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Sunday, 3 May 2026

# Lesotho Tribune

*Information Liberates*



www.lesothotribune.co.ls

VOL 5, ISSUE 35

M22.00

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# Family's grief deepens as hospital admits bite marks found on teenager's body

*Pulane Thoahlane, 15, died at Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital days after admission for tuberculosis. Her family discovered post-mortem injuries consistent with rat bites, prompting a police case and a failed compensation offer from management.*

## By Staff Reporter



When the Thoahlane family entrusted their daughter Pulane, aged 15, to Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital on 28 March, they left confident she would receive proper treatment for tuberculosis and return home soon. What followed over the next four days would shatter that confidence entirely.

Pulane had been diagnosed with TB and referred to QMMH for specialised care. Upon admission, all required paperwork was completed and the family departed in good faith. When they returned the following day during visiting hours, they were told she had been moved to the Intensive Care Unit. Medical staff had found that she also suffered from pneumonia, which had compromised her breathing and necessitated the transfer. The family left without seeing her, hoping to do so the next day. In-

stead, on 30 March, they arrived to be told their daughter had died. "The bite marks were not present at the time of her admission." — Superintendent Mohai, Lesotho Mounted Police Service No one had contacted the family to inform them of her passing. The news was conveyed to them only when they arrived for the regular visiting period, a circumstance that compounded their shock. Overwhelmed with grief, they left without viewing the body, agreeing to return on 31 March to arrange the transfer of remains to the mortuary of their choice. That return visit became the first time the family saw Pulane after her death, and what they saw disturbed them profoundly. Her lips bore bite marks that appeared to have been inflicted by a small animal, possibly a rat, with visible scarring around the affected areas.

The family reported their findings to hospital management, which convened a meeting chaired by Dr Ranyali, the hospital director. The hospital acknowledged responsibility for the body while in its care but could not determine whether the injuries occurred in the ward or in the morgue. Staff indicated that the body had arrived at the morgue already in that condition. A case was subsequently lodged at Lithabeng Police Station and a post-mortem conducted. The examination confirmed bite marks consistent with a small animal, although it could not be established whether they occurred before or after death, or in which area of the facility.

### KEY FACTS

**28 March:** Pulane Thoahlane (15) admitted to QMMH for tuberculosis treatment.

**29 March:** Family informed she has been transferred to ICU following a pneumonia diagnosis.

**30 March:** Family informed of her death during regular visiting hours, without prior notification.

**31 March:** Family views the body for the first time; bite marks observed on the lips.

Compensation: M15,000 offered, then M20,000. Both declined by the family.

The hospital offered the family M15,000 in compensation. The family declined. A further M5,000 was added to the offer; that too was refused. Hospital management then advised the family to pursue any further action through available legal channels, stating it could provide no additional support. No further communication has been received by the family.

The then Minister of Health, Selibe Mochoboroane, was informed of the incident but neither contacted the family nor participated in any subsequent meetings. He did not respond to inquiries from the Lesotho Tribune seeking comment.

Superintendent Mohai of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service confirmed that a case had been opened regarding the discovery of bite marks on the body, marks that, he noted, were not present at the time of her admission. He added that a second case of a similar nature had been reported against the hospital. Sources familiar with the hospital's morgue facility described conditions consistent with the possibility of rodent access. Several windows are reportedly left open, and the low level of activity within the morgue creates an environment in which animals could enter undetected. Given that the family had indicated they would collect the body the following morning, it is believed the remains may have been left on a mortuary table overnight, providing access to the injuries observed. The Thoahlane family has received no closure, no formal explanation of the circumstances surrounding Pulane's death, and no accountability from the authorities they expected to protect her.

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# Ombudsman finds Polihali Phase II failing displaced communities in Mokhotlong

*A new investigation exposes systemic failings in Lesotho's flagship water infrastructure project, including delayed compensation, substandard housing and the exclusion of villagers from decisions affecting their livelihoods.*

By MOLEFI TSUMANE



The Office of the Ombudsman has issued a scathing report highlighting serious failures in the management of the Polihali Phase II project in Mokhotlong, citing systemic delays in compensation and the exclusion of affected communities from key decision-making processes.

The Ombudsman detailed the findings of an investigation triggered by growing grievances from local residents, with a particular focus on the villages of Ha Tlhakola, Masakong and Tsekong, where communities claim their lives have been upended by a relocation process that has consistently prioritised project timelines over human welfare.

According to the investigation, res-

idents were largely sidelined during critical stages of planning. Major decisions concerning their land and livelihoods were reportedly made long before any meaningful consultation took place, leaving affected families as mere spectators to their own displacement.

