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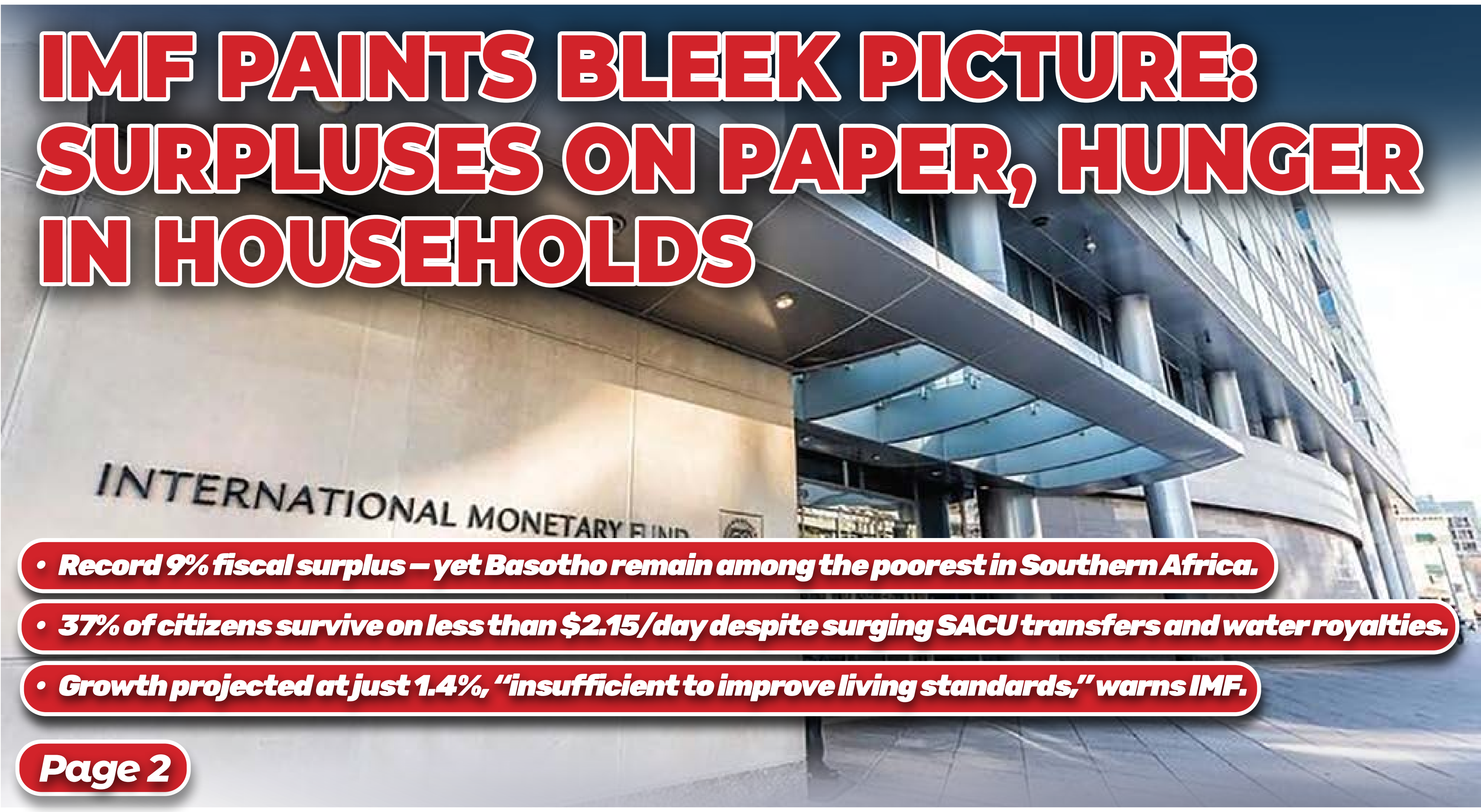

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IMF paints bleek picture: Surpluses on Paper, Hunger in Households

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*Picture Courtesy - **The Tribune***

Staff Reporter

Lesotho is running surpluses, but Basotho are running on empty, this is the paradox revealed by the 2025 IMF Article IV Consultation Report on Lesotho.

The report praises the country's record fiscal surplus of 9 percent of GDP in FY24 yet projects growth of just 1.4 percent in FY25/26, far too low to improve living standards.

The findings strike at the core of Lesotho's economic contradictions: revenues are buoyed by Southern African Customs Union (SACU) windfalls and water royalties, but ordinary citizens still queue for jobs that do not exist, water that does not flow, and hospitals that struggle to deliver basic care.

Poverty and unemployment remain stubbornly high, with 37 percent of Basotho living on less than $2.15 a day, the report revealed.

The IMF warns: "Despite a record fiscal surplus in FY24, growth has weakened, reflecting capacity constraints in public investment and slow progress on structural reforms. Medium-term growth is projected at around 1.5 percent, insufficient to reduce poverty or improve living standards."

The report notes that Lesotho's fiscal strength is not the result of productivity or industrial growth but of external flows, but, in 2024, the government renegotiated water royalties and enjoyed an exceptional surge in SACU transfers, which together account for almost 40 percent of national revenues.

"The fiscal surplus of about 9 percent of GDP in the 2024 financial year reflects exceptionally high SACU revenues and higher water royalties under the Phase II agreement of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. But this revenue base is fragile."

The IMF cautions that fiscal surpluses are expected to dissipate as SACU revenues normalise.

It went further to warn that without durable reforms, Lesotho's fiscal position would become vulnerable once again.

The IMF does not miss this contradiction, highlighting that revenues are not translating into domestic development; "Weak execution capacity and governance challenges constrain the ability of the government to translate fiscal resources into inclusive growth.Even with fiscal space, Lesotho's economy is barely growing."

The IMF projects growth will slow from 2.2 percent in the 2024/2025 financial year to 1.4 percent in the 2025/2026 financial year, citing structural weaknesses and political gridlock.

Over the medium term, IMF indicates that growth will average only 1.5 percent, a level described as "insufficient to address high unemployment and entrenched poverty."

This weak performance is not new, the report notes that Lesotho's growth has been volatile and low for more than a decade, reflecting dependence on external transfers, political instability, and a weak private sector.

"The textile industry, once the country's largest private employer, faces new risks. U.S. tariff changes threaten exports, and the cancellation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact has dashed hopes for renewed investment in horticulture and infrastructure."

The IMF is blunt about Lesotho's governance failures citing that the fragile coalition politics have hindered the passage of key reforms, including the Omnibus Bill, which aimed to strengthen governance, improve central bank independence, and enhance the rule of law.

"Without reforms, the country's institutions remain weak. Public financial management is poor, anti-corruption institutions lack teeth, and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) drain public resources."

The IMF stresses that SOEs continue to suffer from chronic governance and efficiency shortcomings, undermining fiscal sustainability and crowding out private sector development.

The report also criticizes the government's inability to push through long-promised financial sector reforms:

"The wage bill remains among the highest in the region, at about 17 percent of GDP, with little progress toward performance-based remuneration or downsizing," this, the IMF warns, squeezes out spending on infrastructure, health, and education, entrenching poverty despite fiscal surpluses.

Lesotho's poverty levels are staggering describes IMF indicating that about 37 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line of $2.15 per day. This is among the highest in Southern Africa.

Unemployment remains acute, particularly among young people. The report acknowledges saying youth unemployment exceeds 30 percent, with few prospects for improvement absent private sector growth.

While the state boasts fiscal discipline, households feel no relief. The IMF points out the contradiction; "The fiscal consolidation achieved in recent years has come at the expense of social spending, limiting the ability to cushion vulnerable groups from shocks."

Lesotho's health system illustrates the peril of overreliance on external aid, the report warns.

"The potential disruption of U.S. official development assistance, including for HIV/AIDS programs, poses significant risks to health outcomes. With HIV prevalence among the highest in the world, the collapse of external funding would be catastrophic. Yet Lesotho has no plan to replace donor dollars with sustainable domestic financing," the IMF stresses that aid dependence has a checkered history and cannot substitute for durable, private sector-driven reforms.

The report further revealed that the public debt stands at 56.8 percent of GDP, with 80 percent owed externally.

While the IMF categorises Lesotho's debt distress risk as "moderate," stress tests show the situation could deteriorate quickly if SACU revenues decline or growth slows further.

"Debt sustainability remains vulnerable to shocks, particularly exchange rate depreciation and lower-than-expected SACU transfers," the report notes.

The IMF highlights that corruption undermines both growth and social cohesion. It calls for "strengthening the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), establishing specialised anti-corruption courts, and enhancing transparency in procurement."

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RSL board coy on Mokoko-Matlanyane standoff

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Board of Directors of the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) has acknowledged awareness of the deepening conflict between Finance Minister Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane and Commissioner-General 'Mathabo Mokoko, but has refused to be drawn into public comment.

At the centre of the standoff are allegations that the Minister has been issuing instructions that the Commissioner-General said are unlawful, compromising the independence of the tax authority and exposing its leadership to possible criminal liability.

Approached for comment, RSL's Board Chairperson Advocate Lindiwe Sephomolo KC confirmed knowledge of the matter but said the board was "seized" with it and would therefore not comment further at this stage.

The board's silence has fuelled growing concern that the crisis could paralyse the tax authority at a time when Lesotho's economy is under pressure.

Efforts to obtain a response from Parliament's Economic and Development Cluster Committee, which oversees the RSL, also proved unsuccessful. Committee chairperson Sello Hakane could not be reached by phone and had not responded to messages by the time of going to print.

In a letter of demand dated September 8, Mokoko, through her lawyers Mei & Mei Attorneys Inc., accused Matlanyane of issuing "persistent unlawful instructions" that violate the secrecy and operational independence of the tax authority.

The letter, also copied to the RSL board chair on September 9, describes what Mokoko calls "intolerable" working conditions created by the Minister's conduct. Among the alleged instructions are demands for confidential taxpayer information, manipulation of tax clearance systems, and enforcement of unlawful debt-to-equity ratios for mining firms.

The most serious allegations involve pressure to reveal names of taxpayers who applied for refunds, instructions to issue tax clearance certificates to delinquent taxpayers, demands for details of refund amounts and timelines for individual taxpayers, attempts to enforce an 8:1 debt-to-equity ratio for mining companies despite the law prescribing a 3:1 limit, and requirements for proofs of payment for taxpayers awaiting refunds.

"The Commissioner-General as duty bound explained to the Minister that to disclose such information would violate the provisions of the governing legislation particularly the VAT Act in this context," the lawyers wrote.

Mokoko maintains that these demands contravene multiple laws, including the Value Added Tax Act, the Income Tax Act, and the Lesotho Revenue Authority Act. Section 76 of the VAT Act obliges RSL employees to preserve taxpayer secrecy, with breaches punishable under section 68.

Despite repeated warnings from Mokoko, the Minister is alleged to have continued pressing for sensitive information, sometimes through WhatsApp messages and other informal channels.

This, Mokoko argues, undermines the credibility of the RSL's automated tax clearance system, which was designed to eliminate favoritism and political manipulation.

"The instructions of the Minister are therefore unlawful in so far as she has sought to be provided with a report naming individual taxpayers whose refunds are still being processed and that the Commissioner General should issue tax clearances to delinquent taxpayers," the letter states.

The grievances document warns that compliance with the Minister's instructions would have devastating consequences.

"The RSL as an institution fears that it will lose credibility and the trust of the Basotho with serious repercussions for the economy and the financial functioning of the State," it reads.

