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Former IEC Director Mphaiphele Maqutu to Face Corruption Charges in Lesotho Court

By: Staff Reporters

Maseru

Lesotho Tribune has been reliably informed that former Director of Elections at the Independent Electoral Commission, Adv. Mphaiphele Maqutu, his former secretary Joalane Mavuso and former IEC Finance Manager 'Mabatho Sesoane are expected to appear in court this week on charges linked to alleged corruption surrounding an IEC tender

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Information Liberates

Court Hears Conflicting Testimony in Alleged Jobs-for-Cash Scheme

By: Tholoana Lesenya

Fresh details and sharp exchanges emerged in court this week as the bribery and money laundering case against 'Mapuleng Montši continued before Thamae Thamae in Maseru, with prosecutors questioning the credibility of her claims that money she received from job seekers was merely financial assistance rather than bribes.

Montši stands accused of helping individuals secure employment within the Ministry of Home Affairs Lesotho in exchange for payments, while also allegedly handling funds believed to be proceeds of crime. The case, which dates back several years, has drawn public interest because it touches on fairness in public sector recruitment and the persistent problem of corruption.

During cross-examination, the prosecution highlighted what it described as inconsistencies in Montši's earlier statements. The court heard that in previous appearances, she had denied working for the ministry and claimed she had no connections to people employed there. This week, however, she reportedly changed her stance, telling the court that she had provided investigators with the names of 10 individuals who eventually secured jobs at the ministry.

The shift in her account became a focal point for the prosecutor, who pressed her to explain how she could assist people into employment if she had no links to the institution.

Montši told the court that some of the individuals she helped were members of her church community. She said she had received their names from the pastor's wife and merely offered support to people who were struggling financially.

According to her testimony, she did not demand or request money for her assistance.

Instead, she claimed she lent them money out of goodwill.

She explained that some job seekers lacked proper clothing and other essentials needed to start work, while others needed transport money to travel long distances. As a result, she said she advanced different amounts to various individuals, including M10, 000, M500, M4, 500 and M1, 200.

Her lawyer suggested that these transactions reflected acts of generosity rather than corruption.

But the prosecution strongly disputed this narrative. The prosecutor reminded the court that several witnesses who have already testified described a different arrangement. According to their statements, payments were made to Montši only after they had successfully obtained employment. In their view, the money was not a loan but a form of compensation or reward.

This, the prosecution argued, pointed to a deliberate scheme rather than charity.

"The payments followed the jobs," the prosecutor emphasized, suggesting a clear link between employment and money exchanged.

Court proceedings also revisited the formal charges Montši faces.

Under Count 1, she is charged with violating provisions of the Prevention of Corruption and Economic Offences Act No. 5 of 1999, which criminalises the acceptance or solicitation of benefits as inducements in dealings involving public bodies.

The charge sheet alleges that between October 2017 and April 2018, Montši directly or indirectly accepted benefits as a reward for using her influence to assist individuals in securing contracts or employment within a public institution.

Prosecutors allege she demanded and accepted monthly payments of M1, 500 from each person she helped. The state argues that she was not officially assigned to the ministry and had no lawful authority or influence over hiring decisions, making the alleged payments unlawful inducements.

Count 2 relates to alleged money laundering under the Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Act 2008. Here, the state contends that Montši unlawfully acquired or used M70, 155 while knowing, or having reason to suspect, that the funds were derived from corrupt activities.

According to the charge, these funds were accumulated over the same period as the alleged bribery scheme.

In court, the atmosphere remained tense as both sides tried to shape the narrative.

The defence maintained that there was no proof Montši influenced recruitment decisions or that the ministry's hiring process was compromised. They suggested that the witnesses' testimonies could be coloured by misunderstanding or assumption, arguing that financial help between acquaintances should not automatically be interpreted as corruption.

Meanwhile, the prosecution insisted the pattern of payments and timing of employment pointed to something more calculated.

Legal observers say the case hinges on whether the court believes Montši's explanation that the money was lent rather than demanded. If the magistrate finds that the payments were tied to securing jobs, the charges could carry serious consequences, including heavy fines or imprisonment.

Beyond the courtroom, the case has sparked broader conversations about accountability and transparency in public service recruitment. Many Basotho have long expressed concerns about favoritism and backdoor dealings in government hiring, with some arguing that deserving candidates are often overlooked.

As the matter continues, more witnesses are expected to take the stand to clarify the nature of their interactions with Montši and whether money changed hands as part of a job-for-cash arrangement.

For now, the accused remains out of custody as proceedings continue.

The court adjourned with the understanding that the trial will resume soon, with both sides preparing to present further evidence.

Whether the payments were acts of kindness or calculated bribes is a question the court must now carefully weigh, a decision that could set an important precedent for how similar cases are handled in the future.

Harith to Acquire FlySafair, Strengthening South African Aviation Infrastructure

By: Staff Reporter

Johannesburg, South Africa, 10 February 2026 – Harith and its affiliates have entered into a Sale and Purchase Agreement to acquire FlySafair, one of South Africa's most successful and fastest-growing airlines. The transaction remains subject to customary regulatory approvals, including approval by the Competition Commission.

Founded in 2006, Harith marks its twentieth year as a long-term investor in strategic infrastructure across Africa. With more than US$3 billion in assets under management, the firm focuses on energy, connectivity, transportation and logistics. As a pioneer in mobilising capital for infrastructure development on the continent, this transaction advances Harith's strategy of strengthening an integrated transport ecosystem that connects Africa more efficiently.

