

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

MASERU, LESOTHO

Sunday, 8 February 2026

Lesotho Tribune

www.lesothotribune.co.ls

Information Liberates

ISSN 2453-5419



VOL 5, ISSUE 22

M 22.00

Backlogs Here to Stay as Judiciary Battles
Performance Slump and Integrity Concerns

...Page 2

Police Instruct Mojapela Not To Label Matekane
Administration As Corrupt

...Page 4

Lesotho Tribune Publisher Selected Among Top 50 in Création Africa Programme

Page 10



Domestic & International Charters

bookings@mohahlaulairlines.com +26622324660



**MOHAHLAULA
AIRLINES**

Backlogs Here to Stay as Judiciary Battles Performance Slump and Integrity Concerns

By Seipati Matobo

Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane has delivered a blunt assessment of Lesotho's justice system: case backlogs are not disappearing any time soon.

Opening the 2026 judicial year, the Chief Justice warned that as long as courts remain the primary forum for resolving disputes, without effective alternative mechanisms, the pressure on the judiciary will continue to mount.

"The story of the backlog of cases does not end," he said, arguing that expanding access to justice inevitably increases filings and deepens systemic strain.

Five Acting Judges Appointed

In response to the growing workload, the Judicial Service Commission, acting under section 120(5) of the Constitution, advised King Letsie III to appoint five acting judges. The appointments took effect on 1 September last year.

Those appointed are Advocate Sekake Malebanye KC, Advocate Tšebang Putsoane, Senior Resident Magistrate 'Manapo Motebele, Resident Magistrate Palesa Rantara and Advocate Tšoana Lesaoana.

Malebanye and Rantara have been deployed to the newly established Southern Division of the High Court, based in Mohale's Hoek. The division officially opens for business today and is expected to begin hearing cases on 16 February. Its formal inauguration will be conducted by Prime Minister Sam Matekane on a date yet to be announced. The Southern Division will serve Qacha's Nek, Quthing and Mohale's Hoek, as well as parts of Mafeteng including Matelile, Ha



Ramabanta, Kubake and Ribaneng.

The Chief Justice described acting appointments as a practical recruitment pipeline, allowing candidates to gain judicial experience before committing permanently to the bench. However, he conceded that attracting senior practitioners from private practice and academia will remain difficult unless judges' conditions of service improve. "For the system to attract experienced and suitably qualified candidates, there has to be an improvement in the package for judges," he said.

Independence and Accountability

Sakoane reaffirmed judicial independence as non-negotiable, stating that judges must be free to decide cases without interference from political actors, economic interests or public pressure. At the same time, he insisted that independence must be matched with accountability, particularly in the timely delivery of judgments.

"Judges and magistrates account only through their judgments, judgments that are clear, reasoned, timely and anchored in law," he said, cautioning that delayed rulings erode public confidence and bring the

judiciary into disrepute.

He signalled that disciplinary measures would be used where necessary to enforce standards.

The Chief Justice also addressed corruption and unethical conduct within the courts, warning that even allegations, whether proven or not, weaken public trust. "Corruption is not only a crime. It is a betrayal of the judicial oath and a subversion of justice," he said, adding that wrongdoing would not be shielded. He pledged that constitutional mechanisms and judicial codes of ethics would be enforced without fear or favour, stressing that integrity remains the cornerstone of a fair, clean and transparent judiciary. In a striking reference, he cited Deuteronomy 16:18–20, which calls for judges to administer justice with righteousness.

A "Hydra-Headed" Problem Turning to systemic delays, Sakoane described them as a hydra-headed monster that multiplies when tackled in isolation. He called for a whole-of-sector approach, examining all justice-sector institutions to identify root causes and craft targeted interventions.

He expressed disappointment with the performance

of court-annexed mediation, saying it has failed to achieve its intended purpose because litigants often do not settle. He criticised lawyers, particularly those representing state institutions, for advising clients not to sign mediation agreements without further review, creating the perception that the Crown resists early settlement in cases brought by citizens against state agencies.

Performance Decline Raises Alarm

The Chief Justice revealed troubling performance statistics.

The Labour Court recorded a 22 percent decline in completed cases compared to the previous year, when 217 matters were finalised. Even more concerning, performance in the Magistrates' Courts declined by 51 percent compared to the 2024/25 judicial year. Sakoane described the trend as disturbing, noting that most Basotho access justice through subordinate courts.

He said Chief Magistrates would be held accountable for the decline in performance.

To address the challenges, he announced that the bench-bar committee would conduct a study and submit a diagnostic report with recommendations to his office.

A System at a Crossroads
The message from the opening of the judicial year was clear: expanding access to justice without parallel reforms in capacity, compensation, ethics enforcement and dispute resolution will continue to strain the courts.

Backlogs may be here to stay for now. The question is whether institutional reform can move faster than the cases piling up.

SECTION 2 Demands Full Disclosure of US-Lesotho Health Pact, Questions Constitutional Compliance

By: Staff Reporter

Lesotho's only "remaining", credible civil society organisation, Section 2, has formally called on the Government of Lesotho to immediately publish the full text of the recently signed five-year bilateral health cooperation Memorandum of Understanding between Lesotho and the United States, warning that aspects of the agreement may raise serious constitutional and sovereignty concerns. In a statement dated 3 February 2026, the group, formally known as the Advocates for the Supremacy of the Constitution, said it had closely monitored developments surrounding the agreement since its confirmation by the United States Department of State in December last year. The agreement was publicly acknowledged on 10 December 2025 by U.S. Principal Deputy Spokesperson Thomas "Tommy" Pigott, who stated that the United States had signed five-year health cooperation memoranda with Uganda and Lesotho to advance the America First Global Health Strategy and strengthen resilient health systems in both countries. According to the statement, the total value of Lesotho's agreement is US\$364 million. Of that amount, the United States intends to provide up to US\$232 million over five years, focusing on HIV and AIDS response, workforce strengthening, data systems improvement, and enhanced disease surveillance. Lesotho has reportedly committed to co-investing



US\$132 million into its domestic HIV and AIDS programme.

Section 2 said it had deliberately refrained from public comment until now, citing the need to access the final signed text of the agreement. However, it said investigative reporting by Newsday had since published what is described as a draft version of the MoU, triggering significant public concern.

Among the issues raised are reported provisions relating to 25-year specimen and data-sharing arrangements, potentially extending to 2050, unilateral audit and termination powers in favour of the United States, and requirements for Lesotho to align certain domestic regulatory decisions with approvals by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Critics, the organisation noted, argue that such provisions could create long-term dependency while undermining regulatory autonomy.

Constitutional Questions Section 2 further questioned whether the agreement complies with the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of Lesotho, Act No. 2 of 2025, which

came into force in August 2025 and introduced Section 153A.

That provision was enacted to strengthen oversight of international agreements. It requires parliamentary approval for binding international agreements and mandates Cabinet authorisation even for non-binding instruments prior to signature.

The organisation is demanding clarity on whether full Cabinet approval was secured before the MoU was signed, and whether Parliament was afforded the opportunity to debate and approve the agreement if its substance renders it binding in effect.

"The people of Lesotho deserve the real facts," the statement reads, urging government to make public the final signed text, all related Cabinet resolutions, and documentation demonstrating compliance with Section 153A.

Minister Under Pressure Section 2 specifically called on the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, who signed the MoU on behalf of Lesotho, to provide a comprehensive public explanation.

Among the questions posed are how an agreement framed by the United States as advancing "America First" can simultaneously safeguard Lesotho's sovereignty, data privacy, genetic resources, regulatory independence, and long-term national interests. The organisation also questioned what protections exist if the agreement grants the United States sweeping enforcement powers, including potential unilateral aid withdrawal, without reciprocal leverage for Lesotho.

International Partnership and Sovereignty While acknowledging that Lesotho welcomes genuine partnerships aimed at strengthening its health system, Section 2 cautioned that any arrangement involving long-term transfers of sensitive biological and health data, subordination of regulatory authority, or structural asymmetry would be subjected to intense scrutiny by citizens, Parliament, civil society and, if necessary, the courts.

The organisation appealed to both governments to prioritise transparency, constitutional compliance and mutual respect.

As of publication, the Government of Lesotho had not issued a detailed public response to the specific concerns raised regarding the MoU's constitutional status or its reported provisions.

The unfolding debate is likely to intensify pressure on government to release the full agreement and clarify the legal framework under which it was concluded.

Police Instruct Mojapela Not To Label Matekane Administration As Corrupt

By: Staff Reporters

Socialist Revolutionaries (SR) leader Teboho Mojapela has accused the police of attempting to silence him over his outspoken criticism of corruption, alleging that he was summoned to police headquarters and warned to stop speaking publicly about what he describes as “high-level graft pulling the country down.”