The Ombudsman identified four major areas of concern that have eroded trust between project managers and the communities. Communities reported a profound lack of inclusivity, with communication from project authorities often being one-sided and failing to incorporate local input into the projects design. Many families remain trapped in financial uncertainty due to lengthy delays in the disbursement of compensation packages, particularly those who lost productive agricultural

land and now struggle to sustain their livelihoods.

The Phase II project, a flagship infrastructure initiative crucial for the country's water and energy security, is currently failing its most vulnerable stakeholders. Perhaps the most visible shortcoming is the quality of relocation housing. Some residents have complained that the new

structures provided are of a significantly lower standard than their original homes, casting doubt on the project's initial promises of betterment for those displaced. The report further highlights a pattern of administrative silence, noting that complaints lodged by affected residents through official channels have frequently been met with prolonged delays or no response at all, deepening the sense of marginalisation.

The Ombudsman warned that the lack of accountability and the apparent decline in living standards for displaced communities risk triggering further social unrest if urgent corrective measures are not taken. The Office is expected to demand a clear timeline from project managers to address the housing deficiencies and fast-track the overdue compensation payments. For the residents of Mokhotlong, the report represents a long-awaited opportunity to move from being ignored to becoming genuine partners in the development

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# News

Official Statements, government communications, and institutional announcements



## SARS to require customs declarations for all foreign vehicles entering South Africa from June

*All SACU-registered motor vehicles must complete a temporary importation declaration from 1 June 2026, using the Travel Management System or Moabi app, SARS has announced.*

**By Staff Reporter**



The South African Revenue Service has notified traders, agents, and travellers across the Southern African Customs Union region that all foreign-registered motor vehicles entering South Africa will be required to complete a temporary importation declaration from 1 June 2026. The directive, issued from the Office of the Head of Customs Land Modality and signed by Vonani Ntlhabyane, confirms that SACU-registered vehicles will no longer be exempt from the declaration obligation that applies to all other foreign vehicles. The requirement derives from Section 15 of the Customs and Excise Act, which mandates declaration of all goods, including vehicles, upon entry. SARS notes that the SACU Agreement does not exempt member states from compliance with South African national legislation on import controls. Until now, SACU-registered vehicles had been temporarily exempted owing to operational

constraints at border posts. SARS says that the introduction of improved systems has resolved those constraints and made uniform enforcement feasible. Previously, SACU-registered vehicles were temporarily exempted due to operational challenges at border posts. With the introduction of improved systems, these challenges have been addressed.

Central to the new regime is the Travel Management System, known as TMS, which enables travellers to submit customs declarations electronically before reaching the border. The system allows for preliminary processing, verification, and conditional approval in advance of arrival, which SARS says will significantly reduce congestion and accelerate the movement of travellers at all border crossings.

Alongside TMS, SARS has introduced the Moabi app as a pre-declaration tool avail-

able to travellers. Information on TMS registration, submission guidelines, and technical support is available at [sars.gov.za/travellerdeclaration](https://sars.gov.za/travellerdeclaration). SARS has also indicated that officials will be stationed at border posts to assist travellers during the transition period. SARS has asked traders, clearing agents, tour operators, and all other stakeholders to communicate the new requirement to their clients and networks ahead of the 1 June enforcement date.

### REGIONAL SARS CONTACTS

**North West and Limpopo: Ms Memory Ndou**  
[mndoul@sars.gov.za](mailto:mndoul@sars.gov.za) 071 883 3457

**Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal: Ms Rachel Sinthumule**  
[rsinthumule@sars.gov.za](mailto:rsinthumule@sars.gov.za) 083 577 2888

**Free State and Northern Cape: Mr Isaac Tau itau1@sars.gov.za** 082 447 3560

The move has direct implications for Lesotho nationals and businesses that routinely drive into South Africa, as well as for the significant number of SACU-registered vehicles that cross at Maseru Bridge, Caledonspoort, Qacha's Nek, and other shared border posts. Travellers who fail to pre-declare through TMS or who arrive without completing the process on the Moabi app may face delays at the border. SARS says it remains committed to stakeholder engagement and coordinated communication to ensure clarity, compliance, and minimal disruption to cross-border movement before the June deadline.

# News

Official Statements, government communications, and institutional announcements



## Senate warns of worsening prison conditions in Lesotho

*A Senate committee has raised urgent concerns about overcrowding, underfunding, and health failures across Lesotho's correctional facilities, warning that systemic neglect is eroding both inmate welfare and public safety.*

By **THOLOANA LESENYA**



A Senate committee has sounded a strong warning about the state of prisons in Lesotho, saying conditions are worsening due to overcrowding, lack of funds, and weak health and security systems. The alarm was raised by the Government Assurances Committee after it visited several correctional facilities across the country. Presenting the findings before the Senate, Senator Mawinnie Kanetsi said what the committee observed on the ground shows deep, long-standing problems within the Lesotho Correctional Services. According to the report, the challenges are not small or temporary. They are part of a system that is struggling to function properly. The committee found that poor infrastructure, limited resources, and growing inmate numbers are putting pressure on both prisoners and staff.

