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# Former MPs in financial distress

**...As bid to enrich themselves after leaving office collapses**



## Staff Reporter

Dozens of former members of the 10th Parliament, whose term ended in July 2022, are pleading with the current Parliament for financial rescue after multiple attempts to double their retirement gratuities were rejected by the courts and pension authorities.

The beleaguered former MPs are in panic mode after the Public Officers' Defined Contribution Pension Fund refused to pay them a 50 percent take-home gratuity, a benefit they insist they awarded themselves before leaving office.

The Fund, acting strictly within the law, paid them the lawful 25 percent instead.

The Public Officers' Defined Contribution Pension Fund, established under the 2008 Act, provides retirement benefits to public officers and is managed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Minister of Finance in consultation with the Minister of Public Service.

At the time the 10th Parliament dissolved in July 2022, the law governing retirement benefits for MPs, the Specified Offices Defined Contribution Pension Fund Act, clearly provided a 25 percent gratuity.

But the former legislators argue they amended the Act before dissolution to double their own gratuities to 50 percent.

Their biggest problem is that the law they rely on never actually existed at the time their term ended.

They petitioned parliament earlier this year to intervene. Their petition was referred to the portfolio committee on law and public safety cluster for consideration in March 2025 and they were consequently

inviting to a briefing session in April.

According to a report tabled this week by Parliament's Portfolio Committee, the Bill increasing gratuities, the Specified Offices Defined Contribution Pension Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2022, had indeed been passed by both Houses but had not been signed by the King when Parliament dissolved in July 2022.

After the term expired, then-Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro declared a state of emergency, and His Majesty King Letsie III recalled Parliament. During that controversial recall, MPs hurriedly passed a series of laws, including the same pension amendment.

The King assented in September 2022.

But that manoeuvre was later struck down by the High Court after Kananelo Boloetse and Advocate Little Tuke challenged the legality of the emergency declaration and the recall of Parliament. The Court found both unconstitutional and nullified all laws passed and assented to during the recalled sitting.

The government appealed, and lost.

That should have put the matter to rest, but in December 2022, the newly elected 11th Parliament revived six Bills that had already passed both Houses before the July dissolution, including the pension amendment.

Led by Minister Selibe Mochoboroane and seconded by MP Lekhetho Rakuoane, the House reinstated these Bills under Standing Order No.105, and they were finally assented to, again.

The controversial amendment, therefore,

only became law months after the former MPs had ceased to be MPs.

Nonetheless, the aggrieved former legislators went to the High Court to demand that the December 2022 law apply retroactively to enrich them. The High Court refused to grant their prayer.

In a surprising twist, the portfolio committee seems to suggest that the invalidated September 2022 version survived the court ruling, a claim with no legal footing.

It argued in its report that Speaker Sephiri Motanyane signed the certificate of the Bill on 11 July 2022, two days before parliament dissolved, making it a "finished Bill".

On this basis, the committee claims that the High Court's ruling in Boloetse and Tuke, which invalidated all laws passed during the unconstitutional recall of Parliament, should not have affected this particular Bill.

Describing the approach as "legal overreach," the committee insists that it was wrong to treat the certified bill the same as the unfinished ones.

In essence, it is relying on a procedural certificate to claim a benefit that the law did not grant at the relevant time, while dismissing a constitutional ruling that invalidated the entire emergency recall.

But the Fund acted lawfully. The law at the time of the MPs' exit provided 25 percent, not 50 percent.

The amendment that approved 50 percent came after they left office.

And the version they try to resurrect was struck down by the courts and stayed down.

Yet the former MPs want parliament to intervene so that taxpayers can fund a gra-

tuity increase they rushed through, failed to complete on time, and which the courts ultimately invalidated.

But even the December 2022 law is on shaky legal ground. In 2023, Boloetse challenged the legality of Standing Order No. 105B, arguing that the Constitution does not permit a new Parliament to revive business that had lapsed when the previous Parliament was dissolved.

Although he initially lost in the High Court, the Court of Appeal overturned that decision and struck down the standing order.

The appellate court noted that Section 78 of the Constitution, which outlines the law-making process, does not address whether Bills that lapsed upon dissolution may be reinstated. Subsection (2), the judges said, simply establishes where Bills must originate, the National Assembly.

"The clause must be interpreted within the context and purpose of parliamentary democracy. The principle that Parliament cannot bind its successors, long recognised in many systems, applies equally in constitutional democracies," the judgment stated.

The court went on: "Standing Order No. 105B does not comply with the spirit and purpose of Section 78 of the Constitution, interpreted within the context of Lesotho's constitutional democracy and monarchy. The appeal must succeed."

As a result, Parliament was restrained from promulgating any Bill that had lapsed at the dissolution of the 10th Parliament, and the King was specifically barred from giving Royal Assent to any Bill unfinished at that dissolution.

Although the Court of Appeal did not nullify laws enacted under the defective procedure, only because Boloetse had not asked for such relief, the decision made it clear that the entire process of reviving the bills was unconstitutional.

The portfolio committee itself acknowledged this uncomfortable truth. In its report, it stated: "C of A (CIV) 62/2023 Kananelo Boloetse vs The Speaker of the National Assembly — known as Boloetse Two — dealt a fatal legal blow to the reinstatement of Gazette Legal Notice No. 111 VOL 67 of the Specified Offices Defined Contribution Pension Fund (Amendment) Act dated 23rd December 2022.

"Standing Order 105(B), which reinstated the bills that were affected by the dissolution of the 10th Parliament, was declared unconstitutional, and therefore, the bills reinstated under that Standing Order have been affected. Unless the Gazette dated 1st September 2022 is considered the lawful and constitutional act, the petitioners and public officers have no new pension law."

