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Mahao trial: court rules on disputed witness after prosecution objects

Prosecutors objected after the defence called a witness the state regarded as its own, forcing the High Court to rule on the dispute mid-testimony.

By THOLOANA LESENYA



Proceedings in the high-profile murder trial arising from the death of former Lesotho Defence Force commander Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao took an unexpected turn this week when prosecutors challenged the defence's decision to call a witness they claimed belonged to the state's case. The dispute emerged before the High Court after retired Major Mamatela Hokinyana took the witness stand and was introduced as a defence witness, shortly after accused soldier Captain Haleeo Makara completed his testimony.

Hokinyana was called on behalf of Sergeant Lekhooa Moepi, one of the accused soldiers represented by Attorney Qhalehang Letsika. Before she could

proceed, prosecutors objected, arguing she had originally been identified as a state witness and could not be called by the defence without the prosecution's knowledge or consent. The objection forced the court to intervene. Leading the objection, prosecutor Advocate Lehlohonolo Phooko told the court the defence had acted improperly. He said the prosecution had not been informed Hokinyana would testify and had instead expected a different witness. "We were informed that Mr. Mokaloba would testify." Phooko argued that calling a state witness without first obtaining permission from the prosecution undermined proper court procedure and could attract legal consequences. Attorney Letsika rejected the argument. He submitted that the prosecution had

already closed its case and the defence was therefore free to call any witness it believed could assist. Preventing the accused from doing so, he said, would be unfair and inconsistent with defence rights.

Justice Charles Hungwe ultimately allowed Hokinyana to continue with her testimony. The court noted the objection had not been raised before the witness took the oath. Under those circumstances, the judge ruled, she should be permitted to proceed. The court added that the dispute was not entirely settled. Justice Hungwe stated it would be revisited at a later stage of the trial. Soldiers accounts Among those who have already testified is Captain Haleeo Makara, who admitted in court that he fired the shot that killed Mahao. He denied acting unlawfully, telling the court he opened fire to protect the leader of the arrest team, the late Captain Tefo Hashatsi, whom he believed was in immediate danger.

Captain Litekanyo Nyakane also testified, acknowledging he participated in the operation at Mokema on 25 June 2015. He told the court the mission was intended to arrest Mahao but ended in a shooting that claimed the former commander's life. The defence has used both accounts to support its argument that the operation was an arrest, not an assassination. The prosecution maintains the accused intentionally shot and killed Mahao during the operation at Ha Lekete in Mokema. The accused include retired army commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli and several former and serving members of the Lesotho Defence Force. In addition to murder, they face charges of attempted murder, theft, and unlawful damage to property. With Hokinyana now cleared to testify, the trial continues before Justice Hungwe.

CORRECTION

THE EDITOR

In our last edition, the Lesotho Tribune published a photograph of Reverend Dr. John Maphephe, Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, alongside a story with which he had no connection. The error was ours alone.

We apologise unreservedly to Reverend Dr. Maphephe for the embarrassment this may have caused him, and to our readers for the confusion. Steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence.

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Mahao was alive and asking for help at hospital, witness tells court

A retired military officer told the High Court that Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao was still alive and conscious when he reached Makoanyane Military Hospital, repeatedly asking for help as medical staff fought to save him.

By THOLOANA LESENYA



Retired Major 'Mamatela Hokinyana has told the High Court that the late Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao was still alive when he arrived at Makoanyane Military Hospital after being shot on 25 June 2015. Giving evidence as a defence witness in the long-running murder trial involving retired army commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli and several co-accused, Major Hokinyana

described a wounded man who was conscious, struggling to breathe and repeatedly asking for help. Her testimony offered a detailed account of the efforts made by medical personnel to save Mahao's life after he was brought to the military hospital following the shooting at Ha Lekete in Mokema.

Major Hokinyana said she was at the hospital when she went in search of paramedics and noticed a white vehi-

cle parked in the ambulance area. As she approached, the vehicle's window opened, allowing her to see Mahao inside. She immediately asked what was happening and noticed he appeared to be in distress. "He was breathing with difficulty." She testified that moments later Mahao forcefully opened the vehicle door and stepped out. Despite his condition, he appeared determined to stand on his own. He leaned against the vehicle and she moved to support him. Concerned, she asked what was wrong.