Mojapela told Lesotho Tribune yesterday, Saturday 07 February, that he received a phone call last Friday instructing him to report to police headquarters at 2pm. He said he was unable to attend at the scheduled time and instead presented himself on Monday this week, where he met officers for approximately three hours.

According to Mojapela, the meeting was not routine. “Junior police officers summoned me with the intention of threatening me and curtailing my constitutional right to freedom of expression,” he said. “They told me to stop talking about the high corruption that is pulling the country down.”

He claimed officers advised him to report corruption privately rather than raise it in public forums. They allegedly warned that his continued commentary could “cause instability in the country.”

Mojapela described the interaction as “deeply troubling” and characterised it as an abuse of power.

“This is a clear abuse of



power. It means the Commissioner of Police himself is complicit,” he charged. The opposition leader, who has consistently criticised the government for what he calls entrenched conflicts of interest among ruling MPs and ministers, questioned why he had been singled out.

“Newspapers, radio stations and civil society organisations complain about corruption every day, but they are never called to the police. Why me? Why now?” he asked.

Mojapela said he believes his uncompromising stance against corruption has placed him in the government’s crosshairs.

“They see me as their enemy because I hate their corruption,” he said, add-

ing that he would not be intimidated into silence. “I know a man’s life has to be full of trials and tribulations, but that does not mean I will give these corrupt people a chance to destroy me. They can destroy my flesh, but not my spirit. I will not allow them to kill me. They want my life.”

At a previous rally in Machache, Mojapela condemned alleged corruption linked to the controversial Queen ’Mamohato Memorial Hospital tender, which he claimed was unlawfully awarded. He argued that corruption has crippled not only the economy but also the livelihoods of ordinary Basotho.

“When those elected to govern are corrupt, the economy suffers, leading to

crime and unruly behaviour, including murders,” he said.

He further questioned why Lesotho remains underdeveloped despite its natural resources, alleging that those in power enrich themselves at the expense of national progress. He cited alleged irregularities in infrastructure projects, including at the Maseru traffic circle and Makoanyane Square.

“There is corruption there. A contractor works, then demolishes the work and starts again,” he alleged. Mojapela also claimed nepotism within government structures, alleging that relatives of ministers are appointed to positions, including at embassies, without merit

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

China-Lesotho: A Strategic Partnership for Practical Outcomes, Tangible Benefits and Shared Future

By: H.E. Amb. YANG Xiaokun

The visit of H.E. Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, to Lesotho marked an important milestone in the development of China-Lesotho relations. It reaffirmed the shared commitment of both countries to advancing a strategic partnership focused on practical cooperation, long-term development, and tangible benefits for the Basotho people.

Over the years, guided by mutual respect and equality, China has worked closely with the Government and people of Lesotho to support national development priorities, accelerate modernization, and improve livelihoods. This cooperation is not abstract in nature; it is reflected in projects, policies, and people-to-people exchanges that have produced visible and lasting results.

Infrastructure is a cornerstone of economic and social progress. In Lesotho, China's foreign aid projects have contributed to strengthening public services, improving connectivity, and supporting sustainable growth. In Maseru, facilities such as the Parliament Building, the State House, the National Library, and the Mathabiseng Convention Centre



play an important role in governance and public life. These projects serve daily needs while standing as long-term symbolic assets. Specialized facilities, including the Fingerprint Examination Laboratory, have enhanced public safety. Beyond the capital, the Mpti-Sehlabathebe Road has improved connectivity between rural and urban areas, facilitating trade, tourism, and mobility. Phase I of the Mafeteng Solar Power Plant has a total installed capacity of 30 megawatts, contributing to energy security and the transition to renewables. Chinese enterprises also participate in major national initiatives such as the Polihali

Transfer Tunnel and Dam, supporting water resource management and future economic development. Together, these projects, which were constructed or granted by China during the past decades, form part of a broader effort to create an enabling environment for investment, industrial activity, and inclusive growth.

China-Lesotho cooperation continues to deepen in trade, investment, and industrial development. Bilateral trade has grown steadily, while China has implemented zero-tariff treatment on 100 per cent of tariff lines for all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, including Lesotho. This policy reflects China's

commitment to open markets and provides concrete opportunities for Lesotho exports. Recognizing wool and mohair as signature products of Lesotho, the two sides have reached consensus on signing a protocol for greasy wool to be imported from Lesotho to China, facilitating market access and encouraging value addition through local processing. By doing so, Lesotho's position in the global value chain will be significantly enhanced. In the mineral trade, global market trends are shaped by technological progress and evolving consumer demand. In the diamond

Continues in Page 7

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

Gun Drawn First, Court Told in Koelane Killing

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Dramatic testimony unfolded in the High Court this week as a state witness told the court that Tebello Koelane allegedly pulled out his firearm first during a heated confrontation moments before he was shot and killed by Sello Mabothe in 2020.

The revelation came during the ongoing murder trial of Mabothe, who stands accused of fatally shooting Koelane following an argument at a gathering attended by members of a local association.

Lehlohonolo Lesala, the first state witness, gave a detailed account of the events that led to the fatal shooting. Speaking calmly in court, Lesala said the incident happened in broad daylight while several people were present. According to his testimony, Mabothe arrived at the premises looking for Koelane. The two men soon confronted each other, and tensions quickly escalated.

Lesala told the court that both he and another man, Thabiso Mpeoa, witnessed the exchange.

“There was a confrontation between them,” Lesala said.

What began as an argument soon turned physical. The witness testified that Koelane slapped Mabothe across the face during the heated exchange.



After being slapped, Mabothe allegedly moved his hand towards his waist. However, before he could draw his weapon, Koelane reportedly pulled out his firearm first and pointed it at the accused.

While holding the gun, Koelane allegedly accused Mabothe of pursuing him over claims that he had an affair with Mabothe's wife.

Lesala said Koelane addressed Mpeoa while still pointing the weapon at the accused, explaining that Mabothe had been searching for him in different places.

“He said the accused had been looking for him all over,” Lesala testified. “He also said people had tried to reconcile them, but the accused did not seem to understand.” The situation deteriorated further within

seconds.

According to Lesala, Mabothe suddenly slapped Koelane's hand, the one holding the firearm, causing him to lose control of the weapon. Mabothe then pulled out his own gun.

“He shot him twice,” the witness told the court. Koelane fell to the ground immediately after the first shots.

But the shooting did not stop there.

Lesala said Mabothe continued firing as he moved around the fallen man, discharging approximately four to five more shots until his gun ran out of bullets.

The courtroom fell silent as the witness described what happened next.

He testified that Mabothe then picked up Koelane's firearm, which had fallen a

short distance away, about three paces from where he lay, and allegedly used it to fire two to three additional shots at the already wounded man.

By this point, Koelane was lying helpless on the ground.

The witness indicated that after the shooting, Mabothe left the scene carrying both firearms, his own and that of the deceased.

However, the court heard that Koelane's firearm was later discovered outside the premises by a security guard, suggesting it had been discarded.

Throughout the testimony, Lesala maintained that he witnessed the entire sequence of events unfold at close range.

The evidence forms a crucial part of the prosecution's case as it attempts to reconstruct the moments leading to Koelane's death and determine whether Mabothe acted in self-defence or used excessive and unlawful force.

The defence is expected to challenge parts of the witness's account as the trial progresses.

Mabothe is represented by Advocate Motiea Teele (KC), while the prosecution is led by Advocate Tsebisio Fuma.

The matter is being heard before Justice 'Mabatšoeneng Hlaele. Legal observers say the testimony regarding who drew a firearm first could become central to the case, as it may influence arguments around intent, provocation and possible self-defence.

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

Continued from Page 5

sector, natural diamonds and synthetic diamonds largely serve different market segments. China 1 remains an important consumer market for natural diamonds, while the growth of synthetic diamonds is driven primarily by industrial and technological applications.

For diamond-producing countries, including Lesotho, strengthening beneficiation, diversification, and resilience remains essential for long-term development amid global market changes.

China also actively encourages enterprises to invest in downstream industries in Lesotho, supporting industrial diversification and job creation. Chinese enterprises have conducted on-site inspections and due diligence for potential investments in Lesotho's wool processing sector.