The letter also warns that issuing tax clearances to non-compliant taxpayers could encourage further delinquency, ultimately crippling the efficiency and effectiveness of the tax system.

Mokoko and her legal team argue that proper communication should be routed through the board of directors, which in turn should liaise with the Commissioner-General. By bypassing these protocols, they say, the Minister has not only undermined governance procedures but also created a hostile working environment.

The lawyers' letter formally demands Matlanyane to cease issuing unlawful instructions and instead restrict her directives to written communication via the board. It further cautions that if the interference continues, the RSL may seek legal remedies, including interdicts against the Minister.

"In the premises, we have been instructed to demand, as we hereby do, that you withdraw the unlawful instructions and that in accordance with the applicable protocols you issue written instructions," the lawyers write.

They continued: "The issuing of informal and casual instruction through platforms such as WhatsApp runs contrary to established State protocols and procedures in dealing with confidential and sensitive correspondence particularly at such high-powered level."

While warning of legal action, the letter also leaves the door open for dialogue. "However, we believe that the parties have an obligation in the national interest to resolve their differences and act in the best interests of the country particularly in these trying economic climate posed by the factors beyond the Kingdom of Lesotho (sic)," it says.

Contacted for comment, Matlanyane confirmed she was outside the country but promised to hold a press briefing on her return.

Her side of the story remains unknown, but the allegations have already sparked intense debate about political interference in state institutions, particularly the tax authority, which plays a central role in the nation's economic stability.

The standoff comes at a time when Lesotho is battling fiscal pressures, high unemployment, and an urgent need to improve revenue collection. Any weakening of the RSL's credibility could compromise the country's ability to meet its revenue targets and maintain confidence with international partners such as the IMF and World Bank.

Observers warn that prolonged conflict between the Minister and the Commissioner-General could also unsettle staff morale at RSL, disrupt tax administration, and scare away investors already worried about governance and stability in the country.

Shelile upbeat over AGOA renewal talks

Minister of Trade, Industry, and Small Business Development, Mokhethi Shelile

Seabata Mahao

Trade, Industry and Small Business Development Minister Mokhethi Shelile is optimistic over the possibility for the United States (U.S.) to renew the expiring African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

His confidence stems from a recent lobbying mission to Washington, D.C., where he led a Lesotho delegation from September 15 to 19 to press for the extension of AGOA, which is slated to expire on September 30, 2025.

During the mission, Shelile and Minister of Labour and Employment Tšeliso Mokhosi held high-level discussions with members of both the U.S. Congress and key private sector groups.

They met ten congressional representatives across the Republican and Democratic parties, and engaged with organisations including the American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the American Fashion Industry Association.

Their efforts focused especially on the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee, critical bodies in any trade legislation.

Shelile acknowledged that the odds for renewal were slim, but he believes the shared interest on both sides enhances chances for success.

"The Americans seemed to have as much interest in the renewal of AGOA as us, so I am hopeful that they are going to do everything in their power to pass this," Shelile said following his U.S. trip.

"They assured us that they will give us the feedback once it is done by October or November by Congress. This is because usually, AGOA is passed together with the budget but the Trump Administration has decided that the USA budget pass alone then the rest will pass accordingly," he added.

He further highlighted the importance of the agreement for Lesotho's export sector.

"Due to the fact that we are under AGOA, if it is renewed we will trade with USA under the 15 percent tariffs which our local investors in the textile industries have accepted and this is shown by their expansion call of their employees who were laid-off."

"This adjustment has already led to many factories recalling workers who were previously sent home, which is a sign that confidence is returning."

Shelile warned that if renewal does not happen by November, the U.S. could impose more punitive measures.

"If AGOA is not renewed by November, the Americans might decide to lift the 15 percent import tariffs 'reciprocal tariffs' and impose the most Favoured Nations' Rates which are 16 percent because we export materials made from cotton which we do not buy from the USA," he cautioned.

Shelile indicated his delegation is pushing for at least a year's extension, leveraging intense lobbying and highlighting the mutual benefits of the arrangement.

"We also reminded them that AGOA trade is the one of the few remaining links between Lesotho and the USA so it will be of great beneficial to both of the countries to reconsider. In as much as it benefits Basotho through employment and job creation it also benefits the USA with the direct and indirect jobs," he clarified.

AGOA has been a cornerstone of Lesotho's economic strategy for two decades, enabling duty-free access for more than 1,800 products from qualifying sub-Saharan countries to the U.S. market. Since its inception in 2000, the agreement has contributed significantly to export growth and employment. In 2015, Congress extended AGOA for another decade (to September 2025), and the current push seeks to secure further continuity.

Shelile welcomed the likely one-year extension but warned that renewal will come with stricter conditions.

"One of the conditions is that our factories must give priority to American orders. This is understandable, but it also means we must work harder to diversify our markets," he noted.

He stressed that Lesotho cannot afford to depend solely on the U.S market.

"We must not put all our eggs in one basket. I encourage our entrepreneurs to explore opportunities in Europe, Asia, and within Africa itself. This is the only way to secure long term stability."

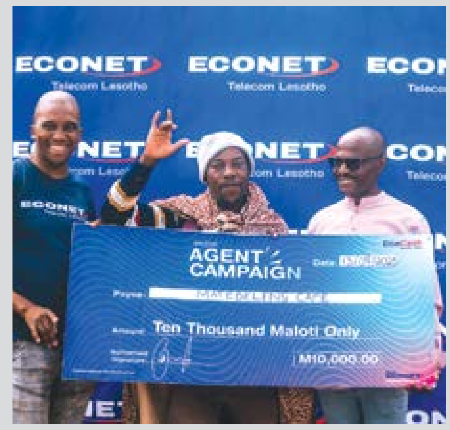
In fact, he pointed out, the recent tariff reduction from 50 percent to 15 percent has renewed some optimism in the local industry.

Despite that reduction, though, the textile sector faces ongoing challenges. Lesotho's textile industry remains under severe pressure despite a reduction in U.S. tariffs from a threatened 50 percent to 15 percent."

The textile sector is Lesotho's largest private employer, and accounts for majority of the country's manufacturing exports. Many factories scaled back operations or laid off workers when the higher tariffs were threatened.

For Lesotho, the stakes could not be higher. The textile industry directly supports tens of thousands of jobs, many of them held by women, and indirectly underpins sectors ranging from transport to housing. The threat of tariff escalation, factory shutdowns, and lost orders has already forced producers to cut shifts and rotate schedules. Some industry voices warn that unless tariffs drop further, to around 10 percent, factories may shut down altogether, unable to compete with rivals in countries like Kenya, where import duties remain lower.

EcoCash agents campaign rolls towards climax



Staff Reporter

Excitement is mounting nationwide as the EcoCash Agents Campaign, spearheaded by Sasai Econet Financial Services (SEFS), a subsidiary of Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL), approaches its conclusion.

The campaign, which has already injected more than M200,000 into the hands of winners through weekly and monthly prizes, will wrap up on September 30, 2025, with a grand finale where one EcoCash Agent will claim the ultimate M100,000 prize.

Recently, the SEFS team visited Maputsoe to present a M10,000 cheque to Matebeleng Café, August's monthly winner. The Café team welcomed the award with joy, highlighting how the initiative has been a real boost for small businesses.

Matebeleng Café's representative, Thabiso Ramaketekete, expressed appreciation for the support, saying the prize would be reinvested to expand their services.

Ramaketekete added that the campaign demonstrates how even small enterprises can contribute meaningfully to transforming Lesotho's financial landscape.

Since its launch, the EcoCash Agents Campaign has not only rewarded excellence but has also significantly strengthened EcoCash's presence across communities. Statistics show consistent growth in both active agents and transaction values, with cash-in volumes surpassing M40 million over the campaign period.

SEFS's General Manager, Moeketsi Mafereka, said these achievements underscore the crucial role agents play in driving financial inclusion. He noted that 138 weekly winners and eight monthly winners have already been recognised, showcasing the campaign's far-reaching impact.

"EcoCash Agents are enablers of progress in every community they serve. We are incredibly excited that we have witnessed the life-changing impact of this campaign. This is a true testament to the difference SEFS is making in the lives of Basotho," Mafereka said.

He added that Econet's strong network coverage and digital infrastructure have been vital in ensuring seamless transactions, reinforcing Lesotho's shift towards a digital economy.

"As SEFS, we encourage EcoCash Agents to increase their cash-in transactions, remain active and reliable. M100,000 grand prize could be the ultimate boost to one lucky agent's businesswhen the campaign ends," Mafereka concluded.

Ex-PM Majoro accused of 'stealing' government computer

Moeketsi Majoro - Former prime minister

Staff Reporter

In a startling revelation, former Prime Minister Dr Moeketsi Majoro has been implicated in a scandal involving the alleged theft of a government laptop during his tenure as the Finance Minister.

The disclosure was made by the Government Assets Search and Recovery Task Team (GASRTT), a unit established to trace and recover government assets, both movable and immovable.

Established in December 2022, the team operates under the Prime Minister's Office and includes representatives from the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF), Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), National Security Service (NSS), and the Ministry of Public Service.

Efforts to obtain Dr Majoro's response proved unsuccessful. His mobile phone went unanswered, and he did not reply to either the email or WhatsApp messages sent by Newsday by the time of going to press.

The GASRTT team led by advocate Seeeng Matšosa, expressed concern about a long-standing lack of follow-up on government assets, with some items left unaccounted for over many years. The team suggested that such negligence points to weaknesses in government asset management.

Meanwhile, authorities continue to complain about shortages of resources, a contradiction that highlights the mismanagement of existing property. According to the task team, failure to properly monitor and safeguard assets not only wastes public resources but also undermines service delivery.

The Auditor-General's annual reports have repeatedly called for a stronger accountability framework to prevent abuse and neglect of government property. The reports emphasize that without proper controls, government services are hampered by resource shortages, even when those resources exist but are mismanaged.

The GASRTT also confirmed that it had recovered laptops from several other former senior officials. These included Advocate Thato Ponya, former Minister of Finance Thabo Sophonea, former Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Kemiso Mosenene, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations 'Matšepo Ramakoae.

In addition, the team recovered a desktop computer from Dr Majoro's former economic adviser and head of the accountability unit, now Central Bank of Lesotho Governor, Dr Maluke Letete.

According to the task team, the recovered laptops and computers were originally allocated to these officials in their capacities as government office-bearers, with a combined value estimated at around M200,000. The team said further recoveries are expected as some devices remain "not easily located."

The GASRTT noted a troubling pattern in which senior officials allegedly "unlawfully" seize government computers and laptops after their contracts expire. To prevent this, the team has recommended that all government employees undergo a clearance process before leaving office.

The unfolding scandal raises fresh questions about accountability in the management of public resources, particularly when set against the government's continued claims of resource shortages. Whether this latest development will lead to stronger asset recovery systems and better controls remains to be seen.

IMF warns Lesotho on youth unemployment

Staff Reporter

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has issued a stern warning to the government of Lesotho that its efforts to combat youth unemployment must remain strictly within existing budgetary limits to avoid inefficient and unsustainable public expenditures.

In July 2025, the government declared a national "state of disaster," citing rapidly rising youth unemployment, economic fragility, and external risks, namely uncertainty over United States (U.S.) trade tariffs and fears that Lesotho might lose preferential access under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

The declaration, effective until 30 June 2027, was intended to give the government special powers to mobilise emergency resources and fast-track job creation and recovery policies under the Disaster Management Act.