The proposed investment aligns with FlySafair's current trajectory and reinforces the airline's continued commitment to operational excellence and sustainable growth.

The agreement follows a shareholder exit process at FlySafair that has been under consideration for several years. Harith's proposed investment signals confidence in the airline's proven operating model, experienced management team and long-term growth prospects.

As with transactions of this nature, completion remains subject to regulatory approvals. The parties continue to engage constructively with the Competition Commission and relevant aviation authorities as part of the standard oversight applicable to licensed airlines.

Consistent with Harith's value-driven, long-term investment philosophy, the intention is to support FlySafair as a disciplined and successful business while maintaining continuity under its existing leadership. The investment further strengthens Harith's strategy to secure an integrated transport network across the continent. Through the provision of patient, long-term capital, Harith aims to support FlySafair's continued focus on affordability, reliability and connectivity.

CJ Highlights Possible Evidence Tampering in Army Murder Trial

By: Tholoana Lesenya

A cloud of concern hung over the High Court this week after Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane openly questioned the integrity of key exhibits in the long-running murder trial involving two members of the Lesotho Defence Force.

In remarks that drew sharp attention in the courtroom, the Chief Justice suggested that crucial evidence may have been tampered with, warning that such interference strikes at the very heart of justice and public trust in law enforcement.

The concerns arose during submissions by the prosecution in a case where Sergeant Tjekane Sebolai and Private Selone Ratšiu are charged with the 2014 murder of Lisebo Tang.

Tang was shot dead near the home of retired army commander Tlali Kamoli, where the two accused had been deployed on night duty. Her companion, Tšepo Jane, survived the attack with injuries.

Prosecutors say the vehicle they were travelling in was also riddled with bullets.

Along the week, the focus shifted away from the shooting itself to the handling of physical evidence.

The Chief Justice noted that firearms submitted by the army to police investigators did not match the bullets recovered from the scene of the crime. In his view, this discrepancy pointed strongly to possible interference with exhibits.

"As there is evidence that the firearms submitted did not match the bullets found at the scene, this shows that the exhibits were tampered with," he observed.

The comment immediately raised eyebrows in court.

Tampering with exhibits is a criminal offence, the Chief Justice stressed, particularly when it appears to be aimed at concealing the truth. He added that defeating the ends of justice is an even more serious matter because it undermines the entire legal process.

His remarks carried an unmistakable tone of frustration.

The court questioned why the police or the Directorate of Public Prosecutions Lesotho had not pursued further investigations to determine how the exhibits were handled and who may have been responsible for altering or switching them.

According to the Chief Justice, such gaps in the chain of custody should have triggered immediate and thorough scrutiny.

He wondered aloud why no effort had been made to trace the movement of the weapons or to obtain statements from officers responsible for submitting them.

"It seems the police did not do their work," he remarked, suggesting that basic investigative steps may have been overlooked.

The comments painted a troubling picture of possible negligence or misconduct within the justice system itself.

Chief Justice Sakoane went further, saying the issue was not merely procedural but raised broader concerns about national security and accountability.

He emphasised that the rule of law must be upheld at all times, especially by those entrusted with enforcing it.

"It is worrying that there is a possibility that the security of the nation is in the hands of dishonest people," he said, adding that some law enforcement officers appear not to honour the oath they took to serve with integrity.

For many in the courtroom, the statements underscored the seriousness of the matter.

Evidence is often the backbone of any criminal case, and any suggestion that it has been compromised can cast doubt on the fairness of proceedings.

The trial itself centers on events from May 9, 2014.

The two accused soldiers allegedly opened fire on a vehicle near Kamoli's residence after reportedly suspecting it posed a threat.

Tang was killed in the shooting, while Jane sustained injuries.

Evidence previously presented before the court indicated that the vehicle matched the description of one mentioned in a so-called "Red Alert," which warned of a white four-by-four allegedly involved in bombing incidents.

The accused allegedly believed the occupants might be dangerous and ordered them to exit and identify themselves. When the occupants did not comply, the soldiers reportedly treated the vehicle as hostile.

Testimony further indicated that the accused were operating under standing orders that instructed them to "capture the enemy, if it resists or flees, eliminate it." The defence has relied heavily on this context, arguing that the soldiers acted under perceived threat while carrying out their duties.

However, the prosecution has maintained that the force used was excessive and unjustified.

The case has already seen one accused discharged.

Private Kopano Matsoso, who was initially charged alongside Sebolai and Ratšiu, was acquitted in 2020 after the court found insufficient evidence linking him to the offences.

Now, attention remains squarely on the two remaining accused.

The prosecution is being led by Advocate Motene Rafoneke, while the defence is represented by Advocate Sello Tšabeha.

Yet the Chief Justice's concerns about the integrity of exhibits may have implications beyond the fate of the accused. If evidence was indeed tampered with, it could raise serious questions about how the investigation was conducted and whether others should face accountability.

For the families of those affected, the developments add another layer of uncertainty to a case that has already dragged on for years.

As proceedings continue, the court must now grapple not only with what happened on the night of the shooting, but also with whether the truth has been obscured by failures in the handling of evidence.


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Blood Bank Probe Concluded, but Ministry Allegedly Sitting on Damning Findings

By: Staff Reporter

A months-long investigation into alleged malpractice and systemic failures at Lesotho's national blood services has been concluded, yet senior management within the

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Lesotho Tribune

Lesotho Scores 37/100 in 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index

By: Lesotho Tribune

Lesotho has scored 37 out of 100 in the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by Transparency International, placing the country below the global average and reinforcing concerns about persistent public sector corruption.

