing such incidents in the future.

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# Advocate Shale Oversees 8 AFCON Disciplinary cases



## LeFA Disciplinary & Disputes Chairperson Advocate Shale Shale

By Litšitso Letsunyane

As the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco moves into the Semi Finals, disciplinary matters have emerged as a growing concern alongside the on-field action. On Monday, January 5th, the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) Disciplinary and Disputes Committee Chairperson, Advocate Shale Shale took a trip to Morocco as he was tasked to oversee a total of 8 disciplinary cases

involving several of the tournament's high-profile nations. Advocate Shale will be working alongside Ms Jane Njeri Onyango and Mr Drucil Taylor. Some of these cases stem from incidents that occurred during the group stage of the competition. Amongst the matters under review is the conduct of Benin's technical team and players, incidents involving the use of smoke bombs by Senegal supporters, as well as the use of flares by Algeria and their supporters, with

several other cases forming part of the 8 brought before the panel. The disciplinary developments come at a critical stage of the tournament, as teams shift focus from survival in the quarter final to high-stakes Semi Final encounters, where suspensions and fines could have a direct impact on squad depth and matchday preparations. CAF has yet to publicly announce final rulings on all the cases. The tournament organisers have repeatedly stressed the importance of main-

taining discipline both on and off the pitch, particularly as global attention remains firmly fixed on the latter stages of Africa's flagship football event. On the field, the competition continues to deliver tense and closely contested matches, with many continental heavyweights fighting for a place in the finals. However, the disciplinary cases serve as a reminder that behaviour off the pitch can be just as influential as performances on it.



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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

The 2025/26 Africa Cup of Nations, currently taking place in Morocco and running into January 2026, has reached its most intense phase as the tournament moves deep into the knockout rounds. With the Quarter Final Stage now complete, 4 of Africa's top footballing nations will be battling for a place amongst the continent's elite in Semi Finals. The hosting nation, Morocco continue to carry the hopes of the home crowd and have looked composed under pressure, and have shown great tactical maturity. They continue to show the world how much they want it after beat-

# ARTS & SPORTS

## The 2025/26 Africa Cup Of Nations Laces Up For the Semi-Finals



ing Cameroon 2-0 on Saturday January 10th, Their next match will be on Wednesday, January 14th and this match will decide which team heads on to the Finals. Senegal, the defending champions, remain firmly in contention and have once again shown why they are considered one of the most balanced sides on the continent, Senegal moved to the

Semi Final after defeating Mali to a shallow 1-0. Senegal's next match will be on Wednesday, January 14th.

Other tournament powerhouses such as Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria, and Ivory Coast are locked in tense battles as their margins between victory and elimination grow increasingly thin. Several matches have been decided by single moments

of brilliance or costly defensive errors, showing how unforgiving the knockout stage can be. As the competition edges closer to the semi-finals, the dream of lifting Africa's most prestigious football trophy remains alive for a handful of nations. With every match now carrying enormous weight, all nations will make sure to deliver their best.

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