One of the biggest concerns highlighted in the report is lack of funding. The committee said the Correctional Services has not been receiving its full budget over the years. This has made it difficult to carry out basic duties such

as maintaining buildings and ensuring safe living conditions. Senator Kanetsi explained that because of this, the department is forced to depend on the Ministry of Public Works and Transport for repairs and maintenance. However, this arrangement has its own problems. Repairs often take too long, and in some cases the work done is not up to standard.

The committee described the current annual maintenance budget of M112,000 as far too low. It said the amount does not match the size of the task at hand, especially as facilities continue to age and the number of inmates increases. Overcrowding is another major issue raised in the report. Many prison cells are holding far more inmates than they were designed for. This has created difficult and sometimes dangerous living conditions.

The committee warned that overcrowding affects more than just comfort. It also raises serious safety concerns. When too many inmates are kept in tight spaces, tensions rise. This can lead to violence, increase gang activity, and make it harder for officers to maintain order. Staff shortages are making the situation worse. With fewer officers available to monitor large numbers of inmates, security risks grow. The committee said this puts both inmates and prison staff in danger.

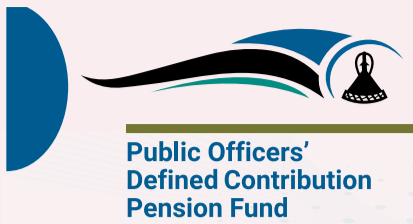
The report also looked closely at living conditions inside the facilities. One place that drew particular concern is the Maseru Central Correctional Institution. At this facility, the committee found that some inmates are kept in one-room cells that include toilets inside the same space where

they sleep. These toilets are not properly separated and have poor ventilation. The committee said this setup is not acceptable. It creates serious hygiene problems and increases the risk of disease. Living in such conditions, the report noted, can also affect the mental health of inmates. & These are not just comfort issues. They are matters of dignity, health, and basic human rights.&quot;

— Senator Mawinnie Kanetsi  
The committee stressed that correctional facilities are meant to rehabilitate offenders, not expose them to conditions that may worsen their situation. It warned that if the current problems are not addressed, prisons may fail to serve their purpose. Healthcare services inside the facilities were also found to be lacking. The report pointed to gaps in medical care, limited access to treatment, and shortages of medical staff. This is especially worrying in overcrowded environments where diseases can spread quickly. The committee urged the government to take immediate action. It recommended increasing the budget for the Correctional Services to allow for proper maintenance, improved living conditions, and better healthcare.

It also called for long-term solutions to overcrowding. These could include building new facilities, expanding existing ones, or finding alternative sentencing options for minor offences to reduce the number of inmates. Another key recommendation was improving staffing levels. The committee said more officers are needed to manage facilities safely and effectively. Despite the challenges, the committee acknowledged the efforts of correctional staff who continue to work under difficult conditions. However, it stressed that without proper support, their efforts may not be enough. The report has now been tabled before the Senate, where it is expected to guide discussions on reforms within the prison system.

Observers say the findings highlight a broader issue about how correctional systems are managed and funded. They argue that prisons are often overlooked in national planning, even though they play a key role in justice and public safety. The committee's message is clear: urgent action is needed. Without it, conditions in Lesotho's prisons may continue to decline, putting lives and rights at risk. The government is yet to respond in detail to the report, but pressure is mounting for meaningful change.



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# Opinion

Official Statements, government communications, and institutional announcements



## The Kingdom in the Sky is exporting its water and importing its hunger

*Lesotho sits atop some of the most abundant highland water in southern Africa, yet its smallholder farmers watch their crops wither through dry seasons that grow longer every decade. That contradiction is not fate. It is a policy failure, and it is entirely correctable.*

By SEIPATI MATOBO



Lesotho is called the Kingdom in the Sky, and the name carries a certain agricultural irony. The country exports vast quantities of water to South Africa through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, a scheme that has generated billions in royalties and transformed the Vaal system into a reliable resource for Gauteng's industry and households. Meanwhile, a smallholder farmer in Mohale's Hoek watches the same highland rains run off eroded hillsides, carrying topsoil into silted rivers, and waits for the next season's maize to tell her whether her family will eat adequately or not.