Chinese enterprises are also investing in poultry farming; in October 2025, the LNDC delegation visited Qingdao and signed contracts with Chinese poultry companies worth approximately US\$100 million, supporting local production, food security, and industrial upgrading. China provides technical support and equipment to enhance Lesotho's capacity for independent and sustainable development. In 2025, China donated 148 pieces of agricultural machinery and handed over the Maseru Agricultural Storage and Logistics Infrastructure to support agricultural modernization and productivity. Since 2006, China has implemented four phases of Juncao (mushroom) technology cooperation, providing grants totaling RMB 21.33 million. Chinese experts have brought advanced cultivation techniques to Lesotho, and the fifth phase of the project is set to launch. As a Chinese

proverb goes, "Giving a man a fish is not as good as teaching him how to fish." Chinese enterprises operating in Lesotho have created employment opportunities and contributed technology, skills, and management experience that support local capacity-building. According to 2024 statistics, three major Chinese-funded enterprises engaged in large-scale national projects have employed and trained over 4,000 local workers; approximately 2,000 Chinese nationals reside in Lesotho, operating businesses and factories that have employed and trained more than 17,000 Basotho workers. Through such initiatives, China helps

Lesotho strengthen self-reliant, sustainable development rather than relying solely on external aid.

China is equally committed to health and well-being. The Maseru District Hospital, built with over RMB 430 million, equipped with modern facilities including CT scanners, digital X-ray systems, an ICU, and a pathology lab, provides modern medical services close to home. Since 1997, 201 Chinese medical professionals have been deployed to Lesotho, who treated over 300,000 patients, performed more than

8,000 surgeries, trained over 800 local staff, and conducted outreach services in over 200 villages. To combat AIDs, last year, China launched a joint project with UNAIDS, "Eliminating the Triple Threat in Girls and Young Women in Lesotho," investing over US\$2 million and expected to benefit more than 20,000 young women.

By combining capacity-building with emergency support, China and Lesotho have tackled public health challenges side by side.

People-to-people exchanges have further enriched our relationship. By the end of 2025, 3,970 Basotho had attended short-term training in China, and another 820 have participated in online training during the pandemic. Hundreds of young Basotho have received full scholarships to study at prestigious universities such as Peking University and the University of International Business and Economics. These programs cover public finance, trade facilitation, clean energy, and other fields, with a 1 focus on youth and women. For example, in 2025, women comprised 63.2% of trainees, and participants under 35 accounted for 18.9%, promoting inclusive development. In Lesotho, the Confucius Classroom at Machabeng College delivers 3,096 lessons annually, while the Confucius Institute at the National University of Lesotho averages 3,000 teaching attendances per week. In 2026, the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges will host around 600 activities across youth, women, culture, education, and civil society, further strengthening mutual understanding and friendship.

More importantly, the visit of H.E. Wang Yi injected fresh momentum into the ongoing mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Lesotho. During the visit, the two sides achieved a series of significant outcomes. First, China announced a new grant of RMB 100 million (approximately 250 million Maloti), marking the second such grant since the FOCAC Beijing Summit. Second, China will provide RMB 12 million (30 million Maloti) in emergency food assistance, continuing its tradition of donating food to Lesotho over the

years. In addition, substantial progress has been made on advancing the second phase of the Mafeteng Solar Power Plant Project with a total installed capacity of 50 megawatts.

The two countries also agreed to fully leverage the policy benefits of zero-tariff treatment to further open the market to Lesotho, aiming to maximize tangible benefits for both peoples. The facts and figures demonstrate that the China-Lesotho strategic partnership is not an empty slogan but a genuine friendship built on long-standing mutual trust, shared development, and win-win cooperation. China-Lesotho cooperation is both tangible and reliable. In the face of global challenges, China firmly supports Lesotho in safeguarding its sovereignty, security, and development interests. While some people called Lesotho as a country that nobody has ever heard of, H.E. Wang Yi's came to Lesotho, sending a clear message: Lesotho matters, and the Basotho people matter.

While some countries impose high tariffs or manipulate aid to influence Lesotho's choices, China adheres to the principle of sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith, respects the sovereignty of Lesotho, and supports Lesotho in pursuing development paths suited to its own national conditions. Looking ahead, China will take this visit as a new starting point, translating leaders' consensus into concrete action. We will continue to deepen cooperation across sectors, keep our doors wide open to Lesotho, and through pragmatic efforts, bring more tangible benefits to both peoples, jointly ushering in a new chapter in the China-Lesotho strategic partnership.

Fugitive Accused Stall Murder Trials

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Efforts to reduce the backlog of criminal cases in the High Court are facing fresh setbacks as several accused persons in serious offences, including murder, remain on the run, forcing proceedings to stall yet again. What had once been described as encouraging progress in clearing long-standing cases is now being undermined by the continued absence of suspects who have either disappeared or crossed into neighbouring South Africa, leaving courts with little choice but to postpone trials.

This week, at least four murder cases called before Justice Tšeliso Mokoko could not proceed because the accused were not present in court. In most of the matters, the dock stood empty.

Only one case, involving Letlaburu Majoro and Kefuoe Mokhothu, had an accused person present. Mokhothu appeared before the court alone, while his co-accused, Majoro, was nowhere to be found. Addressing the judge, Mokhothu said he had heard that Majoro is currently in Cape Town, South Africa, and has not returned home for some time. His absence meant the matter could not proceed.

The situation was repeated across other cases, as investigating officers detailed unsuccessful attempts to trace the missing suspects. In the matter concerning Hlompho Boi, the court heard that police have made several efforts to locate him, all without success.



Investigating Officer Inspector Sefako testified that he had followed leads suggesting that the accused and his family originate from Tsatsane and also maintain a home at Mount Moorosi, where family gatherings and funerals are often held because Tsatsane is far.

Hoping the suspect might surface during such events, the officer attended the funeral of the accused's grandmother in October last year.

"I thought he would attend," Inspector Sefako told the court. But the accused did not appear. Still determined to apprehend him, the officer made another attempt earlier this year.

He told the court that on February 1, 2026, he attended the burial of the accused's brother, who had died more than a month earlier. This time, he said, he even disguised himself to avoid recognition, as he is well known to both the accused and members of the community.

Despite the effort, the accused once again failed to show up.

While at the funeral, the officer gathered new information suggesting that Boi had allegedly scammed

several people, including his own relatives, during sheep sales.

According to the officer, this may explain why the suspect has been avoiding returning home.

"He is afraid to come back because of those issues," Inspector Sefako said.

Even so, he assured the court that investigations would continue and that police remain committed to locating him.

Another case involves Likhang Lekena, who is also still at large. No detailed report was presented before the court regarding his whereabouts, except confirmation that he remains a fugitive.

The absence of updates further frustrated attempts to move the case forward.

In yet another matter, the court faced an unusual situation where there was no accused person, no prosecutor and no defence lawyer present.

The case concerns Thabang Molibeli.

With no legal representatives available, a lawyer from the Law Office, who happened to be in court for another matter, had to step in temporarily to assist.

It was revealed that a warrant of arrest had been issued for Molibeli as far

back as August 25, 2025, yet he has still not appeared before the court. The investigating officer assigned to the matter, Sergeant Serabele, was also absent and therefore unable to provide an update on efforts to execute the warrant.

Earlier explanations suggested that Molibeli may not have received his notice of trial. It was also indicated that he works in the mines in South Africa, and that his employer could not release him without proper justification. However, with no confirmation of his exact location or formal communication with authorities, the case remains in limbo.

Legal observers say such delays are becoming increasingly common in matters

involving suspects believed to be outside Lesotho, particularly in South Africa, where tracking and extraditing individuals can prove difficult and time-consuming.

For the court, the repeated postponements not only slow the pace of justice but also prolong uncertainty for victims' families and witnesses who must wait longer for closure.

Justice Mokoko postponed all the affected matters to August 3, 2026, in the hope that authorities will have made progress in tracing the missing accused by then.

Until the suspects are located and brought before court, the cases cannot move forward.

For now, the empty docks serve as a visible reminder that even as the justice system pushes to clear its backlog, justice itself remains out of reach when the accused simply cannot be found.

Court Pushes Healing After Uncle Admits Killing Nephew

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

In a rare move aimed at repairing broken family ties rather than deepening punishment, the High Court has ordered a restorative justice process for a Berea man who admitted to killing his nine-year-old nephew, giving him a chance to rebuild relations with his family and community.

Tseko Koetle of Lekokoaneng Ha Tau pleaded guilty to culpable homicide that happened on the 23rd day of June 2019 causing death of the child. Instead of focusing only on imprisonment, the court has now directed that efforts be made to prepare both the accused and his relatives for reconciliation when he returns home.

