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“I Was Treated Like a Criminal” - Tsikoane Breaks Silence on Arrest

BY: Staff Reporter

Maseru

Social media speculation over the weekend about the arrest of Tsikoane Peshoane, Executive Director of the Transformation Resource Centre, has drawn renewed attention to the circumstances under which he was detained by Mafeteng police and later appeared before the Mafeteng Magistrate’s Court. Peshoane appeared in court on 29 December 2025 in connection with an alleged refusal to submit to an alcohol breathalyser test at a police roadblock. Some online reports further claimed that he was released on “free bail” and instructed to return to court on 14 January 2026.

In an interview with Lesotho Tribune, Peshoane disputed several aspects of the narrative circulating publicly and offered his account of the events that led to his arrest. According to Peshoane, the incident occurred on the afternoon of 28 December, while he was driving from Mafeteng to Maseru. He says he was stopped at a police roadblock near the old Post Office building in Mafeteng and then left without explanation by the officer in charge. He claims he exited his vehicle to follow the officer and seek clarity, at which point he was ordered to take an alcohol breath test. Peshoane



says he did not refuse the test but raised concerns about the hygiene of the breathalyser device and requested that the matter be handled at a police station instead of at the roadside.

His objections, he alleges, were met with hostility, with officers accusing him of “knowing too much”.

After an exchange at the roadblock, Peshoane says he was instructed to drive himself to the police station, accompanied by officers.

“I questioned why a person suspected of drinking and driving would be allowed to drive himself to the station,” Peshoane said, adding that his suggestion to be transported in a police vehicle was dismissed.

Upon arrival at the station, Peshoane alleges he was verbally abused and detained without being informed of his rights or the charge against him.

He says he was placed in a holding cell and only learned of the charge the following day after being

transferred to another police station near Van Rooyen.

Peshoane says he was then informed that he was being charged with refusing to comply with the law by not taking the alcohol test and was told he would appear before court on Monday.

He further described holding cell conditions as overcrowded, initially housing about 19 detainees, and said he later experienced what he perceived as humiliating public attention during visiting hours.

According to Peshoane, he was also forcibly photographed by police despite informing them that his lawyer had instructed that no images be taken or posted on social media.

“Those photographs were taken without my consent,” he said. “I was manhandled and forced to comply.”

When the matter came before the Magistrate on Monday, Peshoane says his lawyer objected to the manner of his arrest and

detention, questioned the police’s authority to administer breathalyser tests, and requested that the case be transferred to Maseru.

The Magistrate excused Peshoane from further proceedings and ordered him and his legal team to return to court on 14 January 2026 for the matter to be addressed. Peshoane has been charged under Section 94 of the Road Safety Act of 1981. He maintains that he did not refuse the breathalyser test but questioned its hygienic handling, and disputes claims that he was released on free bail.

“I was not released on bail because I was never remanded,” he said. “I remain without a criminal or bail record.”

Police response

Lesotho Tribune made repeated efforts to obtain comment from the Mafeteng police regarding Peshoane’s arrest, the allegations of abuse, and the procedures followed at the roadblock and during detention.

By the time of publication, police had not responded to requests for comment.

What happens next

Peshoane is expected to return to court on 14 January 2026, where the Magistrate is expected to determine the way forward. He has indicated his intention to challenge both the manner of his arrest and the broader legal framework governing breathalyser testing and police conduct at roadblocks.



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Youth League Leader Lands Director Role at Prime Minister's Office

By: Seipati Matobo

Maseru

Questions are emerging over the appointment of Lesala Maphathe, the leader of the Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) Youth League, to a senior civil service position within the Prime Minister's Office, following documents indicating his placement as a Director at Grade J on the government payroll.

Documents seen by Lesotho Tribune, extracted from the government's human resources and payroll system, show that Maphathe was formally assigned to the Prime Minister's Office with effect from 1 January 2026, holding the position of Director and placed on Civil Service Grade J, one of the upper tiers in the public service structure.