The water was always here. The infrastructure to keep it and use it was not built for her. This is the central failure of Lesotho's agricultural water policy, and it has persisted across governments, development programmes, and donor cycles with a consistency that amounts to institutional

neglect. Lesotho receives an annual average rainfall of approximately 700 millimetres, with the highlands receiving considerably more. That figure is not generous by tropical standards, but it is sufficient for productive rain-fed agriculture if soils are managed correctly and supplementary irrigation is available to bridge the dry spells that now arrive with greater frequency and severity as climate patterns shift. The problem is not the quantity of rainfall. The problem is that almost none of it is captured, stored, or channelled in ways that serve the farming communities who need it most.

The water was always here. The infrastructure to keep it and use it was not built for her. The numbers are stark. Irrigated agriculture accounts for less than three percent of Lesotho's cultivated land. In a country where more than seventy percent of the population depends on subsistence or smallholder farming for some part of its

livelihood, that figure represents a structural vulnerability of the first order. Every season without reliable water access is a season in which a household's food security depends entirely on the timing and distribution of rainfall that is becoming less predictable by the year. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projections for southern Africa indicate a trend toward more intense but shorter rainfall events, longer inter-seasonal dry periods, and greater variability in onset dates. For a farmer planning a planting schedule, that is not an abstraction. It is the difference between a harvest and a loss. The Government of Lesotho has not been entirely passive. The Smallholder Agriculture Development Project, supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, has constructed small earth dams and promoted conservation agriculture techniques in several districts. The Lowlands Water

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# Business & Economy

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IT

*Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy*

## China opens its market to all of Africa: a new chapter in South-South trade

*China extended zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African nations with which it maintains diplomatic ties on 1 May 2026, with South African apples becoming the first consignment to clear Shenzhen customs under the landmark policy. For Lesotho and the broader region, the implications are immediate and far-reaching.*

By LESOTHO TRIBUNE BUSINESS DESK



**A**t the stroke of midnight on 1 May, a container truck rolled through Shenzhenwan Port carrying 24 tonnes of South African apples. In that unremarkable moment of commerce, something historic occurred: the first goods to enter China under a sweeping new trade arrangement that grants zero-tariff access to all 53 African nations with which Beijing maintains diplomatic relations.

The apples, cleared swiftly by customs officers in the early hours of Friday, are bound for supermarkets and wholesale markets across China. Their tariff rate fell from 10 per cent to zero overnight, a reduction that signals not only lower prices on Chinese shelves but a far-

reaching shift in the architecture of China-Africa trade.

For Lesotho and its neighbours across southern Africa, the policy arrives with immediate force. South African citrus fruits and wine, Kenyan coffee and avocados, Ghanaian and Ivorian cocoa, and processed goods that previously faced tariffs of between 8 and 30 per cent now enter the world's second-largest economy duty-free.

\$348bn  
CHINA-AFRICA TRADE IN 2025  
A RECORD, UP 17.7% YEAR ON YEAR

53  
AFRICAN NATIONS NOW COVERED BY CHINA'S FULL ZERO-TARIFF FRAMEWORK

27.5x  
GROWTH IN CHINA-AFRICA TRADE OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES

China's commerce ministry described the move as making China the first major economy to provide unilateral, full-coverage zero-tariff treatment to all African countries with which it has diplomatic ties. The initiative builds on a

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Development Project has extended piped water to communities that previously had none. These are genuine achievements and the officials and communities involved in them deserve recognition. But they remain islands of intervention in a landscape of unaddressed need. The scale of investment in smallholder irrigation infrastructure remains a fraction of what the sector requires, and the institutional capacity to maintain what has been built is chronically underfunded.

Lesotho exports water to South Africa at scale and imports food it could grow itself. That equation will not change until water policy is reoriented to serve the farmer in the field, not the pipe in the ground  
SEIPATI MATOBO

The deeper policy failure lies in the disconnect between water governance and agricultural planning. The Lesotho Highlands Water Project is administered as an infrastructure and revenue instrument. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security plans planting seasons and extension services. The Water and Sewerage Company manages urban supply. These institutions do not operate in coordinated fashion around a shared objective of food security. The result is that Lesotho has sophisticated water management capability deployed entirely in the service of export and urban supply, while the smallholder farmer who could benefit most from even modest water storage infrastructure at the village or catchment level remains outside the system's ambitions.

This must change, and it must change with the recognition that the required investment is not beyond reach. Small-scale weirs, run-of-river diversions, hillside water harvesting structures, and rehabilitated wetlands, known in Sesotho as metsi-maholo, can meaningfully extend the productive season for thousands of farming households at a cost per beneficiary that compares favourably with any social protection programme the government currently runs. The technology is not experimental. It has been demonstrated in comparable highland environments across East Africa, in Ethiopia's Tigray region and in Rwanda's terraced hillsides, with measurable improvements in yield stability and household food security. Lesotho does not need to invent a new approach.