The global average dropped to 42 out of 100, marking the first time in over a decade that the benchmark has fallen to that level. The 2025 CPI highlights stagnation in anti-corruption efforts worldwide.

Lesotho Below the Global Average

Lesotho's CPI score of 37 places it firmly below the global benchmark of 42 and within the majority of countries scoring under 50 — a range widely considered indicative of serious corruption challenges.

Although Lesotho performs slightly above the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average of 32, the score suggests that public institutions remain vulnerable to perceived corruption.

For many Basotho, this perception translates into:

- Concerns over public procurement processes
- Questions around government contract transparency
- Distrust in public service delivery
- Reduced confidence in state accountability

A CPI score below 50 signals that corruption remains a structural governance issue rather than isolated misconduct.

South Africa Also Struggles

Lesotho's only neighbour, South Africa, scored 41 out of 100 in 2025.

While slightly higher than Lesotho's score, South Africa also remains below the global average, indicating continued governance and accountability challenges.

Given the close economic and geographic ties between Lesotho and South Africa, their comparative CPI performance underscores a broader regional struggle with public sector corruption.

What the Corruption Perceptions Index Measures

The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks 180 countries based on perceived levels of public sector corruption, using a scale from:

- 0 = Highly Corrupt
- 100 = Very Clean

Countries scoring below 50 often face:

- Weak judicial independence
- Limited democratic oversight
- Political interference in state institutions
- Restricted civic space

According to Transparency International, strong democracies with independent courts, free media and active civil society organisations tend to perform better on the CPI.

Why the CPI Score Matters for Lesotho

Corruption perception is not merely about international rankings. It has real economic implications.

A low CPI score can:

- Deter foreign direct investment
- Increase borrowing costs
- Undermine public trust
- Weaken institutional legitimacy
- Deepen inequality

For Lesotho, a score of 37 suggests that anti-corruption reforms have yet to meaningfully shift public confidence.

Recommendations Highlighted in the 2025 CPI Report

Transparency International recommends several reforms to improve corruption outcomes:

- Strengthening independent judicial institutions
- Protecting anti-corruption bodies from political influence
- Tightening regulations on political financing
- Increasing transparency in public spending
- Protecting journalists and whistleblowers

For Lesotho to move above the 50-point threshold in future CPI reports, sustained political will and institutional independence will be critical.

The Road Ahead

The 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index serves as both a warning and an opportunity for Lesotho.

A CPI score of 37 reflects persistent governance concerns. Reversing that trajectory will require consistent enforcement of anti-corruption laws, transparent public financial management and demonstrable accountability.

Ultimately, improving Lesotho's corruption score is not about optics. It is about restoring trust between citizens and the state and ensuring that public resources serve the public interest

BUSINESS&ECONOMY

Inside the Sekhametsi Forensic Report

Who Is Involved, What Happened, What Is Proven And What Comes Next

By:Staff Reporter

A forensic investigation into Sekhametsi Investment Consortium (SMIC) has laid bare a series of governance, procurement, and investment control failures that raise serious questions about how decisions were made and money was committed.

For readers encountering this story for the first time, here is what you need to know.

Who is SMIC?

Sekhametsi Investment Consortium (SMIC) is an investment vehicle linked to the Sekhametsi group structure. It holds interests in various ventures, including property development and enterprise investments. Its board of directors is responsible for approving major expenditures, investments, and contracts.

At the centre of this report are board decisions, or the absence of them.

Who are the other key entities?

LNDC

The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) is a government-owned development agency that promotes investment in Lesotho.

The report examines a pledge made by SMIC to LNDC for participation in the Dubai Expo.

VDI

Vodacom Digital Investments (VDI) was a proposed investment target in which SMIC acquired a minority shareholding (2.5%). The deal required substantial capital commitments from SMIC.

The forensic report scrutinises how this investment was approved and whether due diligence was properly conducted.

PS: be on the lookout in the coming week(s) about VDI, Mergence Lesotho and Public Officers Defined Contribution Pension Fund…

Creative Lab

Creative Lab is a private company reportedly contracted in connection with Dubai Expo activities and branding-related work.

The report questions how payments to this company were approved and whether procurement rules were followed.

Sekhametsi Place

Sekhametsi Place refers to a property refurbishment project undertaken within the SMIC structure. The forensic review compared contracted amounts to

Continues in Page 11

Continued from Page 10

actual invoices paid during this project.

What the Report Alleges

The report does not accuse individuals of criminal conduct outright. Instead, it alleges serious governance failures.

These include:

- Expenditure committed without documented board approval
- Incomplete or weak due diligence on large investments
- Procurement decisions made without competitive processes
- Potential conflicts of interest in valuation and advisory roles
- Invoicing that exceeded contract values without proper documentation
- Missing or damaged digital governance records

These are structural failures. They concern how decisions were made, not just what decisions were made.

What the Report Clearly Establishes

There are several matters the report documents with supporting evidence.

1. The LNDC Dubai Expo Pledge

SMIC pledged $12,000 (approximately M180,000) to LNDC in connection with Dubai Expo participation.

The forensic review states there was no documented board resolution authorising this pledge. The payment was processed, but it was not properly classified in the financial statements as a donation.

This establishes two things:

- A governance approval gap
- A financial reporting classification issue

2. Creative Lab Payment

A payment of approximately M315,682 was made to Creative Lab.

The report notes that it was unable to verify the full procurement trail, including board minutes approving the amount and confirmation of competitive quotations.

The issue here is not necessarily that the service was unnecessary, but that the authorisation and procurement documentation were incomplete.

