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Mofomobe: Use Lesotho Highlands water as leverage now

BNP leader Machesetsa Mofomobe has called on Lesotho to use its control of Highlands water to demand better treatment from South Africa, warning that failure to act will leave the country a permanent underclass.

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Mofomobe: Use Lesotho Highlands water as leverage now

BNP leader Machesetsa Mofomobe has called on Lesotho to use its control of Highlands water to demand better treatment from South Africa, warning that failure to act will leave the country a permanent underclass.

By Seipati Matobo



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PAC attributes M6.1 billion shortfall to negligence not theft

The Public Accounts Committee has told Ministry of Finance officials that the M6.1 billion flagged as untraceable in government accounts is more likely the result of negligence and poor record-keeping than outright theft.

By Tholoana Lesenya



PAC Chairperson 'Machabana Lemphane Letsie questioned how such a large sum of public money could remain unaccounted for during hearings this week. The committee met senior Ministry of Finance officials to examine Auditor General reports for the years ending March 2023 and March 2024.

Lemphane Letsie said the Ministry appears to be operating without clear plans or effective internal controls.

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The PAC said public suspicion that the money was stolen is understandable but the evidence points more to negligence, poor record-keeping and failures to reconcile accounts.

Delayed payments to service providers are placing local businesses under severe financial pressure, with some struggling to pay staff and settle debts. Contractors whose vehicles were hired by government are still waiting for payment months after completing

work.

The committee wants the Principal Secretary to explain why payments are delayed despite annual budget allocations being in place. The Auditor General has repeatedly flagged unsupported expenditure, missing documentation and unreconciled accounts across ministries. The PAC said it expects detailed explanations on systems for processing payments and monitoring outstanding invoices.

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Ex-education officer charged with taking bribes to fix teacher jobs

A former assistant human resources officer in Leribe has been charged with bribery and fraud after allegedly demanding payments from teacher applicants and tampering with recruitment records.

By Tholoana Lesenya



Tsireletso Lekoetje, 30, of Ha Raliee, appeared in court facing multiple counts of bribery, corruption, fraud and extortion. Prosecutors from the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences allege that while working under the Youth Apprenticeship Programme at the Leribe District Education Office, he abused access to confidential recruitment documents.

The alleged offences took place during the 2024 teacher recruitment exercise in Leribe. Investigators say Lekoetje

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approached candidates who had performed well in interviews and demanded money in exchange for keeping or improving their positions on the recruitment list.

One candidate who was ranked third allegedly paid M6,000. Lekoetje is accused of altering Schedule 17 records to move the candidate to first place. The falsified documents were then submitted to the Teaching Service Commission, which appointed the

candidate to Thokoa Primary School.

The DCEO alleges Lekoetje received a total of M9,500 from several candidates in exchange for manipulating outcomes. Lekoetje was granted bail of M2,000 cash deposit plus M20,000 surety but failed to meet the conditions and remains in custody.

The case has revived older allegations of officials demanding up to M30,000 for teaching posts in previous years.

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RVCL+ programme opens export markets for Basotho firms, minister says

Trade Minister Motlatsi Maqelepo says the EU-backed RVCL+ programme has helped 102 Basotho firms reach international trade fairs and created new jobs, while finance, certification and capacity still hold businesses back.

By LEMOHANG BOTSANE



THE government has reaffirmed its promise to help Basotho-owned businesses grow, compete and create jobs, with the Minister of Trade, Industry and Business Development, Motlatsi Maqelepo, saying programmes such as RVCL+ are already showing results.

In a press statement on Thursday, Maqelepo said the Regional Value Chains Lesotho Plus (RVCL+) programme shows the government is building an economy that is strong, inclusive and able to compete in the region and beyond. RVCL+ is supported by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and is implemented with GIZ. It focuses on developing competitive value chains in agro-processing and light manufacturing.

Maqelepo said the programme is helping local companies improve product quality, find new markets and create jobs. He said working with development partners helps the government deal with problems that slow business growth.

What the programme has delivered According to the minister, the programme has already made progress across several fronts.