It needs the political will to fund and implement one that is already proven. Lesotho does not need to invent a new approach to water harvesting. It needs the political will to fund and implement one that is already proven. There is also a land tenure dimension that is too often omitted from irrigation policy discussions. A farmer who does not have secure tenure over the land she cultivates will not invest in permanent water infrastructure on that land. The periodic reallocation of agricultural fields under customary tenure arrangements, however well-intentioned as a mechanism of equity, systematically discourages the long-term investment in soil and water management that productive farming requires. Any serious irrigation expansion programme must be accompanied by reforms that give smallholder farmers, and in particular women farmers who constitute the major-

ity of Lesotho's agricultural workforce, the security of tenure that makes capital investment rational. The government's Medium-Term Development Framework identifies agriculture as a priority sector. The annual budget allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security does not reflect that priority. In a country that imports a significant proportion of its cereal requirements from South Africa, the argument for redirecting public investment toward smallholder water infrastructure is not ideological. It is fiscal. Every maluti spent reducing food import dependence through improved domestic production is a maluti that stays in the domestic economy, supports rural livelihoods, and reduces the country's exposure to South African price movements and supply chain disruptions that it cannot control.

This newspaper calls on the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Water to establish a joint smallholder irrigation unit with a dedicated capital budget, clear targets for irrigated hectares by district, and a community-led maintenance model that does not collapse when the project's donor cycle ends. The Lesotho Highlands Water Project Royalty Fund, which accumulates water export revenues, should be examined as a potential source of ring-fenced financing for this purpose. It is a fitting symmetry: water exported should generate returns that irrigate the land of the people whose highlands produce it.

The Kingdom in the Sky has water. What it needs now is the will to use it for the people who live beneath those clouds and farm the soil they water.



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# NUL demands recusal of all High Court judges in Mosito dispute

*NUL argues that professional ties between its Pro-Vice Chancellor and the High Court bench create an unacceptable risk of perceived bias, and is pressing for all judges to stand aside before the case can proceed.*

By THOLOANA LESENYA



The legal battle between the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and its Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Kananelo Mosito, has taken a new twist, with the university insisting that all High Court judges should recuse themselves from the case. This comes despite a recent ruling by Justice Molefi Makara confirming that the High Court does have jurisdiction to hear the matter. The court's decision had initially appeared to clear the way for the substantive issues to be argued.

However, NUL has maintained that the

question of judicial impartiality remains unresolved and must be addressed before the case can proceed. At the centre of the dispute is the university's concern that the relationship between Professor Mosito and High Court judges could compromise the independence of the court, or at least create that impression in the eyes of the public.

Representing NUL, Advocate Mamello Makau argued that safeguarding public confidence in the judiciary is paramount. She submitted that the longstanding professional ties between Professor Mosito,

in his capacity as President of the Court of Appeal, and judges of the High Court raise legitimate concerns about impartiality. Makau told the court that even the appearance of bias is enough to justify recusal, stressing that justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done. According to her, the overlap in judicial roles and the nature of professional interactions over the years could lead a reasonable observer to question whether High Court judges can decide the matter without influence.

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& There is a real likelihood that any judge assigned to this case may be perceived as biased, given the institutional and personal connections involved. & NUL's concerns are also detailed in an affidavit filed by the Chairperson of the University Council, Dr. Khabele Matlosa. In his statement, Matlosa expressed what he described as a & reasonable apprehension & that no High Court judge would be able to act

with complete impartiality in a matter involving Professor Mosito. He argued that, as President of the Court of Appeal, Professor Mosito occupies a position of authority within the judiciary that could indirectly affect how judges approach the case. According to Matlosa, judges may feel reluctant to rule against someone they regard as a senior colleague or functional superior. & Naturally, none of them would want to be in the President's bad books, & he stated, suggesting that this dynamic could influence decision-making, even if unintentionally. Matlosa went further, raising concerns about Professor Mosito's personal conduct. He alleged that the Pro-Vice Chancellor has a tendency to intimidate colleagues and disregard authority, claiming that such behaviour could extend to attempts to influence the court. Based on these assertions, NUL argues that allowing High Court judges to preside over the matter would undermine confidence in the outcome, regardless of the actual merits of the case.