His response was simple but urgent. "He asked for help," she testified. The witness described how one of Mahao's arms appeared to be injured and was showing signs of involuntary movement. She attempted to support him around the waist as he struggled to maintain his balance. Mahao resisted assistance and briefly pulled away. "He eventually went free, but I managed to hold him again," she told the court. As his condition worsened, he again pleaded for assistance. Major Hokinyana said she reassured him that help had arrived and that medical personnel were attending to him. Soon afterwards, the Director Medical Services and Private Sechele arrived with a trolley. Working together, they placed Mahao on the trolley and rushed him into the emergency treatment room.

Continues in Page 6

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Continued from Page 4

Inside the emergency unit Doctors and paramedics immediately began efforts to save his life. Major Hokinyana told the court the medical team worked urgently to stabilise the wounded soldier, but the seriousness of his injuries quickly became apparent. One difficulty, she said, was locating a vein through which treatment could be administered.

“The efforts by paramedics to locate a vein failed,” she testified. Despite the challenges, the team continued working on him. Major Hokinyana joined other personnel in trying to identify the extent of Mahao’s injuries. She explained that they carefully cut away a jersey he was wearing to expose the wounds, a process carried out cautiously to avoid causing further injury. Once the injuries were visible,

the team attempted to stop the bleeding. The wounds on his chest and arm were dressed while efforts to revive him continued. The doctors worked tirelessly but were ultimately unable to save him. At approximately 15:54, the medical team ceased resuscitation efforts. Major Hokinyana said the doctors and the Director Medical Services who had been attending

to Mahao officially pronounced him dead. She recalled looking at Mahao and noticing that his eyes remained open but were no longer blinking. “I then closed them,” she told the court.

Even after his death was confirmed, medical personnel continued examining his injuries. Major Hokinyana testified that they turned the body and discovered an open exit wound in the centre of his back, along the spine. She said blood was still flowing from the wound. Medical staff then applied gauze and adhesive bandages in an effort to contain the bleeding and prepare the body. The witness also addressed what happened to some of the blood-soaked materials used during treatment, a matter that has featured prominently during proceedings. She told the court that linen heavily stained with blood was removed from the treatment area. Some items were placed in plastic bags while others were soaked in water to wash away the blood. The deceased’s clothing was also cleaned. Major Hokinyana insisted these actions were not intended to interfere with future investigations. The primary concern, she explained, was maintaining hygiene within the hospital environment. She firmly denied that the washing of the

items was done to conceal evidence or frustrate police inquiries.

“The aim was not to defeat police investigations but to ensure hygiene.” Retired Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli and several other accused are facing charges arising from the death of Mahao, who was shot at Ha Lekete in Mokema on 25 June 2015. The accused are alleged to have intentionally shot and killed the former army commander. In addition to murder, they face counts of attempted murder, theft and unlawful damage to property. The prosecution maintains that Mahao’s death resulted from a deliberate operation, while the defence has sought to challenge aspects of the state’s case through witness testimony and evidence presented before the court. For more than a decade, the circumstances surrounding the death have remained a subject of national debate, drawing significant public interest and international attention.

Major Hokinyana’s evidence presented a picture of a man who was still alive on arrival at the hospital, conscious enough to communicate and repeatedly ask for assistance as medical personnel fought unsuccessfully to save him. The trial continues before Justice Charles Hungwe.