RESULT	FIGURE
Firms taken to trade fairs	102, across 8 fairs
New export markets	Europe, Japan, SA
Public officials trained	114
Permanent jobs created	122 (+200 Duck & Geese)
MSMEs given support	More than 100
Business Hubs (BEDCO)	5
Apparel Business Hub	180+ machines, 9 lines, up to 300 jobs

The 102 firms were supported to take part in eight international trade fairs, and their products now reach customers in Europe, Japan and South Africa. The 114 officials were trained in trade policy, market research and value chain development. The five hubs, managed by the Basotho Enter-

prise Development Corporation (BEDCO), give firms shared equipment and space in essential oils, seed oils, herbs and spices, natural cosmetics and apparel. The Apparel Business Hub is now fully running, with more than 180 machines and nine production lines, and could create about 300 jobs. The barriers that remain Maqelepo acknowledged that many local businesses still face problems.

He named meeting the certification requirements needed to export, limited access to finance to grow and buy equipment, production capacity gaps that leave firms unable to meet large orders, and difficulties with export logistics such as transport and packaging. To address these, the Ministry is working with the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) and BEDCO to find solutions. Where the Ministry will focus The minister said the Ministry will concentrate on five priorities: certification support to help businesses meet local and international standards, enterprise development through training and technical help for small businesses, market access to open more doors for Basotho products abroad, capacity building for both business owners and government officials, and digital transformation to help businesses use technology to raise productivity.

“We want businesses that are productive, innovative and sustainable so that more Basotho can get jobs and improve their livelihoods.”

MOTLATSI MAQELEPO, MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT “Government remains committed to creating an environment where Basotho enterprises can thrive, grow and compete,” Maqelepo said. He urged the private sector and development partners to keep working with the government to remove barriers and grow Lesotho’s presence in regional and international trade.

News

Official Statements, government communications, and institutional announcements



El Niño raises drought risk but does not guarantee it, minister says

The environment minister told a Maseru briefing that El Niño raises the risk of a dry season but does not guarantee drought, and urged Basotho to plan ahead rather than panic.

By LEMOHANG BOTSANE



BASOTHO have been urged not to panic over reports of El Niño, with the government saying the weather pattern does not automatically mean Lesotho will face drought in the coming rainy season. The Minister of Environment and Forestry, Thabo Mofosi, made the remarks on Wednesday during a media briefing in Maseru. He said that while El Niño can increase the chances of less rain, it is not the only thing that decides Lesotho's weather.

Mofosi said El Niño is a climate pattern that sometimes leads to below-normal rainfall in southern Africa, but that it does not work alone. "An El Niño event should not be interpreted as a confirmation that drought will occur," the minister said. "Weather in Lesotho is also affected by ocean temperatures in the Indian and Atlantic oceans, global wind patterns, and how strong or early an El Niño event is."

He said current seasonal forecasts show only a possibility of below-average rainfall for the 2026/27 rainy season, not a definite drought. El Niño and the drought record The minister acknowledged that some strong El Niño years brought serious drought to Lesotho. He named the 1991/92 and 2015/16 seasons, which caused major problems for farmers and water supplies. But he said history also shows that not every El Niño year leads to drought. In 1987/88, 2006/07 and 2018/19, some parts of the country received normal or even above-normal rainfall despite El Niño conditions. "This shows that El Niño increases risk, but it does not guarantee drought," Mofosi said. How the government is preparing Mofosi said the government is already putting measures in place. Through the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and the Lesotho Meteorological Services, officials will continue to monitor weather patterns and give the public regular up-

dates.

Other plans include strengthening disaster risk management so communities can respond faster, promoting climate-smart agriculture to help farmers cope with dry conditions, improving water harvesting and conservation projects in villages and towns, and working with partners in food security and disaster response to support vulnerable households.

Advice to farmers The minister encouraged farmers to start preparing now. He suggested planting drought-tolerant crops such as sorghum and beans, using conservation farming methods that keep moisture in the soil, and adopting efficient irrigation and greenhouse farming where possible.

He also warned people not to believe or share unverified weather information on social media. "Households, farmers, businesses and local authorities should rely on official updates from the Meteorological Services when making decisions," he said.

"Let us prepare, but let us not assume the worst."

THABO MOFOSI, MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY Lesotho is one of the countries most affected by climate change. Droughts and unpredictable rains often hurt crop production, reduce water in dams and rivers, and make life harder for families who depend on farming. Climate experts say early planning and adaptation matter more than ever as weather patterns become less predictable.