3. The VDI Investment

SMIC committed to acquiring a 2.5% stake in VDI.

The forensic report states:

- The offer letter was signed before funding of approximately M145 million had been secured.
- Comprehensive due diligence documentation was not provided.
- The promoter and the valuer of the transaction shared overlapping connections, creating potential conflict-of-interest concerns.
- Shareholding documentation, including share certificates and Companies Act reporting, was not fully evidenced.

The report does not declare the investment fraudulent. It concludes that governance procedures surrounding it were weak.

4. Sekhametsi Place Refurbishment

The report compares contract values under PROC-SA agreements to invoices paid.

It identifies a significant variance, with invoiced amounts exceeding contracted values by over M14 million, and notes that no documented variation orders were provided to justify the increase.

This finding is significant because variation orders are standard in construction projects. If costs legitimately increase, formal written amendments are required. Without those, oversight weakens.

5. Damaged Digital Records

A hard drive containing governance records was found to be damaged, limiting recovery to a small amount of data.

This materially affected the investigators' ability to verify board minutes and historical decisions.

What the Report Cannot Prove

Because of incomplete documentation and damaged records, the report cannot definitively prove:

- That cost overruns were fraudulent rather than poorly documented
- That valuation concerns resulted in inflated pricing
- That signatories acted with malicious intent
- That shareholders suffered quantifiable financial loss in every questioned transaction

The report highlights red flags. It does not deliver criminal verdicts.

That distinction matters legally and institutionally.

What the Report Recommends

The report recommends that SMIC consider:

- Assessing potential liability of former directors under the Companies Act
- Conducting further engagement with project managers and signatories to account for refurbishment costs
- Reviewing compliance failures related to share issuance and reporting

These are not automatic legal actions. They are recommendations for consideration.

The Bigger Picture

This forensic review paints a picture of an organisation where:

- Board authority may not have been consistently documented
- Procurement discipline weakened
- Investment due diligence processes were not robust
- Record keeping systems were fragile

None of these failures alone guarantee corruption. But collectively, they create vulnerability.

Governance does not collapse in one dramatic moment. It erodes through exceptions that become habits.

What Happens Next?

SMIC faces three strategic choices:

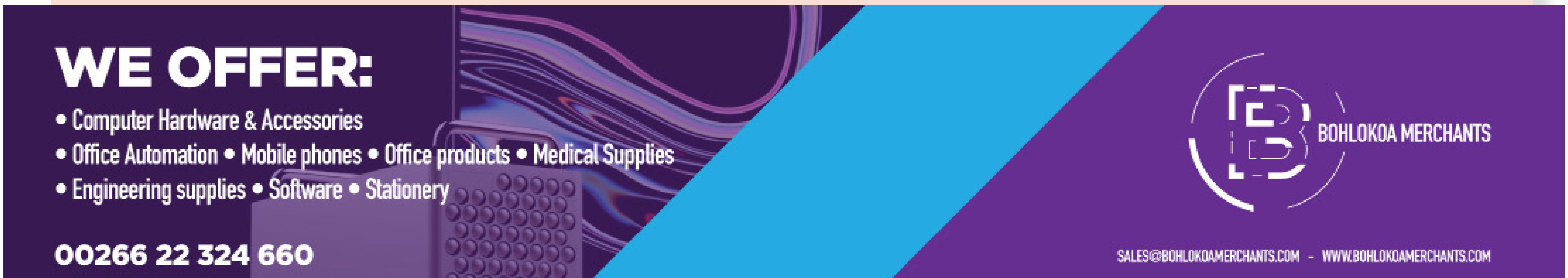
1. Pursue recovery or liability actions where financial loss can be quantified
2. Implement deep governance reforms, including strict board resolution protocols and digital record preservation
3. Treat the report as factional ammunition and move on

Only one of those options strengthens the institution.

For shareholders and stakeholders, the key issue is not whether the report is uncomfortable. It is whether SMIC uses it as a corrective blueprint.

Because in corporate governance, documentation is not bureaucracy.

It is protection



Lumpy Skin Disease Treatment Rolled Out Nationwide as Cases Reach 1,061

BY: Lemohang Botsane

MASERU

Government has begun nationwide distribution of medication to combat lumpy skin disease following weeks of concern from livestock farmers across the country.

Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, confirmed at a press conference on Thursday that the long-awaited antibiotics have now arrived and are being dispatched to affected districts.

Veterinary teams will administer the treatment free of charge directly at farmers' homesteads.

The delay, according to the Minister, was caused by temporary factory closures in South Africa during the Christmas holidays, coupled with high regional demand as several Southern African countries grapple with outbreaks of the same disease.

"We acknowledge the frustration this delay has caused," Mofosi said. "However, we are pleased to confirm that the medication is now available and distribution has commenced in all affected areas."

The Ministry reports 1,061 verified cases of lumpy skin disease nationwide, with 63 cattle deathsrecorded to date. While officials indicate that the overall infection rate has slowed, new cases have emerged in districts that were previously unaffected.

Lumpy skin disease is a viral infection that primarily affects cattle and water buffalo. It is transmitted through biting insects such as mosquitoes, as well as through direct contact between animals. Although there is no specific cure for the virus itself, supportive treatment including antibiotics helps prevent secondary infections and strengthens the animal's ability to recover.

The Minister urged farmers to take preventative measures while the rollout continues.

"Farmers must isolate infected animals, ensure they have sufficient food and water, and keep them in shaded areas. Infected livestock should not be used for work," he advised.

Verification of suspected cases remains ongoing in several areas, with veterinary officers continuing field assessments.