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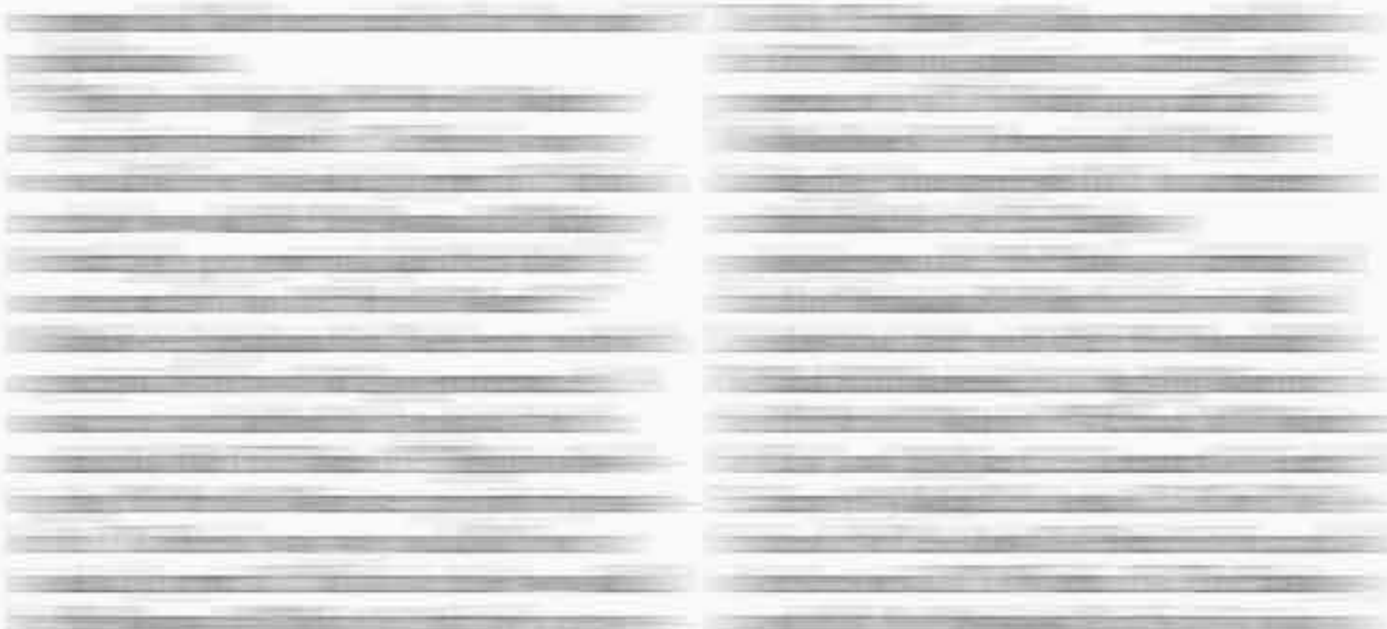
Lesotho couldn't fly its own PM. Botswana did it instead


Lesotho Prime Minister Samuel Matekane travelled to Botswana and back aboard Botswana's presidential jet OK1 after the aircraft intended for his trip failed to obtain a permit from the Department of Civil Aviation — an account now disputed by a source who says permits for a Prime Minister's aircraft are never delayed.

By Staff Reporter




Botswana President Duma Boko publicly stated that his government placed Botswana's presidential jet, OK1, at the disposal of Le-





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Soldier describes four-team structure of Mokema operation that killed Mahao

A soldier standing trial for the 2015 killing of former LDF commander Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao has told the High Court that the Mokema operation was a planned arrest mission — with rehearsals, a structured team, and a rules-of-engagement briefing before deployment.

By THOLOANA LESENYA



Sergeant Lekhooa Moepi, one of nine army members standing trial alongside retired commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli for the murder of Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao, took the witness stand this week and described in detail how military teams were assembled and deployed to Mokema on 25 June 2015.

Moepi told the High Court that he was among soldiers selected by the late Captain Tefo Hashatsi to participate in the operation. Four separate teams were formed, each assigned specific roles. The first team consisted of Captain Hashatsi, Captain Litekanyo Nyakane and Private Ramoholi. The second was made up of Sergeant Makara, Lance Corporal Seithleko and Private Machai. Moepi said he was assigned to the third team alongside Corporal Fako. The fourth team consisted of Corporal Moleli and Private Halahala.

Hashatsi briefed all participating soldiers before they departed for Mokema, telling them that intelligence indicated Mahao would be travelling through the area that day in his half-truck. Moepi said preparations were not rushed — team members underwent rehearsals beforehand, and Hashatsi reminded them of the Rules of Engagement governing the use of force.