Deputy Prime Minister Nthomeng Majara explained at the time that the designation would allow the state to mobilise emergency resources and fast-track interventions aimed at job creation and economic recovery.

The move responded directly to mounting pressure from youth groups, who in April had demanded the government treat the crisis as a national emergency. By then, youth unemployment was widely estimated at 39 percent, well above Lesotho's general unemployment rate of about 30 percent.

To respond, the government later reallocated M459 million in the 2025/26 national budget throught a cabinet decision toward youth empowerment and job creation schemes.

Information Minister Nthati Moorosi said the Cabinet, meeting on 8 July 2025, approved the shift to fund programs designed to equip young Basotho with skills, generate employment, and promote entrepreneurship. The government pledged to deliver roughly 62,000 youth jobs under these schemes.

The reallocation came after Parliament had already approved the national expenditure plan for the 2025/26 financial year, raising concerns about fiscal discipline and accountability.

In its 2025 Article IV consultation report, the IMF cautioned that while responding to the youth employment crisis is morally and politically necessary, doing so must not undermine fiscal stability.

"On recurrent spending, the authorities are struggling to strike a balance between continued restraint and the need to respond to recent shocks. Importantly, the broad moratorium on new hiring remains," the IMF said.

It emphasised that the moratorium on new hirings should continue as a break from prior years when windfalls from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) often prompted volatile spikes in the wage bill. The IMF noted,

"The authorities have also recently announced a new focus on youth unemployment. Concrete plans are still being developed, but any new measures should be accommodated within the existing budget envelope."

The IMF further warned against institutionalising public employment schemes as a permanent measure.

"In this context, public employment programs have a checkered history and cannot substitute for private-sector reforms," the report states.

But it allows for temporary social support if carefully designed. The Fund stressed that such programs should be underpinned by strong coordination across agencies, time limited with clear transition plans, embedded with training and skills development, and prioritising transparency, accountability and evaluation. The IMF also underscored the risk of weak public investment capacity.

"If capacity constraints on public investment remain unaddressed, fiscal prudence requires continued surpluses into the medium term — narrowing gradually to 0.9 percent of GDP."

While this may seem overly cautious given Lesotho's growth needs, the IMF argues it is the most realistic fiscal path given current constraints and limited ability to scale up capital spending. Under this scenario, the focus must remain on controlling recurrent costs: maintaining the hiring freeze, streamlining the payroll, and ensuring a fair, performance-based compensation system.

The warning comes at a timely when Lesotho's economy is under pressure. Growth is projected to slow to around 1.4 percent in FY25/26, down from 2.2 percent earlier. Inflation has eased from a peak of 8.2 percent in early 2024 to 4.4 percent in mid-2025.

The country's dependence on SACU transfers and water-royalty revenues adds volatility: while these inflows have recently buoyed reserves and allowed fiscal surpluses, they are not a stable long-term anchor.

Unemployment remains stubborn, with the 2025 Country Focus Report citing 30.1 percent national unemployment and a 38.9 percent rate among youth (aged 15–35). Some observers argue the true rate is well above 60 percent if informal joblessness is included.

Against this backdrop, frustrated youth voices have been calling for the government to take action. In June 2025, youth activist Tšolo Thakeli was briefly arrested after posting a video accusing Prime Minister Sam Matekane's administration of failing to deliver on promises of job creation.

He was later charged with sedition. The case ignited protests in Maseru and raised concerns over the suppression of dissent.

Thakeli's ordeal underscores the political sensitivity of youth unemployment, especially when economic constraints limit the government's freedom of action.

MP's question government's international travel spending

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Government spending on international travel has come under scrutiny in the National Assembly, as MPs question whether the millions of maloti allocated annually deliver value for money.

During an oral questions and answers session this week, Remaketse Sehlabaka, leader of the Mpulule Political Summit (MPS), pressed government to justify the expenditure.

He demanded clarity on the total cost of foreign trips in the 2024/25 financial year, how that compared with funds earmarked for youth job creation, and how much additional money had been drawn from the contingency fund. He also challenged the executive to explain the tangible benefits these trips bring to the country.

In response, Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Leader of the House Justice Nthomeng Majara disclosed that M145 million had been budgeted for international travel in 2024/25.

She further revealed that an extra M13 million had been allocated, of which M9 million had already been used. By comparison, Majara told the House that M300 million was allocated to the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in the same financial year.

On the question of returns, Majara defended the trips, arguing that they create opportunities for Lesotho to contribute to global debates and benefit from international cooperation.

"They present an opportunity for the country to contribute and share ideas with other global partners," she said.

She added that value for money is reflected in the partnerships Lesotho maintains with organisations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the World Economic Forum, and the Conference of the Parties (COP).

The DPM highlighted that participation in such fora also unlocks access to financial and development support. She cited funds mobilised through Lesotho's participation in climate change negotiations under the COP framework as an example of concrete returns from foreign missions.

Majara further argued that foreign engagement strengthens the country's position in negotiating trade agreements and accelerates programmes tied to digitalisation and service delivery. "Through travel engagement, the country is poised to address diverse challenges but also provides opportunities to negotiate trade agreements and exercise oversight in international bodies," she said.

Government's involvement in global platforms, she added, helps foster a collaborative approach to development and economic growth, particularly as Lesotho seeks to tackle unemployment and economic inequality.

However, on Sehlabaka's query about the budget's proportionality to youth job creation, Majara conceded that specific figures were not readily available. She explained that youth initiatives are integrated across several ministries, making it difficult to disaggregate the exact spending on employment-related programmes compared with travel.

Acknowledging this gap, Majara said plans are underway to create a new tool that will allow for better tracking and reporting of such expenditures in the future. This, she noted, would ensure greater transparency and accountability when comparing allocations and outcomes across different government programmes.

For now, questions persist on whether the large sums devoted to international travel can be justified in a country grappling with high unemployment, sluggish economic growth, and pressing social needs.

Newsday Business

Construction, transport growth cushions economy amid sectoral declines

Seabata Mahao

The transport and construction sectors displayed resilience amid prevailing economic uncertainties, helping to sustain Lesotho's modest economic growth during the second quarter of 2025.

This development underscored a growing reliance on large-scale infrastructure projects, notably the ongoing Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) Phase II implementation, which includes the Polihali Dam and Senqu Bridge.

The influence of the construction and logistics sectors' influence was highlighted by the Central Bank of Lesotho's (CBL) Governor Dr Maluke Letete, during the announcement of the bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decisions this week.

The decisions included maintaining the Net International Reserves (NIR) target floor at US$840 million. This level is considered sufficient to support the stability of the loti, which is pegged to the South African rand.

The MPC also resolved to keep the CBL rate unchanged at 6.75 percent per annum.According to the bank, this decision is aimed at aligning with prevailing domestic economic conditions while remaining consistent with the broader regional monetary policy environment.

Addressing journalists on Tuesday, Letete said external shocks had continued to weigh on Lesotho's economy, with the textile sector being the hardest hit.

Weak demand from United States buyers has significantly reduced Lesotho's textile exports, creating ripple effects across the manufacturing industry.

"Unlike before, the textile and manufacturing industry have dropped to the lowest levels, leaving only the construction and logistics sector as the key economic driver," Dr. Letete stated.

The textile industry, once a backbone of Lesotho's export economy, has been significantly impacted by waning U.S. demand and a tariff hike from the United States, leading to a sharp contraction in output and export figures.

The Govenor of Central Bank of Lesotho, Dr. Maluke Letete

"There is nothing, especially with the ongoing tariff hike from the United States of America. The textile industry has dropped by a large margin. The manufacturing industry has also dropped across all categories," Letete added.

"The preliminary indicator of economic activity showed a slight growth in July 2025, reflecting expansion in transport and construction categories," Letete said.

"Nonetheless, weak domestic demand and a fall in manufacturing, driven by lower U.S. textile exports, constrained growth. In the medium term, growth is expected to moderate due to external shocks, especially those emanating from the export-oriented industries."

The lack of agricultural production and limited investment in land use were also cited as key issues, further exacerbating economic vulnerabilities.

"The lack of production from Basotho is evident, with very little investment in agricultural and horticultural sectors," he noted.

Lesotho's economy tends to move in tandem with that of South Africa, given the currency peg and close economic ties. Letete noted that South Africa experienced a rebound in the second quarter of 2025 after a sluggish start to the year.

"In South Africa, economic growth picked up in the second quarter of 2025 following a moderate performance in the first quarter. This was driven primarily by a rebound in manufacturing and mining activity alongside stronger household consumption," he explained.

He added that inflationary pressures in South Africa had eased in August but were expected to rise in the near term due to persistent increases in administered prices.

"Consequently, the South African Reserve Bank decided to keep the policy rate unchanged, balancing support for growth with the need to monitor emerging inflationary risks," he said.

Lesotho's headline inflation edged up to 4.6 percent in August 2025, compared to 4.4 percent in July.

"This mainly reflected an increase in food prices due to the supply constraint of wheat. In the near term, inflation is expected to moderate, amid mixed price pressures, but the outlook is balanced," Letete said.

On the fiscal front, government finances improved significantly during the quarter under review.

"The overall fiscal balance strengthened markedly in July 2025, shifting to a surplus of 11.4 per cent of GDP from 0.6 per cent in June, largely driven by SACU receipts," Letete revealed.

However, the country's debt burden also grew slightly. "The public debt-to-GDP ratio increased to 56.0 per cent in July 2025, from 55.8 per cent in June 2025 due to project disbursements," he said.

In the external sector, Lesotho's current account recorded a deficit of 4.8 percent of GDP in June 2025, compared to a surplus in the previous quarter. This was mainly attributed to persistently high import demand relative to exports.

The bank noted that surpluses in the primary and secondary income accounts helped partially offset the deficit.

RSL–FAFF pact targets revenue leakages at borders

Seabata Mahao

In a significant move aimed at curbing revenue leakages at Lesotho's ports of entry and improving customs compliance, the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) and the Federation of Agents of Foreign Firms (FAFF) have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The agreement, signed this week by RSL's Commissioner General 'Mathabo Mokoko and FAFF Chairman Advocate Lehloka Maphatšoe, is designed to streamline import processes, promote transparency, and tighten enforcement mechanisms in foreign trade.

It marks a critical step in Lesotho's broader effort to close long-standing gaps in revenue collection and create a fairer business environment.

The MoU facilitates for sharing of critical trade data between the two parties to enable early detection of non-compliance and illicit business practices. This integration is expected to directly address the chronic challenge of revenue losses at Lesotho's borders, where porous systems and weak enforcement have long been exploited by unscrupulous traders.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Commissioner General Mokoko stressed that the agreement is the product of collaboration across several government institutions, including the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police, and the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences.

RSL Commissioner General 'Mathabo Mokoko and FAFF Chairman Advocate Lehloka Maphatšoe signing MOU

"This agreement is not the result of one institution alone," Mokoko stated.

"It represents a shared commitment to compliance, transparency, and fair business practices that can create much-needed employment for Basotho."

Mokoko indicated that the MoU builds on a previous partnership with the Agents of Foreign Firms Association (AFFAL), reinforcing RSL's mission to simplify cross-border trade while strengthening oversight.

"Integrating our systems strengthens our ability to monitor and regulate economic activity. It ensures foreign firms operate within the law while boosting revenue for critical public services," Mokoko added.

On his part, FAFF's chairman Advocate Maphatšoe described the MoU as a "critical step" in system integration that would allow authorities to detect irregularities before they escalate into costly loopholes. He emphasised that FAFF, though a registered company, operates as a non-profit entity focused on regulatory oversight.