Mofosi said the government remains focused on protecting livelihoods and making sure communities are not caught off guard. "With the right information and the right actions, we can reduce the impact of any bad weather," he said.

Business & Economy

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

10 **IT**

PAC orders CBL Governor to act on M1.2 million duplicate payment officials

The Public Accounts Committee has ordered Central Bank of Lesotho Governor Dr Maluke Letete to take decisive action against officials linked to the irregular duplicate payment of M1.2 million.

By Tholoana Lesenya



PAC Chairperson 'Machabana Lemphane Letsie questioned why no disciplinary action has been taken despite the financial loss to the Central Bank. The committee said recovering the M1.2 million does not erase the need to establish responsibility for how the error occurred. Dr Letete confirmed the bank reimbursed the amount on November 12, 2024, using its own funds after the linked account had been closed.

Lemphane Letsie directed the Governor to return before PAC on July 24 with a detailed report on steps taken against employees involved. No disciplinary action has yet been taken against any employees nearly two years after the issue was identified.

PAC members argued that failing to act sends the wrong message and weakens efforts to improve financial gov-

ernance. The duplicate payment forms part of broader Auditor General findings on weak internal controls across public institutions. The committee wants assurance that similar weaknesses have been addressed to protect public resources.

PAC maintained that accountability must extend beyond financial restitution to include identifying those responsible.

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LAPAM relaunches with a promise to improve public services

The Lesotho Association for Public Administration and Management has relaunched after more than a decade of inactivity, promising research, training and pressure on policymakers to improve public services.

By LEMOHANG BOTSANE



THE Lesotho Association for Public Administration and Management (LAPAM) has relaunched after years of inactivity, with a promise to help government workers deliver better services to the public. The association was officially relaunched on Thursday in Maseru.

LAPAM says it will focus on good governance, accountability and professional management in the public sector. From 1996 to a decade of silence Speaking at the event, LAPAM Secretary General Phehello Majola said the association was first formed in 1996. Its goal was to support quality service delivery, good governance and professional excellence in government.

Majola said LAPAM became inactive in 2011 because of financial problems and a lack of resources. After more than ten years, the organisation was re-registered

on 9 July 2025. “Our aim is to help public servants gain the knowledge and skills they need to provide efficient and quality services,” Majola said. He added that LAPAM will also create a space where professionals can share ideas and work together to support national development. Concerns from the floor During a discussion session, Liranyane Thamae asked whether LAPAM’s work also includes ordinary government employees. He raised concerns about poor working conditions in some government offices, and said some junior staff are mistreated by supervisors, which lowers morale and affects the services given to the public.

Responding, LAPAM Deputy President Thotoane Sebotsa said the association plans to hold conferences and workshops where members can talk openly about workplace problems and find practical solutions together. She said LAPAM will

also do research to understand why public services are not working well in some areas.

“Together we can improve governance and make sure that Basotho receive the quality services they deserve.”

THOTOANE SEBOTSA, LAPAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT

“Once we have the facts, we will use them to make recommendations to policymakers when they are making new laws and regulations,” Sebotsa said. Sebotsa said one of the biggest problems in government is weak leadership and the appointment of unqualified managers. She said this often frustrates hardworking and qualified employees, and leads to poor performance.

What LAPAM plans to do The association set out four aims: to research the root causes of poor service delivery, to propose evidence-based solutions that government can use, to train and support public servants so they can do their jobs better, and to promote accountability at all levels of the public service.

In her closing remarks, Sebotsa urged members to work together to rebuild and strengthen public institutions for the benefit of future generations. “Let us identify the challenges facing our public service and come up with sustainable solutions,” she said. LAPAM says it will work with government, civil society and development partners to achieve its goals.

China marks 105 years of the Party, and a deepening tie with Lesotho

At a reception in Maseru, Ambassador Yang Xiaokun set out China's account of the Communist Party's record and its widening cooperation with Africa, from a new zero-tariff regime to closer ties with Lesotho.

By Staff Reporter



At a reception celebrating the 105th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China, Ambassador Yang Xiaokun introduced the Party's historic achievements and its widening cooperation with Africa, from a zero-tariff policy to closer ties with Lesotho.