Captain Makara admitted he fired the shot that killed Mahao, but maintained his actions were justified — saying he discharged his firearm to protect Captain Hashatsi from immediate danger. Moepi's testimony is part of the defence's broader effort to characterise the Mokema operation as a lawful arrest mission rather than a deliberate killing. Earlier in his evidence, he told the court that he had participated in several arrests of soldiers suspected of involvement in an alleged mutiny within the LDF in May 2015, including Lance Corporal Motene, Lance Corporal

Makhabane, Brigadier Motoa, Colonel Kolisang and Colonel Nkeli.

Moepi told the court that those earlier arrests took place when the LDF was under the command of then Major General Motšomotšo, with Major General Poopa serving as deputy. He noted that Kamoli was on leave of absence when those arrests were carried out. His testimony followed that of retired Major Mamatela Hokinyana, formerly of Makoanyane Military Hospital, who gave evidence about the final moments of Mahao's life after he was brought to the hospital following the shooting.

Several other accused have already testified. Captain Haleeo Makara admitted he fired the shot that killed Mahao, maintaining his actions were justified — he said he discharged his firearm to protect Captain Hashatsi from what he believed was immediate danger. Captain Litekanyo Nyakane testified about vehicle movements before and during the incident. Corporal Molise Molieleng gave evidence about information supplied by an informant regarding the alleged mutiny plot, placing the operation in the context of heightened security concerns within the LDF.

Mahao was shot at Ha Lekete in Mokema on 25 June 2015. His death drew widespread controversy and international attention. The prosecution alleges the accused intentionally killed him. In addition to murder, the accused face charges of attempted murder, theft and unlawful damage to property. The trial continues before Justice Charles Hungwe. Further defence witnesses are expected in the coming days.

Business & Economy

10

IT

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

Lesotho signs M900 million World Bank deal covering electricity, skills and nutrition

PROJECT	MALOTI	USD
Accelerating Sustainable Energy Access Transformation	M820 million	US\$50 million
Skills training	M16.4 million	US\$1 million
Nutrition	M4.9 million	US\$300,000
Total	M900 million	US\$51.3 million

Lesotho has signed World Bank financing agreements totalling M900 million (approximately US\$51.3 million), with the bulk earmarked for rural electrification and the remainder split between skills training and nutrition.

By **LEMOHANG BOTSANE**



Minister of Finance and Development Planning Dr. Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane signed financing agreements worth M900 million (approximately US\$51.3 million) with World Bank Country Representative Dinara Djoldosheva, committing the funds across three projects covering energy access, skills development and nutrition. The largest share, M820 million (US\$50 million), goes to the Accelerating Sustainable Energy Access Transformation project, intended to

connect more homes and businesses to electricity. The project focuses on rural and highland communities that currently have limited or no supply.

M16.4 million (US\$1 million) is allocated to skills training, aimed at equipping Basotho, particularly young people, with skills that match available employment. A further M4.9 million (US\$300,000) will fund nutrition programmes targeting children and mothers.

The largest share, M820 million, goes to electrification, with rural and highland communities identified as the primary beneficiaries. Speaking after the signing, Dr. Matlanyane said the agreements reflect the governments intention to invest in electricity, skills and nutrition as drivers of economic growth. Djoldosheva said the World Bank will continue to support Lesotho's development plans and described the projects as steps toward a more inclusive economy.

World Vision Lesotho sets 650,000-child target in new five-year strategy

World Vision Lesotho has launched a five-year strategy targeting 650,000 vulnerable children, with child protection, health, water and family income as the four focus areas for the 2026 to 2030 period.

By **LEMOHANG BOTSANE**



World Vision Lesotho launched its 2026-2030 community strategy in Bela-Bela on Friday, setting a target of reaching approximately 650,000 vulnerable children over the next five years through programmes focused on child protection, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, and family livelihoods.

Director General James Chifwelu said the strategy puts communities at the centre of implementation, with an integrated approach designed so that programmes in different areas reinforce

each other rather than operate in isolation.

“Our goal is to work with communities in the most coordinated and impactful way possible,” Chifwelu said. He added that community members are not just recipients of services but partners in planning and decision-making. “It takes all of us — government ministries, development partners, schools, churches, communities, and families — working together.” — Thato Masupha, District Child Protection Team

the District Child Protection Team said her team’s role is to bring different groups together to prevent and respond to child protection concerns. She said protecting children is not a government responsibility alone.

“It takes all of us — government ministries, development partners, schools, churches, communities, and families — working together,” Masupha said.