"FAFF does not conduct business; our members do. Our role is to ensure they follow both legal and ethical business standards. This is more than just data sharing, it is about building an effective regulatory ecosystem that promotes long-term economic growth," Maphatšoe said.

He further urged Basotho to embrace values of integrity and hard work, reminding them of the founding principles laid down by King Moshoeshoe I.

"Corruption does not sell. Mediocrity does not sell. But integrity does. Let us rise and rebuild on the foundation our founder King Moshoeshoe I laid."

FAFF's Public Relations Officer, Thabo Qhesi, also reiterated the federation's role in protecting sectors reserved exclusively for Basotho entrepreneurs. He pointed to a 2020 law that restricts certain businesses to local ownership, warning that foreign encroachment in these areas undermines opportunities for citizens.

"We are working tirelessly to ensure that these reserved sectors are not unfairly dominated by foreign players. The MoU strengthens our enforcement capacity and affirms our legitimacy in addressing unlawful business practices," Qhesi said.

He added that FAFF will continue to collaborate with RSL and other partners in monitoring compliance, ensuring that legitimate Basotho businesses are not crowded out by unfair competition.

ESTATE NOTICE

Notice in terms of section 44 of the Administration Estate and Inheritance Act No.2 of the 2024;

ESTATE LATE Tumisang Latislas Fesi E 890/2025

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 44 of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024 calling upon all creditors of the deceased to lodge their claims with executrix of the deceased's estate within thirty (30) days of this publication.

The address at which the said claims can be lodged is mentioned hereunder;

(Address)

Mangopeng
Roma,

Maseru
+26656674767

Makhotso Fesi
Excecutrix

ESTATE NOTICE

ESTATE LATE MAKABE SABASTIAN MALIBO B110/25.

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 37 of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024 calling upon all heirs, legatees and creditors of the deceased to attend before the Master of the High Court in the Butha-Buthe district,near the District Administration office,on the 21st OCTOBER 2025 at 11AM.

Proposing some person/persons to be appointed by the Master as the executor dative.

DATED AT BUTHA-BUTHE ON THIS 22nd SEPTEMBER 2025

MASTER OF THE HIGH COURT OFFICES
BUTHA-BUTHE

BEHIND PASSPORT OFFICE BUILDING
OPPOSITE POST OFFICE, BUTHA-BUTHE

Newsday Health

Maternal mental health linked to childbirth complications

Ntsoaki Motaung

In a landmark initiative towards addressing the growing crisis of maternal mental health, the Lesotho Alliance for Maternal Mental Health was officially launched recently.

Speaking on behalf of the World Health Organisation, Dr Mosala Zulu highlighted the profound impact of maternal mental health on both mothers and their families.

"One in five women in low- and middle-income countries will experience mental health conditions during pregnancy or after birth," Dr Zulu said, stressing the urgency of the issue.

He further noted that poor maternal mental health is associated with childbirth complications, premature births, and, in severe cases, suicide.

This is especially significant for Lesotho since according to the World Health Organisation's 2019 estimates, the country has a suicide rate of 72 per 100,000 people, the highest globally. Within this grim reality, mothers and expectant women are among the most vulnerable.

"Mental health is not merely the absence of mental health conditions, but a state of wellness in which individuals can realise their potential," he added.

The alliance, born out of the Community Health Intervention through Musical Engagement (CHIME) project, seeks to integrate maternal mental health into Lesotho's primary healthcare system while pushing for evidence-based policies.

Its launch brought together researchers, healthcare professionals, government representatives, and non-governmental organisations in what has been described as a collaborative milestone for the country.

Dr Thabo Mokhothu, the chairperson of the newly formed alliance, described the initiative as a huge responsibility.

"The alliance is multisectoral, it boasts integration. It has brought together government representatives, people from the private sector, non-governmental and civil society organisations, including the academia, and the people with lived experiences," Dr Mokhothu said.

According to Dr Mokhothu, the alliance's mandate is to push for the integration of maternal mental health into existing primary healthcare structures, the development of shared protocols and guidelines, and the building of capacity among healthcare workers and community members to provide psychosocial support.

"This exciting and difficult challenge is not something that we can do alone. We have had a very critical component in the response to the pandemic," he said, pointing to the need for collaboration in tackling such a complex challenge.

"A healthy mother takes care of the household and the men. When the mothers are taken care of, the entire household is taken care of," he said.

One of the unique aspects of the CHIME project, which underpins the alliance, is its use of music as a therapeutic tool.

On her part, Dr Llang Maama, the acting Director of Primary Health in the Ministry of Health, commended the universities involved in the initiative and urged the incorporation of local practices.

"We have been gathering more and more evidence so that our interventions will be evidence-based, and at the same time, also aligning with our indigenous practices. We did not even think that music has an impact on the health outcomes," she said.

Despite these promising initiatives, one of the biggest obstacles remains the lack of reliable data on maternal mental health in Lesotho. Moroesi Makhetha, a researcher from Stellenbosch University, highlighted this gap.

"There is a limitation when it comes to data or in terms of what we know about maternal mental health in Lesotho. Without that being properly documented and published, it is hard to even go to a policymaker and say 'this is the situation, and we need to do something about it.'"

Makhetha confirmed that the CHIME project will undertake a situational analysis and collect existing data to provide a clearer picture of the problem, which will then be shared with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders.

At the healthcare delivery level, the gaps are also evident. Psychiatric Health Nurse Kefuoe Ramone explained that mental health screening is not routinely done at health centres, meaning many women are diagnosed late, when complications have already escalated.

"This leads to a person having mental health problems at a very late stage with so many complications," she said, pointing to the limited training among healthcare workers and the persistent challenge of transportation in rural areas, which prevents timely access to care.

Prioritising child safety and health

Ntsoaki Motaung

Lesotho marked World Patient Safety Day with a renewed commitment to protect its youngest citizens, launching the Child-Friendly Communities Initiative under the rallying call "*#E Seng Ka Ngoana*".

The event, held in Mafeteng on Wednesday this week, brought together government officials, health partners, and community members to emphasise the importance of safe and quality healthcare for children.

This year's World Patient Safety Day theme, "Safe Care for Every Newborn and Every Child," highlighted the specific risks faced by children due to their rapid growth and evolving health needs.

World Health Organisation's (WHO) Representative, Dr Innocent Nuwagira, noted that across Africa, poor-quality care contributes significantly to maternal and neonatal deaths. He stressed that Lesotho faces similarly high mortality rates, underscoring the need for urgent improvements in patient safety.

Nuwagira called for greater awareness of safety risks in paediatric care, stronger infection prevention programmes, and better surveillance systems. He also encouraged investment in research and adoption of innovative digital health solutions to address these challenges.

UNICEF's Country Representative, Deepak Bhaskaran, echoed these concerns, pointing out that many deaths of newborns and young children in Lesotho are preventable. He linked the problem to delays in accessing care, substandard service delivery, and missed immunisation opportunities.

"Patient safety is not just a technical issue but a fundamental human right," he said, adding that for children, safety is "non-negotiable."

He further stressed that creating child-friendly communities requires a "whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach."

Health Minister Selibe Mochoboroane formally launched the Child-Friendly Communities Initiative, describing it as a "social contract with the children of Lesotho."

He explained that in such communities, children's basic rights—healthcare, birth registration, nutrition, clean water, education, and protection—must be guaranteed rather than treated as privileges.

Mochoboroane emphasised that the well-being of children is "not negotiable", pledging that the initiative would prioritise children in all aspects of national planning, budgeting, and service delivery.

He stressed the need for collaboration across all sectors for the initiative to succeed. "No single ministry, no single actor can do this alone," the Minister said.

With Lesotho's maternal and child health indicators remaining among the most concerning in the region, the launch of this initiative signals a strong national commitment to safeguarding children's rights and improving their survival and well-being.

Assets recovery team must be capacitated to complete mission

Lesotho is sitting on a time bomb of squandered wealth. For decades, state assets, houses, land, vehicles, machinery, have slipped quietly from public hands into private possession, often aided by dereliction, negligence, and in some cases, outright collusion from those entrusted to safeguard them.

The shocking revelations made by the Government Assets Search and Recovery Task Team (GASRTT) this week before the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee have peeled back the curtain on a rot so deep it raises fundamental questions about the kind of stewardship Basotho can expect from their government.

For a task team mandated to trace, recover, and safeguard the people's property, it is being starved of the very oxygen it needs to function; which is financial resources. Removed from the Prime Minister's budget, the team struggles to fund even the most basic operational necessities, fuel, travel, accommodation.

This chronic underfunding is not only crippling its effectiveness, it is protecting those who have benefited, perhaps illegally, from the looting of state property. Every day the team is forced to scale back its work, asset grabbers tighten their grip, emboldened by the state's silence and inaction.

The implications are devastating. These are not abstract figures locked in balance sheets. These are houses where public servants should live, land that should be used for public development, vehicles meant for service delivery, and equipment meant to support infrastructure projects.

The most troubling aspect of the task team's findings so far is the suggestion that some prominent politicians and senior state officers could be among the beneficiaries of these assets.

This is not just a matter of theft, it is a betrayal of public trust at the highest levels. Basotho deserve to know who these individuals are, how they came into possession of government property, and why nothing was done for so long.

To cut short this investigation due to "lack of funds" would be an unforgivable travesty, shielding the powerful from accountability while ordinary citizens are left to suffer.

The mandate of the task team is broad and necessary. From investigating illegally occupied houses and encroached sites, to unearthing cases where officials rent out state houses for personal gain, it is an agenda that cuts to the very heart of corruption and governance failure.

And yet, instead of empowering this body to carry out its noble mission, the government seems content to leave it handicapped, without even the legal instrument to anchor its existence as a formal state institution. Without such a law, the team remains vulnerable, its authority questioned, its operations undermined by ministries reluctant to cooperate.

This is not the time for half-measures. The government must immediately provide the financial resources to allow the task team to travel across all districts, investigate thoroughly, and recover assets that rightfully belong to the state. Anything less is complicity in the theft of public wealth.

At the same time, Parliament should move with urgency to enact legislation that anchors the task team in law, giving it permanence, independence, and the teeth to bite into the rot of asset mismanagement.

We must be clear: the shocking state of government asset management is not an accident. It is the product of years of neglect, impunity, and a culture where public resources are treated as private spoils. Allowing this to continue will only deepen the crisis of governance. Basotho already struggle with unemployment, poverty, and poor service delivery. To let state assets rot away in private hands while the government pleads poverty is nothing short of scandalous.

What the task team has already exposed is just the tip of the iceberg. The true scale of the rot remains hidden, and only with full support can it be brought to light. Basotho must rally behind this cause, demand accountability, and insist that the government stop playing politics with public wealth. If the team fails, it is not just the loss of houses, land, and vehicles, it will be the loss of trust, of confidence in the very institutions meant to serve the people.

The government created this task team. Now it must give it the means to finish the job. Anything less is proof that those in power would rather protect the beneficiaries of corruption than serve the people who elected them.

No Comment

Theko Tlebere

Common Concern

Open Letter to the Honourable Minister of Finance and Development Planning: When NMDS Policies Punish the Poor

Honourable Minister,

I write to you with deep respect and a heavy heart. This letter represents the voices of many young Basotho whose only dream is to study, learn, and return home better equipped to contribute to our nation's development.