On the other side, Professor Mosito's legal team has strongly rejected these claims. Advocate Dominic Metlae, representing Mosito, argued that the

university's fears are unfounded and speculative. Metlae told the court that Professor Mosito does not exercise control over High Court judges and has no authority to direct or influence their decisions. He emphasised that the High Court and the Court of Appeal are separate institutions, each operating within its own framework. & The President of the Court of Appeal does not command the jurisprudence of the High Court, & Metlae said, dismissing the suggestion that Mosito holds sway over judges hearing the case.

He also addressed the argument that High Court judges serve as ex officio members of the Court of Appeal, clarifying that this does not place them under the authority of its President. Instead, he pointed out, judges are appointed by the Chief Justice and are bound by their oath to act independently. According to the defence, accepting NUL's argument would set a troubling precedent, effectively disqualifying judges from hearing cases involving colleagues within the judicial system. Metlae maintained that professional familiarity does not equate to bias and should not be used as grounds for recusal without concrete evidence. The issue of recusal arose after NUL filed an interlocutory application seeking to have all High Court judges step aside from the matter.

This followed Professor Mosito's decision to challenge the university's governing council over its attempt to recruit a new Vice-Chancellor. In his court papers, Mosito argues that the recruitment process is unlawful, claiming it was initiated before a vacancy had arisen. He contends that this violates Section 16 of the National Uni-

versity of Lesotho Order of 1992, which governs the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor. Initially, there was a procedural dispute over whether the court should first determine the question of jurisdiction or address the recusal application. The court ruled that the issues are closely linked but decided that jurisdiction should be settled first.

With that question now resolved in favour of hearing the case, attention has shifted fully to the recusal application, a matter that could significantly affect how the case proceeds. If the court agrees with NUL, it could mean that the matter is referred to a different panel or even judges from outside the High Court. Such a move would be unusual and could delay the resolution of the dispute. If, however, the court dismisses the application, the case will proceed before the High Court as currently constituted, allowing the substantive issues regarding the Vice-Chancellor recruitment process to be heard. The outcome of the recusal argument is likely to have broader implications beyond this particular case. It raises fundamental questions about judicial independence, the perception of fairness, and how courts should handle cases involving members of the judiciary. As the legal battle continues, both sides remain firmly entrenched in their positions. For NUL, the focus is on ensuring that the process is beyond reproach. For Professor Mosito, the priority is to move forward with a case he believes challenges an unlawful decision. The court's ruling on recusal will determine the next step in a dispute that has already drawn significant attention within legal and academic circles, and which could shape how similar cases are handled in the future