The strategy was launched under the theme: “Transforming Lives, Empowering Communities with Agile, Low-Cost, High Impact Programs.”

Lesotho launches 26-organisation immunisation network to reach communities beyond clinic reach

A network of 26 civil society organisations has launched in Lesotho to strengthen vaccine uptake and reach communities that government health services cannot always access — including, for the first time, a structured programme bringing sign language interpreters to clinics for deaf parents.

By Lemohang Botsane



The Ministry of Health has welcomed the launch of the Immunisation Network of Civil Society Organisations Lesotho, known as INCL, saying civil society groups are an extension of the health system in areas where government clinics and hospitals cannot always reach.

Speaking at the launch, Acting Principal Secretary Dr. Llang Maama said civil society organisations function as an extra arm of the health system, reaching villages and communities through village health workers, chiefs, faith-based groups and mothers's clubs. "Through village health workers, chiefs, faith-based groups and mothers's clubs, CSOs bring health information to the people and encourage families to vaccinate their children," Dr. Maama said. Dr. Maama said the timing of the network matters because Lesotho is working to counter vaccine hesitancy. The ministry believes INCL will increase

vaccination rates and help address broader health problems in communities.

"Civil society is the conscience of society. We speak up, hold leaders accountable, and make sure no one is forgotten." — Puseletso Sethunya, INCL Chairperson Irene Mechele of the National Association of the Deaf Lesotho told the launch that deaf parents have long faced a specific barrier at clinics: no sign language interpreters. Many deaf caregivers could not ask questions or follow the advice nurses were giving them.

NADL has begun working with health centres, chiefs and village authorities to identify deaf parents and place interpreters at clinic visits. Mechele said the response from families has been direct: "Parents said they felt proud and confident because they could finally speak directly with health workers and understand the advice they

were given." Mechele said the programme has demonstrated that deaf people can work

as interpreters, reducing stigma and creating employment. She called on the government and partners to expand the sign language programme to rural areas where resources remain limited.

INCL Chairperson Puseletso Sethunya said the network was formed in September 2024 following training supported by GAVI at Thaba-Bosiu. Its 26 member organisations focus on advocacy and equitable access to vaccines across communities. "Civil society is the conscience of society. We speak up, hold leaders accountable, and make sure no one is forgotten," Sethunya said. INCL is supported by GAVI, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and CHAI. Working alongside the Ministry of Health, the network will support Lesotho's Expanded Programme on Immunisation.

Farmers Corner

13 **IT**

Small holder farming, land, climate risk, and Lesotho's climate risk

Botswana pledges 100,000 FMD vaccine doses to Lesotho after first outbreak confirmed

Botswana has pledged 100,000 doses of Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccine to Lesotho as the country works to contain its first recorded FMD outbreak, confirmed in Butha-Buthe District in February 2026.

BY Lemohang Botsane



Botswana President Duma Gideon Boko announced that Botswana will donate 100,000 doses of Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccine to Lesotho during the first meeting of the Lesotho-Botswana Bi-National Commission, held in Gaborone. The announcement was made public by the Office of the Government Spokesperson.

Lesotho confirmed its first FMD out-

break in Butha-Buthe District in February 2026. Veterinary and government teams have been working to prevent the disease from spreading to other parts of the country since. Botswana's President Boko announced the 100,000-dose donation at the first sitting of the Lesotho-Botswana Bi-National Commission in Gaborone.

The Government of Lesotho says the vaccine donation will help protect live-

stock and support farmers whose livelihoods depend on animals. Officials are urging livestock owners to cooperate with vaccination teams, follow advice from veterinary officers, and report signs of illness early.

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease affecting cloven-hoofed livestock including cattle, sheep and goats. Lesotho's outbreak is the first the country has recorded.

Lesotho and Botswana launch bi-national commission in Gaborone

Lesotho and Botswana have launched a Bi-National Commission and signed a trade and investment agreement, following a two-day official visit by Prime Minister Samuel Matekane to Gaborone this week.