For decades, the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS), operating under your Ministry, has been a beacon of hope. Since its establishment, it has supported thousands of Basotho in accessing education and training, both locally and abroad.

However, today, Honourable Minister, that beacon is dimmed by policies that no longer reflect the realities of Lesotho in 2025. Policies that were once intended to protect public funds are now shutting the door on deserving young people whose only "crime" is being poor.

Allow me to share a true story that illustrates this tragedy. A few weeks back, a young Mosotho man received an admission letter from a prestigious university in China. This was not just a personal victory; it was a national opportunity.

His chosen field of study could bring direct benefits to Lesotho's future. Determined to follow the proper channels, he approached NMDS. Fully aware of his past obligations, he took responsibility, negotiated repayments, and even secured a private bank loan to clear his debt with NMDS, believing this would qualify him for support.

Yet, when his application was processed, he was denied funding. Not due to his own record or lack of merit, but because his spouse had an outstanding debt with NMDS, a debt incurred years before they were married. Today, this young man is being punished for circumstances entirely outside his control. His future is tethered to someone else's past.

Honourable Minister, this is not accountability; this is collective punishment. It undermines fairness, violates trust, and strips hope from the very citizens striving to comply with the law.

Every Mosotho understands the vital role NMDS has played in building human capital. The Secretariat administers loan bursaries, revolving funds, and supports needy high school students.

However, the insistence that "proof of repayment" for any past bursary must be provided by even family members and or siblings who have not applied for a scholarship beams a very punitive and counterproductive reflection on today's government. I really don't understand how NMDS decides to punish a fully paid up student in the pretence that their spouse still has a debt while the spouse is not even the guarantor.

This policy is also disconnected from our current economic realities. According to the Bureau of Statistics (2024), Lesotho's unemployment rate stands at nearly 38 percent. How realistic is it to demand that jobless graduates repay old loans before pursuing further studies that cost the Government of Lesotho so little?

How just is it to deny international scholarships, funded through the goodwill of other nations, simply because young people cannot find employment at home? The irony is painful. On one hand, foreign governments extend scholarships to uplift Basotho youth. On the other, our own government closes the door on them, using outdated conditions that punish the poor instead of empowering them.

Honourable Minister, this policy may also infringe upon our legal and moral obligations. Section 28 of Lesotho's constitution as amended provides that **Provision for education in Lesotho shall endeavor to make education available to all and shall adopt policies aimed at securing that. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** affirms that education must be accessible without discrimination or undue barriers. Denying opportunities based on financial incapacity contradicts these principles.

I am also mindful that while foreign scholarships often cover tuition and stipends, anyone who has studied abroad knows that these stipends are rarely sufficient for survival. It is the NMDS top-up that helps Basotho navigate the real challenges of rent, food, and transport in foreign lands. Without it, many dreams collapse before they even begin.

Honourable Minister, I apologize for being a little personal, but you being an academic, you understand the transformative power of education not only for individuals but for their families, communities, and the nation. That is why I appeal to you directly. Under your leadership, NMDS can be reformed to reflect fairness, equity, and the urgent development needs of Lesotho in this century.

This is a call not only to you but also to the Director and managers of NMDS. If you have time Mme, please make time to visit the NMDS offices and you will witness for yourself the misery in the eyes of those seeking services there. As for parents and guardians who spent days there you will be humbled. The NMDS staff needs to be reminded that they are not merely administrators of bursaries; but are custodians of national dreams. The decisions made by NMDS determine whether young Basotho step into classrooms abroad or remain trapped at home with wasted potential. **Please review these outdated policies and replace them with systems that promote accountability without extinguishing ambition**. Consider flexible repayment schedules, income-contingent repayment models, or conditional waivers tied to national service.

Honourable Minister, this letter is written with respect and urgency. Lesotho cannot afford to waste talent at a time when our health system, economy, and governance structures cry out for skilled professionals. The future of Lesotho lies in the education of its people.

Let us not allow obsolete policies to silence ambition, waste talent, or discourage patriotism. With your leadership, NMDS can once again shine as the light it was meant to be.The Future is **NOW!**

Rot runs deep: How state assets fell into private hands

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The shocking state of Lesotho's government asset management has come to light, exposing a level of neglect and mismanagement so severe that countless state properties, ranging from vehicles and houses to valuable sites, have ended up in private hands without proper documentation.

The revelations by the Government Assets Search and Recovery Task Team (GASRTT) point to a systemic collapse of oversight, where dereliction of duty by responsible offices has allowed national resources to be treated like personal property.

The task team, which reports to the Prime Minister's Office, recently briefed the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on its findings, painting a disturbing picture of how far the rot has set in.

Established in March 2023 following a Cabinet resolution, the team was mandated to track, recover, and secure state assets. Instead, what it discovered is a trail of vanished vehicles, vandalised houses, encroached land, and a government crippled by its own negligence.

The government holds assets across the country and abroad, including official residences, offices, vehicles, heavy machinery, warehouses, and land.

The task team discovered that some residential properties belonging to the office of the Prime Minister are left unattended and now in a state of disrepair.

The Land Administration Authority (LAA) submitted a list of 756 government sites. Upon investigation, the task team found the reality to be far worse: 1,601 sites were surveyed, with 1,214 confirmed as government-owned.

Of these, 97 had been mysteriously transferred to private individuals, transactions that remain under investigation. An additional 232 sites were validated, but 59 are already in dispute and six have been encroached upon. The picture emerging is one of widespread land capture facilitated by state neglect.

The chaos extends to the government vehicle fleet. Official databases list 1,579 vehicles and 100 pieces of heavy machinery. Yet Fleet Services Lesotho records only 987 vehicles. In contrast, Engen Petroleum's fueling contract indicates that at one point nearly 3,900 vehicles were registered, with over 3,000 still active.

The discrepancies raise questions about where the missing vehicles have gone, who is using them, and why accountability mechanisms have collapsed.

In Maseru West, Florida, Europa, and Hillsview, vandalised government houses bear testimony to years of neglect. Broken windows, stripped fittings, and collapsing walls have turned once-valuable properties into ghostly shells. Instead of being refurbished for civil servants or sold transparently to raise revenue, they have been abandoned—easy prey for illegal occupants.

The task team has already issued eviction notices to individuals found unlawfully occupying government residences and sites, yet questions linger as to how such occupations were allowed in the first place.

Acting on tips in Hlotse, the task team uncovered names of individuals and companies occupying prime government sites, including Mochochonono Investment (Raheem Family Trust), Sigma Properties, Michael Keele, Boloetsi Senti, Nthabiseng Mofolo, Liam Paleho, Tefo Khoanyane, and Seqeno Khang. While some, such as Mochochonono Investments and Liam Paleho, have agreed to surrender properties, others have resisted.

A civil case has already been launched against Keele for encroachment on land belonging to the Ministry of Education. Ten other civil cases involving fraud and violations of the Land Act have been opened at the Leribe Police Station.

Despite limited resources, the task team has managed to recover a handful of assets, including two Nissan Hardbody NP300 vehicles, a tractor trailer, several laptops, and a number of houses and sites. But these represent only a fraction of what has been lost. The majority of state assets remain unaccounted for, tied up in disputes, or simply rotting away.

What makes the situation worse is the institutional paralysis surrounding the task team itself. Initially composed of personnel from the Prime Minister's Office, the Lesotho Defence Force, the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, the National Security Service, the Public Service, and the Ministry of Finance, the team's effectiveness has been hamstrung by the withdrawal of Ministry of Finance staff and the absence of a legal framework establishing its authority.

Without legislation backing its operations, its efforts remain vulnerable to political interference and bureaucratic inertia.

Adding to the frustration is the lack of funding. Removed from the Prime Minister's budget, the task team struggles to cover even basic operational expenses such as travel and accommodation when working outside Maseru. This underfunding has crippled its ability to pursue cases in the districts, allowing asset grabbers to operate with impunity.

The PAC has raised serious questions about how so many individuals could have gained control of government properties without documentation or accountability. The committee's hearings underscore the scale of dereliction in the ministries responsible for safeguarding public property. For years, officials appear to have either looked the other way or actively facilitated the handover of assets to private interests.

The task team has recommended deploying members of the security agencies to occupy abandoned government houses to prevent further illegal takeovers. Yet such stopgap measures cannot address the underlying rot. Without a comprehensive clean-up of records, stringent enforcement of laws, and prosecution of those who facilitated the looting, the state risks losing even more assets.

The revelations are not just about lost houses or vehicles. They point to a deeper crisis of governance. State resources meant to serve Basotho citizens have been captured through negligence and corruption. The consequences are far-reaching: depleted public housing for civil servants, weakened service delivery, and a loss of public trust in government institutions.

For ordinary Basotho, the sight of abandoned houses and missing vehicles symbolises a government unable to safeguard its own property, let alone deliver on its promises. The PAC hearings have pulled back the curtain, but unless urgent reforms are undertaken, the decay will only deepen.

The shocking state of government asset management is a mirror of wider dysfunction in the state. A culture of impunity and neglect has left public resources vulnerable to looting. Without decisive action, more properties will slip away, and the government will continue to bleed resources it can ill afford to lose.

Ministry of Trade revenue plummets by 72 percent

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development has suffered a dramatic 72 percent shortfall in planned revenue collection from business licence fees, highlighting the financial strain of the government's two-year waiver programme aimed at supporting small enterprises.

The waiver, introduced to encourage micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to join the formal economy, exempts new businesses from paying registration and licensing fees.

The initiative was designed to ease entry into the market, allowing young entrepreneurs and emerging enterprises to benefit from opportunities typically reserved for established firms, while creating pathways for them to expand and diversify.

This financial impact was revealed this week during a sitting of the National Assembly when the report of the Portfolio Committee on the Economic and Development Cluster on the Business Licensing Regulations (Amendment) Regulations, 2025 was tabled.

According to the Ministry, the regulations were crafted under sections 25 and 44 of the Business Licensing and Registration Act, 2019, reflecting government's broader policy direction to address the country's high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth.

Presenting the committee's report, Chairperson Sello Hakane told parliamentarians that the financial implications of the waiver had not been factored into the Ministry's budget.

"The Ministry stated that the Department of One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre (OBFC) has to-date only collected revenue of M582,891.00 from issuance of company licenses, compared to its planned collection of M1,369,500.00.

"Additionally, it has to-date only collected M962,000.00 for business registration, compared to its planned collection of M4,084,000.00. This indicates a cumulative loss of M3,908,609.00 (72%) compared to an approved collection of M9,608,000.00 for the Financial Year 2025/2026," reads the report.

On 2 September, the Minister of Trade, presented the amendment regulations, which were then referred to the committee for consideration in line with parliamentary standing orders.

The committee subsequently invited the Ministry to explain the new regulations and update legislators on progress made in registering new businesses.

Hakane said the Ministry confirmed that the waiver, which exempts businesses from paying fees between July 2025 and August 2027, has increased registrations but significantly reduced collections.

While the Ministry initially anticipated registering 7,000 new businesses, it has already registered 8,200. The influx of registrations, while positive for entrepreneurship, has directly translated into reduced revenue for the Ministry.

Hakane told the house that most of the newly registered businesses are youth-led, particularly by recent school leavers. He called for the creation of a specialised office within the Ministry to focus on youth entrepreneurship issues, ensuring that young business owners receive guidance and mentorship.

He further clarified that registration does not exempt these businesses from tax obligations. Once they become operational and profitable, they will still be liable to pay taxes, potentially offsetting some of the Ministry's immediate revenue losses.