The Ministry maintains that controlling the outbreak is a national priority, given the importance of livestock to household incomes and food security. Authorities have assured farmers that additional support measures will be implemented should the situation escalate.

For now, officials say the focus remains on early detection, isolation, and rapid treatment to prevent further spread and safeguard Lesotho's cattle population.

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Lesotho Tribune

FARMERS CORNER

Free State Confirms 53 New Foot-and-Mouth Cases as Total Rises to 344

By Staff Reporter

The Free State Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has confirmed 53 new cases of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), bringing the total number of confirmed outbreaks in the province to 344.

In a media release dated 13 February 2026, the department said new infections were recorded across multiple towns including Kroonstad, Viljoenskroon/Vredefort, Heilbron, Parys/Vredefort, Sasolburg/Deneysville, Cornelia/Frankfort/Villiers, Bethlehem, Reitz/Lindley, Vrede/Memel, Warden, QwaQwa/Harrismith, Bothaville, Marquard/Senekal, Edenburg, Bloemfontein and Boshof/Bultfontein.

Authorities say outbreaks have now been identified across fourteen local municipalities, with some areas reporting significantly higher case numbers than others.

Most Affected Areas

Among the hardest hit municipalities:

- Viljoenskroon/Vredefort (Moqhaka Municipality) has recorded 61 confirmed cases
- Parys/Vredefort (Ngwathe Municipality) stands at 49 cases
- Deneysville/Sasolburg (Metsimaholo Municipality) has 45 cases
- Cornelia/Frankfort/Villiers (Mafube Municipality) has 28 cases

Other affected towns include Kroonstad, Heilbron, Bethlehem, Reitz/Lindley, Vrede/Memel, Warden, QwaQwa/Harrismith, Odendaalsrus/Welkom/Ventersburg, Bothaville, Marquard/Senekal, Hlohlolwane (Clocolan), Rouxville, Edenburg, Bloemfontein and Boshof/Bultfontein.

Movement Restrictions and Quarantine Measures

The department confirmed that movement restrictions have been implemented on all farms within a 10-kilometre radius of infected premises.

Infected farms have been placed under quarantine. Surrounding farms have also been placed under precautionary quarantine while surveillance is conducted to determine the extent of the spread.

Officials say these measures are necessary to prevent further transmission of the highly contagious viral disease, which primarily affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, sheep and goats.

Concern Over Under-Reporting

The department expressed concern over what it described as an increase in farmers failing to report suspected FMD cases.

Authorities warned that failure to report suspected cases is not only a criminal offence but also undermines disease control efforts.

Accurate reporting is critical to planning vaccination campaigns. Officials said under-reporting distorts the disease picture and may result in vaccine shortages in specific areas, thereby delaying control measures and increasing the risk of further spread.

Legal Obligations of Farmers Farmers have been reminded of their legal obligations under Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act, which requires animal owners to take all reasonable steps to prevent the introduction and spread of controlled diseases.

The department urged farmers to immediately report any suspected cases to their nearest state veterinarian or animal health technician to enable prompt investigation.

Economic Implications Foot-and-Mouth Disease poses serious economic risks to the livestock sector. Beyond direct animal health impacts, outbreaks can disrupt trade, limit movement of livestock and livestock products, and affect farmer incomes.

With confirmed cases now approaching 350 across the province, agricultural authorities face mounting pressure to contain the outbreak before it escalates further.

The department says surveillance and vaccination planning remain ongoing

Cross-border risk analysis for Lesotho livestock producers

What South Africa's Foot-and-Mouth outbreak means for Basotho farmers, traders, and abattoirs

By: Staff Reporter

South Africa's expanding Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) situation is not just a Free State problem. For Lesotho, it is a border economy shock: animals move informally, feed and inputs cross daily, and much of our livestock trade is tied, directly or indirectly, to South African markets and logistics.

The core risk is simple: even if Lesotho has no outbreak, an outbreak next door increases the chances of (1) accidental disease introduction, and (2) trade and movement restrictions that disrupt livelihoods.

1) The immediate risk: disease introduction through movement and contact

FMD spreads quickly among cloven-hoofed animals (cattle, sheep, goats, pigs) via direct contact, contaminated equipment/vehicles, people, and shared grazing or handling points.

Free State authorities have been using quarantine and movement restrictions within 10km of infected farms as a control measure, showing the seriousness of containment protocols.

For Lesotho producers, the cross-border exposure points are predictable:

- Informal livestock movement (animals bought/sold across border villages without veterinary movement permits)
- Shared transport (trucks/stock trailers that haul animals in SA and then in Lesotho)
- Auction systems and traders who operate on both sides
- Common grazing and watering points near border communities
- Farm visitors (workers, buyers, relatives) moving between SA farms and Lesotho farms

Bottom line: if movement controls tighten in SA, some trade shifts into informal routes. Informal routes raise disease risk.

2) The economic risk: bans, restrictions, and price distortions

Even without a single case in Lesotho, neighbouring outbreaks can trigger:

A) Import restrictions and supply shocks

Lesotho has previously moved to restrict imports of livestock and unprocessed meat from South Africa during FMD concerns.

When imports tighten, you often see:

- higher prices for certain meat cuts in local retail
- pressure on local abattoirs to source locally (sometimes at higher farmgate prices)
- opportunistic middlemen behaviour

B) Market access risk for wool/mohair and livestock value chains

Even though FMD is primarily a livestock disease issue, regional controls can spill over into broader animal-product logistics. PublicEye previously highlighted how regional animal-disease events can disrupt Lesotho's export corridors because transit and controls run through South Africa.