According to the system records, Maphathe's appointment is marked as "Active – Payroll Eligible", with his duty station listed as Maseru. His as-



signment number, job title, grade, and organisational placement are clearly reflected in the

official system interface, which is typically reserved for confirmed and approved civil ser-

vice appointments. Further payroll infor-

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mation indicates that the Grade J salary scale attached to the position reflects a value of M381,456.00, effective from April 2025, with the grade ceiling set at point 8. While the documents do not explicitly state the final notch or net remuneration payable to Maphathe, they confirm that the position is pensionable and fully integrated into the civil service payroll. What has drawn particular attention is Maphathe's political profile. As leader of the RFP Youth League, he occupies a prominent partisan role within the ruling party's structures, frequently acting as a vocal defender of government policy and party leadership in public forums and on social media.

While political activists have historically transitioned into government roles, governance analysts note that senior civil service positions such as Director are, in principle, expected to be filled through merit-based, competitive, and transparent processes, in line with Lesotho's Public Service Regulations.

The documents reviewed do not clarify whether the position was publicly advertised, whether competitive interviews were conducted, or whether Maphathe was seconded, contracted, or substantively appointed under standard civil service recruitment procedures.

Handwritten notes attached to correspondence related to the matter appear to reference internal discussions around director-level placements, but stop short of providing explicit justification for the appointment or detailing the selection criteria applied.

The appointment has also drawn concern from members of the public. Lerato Matsoele, a citizen who described herself as "deeply concerned" about the implications of the decision, questioned whether the appointment undermines the principle of neutrality within the civil service.

"I need clarity regarding the appointment of Mr Maphathe as the Director of the Lesotho Youth Apprenticeship Programme," Matsoele said. "While he is a citizen who

deserves employment opportunities like any other youth, his deep political ties are very concerning."

Matsoele described Maphathe as a highly polarising figure, citing a recently circulated video in which he allegedly urged party supporters to defend the RFP "at all costs". She also referred to remarks previously attributed to Maphathe in which he advised party leadership to stop advertising in local newspapers critical of the government.

"Now this same individual has been appointed to lead a strategic programme designed to combat youth unemployment," she said. "Given his partisan history, how can we expect meritocracy to prevail in recruitment? Can we trust that opportunities will be granted to all, or will they be reserved for party loyalists? I speak simply as a concerned citizen."

The Prime Minister's Office has not yet responded to Lesotho Tribune's questions seeking clarification on the circumstances surrounding Maphathe's appointment, nor has it addressed concerns about the potential

blurring of political and administrative roles within the state. Good governance advocates warn that even where appointments are lawful, the perception of political favouritism can erode public trust in state institutions, particularly at a time when unemployment, public sector wage pressures, and service delivery challenges remain acute. As scrutiny intensifies, attention is likely to focus on whether the appointment complied fully with Public Service regulations and whether sufficient safeguards exist to preserve the neutrality of the civil service.

Maphathe is no stranger to controversy. Two months ago, he addressed an RFP rally in Semonkong, calling on government to stop advertising with media outlets deemed to be critical of the administration.

For now, the documents establish one fact beyond dispute: **Lesala Maphathe, a senior political youth leader, is now a Director within the Prime Minister's Office, drawing a Grade J civil service salary from the public purse.**

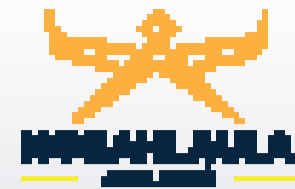
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New Year's Greetings to Our Valued Subscribers

As we welcome the New Year, Lesotho Tribune extends its heartfelt gratitude to our loyal readers for your continued trust and support. May the year ahead bring you good health, prosperity, and progress. We remain committed to delivering credible, timely, and impactful journalism that serves the nation. Happy New Year.

2026

Happy New Year

ESG Lens

Why corruption, not poverty, now defines Lesotho's deepest fear



9

Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

There are years when a country worries about prices. Other years, about jobs. And then there are years when the anxiety shifts deeper, when citizens stop arguing about outcomes and begin questioning the system itself.

For Lesotho, 2025 appears to have been one of those years.

A series of reader polls conducted by Lesotho Tribune in late December, across X, lesothotribune.co.ls and Facebook, do not read like a protest. They read more like a diagnosis. The sample size is small, yes, but it is internally consistent and it points in one direction. What worried Basotho most was not hunger, inflation, or even unemployment. It was corruption by government.