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# Science & Technology

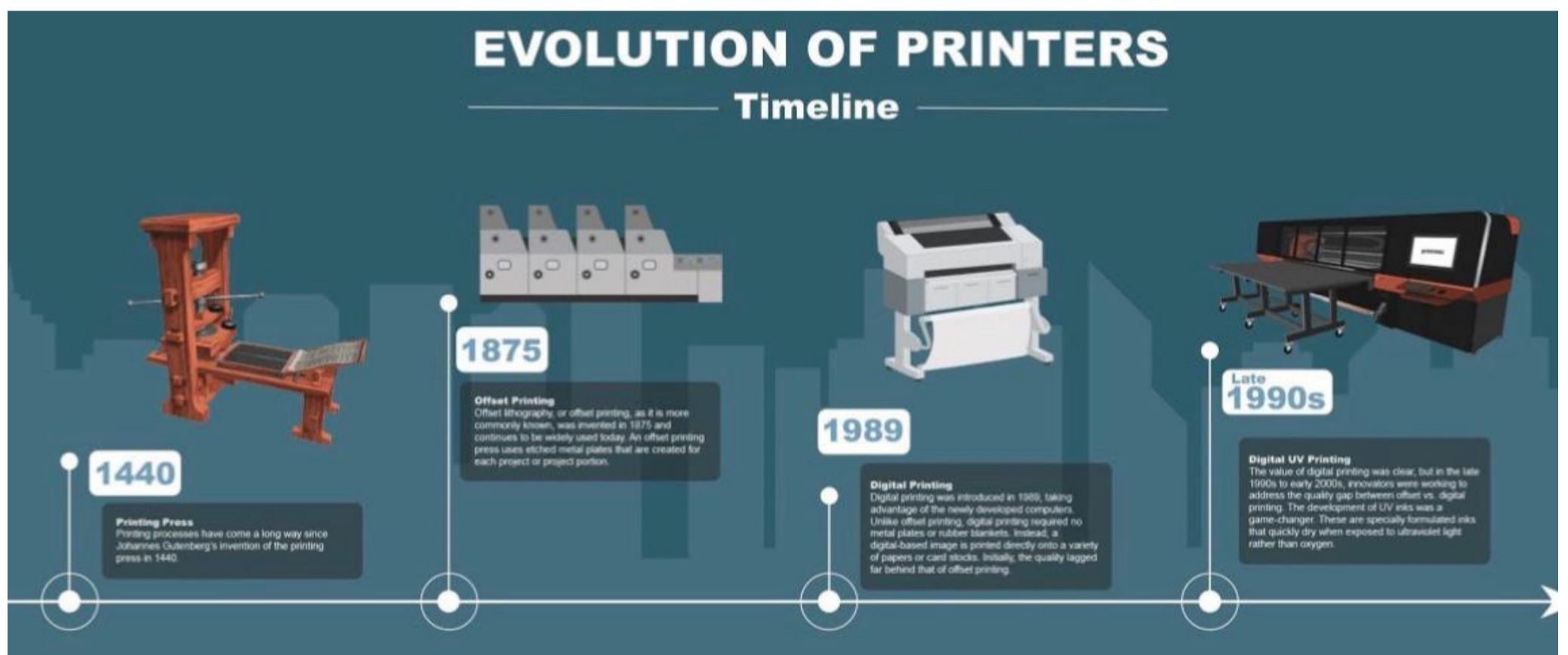


Technology, Connectivity and the digital transformation of economics like Lesotho

## Every new technology produces the same critic

*From the printing press to artificial intelligence, each era's transformative invention has been met with identical warnings, identical fears, and identical demands for restraint. History suggests the critics are always partly right, and always always wrong.*

BY STAFF REPORTER



When OpenAI released ChatGPT in late 2022, the warnings arrived within days. Academics feared plagiarism. Journalists feared displacement. Ethicists warned of hallucination, bias, and the erosion of truth. Governments convened emergency panels. Geoffrey Hinton, one of the architects of modern neural networks, resigned from Google and declared that he regretted his life's work. The critic of artificial intelligence had arrived, fully formed.

The words being spoken sounded almost exactly like words spoken before, about every transformative technology in recorded history. The shape of technological criticism does not change. What changes is only the name of the machine.

The printing press and its enemies In 1440, Johannes Gutenberg introduced movable type to Europe. Within two generations, the press had produced millions of books. It had also produced, in

the view of many scholars and clerics, a catastrophe. Pope Alexander VI issued a papal bull in 1501 calling for censorship of printed material. The humanist Hieronymus Squarciafico warned that the abundance of books would make men lazy of mind.

The complaint was not that books

### THE FIVE RECURRING CRITICISMS

1. It destroys jobs. Said of the mechanical loom (1811), the telephone exchange (1890s), the automobile assembly line (1920s), the personal computer (1980s), and now large language models.
2. It makes people stupid. Said of the printing press (1501), the novel (1790s), the telegraph (1850s), television (1950s), the internet (1990s), and smartphones (2010s).
3. It spreads lies. Said of the pamphlet press (1640s), the penny newspaper (1830s), radio (1930s), and now social media and AI-generated content.
4. It will be used by criminals. Said of

every technology from the telephone to encryption to the dark web.

5. It moves too fast to regulate. Said, in almost identical language, in every decade since industrialisation.

The pattern repeats with remarkable fidelity across the history of electricity, the radio, the automobile, aviation, nuclear power, the internet, and now artificial intelligence. Each technology arrives. Critics identify, usually accurately, the genuine harms it will cause. Society debates, legislates, adapts, and eventually normalises. Television: the vast wasteland Television offers perhaps the clearest modern mirror for the AI debate. When broadcast television became a mass phenomenon in the late 1940s and 1950s, the critics were numerous and The African dimension For South Africa and Lesotho, the AI debate carries an additional dimension that European and American framings tend to obscure.

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# Business & Economy

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*Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy*

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December 2024 measure that had already extended zero tariffs across 100 per cent of tariff lines to 33 least developed African nations.



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# Science & Technology



*Technology, Connectivity and the digital transformation of economics like Lesotho*

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The question is not only whether the technology causes harm. It is whether the communities most affected by that harm will have any say in how it is governed, and whether the benefits will be distributed equitably or extracted northward as so many previous technological revolutions were.

The concern about AI displacing call centre workers in Johannesburg, transcription clerks in Maseru, or customer service agents in Cape Town is not abstract. But neither was the concern, once, about the displacement of hand-loom weavers in Lancashire.