BY STAFF REPORTER



Prime Minister Samuel Ntsoakoane Matekane concluded an official visit to Botswana on 18 June 2026, presiding alongside President Duma Gideon Boko over the inaugural session of the Botswana-Lesotho Bi-National Commission (BNC) in Gaborone. The BNC was established under an agreement signed in Maseru in July 2025,

replacing a joint commission on economic and technical cooperation that had been in place since 2003. The inaugural session was preceded by a senior officials meeting from 15 to 16

June, a ministerial meeting on 17 June, and a business forum held the same day. During the session, the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC) and the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) signed a memorandum of understanding on trade and investment. The two governments also reported progress on negotiations covering 38 further memoranda of understanding across multiple sectors.

“The BNC serves as an effective platform for deepening cooperation in trade and investment, energy, water, agriculture, education, tourism, law en-

forcement, defence and security, among others.”

A joint communique issued at the conclusion of the visit said both leaders reaffirmed their support for the Lesotho-Botswana Water Transfer Project and agreed in principle to rename it the Lesotho-South Africa-Botswana (LESABO) Water Transfer Project, subject to consultation with the Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM). The renaming reflects the tripartite character of the project. On agriculture, the communique noted that Botswana contributed 100,000 doses of Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccine to Lesotho in support of efforts to contain the disease regionally. Both governments said they would deepen cooperation on animal health and veterinary services.

Matekane also toured the Diamond Trading Company Botswana during the visit. The communique cited interest in collaboration on mining governance, value addition and mineral beneficiation. President Boko acknowledged progress on Lesotho’s constitutional reform process and praised Matekane’s leadership on democratic governance and political stability. Both governments said they would align positions at the Southern African Development Community, Southern African Customs Union, African Union, and African Continental Free Trade Area forums. The second session of the BNC will be held in Lesotho in 2027, on a date to be set through diplomatic channels. President Boko accepted an invitation from Matekane to lead the Botswana delegation at that session.

Editorial

The Tribune's position, and voices that challenge, provoke and inform



Bread will follow democracy, not replace it

When a Speaker of the National Assembly suggests that democracy is somehow in competition with bread, it is time for the editorial page to respond. Democracy does not fail people. The failure to build democratic institutions that work is what leaves people hungry.

By Editorial



There is a phrase making rounds in parliamentary circles on this continent, and it arrived in Maseru last week from the lips of the Speaker of Lesotho's National Assembly, the Right Honourable Tlohang Sekhamane. Speaking at the CSPOC2026 gathering, Speaker Sekhamane declared that people eat bread, not democracy, and urged Parliament to concern itself with democracy's ability to deliver food, services and economic growth. The sentiment sounds reasonable. It is, in fact, a false choice dressed in the language of pragmatism, and it deserves a firm, considered response.

The argument misreads history. The claim that democracy and material wellbeing are separable, or worse, that one must be de-prioritised in favour of the other, is not a new idea. It has been advanced, with varying degrees of sincerity, by every government that has wished to defer accountability. It was the logic of one-party developmentalist states across post-independence Africa. It was the justification offered for military governments that promised order and delivery in exchange for rights.

The record is not ambiguous: those arrangements did not, as a class, feed people better. They enriched smaller groups of people, more efficiently, with less scrutiny. Lesotho itself carries this memory. The institutions built painstakingly since 1993 exist precisely because the alternative was tried and found wanting. "Parliament is the supplier of democracy," the Speaker said. We agree. Which is precisely why Parliament must never suggest that the product it supplies is a luxury item citizens cannot yet afford. Democracy is the mechanism, not the obstacle. There is a genuine and legitimate concern buried inside the Speaker's remarks, and we do not dismiss it entirely. Parliaments that debate endlessly while water systems fail, while clinics run without medicines, while young people emigrate in search of futures their own country cannot offer, are parliaments that have lost their purpose. That critique lands. But the solution to a Parliament that does not deliver is not less democracy. It is better democracy. It is a Parliament that uses its oversight powers more aggressively, that holds the executive to account on public finance, that scrutinises infrastructure contracts, that calls ministers to answer when promised water projects stall and budgeted clinics are never built. The problem Speaker Sekhamane describes is a problem of democratic under-performance, not democratic excess.