A hierarchy of fear



The hierarchy of fear

Institutional disappointment 2025



More than half of respondents ranked corruption as Lesotho's greatest concern, outweighing youth unemployment and cost-of-living pressures combined.

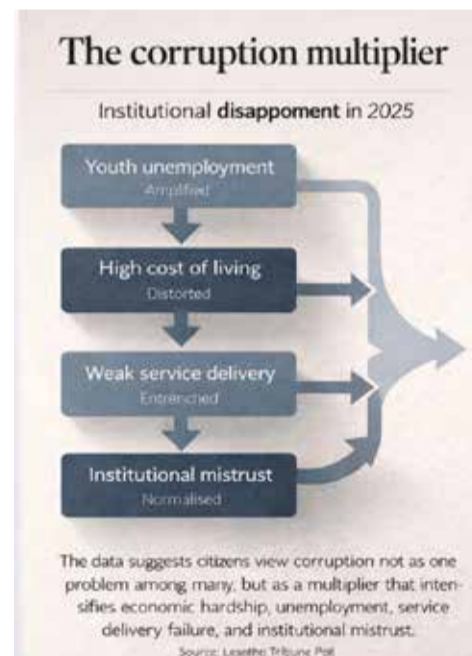
Figure 1 captures the hierarchy starkly. Asked what worried them most about Lesotho's future, 53 percent of respondents chose corruption, compared with 26 percent who chose youth unemployment and 21 percent who pointed to the cost of living.

This is not a marginal lead. It is a commanding one.

From a data-analysis standpoint, such a gap is telling. When one variable so clearly dominates others, it usually means respondents are not thinking in isolated categories. They are ranking causes, not symptoms. "Basotho are no longer

just counting prices. They are questioning the system that produces them." In effect, the public appears to be saying this: we can survive high prices, and we can endure job scarcity for a while, but a state that cannot be trusted eventually collapses under its own weight.

When corruption becomes the lens



This interpretation is reinforced by Figure 2, which conceptualises corruption as an upstream risk. In systems analysis, upstream variables are those that shape everything downstream. If they fail, no amount of downstream intervention fully compensates.

Viewed this way, corruption is not competing with youth unemployment or the cost of living. It is framing them. Inflation becomes more painful when public procurement is distorted. Youth unemployment becomes permanent when opportunity is mediated by patronage. Even well-funded programmes fail when institutions lack credibility.

Data callout:

53% of respondents ranked corruption above all other concerns about Lesotho's future.

Source: Lesotho Tribune poll, December 2025

The data suggests that many Basotho now see corruption as the silent tax that inflates every other problem.

Disappointment has an address



If Figure 1 tells us what people fear, Figure 3 tells us where they think responsibility lies.

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Hospitals Cleaners Haven't Been Paid in Months

By: Staff Reporters

In March 2025, Beyond Laundry & Housekeeping, a Maseru-based cleaning services company, secured a high-profile Ministry of Health tender to provide critical cleaning services at Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka hospitals. Less than a year later, what was presented as a milestone in improving hospital standards has deteriorated into a crisis marked by unpaid wages, unsafe working conditions, and mounting desperation among front-line workers.

Employees told Lesotho Tribune they have not received salaries since September 2025. While they were initially warned of possible payment delays due to a complex funding chain involving the Lesotho Millennium Development Agency (LMDA), the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Finance, they say they never anticipated a prolonged and complete breakdown in remuneration.

"We signed legally binding contracts. We trusted the process," one worker said. "We never imagined we would be pushed into a corner like this."

The financial distress is compounded by low wages. Workers say they earn M2,600 per month, roughly M400 less than their



predecessors. They further allege that promised bereavement benefits, meant to support employees during family losses, have never materialised.

More troubling are allegations of unsafe working conditions in high-risk hospital environments. Employees report persistent shortages of basic protective equipment, including masks, rubber gloves, and detergents. In some cases, they claim they have been forced to borrow supplies from hospital staff or, most alarmingly, reuse disposable rubber gloves while cleaning clinical areas.

"You cannot clean a hospital without protection," another worker said. "We are exposed every day." Staff also accuse management of negligence, alleging that communication is minimal and that updates on salary payments are only

provided after repeated and aggressive follow-ups.