Mokhethoaneng constituency legislator, Mokhothu Makhalanyane pressed the committee on what strategies were in place to boost the economy and close the revenue gap. In response, Hakane said the expectation is that increased business registration will, over time, result in higher tax collection as these enterprises mature and succeed.

He also emphasised the need for the Ministry to increase the number of inspectors to ensure compliance with tax laws. Another member of parliament (MP) Hlalele Letšaba supported the bill, stressing that while the Ministry's revenue may fall in the short term, the regulations are expected to stimulate job creation and promote self-reliance.

"This law should be passed as it is expected to create jobs for Basotho, particularly for young people. It will positively impact the country's economy and promote self-reliance," Letšaba said.

According to the Ministry, the initiative is already contributing to the economic ecosystem by reviving dormant companies, creating opportunities for vocational school graduates, and enabling established businesses to expand into new sectors.

Despite these benefits, some MPs raised concerns about the slow progress on certain provisions. Opposition legislator Lebohang Monaheng questioned the effectiveness of the new law without the implementation of Section 34, which designates nearly 50 business sectors exclusively for Basotho nationals. Progress on this section, he noted, has been slow, potentially undermining the intended protection for local entrepreneurs.

In adopting the report, the committee urged parliament to approve the amendment regulations along with its recommendations. Among these is the establishment of a dedicated office to provide guidance for new business applicants during the waiver period, helping them navigate the value chain and understand the broader business environment.

The committee further recommended expanding public education campaigns to help Basotho adapt to the changing business landscape. It also called for an increase in the number of inspectors to strengthen compliance, and for the decentralisation of the registration and licensing process to make it more transparent and accessible nationwide.

The Ministry's 72 percent revenue shortfall illustrates the tension between short-term fiscal pressures and long-term economic development goals. While the waiver has deprived the Ministry of millions in anticipated revenue, it has simultaneously unlocked opportunities for thousands of new businesses, many led by youth, who now have a formal platform to grow.

TENDER NOTICE

OPEN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE TENDER
LES/ IEC/TEN/PAN/ 2025-2026/04

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) invites tenders from interested companies for the Supply, Delivery and Assembling of Two Hardware Servers.

DESCIPTION

Supply, Delivery and Assembly of Two Hardware Servers.

Number	Description	Quantity
1	**Database Server**	1
2	**User Acceptance Testing (UAT)/Test Server**	1

BIDDING DOCUMENT

Tender document is obtainable from Election House Procurement Unit 2nd Floor, Corner Maluti and Caledon Road, Maseru West during working hours from 09:00am to 16:00 hours. Bidders must purchase a copy of tender document at a **NON-Refundable fee of M2 200.00 (Two Thousand and Two Hundred Maloti only])**. The procedure for obtaining the Tender document is as follows: **Payment of bid document must be made at 2nd Floor Election House, Finance Department. The receipt issued must be taken to the office of Procurement where document will be issued.**

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria have two weights Technical and Financial Weights. The pass mark for Technical Evaluation is 70% points. The Technical weight is 70% and Financial weight is 30%.

Technical weight 70%	**Financial weight 30%**
Specifications.	Price.
Experience	**Financial Capability:** Current bank statement for three months and a valuation letter from the bank as an assurance that the suppliers will be financed for incapable supplier. **OR** Tenderers own current financial statements with an audit opinion from a qualified independent Auditor.
Lead time.	

Category	Description	Weight
Hardware Compliance	Conformance to the specifications above	40%
Licensing & Software Compatibility	OS and hypervisor support and clarity on licensing	10%
Supplier Experience & Past Similar Work	Years in operation, similar project references (2024-2023,2023-2022)	10%
Certifications & Technical Expertise	Manufacturing Authorization Letter certifications, engineer CVs, certified technical staff	10%
Support and Warranty Provisions	Type of warranty, local support, response time, guarantees	10%
Implementation Plan	Delivery timeline, installation process, setup assistance	10%
Documentation & Training	Handover plan, training quality, and documentation completeness	5%
SLAs & Uptime Guarantees	Uptime commitments, escalation processes, and service penalties	5%

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

- Attach valid and relevant Traders License/ Business Identity Card.
- Attach valid copy of Tax Clearance certificate.
- The bonafide certificate should be filled, signed and the total cost should be written on the certificate.
- Provide **Bid Security of M 260,000.00** from the bank and be valid for three months.
- Manufacturing Authorisation letter must be filled, signed and stamped; it must be on letter head.
- Manufacturing Authorisation letter must be filled, signed and stamped, it must be on Business's letterhead.

N.B

- Bidders are informed that 5% source tax will be deducted from payments for local companies.
- Electronic bidding shall not be permitted.
- Payment will be done after delivery of goods / provision of service.
- Unavailability of mandatory documents will lead to disqualification of the bid.
- The price should be VAT inclusive for suppliers who qualify to collect VAT (attach VAT registration certificate).
- Provide recent two reference letters in a form of Purchase Orders or Contracts of similar work done within the last two financial years (2024-2023, 2023-2022).
- Provide original bidding document and four copies.
- Price should be quoted in Maloti currency.
- Provide three envelopes, the outer envelope clearly marked **"Supply, Delivery and Assembling of Hardware Servers"** the two inner envelopes, one clearly marked **"technical bid"** containing original and four copies and the other one clearly marked **"financial bid"** containing original and four copies.
- Provide access to credit facilities of 70% of the quoted price (Strictly form the bank).
- The price should be VAT inclusive for suppliers who qualify to collect VAT (attach VAT registration certificate).

Sealed bids bearing no identification of the suppliers should be deposited in the tender box at the Election House Ground Floor near security office **On or before 12:30pm Tuesday 4th November 2025** and will be opened on the same date at **14:30hours at 1st Floor Boardroom**. Envelopes should be clearly marked: **"Supply, Delivery and Assembling of Servers"**.
For further information, relating to the above information please contact,

The Procurement Unit
Independent Electoral Commission
Election House Maseru West
Maseru, Lesotho
Tel: +266 – 22 314991 / 59019086
E-mail: tenders@iec.org.ls

The Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.

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Procurement Unit-IEC

THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (MOE)

INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT)

FOR THE SUPPLY, DELIVERY, AND INSTALLATION OF HEAVY-DUTY PHOTOCOPIER MACHINE
ITT NO: MOE/ADMIN/1-2025/2026
DATE:4 SEPTEMBER,2025

1. The Ministry of Energy hereby invites tenders from eligible and qualified Bidders for the supply and delivery of one Heavy Duty Photocopier Machine. The specifications are provided in the bidding document.

2. A complete set of bidding documents, in English, may be purchased on the submission of a non-refundable fee of **Two Thousand (2000.00)** Maloti or its equivalent in any convertible currency, net of all bank charges from the **Procurement Unit, Ministry of Energy (MOE) Government Complex, Africa House 3rd Floor**. The method of payment will be by bank transfer/deposit only, payable at Central Bank of Lesotho, Account Name Main Revenue Epicor 10, Account Number 0101403715016, Reference Ministry of Energy sale of Tender document. The proof of payment must be taken to MOE Accounts Office at **Sekhametsi Building, 2nd Floor, Kingsway Maseru** where a receipt will be issued. The receipt should then be submitted to the Procurement Office where the bidding documents shall be obtained.

The Tender documents will be obtainable from the 15th September 2025 to 9th October, 2025

3. **Mandatory Documents**
   - Copy of valid Tax Clearance Certificate (certified at source).
   - Copy of Value Added Tax (VAT) Registration Certificate (certified at source).
   - Copy of valid Trader's License.
   - Company/Business Profile.
   - Reference letters from recent institutions served in the past two (2years)
   - Bid Security
   - Minimum experience of contracts of a similar nature and magnitude executed within the last two (2) years) support with one (1) copy of contract or purchase order).
   - Evidence of financial capacity (credit line from registered financial institution and audited accounts statement from registered Institution)
   - Completed certificate of bona fide tendering.

4. Sealed tenders bearing no identification of the tenderers and marked as follows **"SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF HEAVY-DUTY PHOTOCOPIER MACHINE"** must be deposited in the tender box situated at the Foyer at the Ministry's Head Quarters, Government Complex, Africa House 3rd Floor. The closing date for submission of tenders is on/before the **23rd October 2025**. Electronic bidding shall not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected.

5. Tenders will be opened in the presence of the tenderers' representatives who may choose to attend in person on the **23th October,2025 at 14:30hrs**. Tenders shall be submitted in one **(1) original and four (4) copies** in a sealed envelope.

INVITATION TO TENDER

SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF PROMOTIONAL AND BRANDING MATERIAL

ITT NO: LNDC-CC-2025002

Block A, Development House
Kingsway Road Private Bag A96
Maseru 100

TEL: 22231000 / 22312012
info@lndc.org.ls | www.lndc.org.ls

The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) invites sealed tenders from locally registered and experienced Marketing, Promotional and Branding Service providers for supply and delivery of Corporate Branding and Promotional material.

A **Compulsory pre-bid meeting** shall be held on **Thursday, 9th of October 2025 at 10:00 am, at Development House Block A, Level 7 (Audio Visual Room).**

Interested and eligible bidders may obtain the tender document by paying a non-refundable fee of **one thousand five hundred Maloti (M1,500.00) directly to LNDC bank account and submit proof of payment** at the Finance Office at LNDC Development House Block A, Level 6.

Tenders must be deposited in the **tender box** situated at the 1st Floor of LNDC Development House Block A, Reception area on or before **Thursday, 23rd of October 2025 at 10:00AM.**

The tender box will be opened publicly immediately thereafter. Submissions received after the deadline will not be considered.

All tenders must be accompanied by valid copies of traders' licence, tax clearance, and proof of authorized signatory. A Margin of Preference will be applicable as per the LNDC Procurement Policy.

The LNDC reserves the right to cancel the tender, reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof. The LNDC is not bound to accept the lowest or any bid.

LNDC

www.lndc.org.ls

NDSO *Health Reaching All In Lesotho*

NATIONAL DRUG SERVICE ORGANIZATION	DOC NO	L4-HRD-GEN-72
	Page	Page 1 of 2
	Revision No	00
	Effective Date	01 September 2025
	Revision Date	31 August 2027

Title: L4-GEN-HRD-72 Advertisement of a position

Applications are invited from suitably qualified and interested individuals to apply for the following position at National Drug Service Organization (NDSO) in the Logistics Department.

Position	Assistant Logistics Manager
Reports to	Logistics Manager
Required Minimum Qualifications	First Degree in Pharmacy or related qualification and registration with LMDPC
Required Minimum Experience	A minimum of three years' experience in stores management with proven knowledge of warehouse management system

1.0 Summary of the Job Description:
The Assistant Logistics Manager is responsible for ensuring the Good Warehousing Practices and management of the day-to-day activities within the warehouse including, but not limited to receiving, warehousing and dispatch.

2.0 List of Duties.

2.1 Receiving:
Develop, implement and review the procedures in relation to:
2.1.1 Mapping of all items received from the couriers.
2.1.2 Physical inspection of consignments from the Suppliers
2.1.3 Put away of products after receiving to their respective location in the warehouse.
2.1.4 Addressing queries associated with deliveries by Suppliers and return to vendors and from customers within specified time.
2.1.5 Efficient operation of WMS, so that the system operate with optimal efficiency.