Justice Tšelisio Mokoko called on the Lesotho Correctional Service (LCS), through its Rehabilitation Office, to facilitate the process. The aim, the court heard, is to prevent the accused from being rejected, attacked or ostracized after his release and to ensure that he is safely reintegrated into society.

The court was told that tensions between Koetle and his family have been severe since the incident. Information placed before the judge revealed that shortly after his arrest in 2019, Koetle chose not to apply for bail. He allegedly received word that some family members were angry and might harm him if he returned home.

Because of the strained relations, he was also unable to attend his father's funeral while in custody, further widening the emotional distance between him and



his relatives.

The situation prompted the court to consider steps beyond the normal sentencing process.

Justice Mokoko said rehabilitation and reconciliation were important to avoid a scenario where the accused, after serving his sentence, faces revenge or permanent rejection from those closest to him.

When summoned to address the court this week, Acting LCS Commissioner Matingoe Phamotse assured the judge that the service would do everything possible to carry out the restorative justice programme, despite limited resources.

He acknowledged, however, that the task would not be easy. Phamotse expressed concern that officers assigned to engage the family and community might face resistance.

"There is a possibility that our Rehabilitation Officer could be rejected when going to the family and community to conduct research," he indicated. Even so, he committed to ensuring that attempts are made to open dialogue and prepare both sides for reconciliation.

Court records show that Koetle was 20 years old at the time of the incident. Evidence presented revealed that the fatal assault occurred after he discovered that the young boy had lent someone a maize roasting pan without permission. In what prosecutors described as a moment of anger, Koetle struck the child, causing injuries that later led to his death. He was initially charged with murder.

However, following negotiations between the defence and the prosecution, a plea agreement was reached. He pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of culpable homicide, admitting responsibility for causing the child's death without intent to kill.

The court subsequently convicted him on his own plea.

During sentencing, the judge took into account the time Koetle had already spent in custody while awaiting trial.

He has been behind bars since 2019.

Justice Mokoko sentenced him to eight years' imprisonment. However, seven of those years were effectively deducted to account for

the lengthy period he has already spent on remand. As a result, Koetle is expected to serve only one additional year before becoming eligible for release. The court said this made it even more urgent to address the broken relationship between the accused and his family.

Legal observers noted that without proper intervention, former inmates in similar circumstances often return to communities that are hostile or unwilling to accept them, increasing the risk of violence or reoffending.

By involving the Lesotho Correctional Service's Rehabilitation Office, the court hopes to create dialogue, encourage forgiveness where possible, and promote peaceful coexistence.

Restorative justice focuses on repairing harm caused by crime through communication, accountability and reconciliation rather than punishment alone. It often involves meetings, counselling and mediation between offenders, victims and families.

In this case, the goal is to ensure that Koetle's eventual return does not trigger further tragedy.

The judge has directed that a preliminary report on the progress of the rehabilitation and reconciliation efforts be submitted on or before May 11, 2026.

The matter has been postponed to May 14, 2026, when the court will review the report and determine the next steps.

For now, the case stands as an unusual example of the justice system seeking not only to punish wrongdoing, but also to mend the deep personal wounds left behind.



10

Lesotho Tribune

By: Seipati Matobo

MASERU

Bohlokoa Media Company, the publisher of Lesotho Tribune, has been selected among the Top 50 entrepreneurs for the second edition of the Création Africa programme covering South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi.

The announcement was made by the French Institute of South Africa on Friday, 06 February, following what organisers described as an intensive external jury selection process.

“We are proud to announce the Top 50 entrepreneurs selected for the second edition of Création Africa South Africa, Lesotho and Ma-

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Lesotho Tribune Publisher Selected Among Top 50 in Création Africa Programme



Founder and Group CEO - Bohlokoa Enterprises, Phafane Nkotsi

lawi,” the Institute said in a public statement. “Congratulations to all

selected entrepreneurs as they embark on this exciting journey.”

The selection places Lesotho Tribune’s par-

Continues in Page 11

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

Continued from Page 10

ent company within a regional cohort of high-potential creative enterprises poised for scaling, collaboration and continental exposure.

Cementing Lesotho Tribune's Position
Speaking on Friday, Phafane Nkotsi, proprietor of Lesotho Tribune, described the milestone as both humbling and strategic.

"We are grateful for the opportunity from Création Africa to learn and better serve and cement our position as Lesotho's publication of record," Nkotsi said.

For a publication that has steadily positioned itself as a data-driven, investigative and culturally anchored platform, the recognition signals validation beyond Lesotho's borders.

Nkotsi said Bohlokoa Media Company intends to use the programme to accelerate its transition into a hybrid cultural media hub that integrates journalism, storytelling, creative content and digital production. The ambition is not incremental growth. It is structural transformation.

Scaling Into a Regional Cultural Platform
Lesotho Tribune is seeking support to expand

into a regional cultural platform that amplifies Basotho narratives and strengthens the visibility of African creative industries.

According to Nkotsi, the project will focus on:

- Digital expansion
- Strengthening and improving the podcast
- Lesotho's Investment Case
- Developing cultural content spaces
- Advancing visual and digital production capacity

The vision is to create a media ecosystem that does more than report news. It aims to curate identity, archive culture, platform artists, profile entrepreneurs and deepen public discourse across sectors.

In practical terms, this could mean more multimedia storytelling, enhanced podcast production, collaborative creative projects, stronger regional distribution networks and structured engagement with artists and cultural practitioners.

For Lesotho, where cultural production often struggles with funding gaps, distribution bottlenecks and limited cross-border exposure, the programme represents a gateway into continental creative

circuits.

A Strategic Inflection Point

The timing is significant.

African creative industries are increasingly being recognised as drivers of economic growth, youth employment and soft power influence. Digital platforms are reshaping how stories travel, how culture is monetised and how small media houses compete with global players.

Participation in a programme like Création Africa signals that Lesotho Tribune is no longer positioning itself merely as a local newspaper. It is staking a claim within Africa's creative economy.

Nkotsi emphasised that the programme offers not only workshops and hands-on activities but also opportunities to connect with fellow creatives across borders. That network effect may prove as valuable as any technical training.

If executed strategically, the initiative could expand Lesotho Tribune's footprint beyond print and online reporting into structured cultural programming, podcast syndication, regional storytelling collaborations and creative incubator models.

What Is Création Africa?

Création Africa is an entrepreneurial development programme spearheaded by the French cultural network in Southern Africa, including the French Institute of South Africa. It targets high-potential creative entrepreneurs operating within cultural and creative industries. The programme provides selected participants with structured workshops, mentorship, skills development sessions, networking opportunities and exposure to regional and international creative ecosystems.

Its objective is to strengthen creative entrepreneurship across Southern Africa by equipping founders with the tools to scale sustainably, collaborate across borders and contribute meaningfully to the continent's cultural economy.

Selection into the Top 50 follows a competitive external jury process, making it both merit-based and highly selective.

For Bohlokoa Media Company and Lesotho Tribune, the journey now shifts from recognition to execution. The real work begins.

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660

SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

Roads Directorate Reports Road Milestones, Flags Internal Hurdles

BY: Lemohang Botsane

MASERU

The Roads Directorate (RD) has announced significant progress in road infrastructure development, with approximately 200 kilometres of paved roads completed, improving connectivity and transport efficiency across the country. This milestone was announced by RD Director General, Mr. Teboho Mokhoane, during a national stakeholder consultation workshop in Maseru.

The directorate has also made notable improvements in urban lighting, with around 1,600 functional street lights installed in major towns, including Maseru Urban, Teyateyaneng, Botha-Bothe, and Mafeteng. These installations are crucial for enhancing road safety and public security during nighttime hours. Furthermore, the RD has constructed around 30 footbridges in rural villages, supporting safe pedestrian movement, particularly in areas prone to flooding. Despite these achievements, the RD faces significant internal challenges, as outlined in its 2026-2031 Strategic



Plan. The directorate is constrained by outdated design standards, weak ICT infrastructure, a non-functional monitoring and evaluation system, poor contract management, staff shortages, and slow internal processes, particularly in procurement and payments. The workshop aimed to strengthen engagement with road users and development partners as the RD prepares to imple-

ment its strategic plan. Mr. Mokhoane emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnership in addressing the challenges facing the directorate. Established under the Roads Directorate Act of 2010, the RD is responsible for planning, constructing, and maintaining Lesotho's national road network. The institution has faced increasing demands to improve road quality, address

climate impacts, and enhance safety across the country. The RD's efforts are critical to Lesotho's economic development, as a well-maintained road network is essential for trade, commerce, and social development. The directorate's commitment to transparency and accountability is commendable, and it is hoped that the challenges highlighted will be addressed promptly.