When questioned about the delays, workers allege they were told the current salary structure was largely a temporary arrangement intended to help the company secure the tender. While not management's exact wording, employees say the implication was that their pay conditions were secondary to passing the procurement process.

Contacted for comment, Beyond Laundry & Housekeeping Contract Manager Thapelo Mokhethi acknowledged what he described as "lengthy" salary delays but denied any knowledge of shortages in protective equipment. He maintained that management remains in constant communication with the LMDA to track the release of funds, though he conceded that he could

not provide a definitive timeline for when workers would be paid.

The contract forms part of the Health Maintenance – Project Implementing Unit (HM-PIU), launched by the Ministry of Health in July 2024 to improve hospital infrastructure and service standards.

Instead, nearly ten months after the tender was awarded, the project has left cleaning staff facing an impossible choice: protect their livelihoods or protect their lives.

Following his initial response, Mokhethi became unavailable for further comment.

Editorial note

The Ministry of Health, the Health Maintenance – Project Implementing Unit, and the Ministry of Finance were approached for comment at the time of publication.

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In a separate poll asking which institution disappointed them most in 2025, Government and Cabinet topped the list. Parliament followed. Then security agencies. Then state-owned enterprises.

This ordering is analytically important. It spans the entire governance chain: policy formulation, oversight, enforcement, and execution. “When disappointment spreads across all institutions, it stops being a personnel issue and becomes a structural one.” From a governance perspective, this pattern signals a collapse of horizontal accountability. Citizens do not believe one institution is effectively restraining another. Instead, they see a closed circuit of power, weak oversight, and limited consequences.

The quiet downgrade of Parliament’s position in Figure 2 deserves special attention. In theory, it is the institution meant to absorb public frustration and translate it into accountability. In practice, respondents appear to view it as part of the problem rather than a counterweight to it. This is significant because once legislative oversight loses credibility, public trust rarely migrates elsewhere. It simply dissipates.

Security agencies and state-owned enterprises trailing Parliament suggests a public perception

that enforcement and delivery failures are downstream of political failure, not independent of it. Youth unemployment: the crisis everyone expects

Youth unemployment ranking second in Figure 1 may seem unsurprising, but its placement below corruption is revealing. At 26 percent, it remains a serious concern, but it no longer defines the national mood. Economists sometimes refer to this as problem normalisation. When a crisis persists long enough without resolution, it ceases to shock. It becomes expected.

Youth unemployment accounted for 26% of responses, suggesting concern remains high, but not decisive. The danger here is not complacency. It is resignation. When citizens no longer believe institutions are capable of solving a problem, they stop ranking it as urgent. Why the cost of living ranked lowest

Perhaps the most counterintuitive finding in Figure 1 is the cost of living coming last. In a year marked by rising prices and household stress, this seems odd. But again, Figure 3 offers the explanation. Cost-of-living pressures are being interpreted as consequences rather than causes. They are visible, painful, and immediate, but they are also seen as politically mediated. If corruption persists, respondents appear to believe, no price relief

will last. Small sample size, strong signal

It is worth repeating that these are not nationally representative surveys. The sample sizes are modest. But data journalism is not only about scale. It is about coherence. Across platforms, across questions, and across institutional targets, the signal is consistent. Corruption dominates concern. Institutions disappoint broadly. Economic anxieties are reframed through governance failure.

“This is not protest data. It is diagnostic data.” What the data is really saying

Read together, Figures 1, 2, and 3 tell a story of a

country no longer debating policy choices, but questioning institutional legitimacy. Basotho are not simply asking for better outcomes. They are asking whether the system producing those outcomes can still be trusted. That is a more dangerous question than any budget deficit or unemployment rate.

As Lesotho enters a new year, the data leaves little ambiguity. The country’s greatest challenge is no longer economic capacity, but credibility. And until that is restored, every other reform risks being swallowed by the same upstream failure.

Source: Lesotho Tribune reader polls, December 2025



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Minister's Airport Statement Rekindles PAC

Warnings on Conflict and Contractor Competence

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

A public statement issued by Minister of Public Works and Transport, Matjato Moteane, following storm damage at Moshoeshe I International Airport has reignited questions raised months earlier by Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), particularly around conflict of interest, procurement irregularities, and the technical competence of the appointed contractor. In a Facebook post published this week, Moteane gave a detailed operational update on damage sustained at the airport, estimating that about 30 percent of the roof sheeting would need replacement, that the project would likely be delayed by eight weeks, and that insurers had already been engaged. He further stated that the contractor was clearing the site and that the airport would reopen in time for scheduled flights later the same day. Notably, the statement was framed in a manner more typical of a project manager or contractor than a political overseer, with the minister offering technical assessments, timelines, material availability projections and assurances regarding insurance claims.