### AI TODAY VS THE CRITICS OF THE PAST

AI today: & LLMs hallucinate facts and cannot be trusted for journalism.& The telegraph, 1858: & The speed of transmission means errors will multiply before they can be corrected. & AI today: & These systems encode historical bias and will perpetuate discrimination at scale.& Television, 1952: & The medium encodes the biases of its producers and cannot give fair representation to minorities. & AI today: & A handful of California companies should not control

were inaccurate. The complaint was that there were too many of them, that anyone could now publish, and that the gatekeepers of knowledge had lost control. This is, word for word, the complaint made about the internet in 1995,

about social media in 2008, and about generative AI in 2023. & The fear is always the same: that the new thing will do what humans do, but without the humanity. &

### TRIBUNE ANALYSIS

The telephone nobody wanted  
When Alexander Graham Bell demonstrated his device in 1876, the Western Union Telegraph Company declined to purchase his patent for \$100,000, issuing an internal memo concluding that the telephone had &quot;too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication.&quot; More substantively, critics warned that the telephone would destroy the art of letter-writing, undermine face-to-face community, enable criminals to coordinate at a distance, and allow employers to reach workers at all hours. All of these criticisms were correct. And none of them were sufficient reason not to have the telephone.

largely correct. The Federal Communications Commissioner Newton Minow famously described American television in 1961 as &quot;a vast wasteland.&quot; Researchers documented correlations between television viewing and reduced reading in children. Studies found that violent content influenced behaviour. These criticisms were substantially accurate. They were also insufficient

to prevent television from becoming the dominant medium of the twentieth century, from transmitting the civil rights movement and the moon landing, from creating shared cultural experience across fractured societies. The wasteland and the wonder coexisted, as they always do. &quot;The Luddites were not irrational. They were right about the harm. They were wrong about their ability to resist the change.&

### TRIBUNE ANALYSIS

infrastructure that affects every society on earth.& Radio, 1934: & A handful of broadcasters in New York should not control the airwaves that reach every home. & What the pattern cannot tell us The AI critic of 2025 is, in almost every particular, the same figure who stood at the threshold of every previous transformation. Geoffrey Hinton's regret is genuine and not to be dismissed. The harms he identifies are real. But the structure of his concern is also the structure of Robert Oppenheimer's concern about nuclear weapons, and Vannevar Bush's ambivalence about the systems he helped create after the Second World War.

The most honest position is the hardest to hold: that the critic is right about the risks, that the risks do not make the technology stoppable, and that the only productive question is how to govern it and distribute its benefits. The name of the machine changes. The argument does not.



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# Business & Economy

17 **IT**

*Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy*

## The policyholders nobody is talking about

*The boardroom battle at Naledi Funeral Planners has a cast of directors, lawyers, and shareholders. The people with the most to lose have none of those titles. They are the policyholders.*

By LESOTHO TRIBUNE REPORTER



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# Business & Economy

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*Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy*

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What is clear from the documents obtained by this newspaper is that the governance dispute produced a situation in which two sets of people simultaneously believed they had authority to approve the company's budget, engage suppliers, authorise expenditure, and direct management. For policyholders, the practical implications of that kind of financial paralysis are significant. If suppliers disengage because payment authorisation is disputed, service delivery suffers. If the budget for the year cannot be formally approved, operational planning is compromised. If management receives contradictory instructions from competing claimants to board authority, day-to-day decisions slow or stall.

The new board's communiqué signals an intention to end this paralysis. It commits to resuming governance functions from

26 April 2026, convening a meeting to elect an additional independent director to complete the quorum, and then engaging formally with management and the broader company structures. Whether the removed directors accept that framing, or whether they intensify their court challenge, will determine how quickly normal governance is restored. Their application, which has already been criticised in the communiqué for a lack of diligence in prosecution, remains before the court. If it reverts to the ordinary roll, resolution could be month away.

In the interim, the people paying premiums to Naledi Funeral Planners have no direct voice in the dispute. They are not parties to the litigation. They are not shareholders. They have no seat at the board table. Their only protection is the legal and regulatory framework that is supposed to ensure the company responding to operational crises.

"It is neither prudent nor responsible for an institution such as Naledi Funeral

Planners to continue operating in a governance vacuum without proper management oversight and direction." THABISO MADIBA — SHAREHOLDER COMMUNIQUÉ, 24 APRIL 2026 by publication time whether Naledi Funeral Planners holds a specific financial services licence or operates under a different regulatory category. "Any costs incurred pursuant to such a meeting will be regarded as irregular and unlawful expenditure. The company reserves its rights to recover such costs personally from those responsible." THABISO MADIBA — NOTICE TO FORMER DIRECTORS serving them remains solvent, accountable, and properly governed, regardless of who sits in the boardroom. That framework is now being tested in Hlotse. End of series. The Lesotho Tribune will continue to follow developments in the Naledi Funeral Planners governance dispute. Anyone with information relevant to this report may contact the newsroom at lesothotribune.co.ls

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