C) Farmer cashflow stress

Movement restrictions mean:

- delayed sales
- delayed slaughter
- higher feed costs while holding stock longer
- higher veterinary and biosecurity costs

3) The policy and enforcement risk: sudden tightening at the border

Lesotho has already signalled a more coordinated posture, including establishing a task team and confirming bans on

Continues in Page 16

EDITORIAL

Lesotho Is Online. But It Is Not Monetised.

By: Editorial

We scroll. We post. We trend. We argue in comment sections.

Yet when it comes to turning attention into income, Lesotho often hits a wall.

Creators complain that they cannot access certain monetisation tools. Small online sellers struggle to scale beyond WhatsApp orders. Local businesses hesitate to spend meaningfully on digital ads. And global platforms quietly treat Lesotho as an afterthought.

It is tempting to say the problem is simple: we are too small.

That explanation is comfortable. It is also incomplete.

What "not monetised" really means

When Basotho say "Lesotho is not monetised," they are usually referring to four different frustrations at once.

First, creator monetisation. Many local creators can build audiences but cannot access the same structured monetisation tools available in larger markets.

Second, digital advertising revenue. A functioning monetised ecosystem requires a strong base of businesses spending on digital ads. If ad demand is thin, creator payouts remain thin.

Third, app store and subscription payments. Monetisation requires seamless payments, reliable payouts, and integration between platforms and local banking systems.

Fourth, real e-commerce. Not inbox selling. Not informal arrangements. True checkout systems, delivery reliability, consumer protection, and returns processes.

So the question is not whether Lesotho has internet users. It does. The question is whether Lesotho has built the rails that allow digital activity to convert into predictable economic value.

The numbers tell a careful story

According to DataReportal, Lesotho had approximately 1.13 million internet users at the start of 2025, representing about 48 percent of the population. Social media user identities were estimated at around 619,000.

Those numbers suggest reach. They suggest presence.

But reach does not equal purchasing behaviour. Lesotho's own National Digital Transformation Strategy states that while roughly 46 percent of Basotho have a commercial bank account and about 28 percent have a mobile money account, only around 10 percent make online purchases or pay bills electronically.

That gap is everything.

If only one in ten citizens is transacting online, global platforms see limited upside. If online shopping is not routine, "digital shops" do not see scale. If scale is weak, investment slows.

Now add another structural problem quietly acknowledged in policy documents: the absence of a comprehensive national addressing system. Without reliable physical addresses, delivery becomes unpredictable. And without delivery reliability, e-commerce stalls before it matures.

This is not about talent. It is about infrastructure.

The uncomfortable truth about monetisation

Small market size does matter. Lesotho is not Nigeria or South Africa.

But size alone does not explain the friction.

The deeper constraints are these:

• Advertiser demand remains shallow. Many Basotho businesses still underinvest in digital advertising, which limits the advertising pool that funds monetisation.

• Payment integration is improving but not frictionless. Even with progress such as the national payment switch introduced in 2022, integration between

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imports of livestock and unprocessed meat from South Africa in the context of FMD risk.
Expect that when outbreaks escalate in SA, Lesotho authorities may respond with:

- tighter border inspections
- stricter requirements for movement permits and health declarations
- restrictions on auctions and gatherings of livestock (depending on risk level)

If you are a trader or run a feedlot/abattoir supply chain, the operational risk is disruption without much notice.
4) The medium-term risk: vaccination politics and "outbreak fatigue" in the region
South Africa is moving toward scaled vaccination and even local vaccine production. Reuters reports SA has launched a domestically developed FMD vaccine and is planning to vaccinate a large share of its herd, with ramp-up of doses from March 2026 onwards.
This matters to Lesotho because:

- If SA vaccination accelerates, disease pressure could ease later, but
- In the short term, mass vaccination programmes often come with tighter control zones and movement rules, and
- Farmers may get fatigued and become non-compliant, which increases informal movement and cross-border risk.

What Lesotho livestock producers should do now
Practical actions, not theory.
A) Tighten farm biosecurity immediately

- Stop unnecessary visitors around kraals, loading ramps, and handling facilities.
- Create one entry point and a simple "wash + disinfect" routine for vehicles and boots.
- Do not share equipment (ropes, halters, loading crates) across farms.

B) Treat any purchased animal as high-risk

- Quarantine new animals for a period (even a short one is better than none).
- Do not mix newly bought animals with the main herd immediately.
- Keep purchase records: seller, origin, date, transport details.

C) Avoid high-risk buying channels temporarily

- Be cautious with animals from auctions and traders operating cross-border.
- If buying is unavoidable, insist on proof of origin and veterinary documentation where possible.

D) Document movement and strengthen traceability Even if informal trade is common, disease control punishes informality first.

- Keep a notebook register of animal movements.
- Keep copies/photos of permits and seller IDs.

E) Watch for symptoms and report early
FMD typically involves mouth sores/blisters, drooling, lameness, hoof lesions, sudden drop in appetite/milk production. If suspected:

- isolate affected animals
- stop movement immediately
- contact veterinary services promptly (Reporting early is also important because under-reporting worsens vaccine planning and containment. SA authorities have publicly warned about non-reporting undermining control planning.)

What this means for policy and industry in Lesotho If Lesotho wants to protect the livestock economy, the emphasis should be on:

1. Border risk management (targeted inspections, trader regulation, and enforcement against illegal movement)
2. Producer education (simple biosecurity standards that smallholders can actually follow)
3. Traceability and movement controls that don't collapse under informal trade realities
4. Clear public communication so farmers know exactly what is allowed, what is banned, and what paperwork is required

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platforms, banks, and local merchants is not automatic.