This posture has drawn renewed scrutiny when read alongside the findings of the PAC report on the rehabilitation of Moshoeshe I International Airport, which explicitly warned of blurred lines between political authority, procurement oversight, and contractor involve-



ment. PAC flagged conflict and lack of capacity. In its report, the PAC found that the M184 million airport rehabilitation contract was awarded under irregular procurement processes, including the misuse of an Expression of Interest procedure for a project that far exceeded the M50 million threshold requiring open international tendering. More critically, the Committee established that the successful bidder, LSP Construction, relied heavily on the profiles of other firms to demonstrate capacity, despite admitting before the Committee that it had no prior experience in airport rehabilitation projects anywhere. PAC concluded that, without these attached profiles, LSP would not have met the basic requirements of the Expression of Interest. The PAC also raised serious concerns about conflict of interest, noting

that tender documents submitted by LSP included entities previously associated with Minister Moteane, in apparent violation of Section 59 of the Public Procurement Act 2023, which requires public officials to avoid both actual and perceived conflicts of interest. Storm damage raises new questions. While extreme weather events cannot be attributed solely to contractor performance, the scale of damage described by the Minister has prompted questions about design choices, materials, and workmanship, especially in light of PAC's finding that no independent aviation engineering consultant was appointed to oversee the project and that supervision was left to an inexperienced architect within the Ministry. PAC warned that this lack of technical oversight exposed the project to risks of poor workmanship, cost escalation, and de-

lays, precisely the scenario now unfolding.

The Committee further observed that multiple prior studies on the airport, including those by ICT, ACSA and LTE, had already addressed design and structural issues, making the repetition of work under the current contract a waste of public funds rather than an evidence-based intervention. PAC recommendations now appear prescient. Among its strongest recommendations, the PAC called for the termination of the LSP contract, re-tendering under an open international process, disciplinary action against senior ministry officials, and further investigation by law enforcement agencies.

The Minister's latest statement, rather than settling concerns, appears to reinforce the PAC's central argument: that the project has been compromised by poor governance, weak separation of roles, and questionable contractor capacity.

For PAC members, the episode may serve as validation of their warnings that ignoring procurement law and technical best practice does not merely create abstract governance risks, but produces tangible consequences in the form of delays, damage, and escalating costs.

As Parliament considers the next steps on the PAC report, attention is now likely to focus on whether the recommendations will finally be implemented, or whether the airport rehabilitation will continue under the same cloud of controversy that the Committee so carefully documented.

EDITORIAL

Excuses! Lesotho's Only Growing Industry



15

Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

There is a quiet envy creeping into conversations across Lesotho. Not the loud, resentful kind, but the uncomfortable kind that comes from watching peers move on while you remain stuck explaining why tomorrow never quite arrives.

Across Africa in 2025, several countries have begun telling stories that sound suspiciously like progress. Not perfection. Not miracles. Just movement.

Zimbabwe, of all places, posted a 9.64 percent economic growth rate in the third quarter of 2025, according to figures reported by Lesotho Tribune.

That number alone should make us pause.



Zimbabwe has spent years as a regional warning sign, invoked whenever African economies were discussed in the past tense. Yet here it is, growing faster than many of its neighbours, including Lesotho.

The reasons are not mysterious. Even the World Bank attributes Zimbabwe's rebound to targeted regulatory reforms, recovery in agriculture and mining, and delib-

erate efforts to make the business environment workable, not perfect, just workable.

Elsewhere, Rwanda continues to post strong growth, anchored in an approach that emphasises measurement and implementation. The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda's GDP publications reflect an economy that is still expanding at a pace many countries would

envy.