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM



13

Lesotho Tribune

By: Lemohang Botsane

MASERU

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry has emphasized the importance of soil conservation and management in ensuring the country's sustainable development. Speaking at the commemoration of World Soil Day, held under the theme "Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities", Minister of Environment and Forestry, Mr. Letsema Adonts'i, stressed that soil is a vital resource that underpins food security, water regulation, landscape stability, climate resilience, and the national economy.

"Soil is not just a component of our environment, it is the foundation upon which our nation is built," Mr. Adonts'i said. "For Lesotho, soil is the backbone of our agriculture, our water resources, and our very

FARMERS CORNER

Soil Health Key To Lesotho's Future, Ministry Declaration



livelihoods. When soils are degraded, development is weakened, but when soils are healthy, nations prosper." The minister emphasized that the government is committed to evidence-based land and soil management, guided by FAO principles and grounded in sound scientific knowledge. He explained that effective land use planning must begin with a clear understanding of soil capabilities and limitations to guide decisions on farming, construction, conservation, and infrastructure development. "Planning without soil information lacks a foundation, and sustainable development cannot be achieved without science-based guidance," Mr. Adonts'i said. To strengthen this approach, the Ministry of Environment and

Forestry is integrating soil data, land capability assessments, and environmental safeguards into national and local planning frameworks. Principal Soil Scientist and Land Monitoring Expert at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Mr. Polao Moepe, explained that the purpose of World Soil Day is to educate communities about the importance of soil and to encourage responsible land use. "Soil plays a critical role in all aspects of life, including agriculture, housing, and economic development," he said.

The commemoration of World Soil Day, held later than the actual date of December 5, was part of the ministry's continued public awareness efforts. The event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of soil conser-

vation and management and to encourage all sectors to share responsibility for protecting the nation's soils.

The government has reiterated its commitment to enforcing land use planning legislation and promoting sustainable land management practices. The ministry has called on all stakeholders to work together to ensure that Lesotho's soils are protected and managed responsibly for the benefit of present and future generations. As Lesotho continues to face environmental challenges, the importance of soil conservation and management cannot be overstated. The ministry's efforts to promote sustainable land use practices and protect the nation's soils are critical to ensuring a healthy and prosperous future for the country.

Financial Consumers Prompted To Know Their Rights

By: Lemohang Botsane and Molefi Ts'umane

Basotho financial consumers are being urged to familiarize themselves with their rights when dealing with service providers across the country. This call was made by Dr. Masenyetse, Executive Assistant to the Governor of the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL), during a workshop held at Lehakoe on February 6, 2026.

Dr. Masenyetse emphasized the importance of consumers understanding their rights, which are clearly outlined in various Acts of Parliament. These laws not only outline the rights of consumers but also their responsibilities. When consumers are well-informed, they are better equipped to make wise financial decisions and protect themselves from unfair or abusive practices by banks, insurers, and other financial institutions.

“Consumer protection is everyone’s right,” Dr. Masenyetse said. “It belongs to regulators like the CBL, to the service providers themselves, and to the consumers. Too often, lack of knowledge leaves ordinary people open to exploitation and mistreatment.” The Central Bank is actively strengthening its market conduct supervision framework to ensure that financial institutions deal with customers in a fair and transparent manner. Workshops like the one held at Lehakoe



play a vital role in building the skills and understanding of all stakeholders, enabling them to comply fully with the rules.

Dr. Masenyetse noted that consumers who know their rights are more likely to hold providers accountable, file complaints when things go wrong, and contribute to a stable and trustworthy financial system that benefits the whole nation.

Mr. Moses Musantu of the World Bank reinforced the message, stating that consumer protection is crucial for building trust between ordinary people and financial service providers. “Strong protection measures boost confidence in the system, leading to higher participation and real

progress in financial inclusion across Lesotho,” he

said.

Effective frameworks prevent misconduct, reduce disputes, and help financial markets run efficiently and fairly for everyone. Mr. Musantu urged regulators to stay alert and take proactive steps to monitor market behavior and prioritize consumers.

He called for closer teamwork among regulators, policymakers, and development partners to design smart policies, implement them properly, and enforce them without fail. Mr. Musantu also highlighted the need for ongoing public education campaigns to inform people about their rights and the channels available to seek help or complain when needed.

The workshop was attended by various stakeholders, including financial institu-

tions, regulators, and consumers. It provided a platform for discussing the importance of consumer protection and financial literacy in Lesotho.

The CBL is committed to promoting financial inclusion and protecting consumers. Through initiatives like this workshop, the bank aims to empower Basotho to make informed financial decisions and contribute to a stable and trustworthy financial system.

As Lesotho continues to develop its financial sector, it is essential that consumers are aware of their rights and responsibilities. By working together, regulators, service providers, and consumers can build a financial system that benefits everyone.

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

EDITORIAL

Justice Held Together by Tape



15

Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

A firearm, presented as evidence before the High Court, sits on a wooden surface. It is held carefully. It is meant to represent the weight of the law, the seriousness of a criminal trial, the gravity of justice. And yet, attached to it is a makeshift paper tag, folded and covered in what appears to be ordinary adhesive tape.

The photograph is jarring. That small detail speaks volumes.

In any criminal justice system, the chain of custody is sacred. Evidence must not only exist. It must be handled in a way that inspires confidence. It must be documented, preserved, labelled and stored according to strict forensic protocols. The integrity of the system depends on



it. When the public sees a firearm tagged with handwritten paper wrapped in tape, the immediate question is not about the accused. It is about competence.

Was the evidence logged properly? Was it preserved in a tamper-proof manner? Is there a documented custody trail from seizure to courtroom?

These questions are not technical nitpicking. They go to the heart of fair trial standards.

Modern forensic practice is not a luxury. It is foundational. Evidence tags are supposed to be durable, standardised, uniquely coded and linked to documented entries. They

exist to eliminate doubt. They exist to protect both the prosecution and the defence. They exist so that convictions, if secured, survive appeal.

When presentation appears improvised, the perception becomes corrosive.

Let us be clear. The officer who prepared that exhibit may well be diligent, hardworking and operating under severe constraints. Resource shortages in policing are not new in Lesotho. Forensic departments often work with limited budgets, inadequate equipment and insufficient training. But that is precisely the point. When institutional underinvestment becomes visible in a courtroom, it

undermines public trust. Justice is not only about catching suspects. It is about procedure. A compromised chain of custody can collapse an otherwise strong case. Defence counsel need only raise reasonable doubt regarding contamination, misidentification or mishandling. Appeals courts are unforgiving where evidentiary integrity is concerned. Sloppy documentation can undo months of investigation.

And beyond the courtroom technicalities lies something deeper. Symbolism matters. Courts represent the highest expression of state authority. When evidence appears labelled with improvised materials, the message projected is one of fragility in systems that should be robust.

The criminal justice system is an ecosystem. Police investigations feed prosecutions. Prosecutions rely on evidentiary integrity. Courts depend on procedural reliability. If one link weakens, the entire chain strains. Lesotho has faced persistent public concern about policing standards, prosecutorial consistency and trial delays. High profile cases have tested the

Continues in Page 17

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

SENTIMENT TRACKER

Basotho Doubt Equal Application of the Law



By Lesotho Tribune

A recent Lesotho Tribune Sentiment Tracker poll has revealed a stark public perception: a large majority of respondents do not believe powerful individuals in Lesotho are held to the same legal standards as ordinary citizens.

The question posed was direct:

“Do you believe powerful individuals in Lesotho are held to the same legal standards as ordinary citizens?”

The response was equally direct.

Out of 43 votes recorded on X, 88 percent answered No. Only 2 percent said Yes, while 9 percent chose Sometimes. None selected Not sure.

Even allowing for the limited sample size, the imbalance is striking. A Perception Gap Public confidence in equal treatment before the law is foundational to constitutional democracy.

When nearly nine out of ten respondents say they believe the law does not apply equally, it signals more than dissatisfaction. It signals distrust.

In a small jurisdiction such as Lesotho, where political leadership, business elites and public institutions often operate within overlapping social and professional circles, perception matters deeply. Citizens watch how investigations unfold. They observe who is charged swiftly and who is not. They notice which cases stall and which move quickly through the courts.

Whether that perception reflects legal reality is a matter for institutional data and case analysis. But perception alone carries weight. Trust in institutions does not collapse overnight. It erodes

gradually, through accumulated impressions.

The Context Behind the Sentiment

The poll result does not exist in isolation. Over the past year, Lesotho has seen a series of high-profile investigations, corruption allegations, governance disputes and court challenges involving senior officials, politically connected individuals and institutional heads.