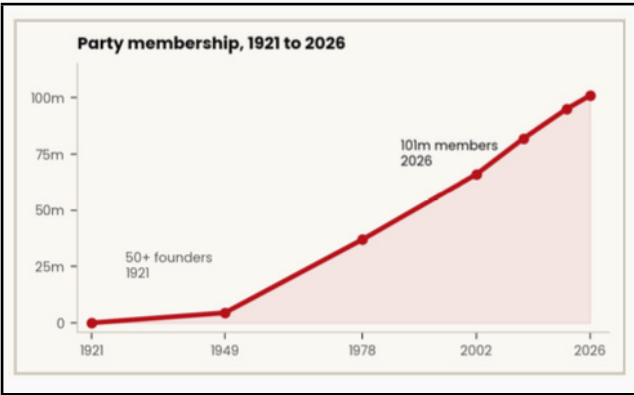
The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Maseru held the reception on 6 July 2026 to mark the 105th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. The gathering drew senior figures from across Lesotho's public life, and the ambassador used it to trace the Party's history and to set out where China and Lesotho now stand.

Ambassador Yang Xiaokun opened by paying respects to King Letsie III and to Prime Minister Sam Matekane, and to members of the Senate, the National Assembly, the judiciary, the cabinet

and the political parties, alongside the Chinese community and Chinese firms in the country.

He noted that a gathering in Beijing days earlier had marked the same anniversary, at which General Secretary Xi Jinping reviewed what the ambassador called the Party's extraordinary journey. Yang quoted Xi's description of the Party's 105 years as, in Xi's words, the most magnificent epic in the millennia-long history of the Chinese nation.

By the ambassador's account, the Party was founded in 1921 with just over fifty members and now has more than 101 million, organised through over 5.43 million primary-level bodies. He said China had become the world's second-largest economy and had, in his telling, completed in a few decades an industrialisation that took others far longer.



Source: figures cited in Ambassador Yang's address. Pre-2026 points illustrative.

Yang said that since the Party's 18th National Congress, China had followed what he called a people-centred path, and he pointed to the elimination of absolute poverty, which he said lifted nearly 100 million rural residents and met a 2030 sustainable-development target ten years early. He listed advances he attributed to that period:

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large public systems for education, social security and healthcare, and gains in science and technology.

On technology, the ambassador said China had led in the research and application of artificial intelligence, with large models feeding a global open-source ecosystem, and reported new work on domestic chips, the Tianwen-2 interplanetary probe, new-energy vehicle output above 16 million units, and more than 20 million charging points.

101m	\$348bn	53
PARTY MEMBERS, 2026	CHINA-AFRICA TRADE, 2025	AFRICAN NATIONS, ZERO TARIFF

Figures as stated by the ambassador and, for trade, China’s customs administration. Yang quoted Xi again, describing the Party as one that seeks happiness for the people and progress for humanity, and argued that there is no single model for modernisation. Every country, he said, has the right to a path suited to its own conditions, and modernisation need not mean westernisation.

“From a small political party of just over fifty members, the Communist Party of China has grown into the largest governing party in the world.”



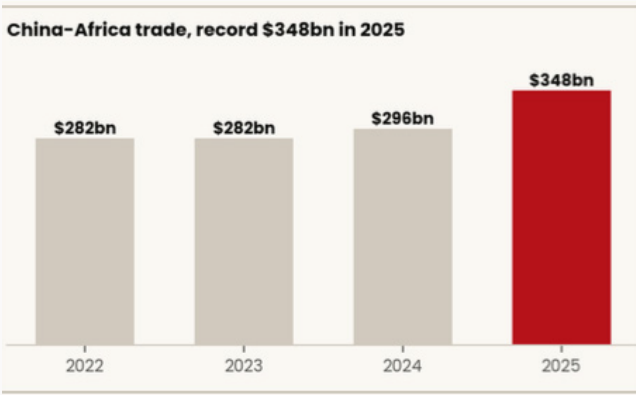
AFRICA, AND THE ZERO-TARIFF TURN

The ambassador placed Lesotho within a wider China-Africa story. He said China’s Africa policy rested on sincerity, real results, affinity and good faith, and pointed to support for industrialisation, agriculture, infrastructure and training. He set out the tariff move in stages. From 2005 China gave zero-tariff access to some products from least developed countries. That widened over time, and on 1 May 2026 it extended to cover all 53 African countries with which China has diplomatic ties.