2.2 Warehousing.
Develop, implement and review procedures in relation to:
2.2.1 Put away verification of stock and reconciliation of discrepancies identified during the activities.
2.2.2 Good warehousing practices for Pharmaceutical products in accordance with acceptable standards

2.3 Dispatch.
Develop, implement and review procedures in relation to:
2.3.1 Dispatch of products in according to the optimized routes.
2.3.2 Regular review of queries upon delivery.
2.3.3 Appropriate documentation and allocation of Human resource that will ensure efficient and effective delivery to the Customers.
2.3.4 Picking and packing of Habit Forming Drugs as per legal requirements

2.4 General.
Develop, implement and review procedures in relation to:
2.4.1 Adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
2.4.2 Security within the warehouse, products in transit and after delivery.
2.4.3 Implementation of the Performance Management System of the Organization.
2.4.4 Review of Warehouse Management system
2.4.5 Prepare, Compile and Analyze all CAPA reports
2.4.6 Employees under supervision meet respective target and all operational resources are in place.
2.4.7 Preparation of HFD registers and picking and packing of HFDs

3.0 Performance Standards.
3.1 Stock records accuracy level (target; >98%)
3.2 Average warehouse order processing. (Target; 3 days Govt and 0 day private).
3.3 Receiving turnaround time 48hrs
3.4 Customer query turnaround time 24hrs
3.3 Prepare, Compile and Analyze all CAPA reports

Interested individuals must send their application letters, CV and Certified Copies of educational certificates by hand to HR office , or email them to hr@ndso.org.ls on or before the closing date.

Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.

The closing date for applications is 10th October 2025 at 16:30.

Trump approves TikTok deal through executive order, Vance says business valued at $14 billion

- ***President Donald Trump on Thursday signed an executive order approving a proposed deal that would keep TikTok alive in the U.S.***
- ***Under the deal's terms, which China must still approve, a new joint-venture company will oversee TikTok's U.S. business while ByteDance holds less than 20% of the stock.***
- ***Vice President JD Vance said the transaction values the business at $14 billion, but no purchase price was provided.***

Jonathan Vanian

President Donald Trump on Thursday (yesterday) signed an executive order approving a proposal that would keep TikTok alive in the U.S. in a transaction that Vice President JD Vance said values the business at $14 billion.

The deal satisfies the requirements of a national security law requiring China-based ByteDance to sell TikTok's U.S. operations or face an effective ban in the country, according to the executive order. Under the terms, which China must still approve, a new joint-venture company will oversee TikTok's U.S. business, with ByteDance retaining less than a 20% stake.

Enterprise tech giant Oracle, Silver Lake and the Abu Dhabi-based MGX investment fund will be main investors in TikTok's U.S. business, controlling a roughly 45% stake in the entity, while ByteDance investors and new holders will own 35%, CNBC's David Faber reported earlier Thursday.

No representatives from ByteDance were present at the signing, and the company hasn't acknowledged that a transaction is taking place. No purchase price was mentioned, and there's no indication that the Chinese government has made changes to laws that would be necessary for a deal to take place.

President Trump said Chinese President Xi Jinping gave the deal the go ahead. Vance said the Chinese government put up some resistance before the agreement.

Under the planned arrangement, Oracle will oversee the app's security operations and continue providing cloud computing services for the new TikTok U.S. firm, Faber reported, citing sources familiar with the deal. Trump said Oracle CEO Larry Ellison is involved in the ownership group and that his company is "playing a very big part."

"It's owned by Americans, and very sophisticated Americans," Trump said at the signing. "This is going to be American operated all the way."

ByteDance investors like General Atlantic, Susquehanna and Sequoia, are expected to contribute equity in the new TikTok U.S. entity, sources told Faber. ByteDance was reportedly valued at $330 billion last month. Analysts have previously estimated TikTok's U.S. operations could be worth between $30 billion to $35 billion.

The deal does not involve the federal government taking an equity stake or a so-called golden share in TikTok's U.S. operations, CNBC reported Monday.

Trump said over the weekend that conservative media baron Rupert Murdoch and his son Lachlan Murdoch could be involved in the TikTok deal as well as Ellison and Dell Technologies CEO Michael Dell.

The president last week signed an executive order that extended ByteDance's deadline to divest TikTok's U.S. operations or be subject to a national security law originally signed by former President Joe Biden. The order prevents the Department of Justice from enforcing the national security law that would penalize app store operators like Apple and Google and internet service providers for providing services to TikTok's U.S. operations.

CNBC

Mountain Sizzlers fire up Lesotho with bold flavors and big dreams

Fusi Hlaoli

On Saturday, 20 September 2025, Mmelesi Lodge in the historic foothills of Thaba-Bosiu came alive with smoke, fire, and the irresistible aroma of sizzling meats.

The Mountain Sizzlers, a newly established group of pitmasters, hosted an exclusive daytime preview reception that gave Basotho a mouth-watering glimpse of what lies ahead at their highly anticipated event next year.

Guests were treated to an extraordinary culinary journey featuring bold flavors and smoked delicacies. But it was the exotic crocodile meat that stole the spotlight, leaving many attendees both surprised and delighted.

Executive Chef and Pitmaster Anton Vermeulen, alongside Lesotho's own Refiloe Mokone and Libuseng Rakhomo, brought their skills to the grill, showcasing a powerful mix of creativity and global influences.

The Mountain Sizzlers was established earlier this year by Mokone and Rakhomo, who drew inspiration from years of exposure to the art of smoking meats in South Africa. Their idea was simple yet groundbreaking: bring the energy, knowledge, and fire of competitive pitmaster culture home to Lesotho.

Their vision received a major boost in August 2025 when they competed at the South Africa Fire Smoke and Meat Association Championships (SAFSMA). Facing off against fifteen seasoned competitors, the duo secured third place in the beef category and fifth place in pork, a remarkable achievement for first-time entrants.

Speaking at the preview event, Rakhomo explained that their aim is to share this energy with Basotho, building a culture of food, meat smoking, and pitmaster experiences that connect people through fire and flavor.

For Mokone, however, The Mountain Sizzlers vision extends beyond food culture into entrepreneurship. He emphasised the importance of recognising food as a viable market where chefs and pitmasters in Lesotho can carve out professional opportunities.

Too many graduates and skilled cooks, he said, are overlooked, and initiatives like this can help them market themselves while demonstrating the value of their expertise.

In his words, the goal is to fill the gap for chefs and pitmasters in Lesotho by creating opportunities that are both creative and economically sustainable. This fusion of food and entrepreneurship, Mokone stressed, is about giving local talent the confidence to take up space in the industry.

The preview event also benefited from the presence of Executive Chef and Pitmaster Anton Vermeulen, a well-known figure in South Africa for his mastery of wild meats. He shared lessons from his experiences at major food events across the border and encouraged Basotho to embrace the upcoming festival next year, promising an unforgettable line-up of wild meat smoking experiences.

One of the highlights of the day was Anton's masterclass on crocodile meat, where he explained his special method of preparation. He revealed that he marinated the meat with pineapple and honey, serving it alongside sweetened potatoes.

The combination, he explained, works because crocodile tastes like a cross between chicken and fish, while the acidity of pineapple refreshes the palate. To fully appreciate the flavors, he advised tasting the three components together.

For many guests, the opportunity to try crocodile for the first time was nothing short of extraordinary.

Before closing his session, Anton made a heartfelt callout to all Basotho, urging them to support The Mountain Sizzlers in big numbers at next year's event.

"This is only the beginning. Next year, we are bringing big smoking to Lesotho, and we need Basotho to stand with us, celebrate with us, and show the world what fire and flavor mean in this country," he said.

He also appealed to companies, sponsors, and local businesses to back the initiative, noting that their support could elevate the event into one of the most exciting culinary festivals in the region.

"With strong backing, we can build something that not only feeds the appetite but also grows Lesotho's economy and creates real opportunities," Anton added.

The crowd responded with enthusiasm, voicing their excitement not only for the food but also for the promise of next year's event.

Comments from attendees captured the mood of the afternoon: "Looking forward to next year's event," one said.

Another shared, "The crocodile was the best, it stole the show." A third remarked, "I never believed I would taste crocodile meat in my life. I cannot wait for next year to try even more wild dishes."

These sentiments reflected not only curiosity but also pride that such experiences are finally being introduced locally.

Among the special guests was South African content creator Dali Monageng, who attended to capture the atmosphere and document the unique event. His presence highlighted the potential for such gatherings to attract attention beyond Lesotho's borders, showcasing the country as an emerging hub for distinctive culinary and entertainment experiences.

Pitmaster Libuseng Rakhomo

The preview therefore served as both a cultural celebration and an international networking opportunity.

As the afternoon drew to a close, one thing was clear: the event was more than just a tasting. It was a cultural statement. By combining tradition, entrepreneurship, and international expertise, The Mountain Sizzlers are positioning themselves as trailblazers in Lesotho's food and entertainment industry.

As Mokone explained, the group's aim is to showcase what can be achieved with smoke and fire in Lesotho, while creating a platform for those who want to share their experiences with food and meat smoking.

Ntate Stunna: The voice of a generation

Chris Theko

Few artists embody the spirit of a nation quite like Ntate Stunna. From his humble beginnings in Lesotho to the international stage, his journey has been a mix of cultural pride, bold experimentation, and unshakable resilience. In this exclusive conversation with Newsday, Stunna opens up about his career growth, the birth of Free Strata, his vision for Sesotho Fashioneng, his highly anticipated album Mosotho Gauteng, and the legacy he hopes to leave behind.

Newsday: People often call you "the voice of a generation." When you look back at your journey, what does that mean to you?

Ntate Stunna (NS): Like everything in life, it came in stages. When I started out, I was just looking up to the biggest local guys at that time. I just wanted my reach to be as big as Lesotho. But when my music started echoing as far as the Free State, that was when I started dreaming bigger.

Being called the 'voice of a generation' actually makes sense to me, because I have grown with my people. Some of them discovered my music back in high school, and now they are part of the working class — still entertained by the same voice they fell in love with over a decade ago. It is humbling to know my sound has been the soundtrack to their growth.

Newsaday: What were some of the key moments that made you feel like you were really breaking through?

NS: There have been a few key moments. One was my first stadium performance — hearing a crowd rap my lyrics word for word hit different. Another was crossing the border, performing in neighboring countries, and realising my music was resonating beyond Lesotho. Then there are moments like winning my first two SAMA awards, hearing my song on radio for the first time, or even seeing strangers wearing Sesotho Fashioneng. Each of those moments was like a validation stamp.

Newsday: Coming from Lesotho, what challenges have shaped your path?

NS: The industry here is still growing, so there aren't as many structures or resources compared to bigger markets. Things like quality studio time, marketing budgets, or even access to platforms were a real struggle.

But those challenges built my character. They pushed me to innovate and create my own path instead of waiting for opportunities. And I think that's why people connect with my story — they see the hustle, they see someone who started with nothing but belief, and still managed to break barriers.

Newsday: How has your music evolved over the years?

NS: I guess I have always been rooted in culture. During the days when I dropped "Mookho," my style was exposed to that sound which was trending a lot back then, and I fell in love with it. My music has always been inspired by what I consume. When I was into trap, my style changed, and later on when amapiano first became big in the mainstream, I did a song called "Skupu," even though the main genre locally was tshepe.

Newsday: You have pioneered the subgenre Free Strata. How did it come about?

NS: I was inspired by the uniqueness of the sound created by 2Point1 in their track "Batho Bana ke Bana," which was a hit back in 2018/19. The one thing that caught my attention was the drum set in it. Later, I worked with 2Point1 and we released "Stimela," which was a hit but we couldn't classify it.