Some cases have resulted in arrests. Others have been delayed. A few have been publicly debated before reaching courtrooms. Each episode feeds into a broader narrative about consistency in enforcement.

For many citizens, the question is not simply whether prosecutions occur. It is whether they occur evenly, transpar-

ently and without fear or favour.

The 88 percent “No” response suggests that, among this group of engaged respondents, confidence in that evenness is low.

Rule of Law and Economic Implications This is not merely a legal issue. It is an economic one.

Investor confidence is closely tied to predictability and equal enforcement. If markets perceive selective application of the law, capital becomes cautious. Contracts become uncertain. Risk premiums rise.

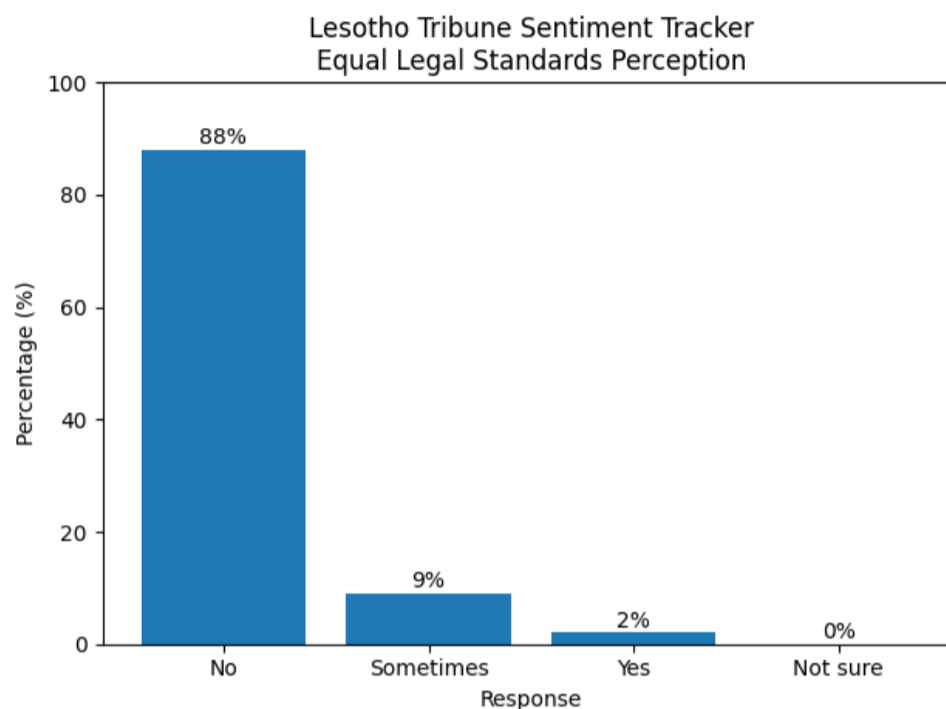
The rule of law is not abstract. It underpins credit systems, procurement integrity, public finance discipline and anti-corruption frameworks. A country’s governance credibility is one of its most valuable intangible assets.

Important Note on Methodology

The Sentiment Tracker poll was conducted on X and gathered 43 votes with 203 views. It is not a scientific national survey and does not claim statistical representativeness.

It does, however, provide a snapshot of engaged public opinion within Lesotho Tribune’s audience base.

Sentiment is data. It may not be definitive, but it is directional.



Continued from Page 15

system repeatedly. Each visible lapse reinforces a narrative that institutions are overstretched, under-resourced or poorly supervised.

The question is not whether officers are trying. The question is whether the state has invested adequately in professional forensic infrastructure.

Do police stations have standardised evidence kits? Are forensic officers equipped with tamper-proof tagging systems? Is there routine audit of evidence handling procedures?

Are court exhibit standards codified and enforced uniformly?

These are governance

questions.

Improving forensic standards is not glamorous. It does not produce immediate political headlines. But it determines whether convictions stand. It determines whether innocent individuals are protected from wrongful prosecution. It determines whether victims receive justice that is beyond reproach.

If resources are the constraint, then the issue becomes budget prioritisation. A single collapsed murder case due to evidentiary mishandling costs far more in public confidence than the price of proper forensic labelling systems.

If training is the issue,

then continuous professional development must become mandatory. Forensic science evolves. Handling protocols evolve. Institutional learning must evolve too.

If supervision is the issue, then leadership accountability must follow.

The image of that firearm with its improvised tag is more than a procedural lapse. It is a mirror. It reflects how small technical weaknesses can cast large institutional shadows.

Justice cannot look improvised.

For a country striving to strengthen rule of law, attract investment, and build institutional credibility, details matter. Investors watch governance

quality. Citizens watch fairness. Courts watch procedure. Every exhibit placed before a judge carries not only evidentiary weight but reputational weight.

We cannot afford a criminal justice system that appears held together by tape.

If Lesotho is serious about restoring confidence in law enforcement and the courts, then forensic standards must be elevated from afterthought to priority. Evidence handling must be beyond criticism. Courtroom presentation must project professionalism.

Because in the end, justice must not only be done. It must be seen to be done.

BOHLOKOA  **MERCHANTS**

Disposabile wear

**CNR Kingsway & Pioneer Rd LNDC Centre
2nd Floor Tel: +266 22 324 660**



18

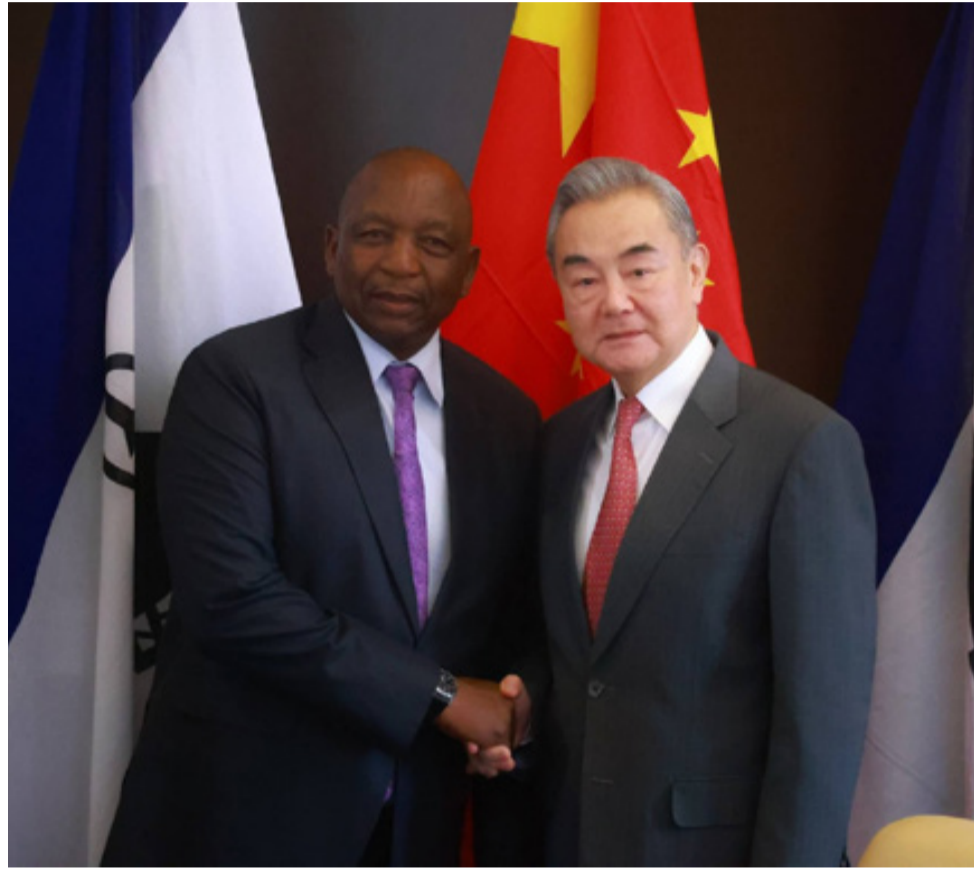
Lesotho Tribune

By: Silence Charumbira

Recent commentary has attempted to position China as Lesotho's biggest economic threat, arguing that Beijing's trade model structurally disadvantages small economies like ours. This narrative, while seductive in its simplicity, fundamentally misdiagnoses our challenges and dangerously misdirects our policy focus. "A more nuanced perspective is this: the key challenge for Lesotho's economic development lies not in external factors like China or the West, but in our ability to fully embrace and act on the responsibility for shaping our own economic future. The uncomfortable truth is this: the primary obstacle to Lesotho's economic development is not China, nor the West, but our own failure to take responsibility for our economic destiny.