Kenya, for all its political noise, continues to signal intent through growth expectations and financing. Reuters reported that Kenya expects faster growth in 2025 and signed a yen-denominated loan with Japan, a reminder that some governments keep pushing the machinery of development even while arguing loud-

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Mr Thabo Mofosi, has warned of an outbreak of lumpy skin disease, which has been reported in parts of Leribe, Maseru, Botha-Bothe, Mafeteng and Quthing.

In a statement, Mofosi said lumpy skin disease primarily affects cattle and water buffalo, and is caused by a viral infection. He explained that the disease is mainly spread by mosquitoes, which transmit the virus from infected animals to healthy ones, although direct contact can also result in infection, albeit at a lower risk.

The minister noted that the current season, characterised by heat and increased moisture, creates favourable conditions for mosquito breeding, accelerating the

FARMERS CORNER

Minister Warns of Lumpy Skin Disease Outbreak as Cases Emerge Nationwide



spread of livestock diseases. He outlined common symptoms of lumpy skin disease, including skin nodules, excessive salivation, fever, and swelling, among others.

Mofosi said there is no specific cure for the disease, as it is viral in nature. However, affected animals can be treated with supportive medication aimed at boosting the immune system and preventing secondary infections.

He urged farmers to immediately isolate infected cattle, keep them in shaded environments, provide adequate food and water, and refrain from using them for any form of labour.

Farmers were also advised to report suspected cases to Ministry offices or

private veterinary clinics as soon as symptoms are observed. Mofosi clarified that treatment for lumpy skin disease is provided at standard veterinary fees, as the Ministry currently subsidises only rabies-related interventions.

“My Ministry intends to work jointly with other stakeholders to combat this disease and will remain alert,” Mofosi said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry is continuing efforts to prevent the spread of foot-and-mouth disease, which was recently reported in South Africa. As a precautionary measure, Lesotho has banned the importation of livestock and unprocessed meat from South Africa.

What is it?

Lumpy skin disease is a viral infection that mainly affects cattle and water buffalo. It spreads rapidly during warm and wet seasons due to increased mosquito activity.

Common symptoms to watch for

Farmers should immediately check animals for:

- Hard lumps or nodules on the skin
- High fever
- Excessive salivation
- Swelling around the neck, legs, or udder
- Loss of appetite
- Weakness or reluctance to move

How does it spread?

- Mosquito bites from infected animals
- Other biting insects
- Direct contact between animals (less common)

What farmers must do immediately

If you suspect lumpy skin disease:

- Isolate infected cattle from the rest of the herd
- Keep animals in a shaded area
- Provide clean water and sufficient feed
- Do not use infected animals for ploughing or work
- Report cases immediately to:
 - Ministry of Agriculture offices
 - Private veterinary clinics

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ly on the surface.

This is not to romanticise these countries. Each has deep problems. But they share something Lesotho increasingly lacks. Momentum. Back home, the numbers tell a far less flattering story. Growth projections hover around one percent, sometimes dipping below. That is not a temporary slowdown. It is stagnation with a calendar.

Lesotho is not short of plans. It is not short of strategies, policy documents, or vision statements. What it is short of is leadership capacity

that can convert intent into execution. The ability to decide, implement, and stay the course even when it is politically inconvenient. Here, development conversations tend to stall at blame. Coalition politics. External shocks. South Africa. Global uncertainty. All valid factors. But none sufficient to explain why year after year, nothing really moves.

Countries that are now growing did not escape constraints. They worked around them. They simplified rules. They picked sectors. They sent signals to investors that the state might be

imperfect, but it was at least predictable.

In Lesotho, predictability has become a luxury. Policy reversals are common. Appointments raise more questions than confidence. Institutions limp instead of lead. And corruption, as recent public polling suggests, is increasingly seen not as a side problem, but as the root of everything else.

This is where the envy becomes sharper.

Young Basotho watch peers in Kigali, Nairobi, even Harare, finding work, starting firms, exporting services. Meanwhile, here, the most reliable growth sector

seems to be excuses.

It would be unfair to say Lesotho has no capable people. It has many. What it lacks is leadership that treats development as an urgent, measurable task rather than a slogan recycled every election cycle.

Development is not mystical. It is boring, repetitive, and unforgiving. It rewards consistency. It punishes drift. Other African countries, even those with heavier baggage than ours, have accepted this reality. Lesotho, for now, seems content to debate it. And that may be the most worrying signal of all.



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