So because of that classification issue, we decided to give the subgenre a name and push it as a Free State and Lesotho amapiano sound. That's how Free Strata was born.

Newsday: Do you see Free Strata growing into a bigger movement?

NS: I hope it does grow into a big movement, but because it is a subgenre, it will depend a lot on the growth of amapiano as a whole.

Newsday: The Sesotho Fashioneng festival is returning in December. What do you hope it becomes?

NS: I love that Basotho took the event very seriously in its first edition. I want to see it grow into not a Ntate Stunna event, but a Basotho festival that celebrates big headlines such as Sannere, Litsepe, and others over the years. Let it be a Basotho celebration of our music and culture in a modern way.

Newsday: How do you see the link between music and fashion?

NS: A musician is heavily defined by their appearance and how they represent themselves. Music and fashion go hand in glove, which is why I have a clothing line called Sesotho Fashioneng. It is my style, and I wear it. We even see it with some awards, where an artist will be recognized for best style.

Newsday: Fans are anticipating your upcoming album Mosotho Gauteng. What's the story behind it?

NS: The story is that everything is a result of what I've been exposed to. I see myself as "six gun spice" — when I come into something, I have to blend in, hence the title Mosotho Gauteng. It's about me going after my dreams as a Mosotho wanting to make it outside my home country and everything I have ever known. So it's all about my experience.

Newsday: What kind of sound can people expect from it?

NS: It was planned to be a dance album, so not much Free Strata, but other sounds that are mainly dance influenced. We decided to release it as singles because it gives us an idea of what people are consuming more, and singles perform way better than albums lately. The idea was to be spontaneous, and that's what people will hear. All the singles were dropped after reaching at least 100,000 streams of the previous release.

Newsday: How does it feel to inspire a generation of young Basotho?

NS: It is such a big deal to me and it warms my heart. That's where I used to be growing up, being a fan, and I know how it feels. So it means I've created a path that inspires the next generation.

Newsday: What responsibility comes with being the voice of a generation?

NS: My biggest responsibility is that I have to make it. I made it this far, but I have an even bigger responsibility to end well. There are a lot of big names that made it but fame and money destroyed them. I don't want to be one of those. I'm in a position where parents use me as an example of success when their kids say they want to do music.

Newsday: Beyond music, what is the bigger dream?

NS: I am inspired by 50 Cent — the rapper and businessman he is. He started and ended well, moving from being a rapper to being a businessman in multiple sectors. That's exactly what I want. I want Penya Play to be a big production company in the film industry. I'm already investing in it and looking forward to the growth.

Newsday: Before we close, can you share what Malome Vector meant to you?

NS: Vector has indeed left a void that cannot be closed until today. Sometimes I get mad at him for leaving me without a warning, but it is one of those things where no one knew, and that is why it still hurts. On a personal and professional level, there are things I could only share with him and him alone , that is the gap he left, things I can't tell him now.

Matlama's slow league start raises alarm bells

Seabata Mahao

For a club that has built its reputation on storming title races from the very first whistle of the season, Matlama Football Club's sluggish start to the 2025/26 Vodacom Premier League (VPL) campaign is raising more questions than answers.

Last Sunday, Tse Putsoa were held to a frustrating goalless draw by league newcomers Maroala FC at the LCS Grounds, a result that followed a 1–1 stalemate against Lijabatho FC on the opening weekend.

Two games, two draws, and just a single goal to show for it, hardly the statement Matlama supporters had hoped for. Traditionally, Matlama are known to set the early pace in the title race, using their pedigree and attacking flair to strike fear into rivals.

This time, however, they look a shadow of that formidable side, and for new head coach Shalane Lehohla, the slow start has added an unwelcome layer of pressure as he tries to impose his philosophy on a squad still finding its shape.

Following the stalemate against Maroala, Lehohla admitted that his team fell short of expectations.

"In every game, our goal is to win, but football can go either way," he said.

"We are still building a new, fresh team, and most players are not yet used to playing together. It is going to take time to find our rhythm."

The coach has been keen to emphasise patience, describing the season as "a marathon." Yet, in the context of Matlama's lofty standards, patience is a rare commodity. Their faithful supporters, accustomed to blistering starts and dominant displays, have found little consolation in the rhetoric of "building phases" and "long-term vision."

Lehohla has already made bold moves by introducing several new faces into the starting line-up, a clear attempt to stamp his identity on the team. But with just one goal in two matches, the experiment has so far looked more like a gamble than a masterstroke.

"The most important aspect is scoring goals. No matter how well we play, if we do not put the ball in the net, it counts for nothing. We need to build the players' confidence and normalise scoring in every match," Lehohla admitted.

That attacking bluntness has been another red flag. Matlama's pedigree as perennial title challengers has always been underpinned by firepower up front. Now, the lack of cutting edge is fast becoming the story of their season.

"If the team does not win, supporters will be disappointed, but what matters is sticking together and working towards a stronger side," Lehohla added, clearly aware of the growing tension in the terraces.

Meanwhile, their opponents Maroala had every reason to celebrate. For the rookies, a goalless draw against a club of Matlama's stature was a milestone in their maiden top-flight campaign. Head coach Kenny Mohooanyane hailed the result as progress after his side opened the season with a 2–0 loss to LDF FC.

"Coming from a defeat to a draw is progress. We managed to correct some of the mistakes from our first game," Mohooanyane said.

He also admitted that his players initially showed "too much respect" to a heavyweight like Matlama but praised their improved mentality and spirit.

"There was talk that Maroala has been given tough fixtures to start the season, but in truth, there are no tough games. It simply means we are now competing at the highest level," he said.

The earned point was a confidence booster for Maroala, while it was another reminder for Matlama that their season has begun in a crawl rather than a sprint.

Matlama next face a wounded LDF FC side, following their 2-1 defeat by the resurgent Linare FC. The LDF fixture could further expose their current fragility if improvements are not made.

Lioli cling to slim hope of CAF miracle

Seabata Mahao

Lioli Football Club's much-anticipated return to continental competition ended in disappointment last Saturday when they suffered a 3–0 defeat to South African giants Orlando Pirates in the first leg of the CAF Champions League preliminary round.

The match, hosted by Lioli in Free State South Africa, saw Tse Nala make a come back to Africa's elite competition after years of absence.

Yet despite their heavy defeat, the Teyateyaneng outfit insists they are not ready to throw in the towel ahead of the decisive second leg in Johannesburg.

Lioli now face an uphill battle in tomorrow's return leg, where they must overturn a three-goal deficit against one of Africa's most experienced and formidable clubs.

And while the task may appear insurmountable, head coach Bongani Maseko believes his side still has a chance.

"We are not giving up. It was a tough result, yes, but we have seen comebacks before in football. We will regroup and fight until the end," Maseko said after last Saturday's loss.

This year's campaign marked Lioli's first CAF Champions League appearance since 2017. The club was unable to compete in last season's edition due to Lesotho's stadium infrastructure failing to meet CAF requirements, as confirmed by the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA).

Having reclaimed the domestic league title earlier this year, Lioli had returned to

Lioli FC in CAF preliminary stage action with Orlando Pirates Fc

continental football with high hopes, those fading hopes now rest on tomorrow's demanding assignment.

In Saturday's clash, Lioli began strongly, pressing Pirates high up the pitch and defending with discipline. For the entire first half, they held firm under sustained pressure, frustrating the home side and going into the break with the scores still level.

The second half, however, proved decisive. Pirates' striker Tshegofatso Mabasa finally broke through in the 53rd minute with a powerful header, capitalising on a well-worked attack down the right flank. Just five minutes later, Mabasa doubled his tally, punishing a defensive lapse as Lioli struggled to regain composure.

The Soweto giants sealed the game in the closing stages when substitute Oswin Appollis calmly slotted in a third goal, leaving Lioli with a mountain to climb in the return leg.

Reflecting on the defeat, Maseko admitted that his side were undone by Pirates' tactical adjustments after the break but credited his players' resilience in the opening 45 minutes.

"We performed well in the first half, especially in our transitions and defensive shape," Maseko noted.

"But in the second half, they changed their approach. We tried to close the central areas, but they attacked us from the flanks. That is where we got caught."

Lioli's coach conceded that his side's attempt to chase a goal left them vulnerable to Pirates' counter-attacks but stressed the importance of learning from the experience.

"We were aiming to get at least one goal. Unfortunately, we got caught on the counter while pushing forward. Still, we take some positives and will review the footage carefully to prepare for the second leg."

On the other side, Pirates head coach Abdeslam Ouaddou praised his team's tactical discipline and flexibility, acknowledging that Lioli's defensive organisation had forced them to adapt.

"We expected a compact and defensive Lioli, so we tried to break through the middle early on. When that did not work, we moved the ball wide and took advantage. Our second-half substitutions gave us more options up front, and that changed the game."

Ouaddou also reflected on the pressures that come with managing a club of Pirates' stature.

"With a big team like Pirates, expectations are high. You are working with top players, but keeping them focused and in sync is always a challenge," he concluded.

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LCS stadium bounces back

Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) Ground

Seabata Mahao

The Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) Ground has officially been readmitted as a host venue for Vodacom Premier League (VPL) matches, ending a season-long exile caused by a sponsorship clash.

For the entire 2024/25 campaign, LCS Football Club was forced to play its home fixtures at alternative venues after the Premier League Management Committee (PLMC) and league sponsors Vodacom Lesotho barred the use of the facility.

The decision followed a dispute over branding, as the stadium prominently displayed advertisements for Vodacom's direct competitor, Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL).

The standoff left LCS without access to its home ground, forcing the team to shoulder logistical and financial burdens associated with renting other stadiums. The return of the ground ahead of the 2025/26 season now comes as a major relief to the club and its supporters.

LCS's Public Relations Officer, Pheko Ntobane, explained that the ETL branding deal was arranged at a higher, institutional level by the Lesotho Correctional Services management, which manages the facility, and not by the football club itself.

"We had a one-year branding contract with ETL, which is still our sponsor in many other aspects. The football club was not involved in the decision to place branding at the ground," Ntobane explained.

He added that after negotiations with Vodacom Lesotho and the PLMC, a solution was reached.

"After fruitful discussions with our sponsors, Vodacom Lesotho, and the PLMC, we have reached a mutual understanding. Econet agreed to relocate their branding to a new location."

With the issue now resolved, the stadium underwent a thorough inspection by the Club Licensing Committee (CLC) and was approved for use in the new season. Ntobane confirmed that the ground now meets all league requirements.

Since its reinstatement, the LCS Ground has already hosted three Vodacom Premier League matches, including double-headers, signalling its full return to the local football calendar.

"This season started on a high note. We are now back in our own backyard, and that is important not only for performance but also for revenue generation," Ntobane said.

The ground's revival has also sparked demand for fixtures, with bookings on the rise. This weekend, it will stage another double-header, beginning with Lijabatho against LMPS FC, followed by a showdown between Members and the home side, LCS FC.

Ntobane expressed optimism that returning to the stadium will boost the club's campaign; "This will assist in shaping our club to compete for the title this season."

For supporters, the LCS Ground's comeback restores both tradition and convenience. Beyond the sentimental value, having their home ground back ensures stronger fan turnout and greater match-day revenue, strengthening the club's financial position.

The readmission of the LCS Ground also represents a positive step for football administration in Lesotho, demonstrating that disputes between sponsors and institutions can be resolved constructively. It brings renewed energy to the Vodacom Premier League, underlining the importance of collaboration in sustaining infrastructure and club stability.