Source: Chinese government announcements, 2024 to 2026. The step, taken as several Western economies raised tariffs, made China the first major economy to offer such unilateral, full-coverage access. For non-LDC states it applies as a preferential rate to April 2028, alongside a proposed China-Africa economic part-

nership.



Source: China’s General Administration of Customs; 2025 a record. WHERE LESOTHO FITS Yang described China-Lesotho relations as excellent, with frequent exchanges between leaders and mutual support on core concerns. He recalled a visit earlier in the year by Wang Yi, China’s foreign minister, at which both sides spoke of raising the partnership to a higher level. On party ties, the ambassador said the Communist Party had built relations with three of Lesotho’s parties, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy, the Democratic Congress and the Revolution for Prosperity, through visits, dialogue and training. He framed these as a way to build trust and support co-operation between the two states. He closed with a toast to the anniversary, to the friendship between China and Lesotho, and to peace and shared prosperity, ending with the Sesotho words Khotso, Pula, Nala. “China is ready to work hand in hand with Lesotho to deepen political mutual trust and expand practical cooperation.” AMBASSADOR YANG XIA-OKUN

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14 **IT**

That M15 million? BKB says it came from a politician, not an audit

The wool broker at the centre of the 2018 allegations says it was never charged, that its frozen account was released in 2023, and that the M15 million figure came from a political claim.

By Staff Reporter



ABOUT THIS SERIES . PART TWO

Part two of a Lesotho Tribune series on the dipping levy deducted from the earnings of Basotho wool and mohair farmers. Part one reported that Revenue Services Lesotho would not say whether it had examined how the levy was handled. Here the broker BKB gives its account. The Tribune is still seeking responses from other parties, and will update the series as they arrive.

THE South African wool broker BKB has rejected the allegations at the centre of a long-running Lesotho Tribune. lesothotribune.co.ls . Information Liberates

dispute over Lesotho's dipping levy, saying it was never criminally charged, that a freeze on its bank account was a tax measure since withdrawn, and that a figure of about M15 million (about US\$925,000)

widely attached to the matter came from a political claim rather than any audit or court finding.

BKB set out its account in a written response to questions about the collection and handling of the levy, a statutory charge deducted from farmers' wool and mohair earnings to fund livestock disease control. Its answers cover the same mat-

ters on which Revenue Services Lesotho, in the first part of this series, declined to comment, citing taxpayer confidentiality and a policy of speaking only to matters settled by a court.

The frozen account On the police enquiries, BKB said it was aware that officers looked into one of its Lesotho accounts in 2018 but that nothing followed. "No criminal charge was ever brought against BKB," the company said, adding that it knew of no further enquiries since.

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The company disputed the earlier account that police had frozen the account to preserve evidence. It said the freeze on its Standard Lesotho Bank account was a Third-Party Debt Order

issued by the tax authority on 24 April 2019 under the Value Added Tax Act and the Income Tax Act, a mechanism for collecting tax rather than a criminal measure. It said Revenue Services Lesotho withdrew that order in a letter dated 17 August 2023 that instructed the bank to release the funds, and that Standard Lesotho Bank confirmed in a letter dated 23 August 2023 that the accounts were unfrozen and the funds available. The account, BKB said, is operating normally.

“No criminal charge was ever brought against BKB.”
BKB, IN ITS WRITTEN RESPONSE Where the tax dispute stands On tax, BKB said its Lesotho position had been settled. It pointed to a Lesotho Revenue Authority notice of assessment dated 17 December 2020, which it said recorded a liability of M1 million (about US\$62,000) in employees’ tax for the years 2012/13 to 2018/19, in full and final settlement, in respect of two staff who worked in Lesotho. It said the same authority confirmed in the letter of 17 August 2023 that all tax liabilities had been settled. The company said a minister

had publicly alleged arrears of M1.4 billion (about US\$86 million), a figure it said the assessment did not bear out.