OPINION

The real threat to Lesotho is not China - it is our own complacency



Before we rush to blame external actors for our predicament, we must reckon with a basic principle of international relations: every country's primary obligation is to its own citizens. China has no duty to industrialize Lesotho any more than the United States has a duty to build factories in rural Mississippi.

Nations pursue their national interests. The question is not whether China protects its domestic market - of course it does -- but whether we are competent enough to leverage the opportunities that do exist for our own benefit.

The sovereignty of self-interest While economic statecraft denotes that every government must protect and nurture its

local industry, China has overly opened up. In recent years, the Chinese market has increasingly become open to cooperating countries because opening up is basic national policy. While protectionism is the new norm for most countries especially in the West, as recently as November, China announced that it "had extended its unilateral visa-exemption arrangements for 48 countries". And in December, China's Hainan province "launched island-wide special customs operations, allowing freer entry of overseas goods, expanding zero-tariff coverage, and introducing more business-friendly measures". "This initiative will significantly ease the entry and exit of people, goods, capital and data across

Hainan, enhancing its position as a hub of global exchange," said the People's Daily in December. Critics who decry China's export dominance and market protectionism seem to have forgotten that every successful economy in history has pursued similar strategies during its development phase. The United States employed aggressive tariffs in the 19th century. South Korea closed its markets to protect infant industries. Japan built industrial champions behind regulatory walls. This is not villainy - it is economic statecraft.

China has numerous policies and programs explicitly designed to benefit African countries: the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Belt and Road Initiative financing, concessional loans, technical assistance programs, and scholarship opportunities. China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, told Prime Minister Sam Matekane last month during his historic visit to Lesotho that the Asian giant would "accelerate the implementation of its zero-tariff policy for Africa in Lesotho, expand bilateral economic, trade, investment, and industrial cooperation, facilitate greater access for Lesotho's

Continues in Page 19

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

Continued from Page 18

specialty products to the Chinese market, and continuously boost Lesotho's national development". These are not secrets. They are published, documented, and available. The onus is squarely on African governments to study these programs, understand their mechanics, and deploy them strategically for national development. When Zimbabwe exports groundnuts to China, when South Africa exports minerals, when Ethiopia leverages Chinese financing for industrial parks, they are not being granted charity — they are executing policy. The question we must ask ourselves is stark: why have we failed to do the same? Can we attribute our challenges in capitalizing on available opportunities to China — or is this an area where we face ongoing work to build sufficient institutional capacity, consolidate political will, and refine strategic vision? Is it China's fault that we lack the institutional capacity, political will, or strategic vision to capitalize on available opportunities? The infrastructure fallacy cuts both ways. The argument that "infrastructure without industrial development is a dead end" sounds compelling until you examine its inverse: industry without infrastructure is utterly impossible. No investor, Chinese or Western, will establish manufacturing operations in countries where roads are impassable, electricity is unreliable, and ports are nonexistent. Infrastructure is the prerequisite, not the after-

thought.

China has built roads, airports, railways, and power stations across Africa. These are tangible assets that will outlast any political administration. They create the physical foundation upon which industries can be built. The reality that we have yet to fully leverage this valuable infrastructure points to areas where our policy alignment and implementation can be strengthened not to any flaw in the infrastructure itself. The fact that we have failed to capitalize on this infrastructure reveals a failure of policy, not a defect in the infrastructure itself. When roads carry imported goods inland instead of local exports outward, the problem is not the road — it is what we have failed to produce.

The reality is this: creating industries is Lesotho's job, not China's.

International partners can provide capital, technology transfer, and market access frameworks, but they cannot manufacture political will or bureaucratic competence. If we are still working to attract more investment despite improved infrastructure, it is worth exploring how we can further enhance our business environment, streamline our regulatory framework, and strengthen our governance structures. If we cannot attract investment even with improved infrastructure, we should ask what else is wrong with our business environment, regulatory framework, or governance structures. Blaming infrastructure donors for our inability to industrialize is intellectual evasion.

The West is no savior. Calling for renewed alignment with Western markets is proof that we are suffering from selective amnesia. Just months ago, Donald Trump — a symbol of Western policy priorities — dismissed Lesotho as "a country that nobody has heard of" before promptly imposing crushing tariffs. This is the partner we are told represents our economic salvation? Let us not forget that colonialism, the most extractive economic system in modern history, was a Western invention. The same powers that now lecture Africa about fair trade are the ones that structured global commerce to perpetuate dependency. The idea that Western markets are somehow inherently more open or benevolent than Chinese markets is historically illiterate and empirically questionable.

What, exactly, are the attractive policies the West is offering small countries like Lesotho today? The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), often cited as a model program, exposes the hollowness of this narrative. AGOA provides preferential market access to the United States for qualifying African exports. On paper, it is generous. In practice, Lesotho has chronically underutilized it. That aside, it is clearly a tool to control and manipulate beneficiary countries.

There is no reliability because the United States reserves the right to cancel anytime as a way to either whip nation states into line or to impose its own

morals on them.

Why? Because accessing AGOA requires meeting rules of origin, compliance standards, quality controls, and supply chain documentation that many of our producers cannot satisfy. The problem is not the program — it is our capacity to use it. This is the pattern: opportunity exists, we fail to seize it, then we blame the opportunity provider. Whether the provider is China or the West is irrelevant if we lack the state capacity to execute. Everyone serious imports less. The complaint that China is "increasingly importing less outside raw materials" betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of economic development. As countries develop, they naturally reduce reliance on imports by building domestic production capacity. This is not a Chinese conspiracy — it is the entire point of industrialization.

The United States imports less than it did decades ago relative to GDP. Europe does the same. Should we blame them for our failure to diversify and revitalize our production base? China is now growing some of the best crops globally, reducing its agricultural import dependency. This is success, not sabotage. If Zimbabwe and South Africa see declining groundnut exports to China, the question is whether they can compete on quality, price, and reliability — not whether China owes them perpetual demand.

Can we reasonably attribute Lesotho's continued import of cabbages despite

Continues to Page 20

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

Continued from page 19

agriculture being a stated economic pillar to China? Should Beijing be accountable for gaps in our processing capacity, cold storage, or agricultural extension services? These are areas where targeted policy adjustments and capacity-building can deliver meaningful progress, rather than issues to be resolved through finger-pointing. Should China be blamed because Lesotho still imports cabbages despite claiming agriculture is a pillar of our economy? Should Beijing be held responsible for the fact that we lack processing capacity, cold storage, or agricultural extension services? These are policy failures that no amount of finger-pointing can obscure. The South African example Before we point accusatory fingers at China, let us examine our immediate neighbor. What does Lesotho export to South Africa beyond labor and water? More poignantly, what could South Africa possibly import from us? The answer is devastating: almost nothing of value-added significance. South Africa has advanced manufacturing, sophisticated supply chains, and export capacity that dwarfs ours. If we cannot competitively produce goods for a market just across the Mohokare river, what magical policy intervention would make us competitive in Shanghai? The problem is not geographic distance or trade barriers it is productive capacity or lack thereof. This exposes the central fallacy in the anti-China argument: even if China

opened its markets completely, Lesotho would still struggle to export because we do not produce enough goods of sufficient quality at competitive prices.

Trade access means nothing without tradeable products. We can blame China for protectionism, but protectionism only matters if you have something to sell.

The devil is in the details—the The fundamental issue might not even be whether China is a perfect partner but whether we are serious about development. China offers financing, infrastructure, technical cooperation, and market frameworks. So does the West, though increasingly with conditionalities and moral lectures. The question is not which patron to choose but whether we have the governance, vision, and execution capacity to use any of them effectively.

Why not explore ways to refine policies to make doing business in Lesotho as seamless as in our neighboring countries? How can we further develop and implement a clear, actionable industrial strategy? In what ways can we increase investment in skills development, research institutions, and technology adoption? How might we encourage a greater focus on productivity alongside governance priorities? As China implements its effective five-year plans, could we strengthen our own economic blueprint and deepen our commitment to its execution? Why do we tolerate policies that make doing business in Lesotho more difficult than in our neighbors? Why do

we lack industrial strategy? Why have we not invested in skills development, research institutions, or technology adoption? Why do our politicians prioritize patronage over productivity? While China has its brutally effective five-year plans, do we have our own economic blueprint by which we abide? These are questions that cannot be answered by analyzing Chinese trade surpluses or Western tariff schedules. They require looking inward.