The research literature on this point is not contested among serious scholars. Democracies, on average, outperform autocracies on long-run human development metrics. They manage famines less catastrophically. They are more likely to respond to citizen pressure on service delivery. They create the legal and institutional environment in which investment, including the kind Lesotho urgently needs, can take root with

confidence. None of this means democracy is sufficient. It means it is necessary.

The danger of the framing Words from the Speaker's chair carry institutional weight. When the presiding officer of the National Assembly, the custodian of the chamber that is constitutionally the foundation of the democratic order, publicly frames democracy as something that must earn its keep by delivering bread, the implication travels further than the conference hall. It travels to the executive, where it can be read as a signal that Parliament itself is prepared to be more flexible about rights and process if results are promised in return. It travels to citizens, who may begin to believe that their representatives regard their political rights as negotiable.

It travels to the international community, at a moment when Lesotho's governance record is under closer scrutiny than it has been in years. This newspaper does not suggest that Speaker Sekhamane intends any of those readings. We take his concern for citizen welfare at face value. The point is that the framing, however well-intentioned, opens doors that are very difficult to close once they have been opened. What Parliament should do. If the Speaker is frustrated, as we suspect he is, with a democratic system that produces elections but not electricity, debates but not development, then the answer lies within the institution he leads.

Strengthen the Public Accounts Committee. Enforce attendance and participation requirements. Demand that the executive tables implementation reports on every budget line. Create a parliamentary budget office with independent analytical capacity. Bring constituency service obligations into law. Make Parliament legible to the people it represents. These are democratic instruments. They are also, precisely, the tools by which bread gets delivered. The Lesotho Tribune has, since its founding, regarded a free parliament and a free press as the twin conditions under which everything else this country needs becomes achievable. We will not waver on that position. We say to Speaker Sekhamane, respectfully and directly: defend democracy, reform its institutions, and the bread will follow. Abandon it in pursuit of the bread, and you will find, as others have found before, that you end up with neither.

Arts & Sports

The stories Lesotho about itself - on the field, on the stage, and on the page

16

Third Place, but Plenty of Promise in Lesotho Cricket

BY LITS'ITSO LETSUNYANE



Lesotho's Senior Men's National Cricket Team concluded its campaign at the ECA Ubuntu Tri-Nations Series in Eswatini on a somewhat positive note, producing an impressive performance to defeat the host nation by 18 runs in their final match of the tournament.

The victory served as a fitting reward for the team's resilience and fighting spirit throughout the competition, showing the steady progress being made by cricket in Lesotho.

Batting first, Lesotho put together a commanding total of 221/6 in their

allotted 20 overs. The innings was anchored by a great knock from Maaz Khan, who top-scored with an outstanding 82 runs to put Lesotho in a strong position. Faced with a daunting target, Eswatini mounted a spirited chase and finished on 203/5 after 20 overs, but ultimately fell short as Lesotho held their nerve to secure a deserved victory.

The match result ended with Lesotho 221/6 (20 overs) and Eswatini 203/5 (20 overs). Which means Lesotho won by 18 runs.

A key figure in the win was Lebona

Leokaoko, whose exceptional all-round display earned him the Player of the Match award. His contributions with both bat and ball proved decisive in helping Lesotho finish the tournament on a winning note.

Despite the final-day success, Lesotho had to settle for third place overall in the ECA Ubuntu Tri-Nations Series. Hosts Eswatini emerged as tournament champions, receiving the trophy and gold medals, while Mozambique claimed second position and the silver medals.

The Lesotho Cricket Association (LCA) congratulated the players and officials for their dedication, professionalism and unwavering commitment throughout the tournament. "The Lesotho Cricket Association congratulates all players and officials for their dedication, fighting spirit, and professionalism throughout the tournament," the association said following the conclusion of the series.

While cricket has traditionally occupied a smaller space in the country's sporting landscape compared to football and athletics, the sport is increasingly gaining momentum across the country. The establishment of structured domestic programmes, greater youth participation, and regular involvement in regional competitions have contributed immensely to its growing popularity.

Results such as the victory over Eswatini offer further encouragement that Lesotho is moving in the right direction. Performances from players such as Maaz Khan and Lebona Leokaoko not only inspire the next generation of cricketers but also showcase the talent that exists within the country. Finishing third may not have brought home the trophy, but ending the tournament