DATE	EVENT, PER BKB
2018	Police examine one Lesotho account; no charge follows
24 Apr 2019	Tax authority freezes account (Third-Party Debt Order)
17 Dec 2020	LRA assessment: M1m employees’s tax, full and final
17 Aug 2023	RSL withdraws order; says tax liabilities settled
23 Aug 2023	Standard Lesotho Bank confirms accounts unfrozen
23 Feb 2026	RSL tax clearance issued to subsidiary Lihoai Consultancy

The dipping levy money BKB was equally firm on the M15 million. It said the figure “did not arise from an audit or court finding but from a public political claim by the Minister” about the benefit of his own localisation policy. On the levy itself, the company said the money reaches the state. “The dipping-levy funds BKB collects are remitted to the Government of Lesotho, through the Department of Livestock, as required by law, and have been since the levy was introduced,” it said. Each payment, it said, is accompanied by a

reconciliation, and the payments are audited twice a year by its external auditors. “BKB has never handled levy funds in any other manner, and any statement to the contrary is incorrect,” the company said.

BKB also drew a line between itself and the growers’ association. It said a separate charge over alleged misappropriation of levy funds was brought against an office-bearer of the association, not against the company, and that BKB was never a party to it. The allegations arose in 2018, when the wool and mohair licensing regulations barred farmers from selling outside Lesotho and routed their produce through a single licensed broker, rules later suspended and then amended after farmers objected. BKB was the broker that scheme displaced. The company said it now conducts its Lesotho business through a locally registered subsidiary, Lihoai Consultancy, which it said holds a Revenue Services Lesotho tax clearance certificate issued on 23 February 2026. The Lesotho Tribune has also put questions to the Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association about its role in receiving and administering the levy after 2006. Its response will be carried in this series. The Lesotho Tribune will update this report as

further responses and supporting records are received.



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Editorial

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

16 **IT**

Viral video compares South Africa treatment of Basotho to Israel and Palestine

A video arguing that South Africa's treatment of Basotho mirrors Israel's treatment of Palestinians has gone viral, drawing attention to Lesotho's status as an enclave completely surrounded by its neighbour.

By Editorial



A video posted by Wandile Bangisi Mvane has spread widely on South African social media. It argues that South Africa's treatment of Basotho is the same as Israel's treatment of Palestinians. At the centre of the argument is a geographic fact: Lesotho is entirely surrounded by South Africa. It is one of only three enclave countries in the world.

For a Basotho citizen banned from South Africa, there is no other route out. The border becomes a complete barrier. The Lesotho government has

raised concerns about the treatment Basotho receive in South Africa. Minister of Communications Nthathi Moorosi said cabinet is worried about reports of Basotho being denied medical care.

The Migrant Workers Association of Lesotho has received more than 60 reports of members denied access to clinics and hospitals, mostly in Soweto. Women migrants are the most affected. Executive director Lerato Nkhetše described the denial of healthcare as a violation of human rights and international law.

Mvane draws a parallel between checkpoints in the West Bank and the effective barriers Basotho face when trying to access services in South Africa. The Lesotho Exemption Permit has been extended to 2027. The Basotho Action Party has called for free movement using national identity cards.

The video argues that a powerful state controlling all access to a smaller encircled population creates structural dependency.

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Arts & Sports

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

18 **IT**

NUL launches Physical Education degree

The National University of Lesotho has launched a new Physical Education degree. The programme starts with 20 students and aims to build professional careers in sport.

BY LITS'ITSO LETSUNYANE



The National University of Lesotho has launched a new Physical Education degree. The four-year course will take only 20 learners in its first intake, including students with disabilities. Minister of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture Thabo Mputi described the launch as an investment in transforming sport in Lesotho from a hobby into a professional enterprise.

He said Lesotho owes a debt to Cuba. A team of Physical Education experts from Cuba helped NUL develop the programme through technical and content advice.

“When our athletes compete locally,

regionally and internationally, they do more than pursue personal achievement. They carry the hopes and aspirations of a nation. They become ambassadors of Lesotho and demonstrate the resilience, courage and excellence that define the Basotho spirit.”

— Thabo Mputi, Minister of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture
How the Physical Education degree will work
Director of Sports Thabo Tsiki said the programme builds fundamental skills early. It should help the country develop athletes from the age of six through partnerships with countries that excel in sport.

Chief Executive Officer for Primary and Tertiary Education Sekhotseng Adam said sponsorship for students cannot be guaranteed yet. The university and National Manpower Development Secretariat will handle the next steps. Dr Maboi Mphunyane, Head of Science Education, said the limit of 20 students is to keep the programme manageable while it is new. Learners with a diploma can enter at second year.

Partnerships behind the launch NUL developed the programme with UNESCO, the Lesotho National Olympic Committee and the Lesotho Sports and Recreational Commission.