The textile industry's success under AGOA demonstrates that when conditions align - market access, investor interest, and functional governance - Lesotho can compete. The fact that this success has not been replicated in other sectors reveals that the binding constraint is not external markets but internal capacity.

Intellectual honesty is crucial The narrative that China is our biggest economic threat is intellectually lazy and politically convenient. It risks allowing policymakers to look outward for explanations rather than inward for solutions, shifting focus from Maseru to Beijing. It is certainly simpler to highlight challenges with foreign trade policies than to address areas where domestic capacity, governance, or strategic focus can be enhanced. It allows policymakers to externalize failure, shifting responsibility from Maseru to Beijing. It is easier to blame foreign trade policy than to confront domestic incompetence, corruption, or lack of vision.

China is a competitor, yes, but so is every other econ-

omy. Competition is the nature of international commerce. The question is whether we are equipped to compete. Currently, we are still building that competitive capacity and that is a journey we can embrace proactively. Currently, we are not, and that is on us.

We must stop politicking without values, principles, or ideals. We must cease the endless blame-shifting that characterizes our public discourse.

Development is not something done to you by benevolent foreigners it is something you build through hard policy choices, institutional reform, and long-term strategic thinking.

China offers opportunities. So does the West. The failure to capitalize on either is not evidence of their inadequacy but of ours. Until we accept this fundamental truth, no amount of analysis about trade surpluses, market access, or dumping will change our trajectory. The threat to Lesotho is not in Beijing or Washington — it is in our own mirror. We must change. The world will not wait for us to figure this out.

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

WE OFFER:

- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKOAMERCHANTS.COM

Inheritance Act Review Underway: Minister Ramoeletsi Reveals Nationwide Public Feedback

By: Molefi Tsumane

MASERU

Minister of Law and Justice Richard Ramoeletsi disclosed during a press conference attended only by journalists at the Ministry of Law offices on 6 February 2026 that the Office of the Master of the High Court had conducted nationwide outreach to gather public views on the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act, 2024. The Minister Ramoeletsi stated that teams from the Master's office travelled across the country, consulting communities on how the law benefits them and where it falls short. "The feedback was clear," he said. "Most people raised complaints about aspects of the Act, particularly its practical impacts on families, costs, and traditional practices." He emphasised that these widespread concerns have prompted action. "The law is now being examined closely," he continued. "Lawmakers are working to address the flaws identified so the Act can truly work in



favour of everyone ensuring fairness without creating undue hardship or division." The Minister did not detail specific timelines or proposed changes but indicated that the review draws directly from the

public input collected by the Master's office. This marks a shift toward reconciliation following earlier Senate debates where traditional leaders highlighted rising family disputes and called for amendments. The ses-

sion underscored the Ministry's commitment to refining the legislation based on real experiences from Basotho across districts. Further updates are expected as the examination progresses.

WE OFFER:

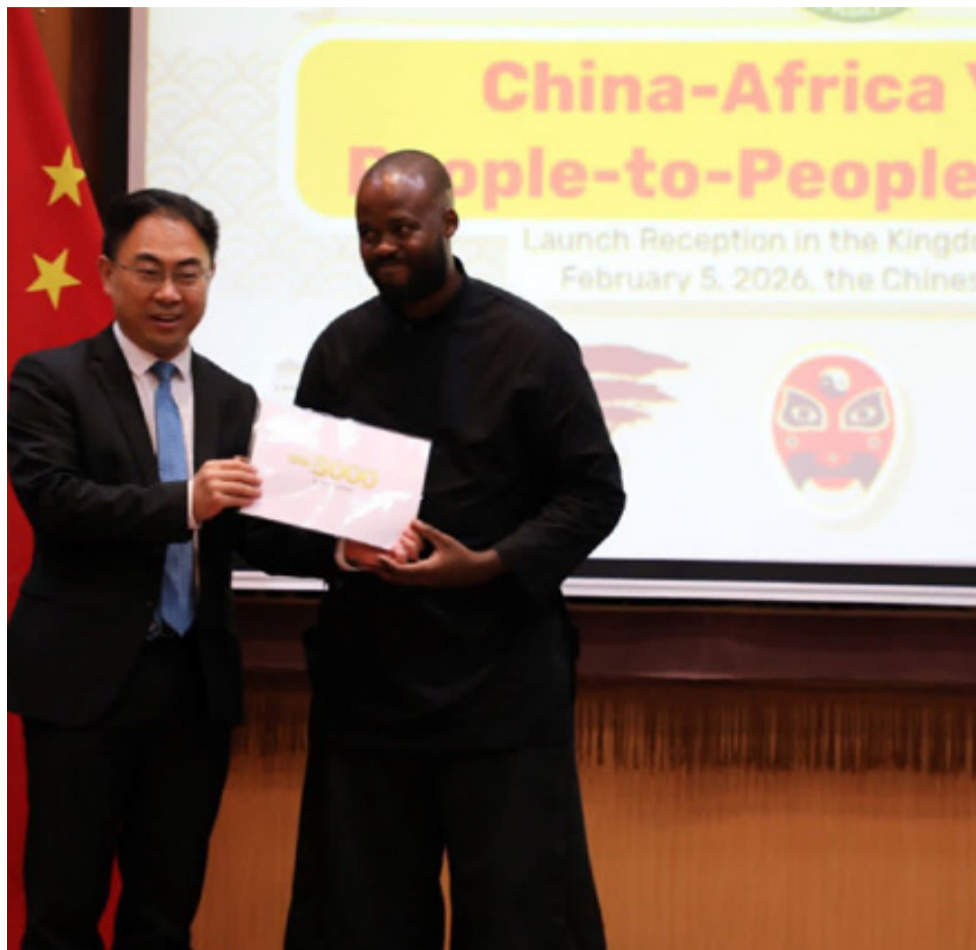
- Computer Hardware & Accessories
- Office Automation • Mobile phones • Office products • Medical Supplies
- Engineering supplies • Software • Stationery

00266 22 324 660



SALES@BOHLOKWAAMERCHANTS.COM - WWW.BOHLOKWAAMERCHANTS.COM

China, Lesotho Mark Launch of People-to-People Exchange Year



By Litšitso Letsunyane

Maseru- Chinese Embassy

The China–Africa People-to-People Exchange Year was officially launched here in Lesotho on Thursday evening at the Chinese Embassy in Maseru, marking a new phase in cultural, educational and social cooperation between China, Lesotho and the African continent at large.

Delivering remarks at the reception, Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Lesotho, Lu Hui, described people-to-people engagement as the foundation of strong state relations, emphasizing that China–Africa cooperation is increasingly centered on ordinary citizens,

cultural interaction and youth development. The designation of 2026 as the China–Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges was jointly agreed at the 2024 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation, with the continental launch having taken place earlier this year at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Lu said the Maseru reception represented the translation of that continental consensus into national action, aimed at deepening mutual learning, strengthening traditional friendship and expanding exchanges, particularly among young people.

He noted that in 2026 alone, nearly 600 exchange activities will be held across sectors such as education, culture,

tourism, media, youth development and public welfare, all designed to reinforce what China terms an “all-weather China–Africa community with a shared future.” Highlighting bilateral impact, Lu pointed to longstanding educational ties, revealing that China provides between 400 and 500 scholarships and training opportunities to Basotho annually. Institutional cooperation continues through platforms such as the Confucius Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology at the National University of Lesotho and the Confucius Classroom at Machabeng College, both of which are helping cultivate language skills and cross-cultural competencies.

Youth exchange success stories were also spotlighted. Among them was a young Mosotho photographer, Mapefane, who represented Lesotho at the China–Africa Youth Festival and later won first prize in the 2nd “Youth Creations on Shared Prosperity” Contest. Another example was 15 year old Tumelo Rabolinyane, who participated in the Second Belt and Road International Skills Competition in robotics and artificial intelligence, gaining international exposure and technical

experience.

Healthcare cooperation was cited as another pillar of relations, with China having dispatched 19 medical teams to Lesotho to date, spanning disciplines including surgery, obstetrics, internal medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. A 20th medical team is expected to arrive soon, continuing capacity-building collaboration with local health professionals.

Beyond institutions, Lu said the Embassy has expanded grassroots engagement through outreach visits to all ten districts of Lesotho, supporting schools, villages and community-level cultural initiatives.

The launch comes in a symbolic year that marks both the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Africa and the 60th anniversary of Lesotho’s independence, milestones Lu said underscore enduring solidarity. China also signaled intentions to broaden cooperation through increased scholarships, youth programs, cultural delegations, media collaboration and academic partnerships, positioning the Exchange Year as a practical platform to strengthen long-term friendship between the peoples of China, Lesotho and Africa.