• Fraud risk and informal trade patterns increase operational costs. Platforms hesitate where compliance and dispute management are expensive relative to expected revenue.

• Logistics and addressing remain underdeveloped. E-commerce without reliable last-mile delivery is theory, not scale.

When platforms evaluate markets, they calculate expected revenue against compliance cost, fraud exposure, support requirements, and payout complexity. If the revenue side is small and the friction side is high, rollout is slow. This is not discrimination. It is economics.

So is Lesotho completely excluded?

No.

Some monetisation channels exist. Google AdSense, for example, includes Lesotho among supported countries. That means structured advertising monetisation is technically available.

But availability does not automatically translate into widespread income. Approval thresholds, verification processes, banking logistics, and traffic scale still determine who actually earns.

The reality is uneven access, not absolute exclusion.

What must change

Monetisation is not a gift. It is an outcome of systems working together.

Government must treat digital infrastructure like physical infrastructure. Addressing systems are as important as roads. Consumer protection for online transactions must be predictable. Regulatory engagement with global platforms must be deliberate, not reactive.

Banks and the Central Bank must reduce friction for online merchant accounts and payout systems. Integration standards need to be seamless, not theoretical.

Telcos must ensure that data affordability supports transactional behaviour, not just passive browsing.

Media and creators must professionalise operations, diversify revenue streams, and build advertiser confidence locally.

And businesses must understand that digital advertising is not a luxury. It is the oxygen that sustains monetised platforms.

The real diagnosis

Lesotho is connected.

But connectivity without commercial depth produces visibility without value.

The country is not fully monetised because its digital economy remains shallow. Too few people transact online. Too few businesses spend meaningfully on digital ads. Delivery systems are inconsistent. Payment integration is still maturing. Addressing infrastructure is incomplete.

Monetisation follows scale, trust, and infrastructure. Lesotho has the audience. What it lacks is the economic density that convinces global platforms that this is a first class digital market.

Until we build that density, we will continue to scroll through opportunity while others cash in on it

World Bank Group Day Commemorated in Maseru, Focus Shifts to Inclusive Growth

By: Lemohang Botsane

MASERU

The World Bank Group this week marked World Bank Group Day in Maseru, reaffirming its development partnership with the Kingdom of Lesotho and its commitment to supporting the country's economic and social priorities.

The commemoration brought together senior government officials, development partners, project beneficiaries and civil society representatives.

The event served both as a reflection on ongoing programmes and as a platform to assess whether development interventions are delivering meaningful results on the ground.

Speaking at the event, the World Bank Country Representative to Lesotho, Ms Dinara Djoldosheva, underscored the importance of partnerships in achieving measurable development outcomes.

"This day offers firsthand insights into how development initiatives are transforming lives and helping anchor our work in real community expectations and priorities," she said.

Djoldosheva noted that engaging directly with beneficiaries allows projects to remain responsive and aligned with the needs of Basotho communities. She emphasised that development must be rooted in lived realities rather than policy frameworks alone.

Also addressing the gathering, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Lesotho, Ms Amanda KhoziMukwashi, called for deeper collaboration among institutions to advance inclusive and sustainable growth. She stressed that economic expansion must translate into tangible improvements in people's lives.

"Economic growth must reduce poverty, create jobs and strengthen livelihoods, particularly for vulnerable groups," she said.

KhoziMukwashi further observed that Lesotho's development challenges, including unemployment, infrastructure gaps, social protection constraints and climate vulnerability, are interconnected and require coordinated, multi-sectoral responses.

On behalf of government, Deputy Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Ms 'Malereko Molefi, echoed the call for inclusive development. She said progress should not be measured purely in macroeconomic figures, but in dignity, opportunity and social inclusion.

"Development must be reflected in improved livelihoods and the everyday experiences of our people," she said, reaffirming government's commitment to strengthening cooperation with international partners.

World Bank Group Day is observed globally to reflect on the institution's mission of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity. In Lesotho, the event highlighted ongoing programmes across sectors such as infrastructure, social protection, economic reform and climate resilience.

The gathering concluded with renewed pledges from stakeholders to deepen collaboration, improve accountability and ensure that development partnerships translate into sustainable and inclusive growth for the country.

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They Meant to Kill," Prosecutor Tells Court

By: Staff Reporter

MASERU

The prosecution has told the High Court that the two soldiers accused of killing Lisebo Tang did not fire their weapons by mistake or out of fear, but with a clear and deliberate intention to take lives.

Delivering closing arguments on Tuesday, Advocate Motene Rafoneke said the evidence before the court shows that the shooting was intentional and calculated, not an act of self-defence.

The case is being heard before Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane, with Sergeant Tjekane Sebolai and Private Selone Ratsiu standing trial for murder, attempted murder and malicious damage to property.

The charges stem from a fatal shooting that occurred on May 9, 2014 near the home of retired army commander Tlali Kamoli, where the two accused had been assigned night duty.

Tang died after the soldiers allegedly opened fire on the vehicle she was travelling in with Tsépo Jane, who survived with injuries.

Prosecutors say the car was also extensively damaged by bullets during the attack.

In his submissions, Rafoneke urged the court to focus on the manner and intensity of the shooting, arguing that the number of rounds fired and the type of weapons used leave little room for doubt about the accused's intentions.

"Our submission is that when the accused shot at the vehicle, there was intention to kill whoever was inside," he told the court.

He stressed that the soldiers were armed with AK-47 rifles, which he described as "war weapons" designed for combat situations rather than routine security duties.

According to the prosecution's breakdown of the evidence, the vehicle was struck by 42 bullet holes while stationary. The two accused reportedly discharged a total of 24 rounds between them, with one accounting for 10 shots and the other 14.

To the state, those figures are telling.

Rafoneke argued that such concentrated and sustained gunfire could not have been meant merely to disable a vehicle or scare off its occupants. Instead, he said, it showed a deliberate effort to eliminate anyone inside.

"The manner in which the shooting was executed disregarded whether the occupants of the vehicle survived or not," he said.

He further dismissed any suggestion that the soldiers acted in self-defence. For a self-defence claim to succeed, he argued, there must be an immediate and real threat to life. In this case, he said, no such danger existed.

"There was no imminent danger against the accused," he maintained, adding that the use of lethal force was neither necessary nor justified.

The prosecutor told the court that both men actively participated in the shooting and that there was sufficient evidence linking each of them directly to the attack. He urged the judge to find them guilty on all counts.

However, the defence has consistently presented a different version of events.

Earlier testimony indicated that the soldiers believed they were responding to a security threat.

Evidence before the court revealed that the vehicle matched a description contained in what was referred to as a "Red Alert," which warned of a white four-by-four vehicle allegedly involved in bombing incidents.

According to this account, the accused suspected the occupants might be dangerous individuals targeting the residence of the former commander.

The defence also argued that Tang and Jane ignored instructions to exit the vehicle and identify themselves, behaviour that allegedly heightened the soldiers' suspicions. The accused reportedly interpreted the situation as hostile and acted under standing orders.

One such order, quoted during proceedings, instructed soldiers to "capture the enemy, if it resists or flees, eliminate it."

The defence has suggested that the accused were simply following protocol in what they believed was a volatile environment.

But the prosecution insists this explanation does not justify the level of force used.

Rafoneke argued that even if the vehicle raised suspicion, the response should have been measured and proportionate. Firing dozens of rounds at a stationary car, he said, could not be considered reasonable action by trained professionals.

"This was not an accident. This was not panic. This was a conscious decision," he said, urging the court to treat the case as a traightforward instance of unlawful killing.

The matter has stretched over several years and has already seen one accused discharged. Private Kopano Matsoso, who was initially charged alongside Sebolai and Ratsiu, was acquitted in 2020 after the court found no evidence linking him to the offences.

His acquittal narrowed the focus to the two remaining accused.

For Tang's family, the proceedings represent a long search for accountability, while for the accused, the stakes could not be higher, as convictions on the charges could carry severe penalties.

As closing arguments wrap up, the case now rests in the hands of the court.

Chief Justice Sakoane is expected to weigh whether the shooting was a split-second response to a perceived threat or, as the prosecution contends, an intentional act aimed at killing the occupants of the vehicle.

The judgment, when delivered, is likely to have lasting implications not only for the accused but also for how security forces respond to suspected threats in the future.

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Lesotho Tribune

ARTS & SPORTS

Likuena Turn to coach Bob Mafoso for Their Football Redemption

By Litšitso Letsunyane

Newly appointed Bob Mafoso has officially taken charge of the Lesotho national football team, Likuena, stepping into the hot seat with a two year contract.

The Lesotho Football Association(LeFA) has reunited Coach Mafoso with the national setup after he previously served as an assistant to his predecessor Leslie Notši .

His appointment follows a stint in Namibia, where he was at the helm of African Stars FC.

Mafoso's coaching breakthrough dates back to the 2013/14 campaign when he guided debutant Likila United to an impressive sixth-place finish in their maiden Lesotho Premier League season, an achievement that immediately marked him as one of the country's brightest young tacticians.

That overachievement earned him a move to the ambitious Sandawana, where he steered the Botha-Bothe side to a fourth-place league finish, reinforcing his reputation as a coach capable of maximizing squad potential, which could be what the current Likuena need.

His rapid rise drew the attention of powerhouse Bantu FC, where in 2016 he was appointed assistant coach to James Madidilane. The partnership proved fruitful as Bantu clinched consecutive league championships.

Mafoso decided to step away from Madidilane's shadow in 2018, when he assumed head coaching duties at Kick4Life FC, guiding the club to a respectable fifth-place league finish.

He later returned to Bantu FC, but this time as head coach, and delivered the club's fourth league crown, with an 18-match unbeaten run during a season heavily disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Coach Bob Mafoso also had stints with Lioli FC where he notably won the People's cup in 2022 and Linare FC before making the move to Namibia.

While in Namibia, he added silverware to his cabinet by winning the league and securing qualification for the CAF Champions League, further evidence of his capacity to deliver success, even beyond Lesotho's borders.

On the international front, Mafoso has long been embedded in Likuena's technical structures. Working alongside coach Notši, he was part of the bench that led the Makoanyane XI to reach the COSAFA U-20 Championship final in 2023, ultimately finishing runners-up to the U-20 Zambian national team.

Speaking during his official unveiling, at Bambatha Tšita, coach Mafoso acknowledged the magnitude of the responsibility awaiting him.

"I have mixed emotions about the job. I'm excited and scared at the same time because I know that expectations are very high," he said.

He added that institutional backing would be key to his tenure:

"I take strength from knowing that I have the commitment from the President that he will give me and the team support."

Coach Bob Mafoso and his Likuena side have already begun training.

If anyone can lead the Lesotho National team, it's coach Bob Mafoso, carrying a CAF A coaching license, multiple titles in his coaching career, international exposure and overall coaching experience. Mafoso has officially assumed the Likuena role.

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