The committee has made a controversial recommendation. It suggested that Parliament consider invoking Section 3(a) of the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, which allows for the reinstatement of bills tabled in the previous Parliament, potentially with retrospective effect.

The Tenth Amendment was only enacted in August 2025. Even so, Boloetse, the Advocates for the Supremacy of the Constitution (SECTION 2), and the Law Society of Lesotho are challenging its constitutionality, and the matter is still before the High Court.

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# Basotho forced to pay bribes for IDs: Afrobarometer Report

## Staff Reporter

New data has revealed a sharp rise in bribery within essential public services, with the process of obtaining a government-issued identity document emerging as the single most corruption-prone interaction Basotho face.

According to the latest survey findings published on Wednesday this week, more than one in five people (22 percent) who tried to obtain an ID document in the past year said they were forced to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to get what they needed.

This marks a six-percentage-point spike since 2022, and this signals a worsening trend in a country already struggling to contain petty corruption.

These findings come from Afrobarometer, a non-partisan pan-African research network that has conducted reliable, in-person public-opinion surveys across the continent since 1999, including in Lesotho as part of its 2024/2025 Round 10 survey.

By contrast, fewer citizens reported paying bribes for police assistance (12 percent) or medical care (four percent), even though these services are also essential for daily survival.

The fact that acquiring an ID, something that determines one's access to social support, economic opportunities, banking, education, healthcare, voting, and travel, is now the most bribery-ridden public service exposes the extent to which state failure is undermining citizens' basic rights.

The responsibility for issuing national IDs and passports in Lesotho lies with the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police (MoLG-HAP).

Within the Ministry, the Department of Passport Services handles applications, printing and distribution of travel documents, while the National Identity and Civil Registration (NICR) unit deals

with national identity cards.

Under the legal framework of the Lesotho Passports and Travel Documents Act, 2018, the power to issue passports and travel documents is vested in the Minister.

Since 2022, Minister Lebona Lephema has held this portfolio. Under Lephema's leadership, the ministry has publicly acknowledged serious challenges in passport and ID issuance, including a shortage of blank document stock, budget constraints, procurement issues, and supply-chain disruptions.

In April 2024, the ministry acknowledged to the parliamentary Law and Public Safety Committee that it lacked the budget to procure enough blank ID cards.

Reports from the NICR indicated that no IDs were procured during the previous fiscal year, leaving only 1,560 cards in stock, and forcing district offices to ration issuance, prioritising only emergency and high-priority cases.

Seven of the 10 most pressing issues Basotho want government to address, according to the Afrobarometer survey, relate directly to broken or failing public services.

After unemployment, which remains the nation's top concern at 63 percent, citizens cited infrastructure and roads (47 percent), crime and security (29 percent), water supply (22 percent), and electricity (20 percent) as urgent priorities needing immediate action.

Education and health, two pillars any functioning society should consider sacred, barely inspire confidence, each mentioned by one in 10 respondents as an area demanding urgent government attention.

Majorities of respondents said the government was doing a "fairly bad" or "very bad" job on nearly every major service they rely on. 65 percent said the government was failing to provide adequate



water and sanitation.

60 percent said it was failing to fight crime, 58 percent said it was failing to maintain roads and bridges, while 58 percent said it was failing to provide reliable electricity.

52 said it was failing to meet educational needs.

Only basic health services escaped this pattern of disapproval, with 55 percent saying government was doing a "good job," a fragile bright spot in an otherwise bleak landscape.

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# DCEO reports over M33 million in recoveries

**Ntsoaki Motaung**

The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) has reported that a total of M33,601,142.53 was recovered through asset recovery proceedings between April and November 2025.

This figure was highlighted during a media briefing delivered by Director-General Sello Mantšo on Wednesday.

Mandated to prevent and combat corruption, economic offences, and money laundering in Lesotho, the DCEO emphasised a renewed focus on being preventative and proactive, rather than reactive.

According to Mantšo, the Asset Recovery and Enforcement Unit, responsible for acquiring assets suspected to be proceeds of crime, achieved significant recoveries during this period.

Five forfeiture orders were secured, covering five movable properties valued at M3,183,000, twelve immovable properties worth M4,350,000, and cash totaling M14,618,142.52, which together amounted to M22,151,142.53.

In addition, one restraining order was executed for two immovable properties valued at M7,500,000, while two preservation orders involved three movable properties worth M1,450,000 and one immovable property worth M2,500,000, totaling M3,950,000.

Collectively, these recoveries account for the reported M33,601,142.53.

Further successes were reported by the Integrity and Compliance Audits Unit, which conducted targeted audits in high-risk sectors.

A physical inspection and audit of the old-age pensions scheme revealed systematic abuse, resulting in immediate recovery of funds and detection of fraud. The DCEO identified payments made to 187 deceased pen-



sioners, leading to a direct recovery of M345,850, which was deposited into government accounts.

Three suspected fraud cases were also uncovered, including an underage recipient, a Chief claiming benefits for two deceased pensioners, and a relative collaborating with the Chief in another instance.

District-specific recoveries included Qacha's Nek (July 2025) - M127,350, Quthing (August 2025) - M60,800, Thaba-Tseka (September 2025) - M55,100, and Mokhotlong (October 2025) - M102,600, which correspond exactly to the total pension recoveries.

The Unit also deployed officers to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Local Government, Chiefs and Police (Passport & NICR) and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to monitor vehicle registration processes and en-

sure corruption-free service delivery, following public complaints about poor service. Officers were additionally deployed at Maseru District Hospital to oversee service delivery.

A major milestone was reported regarding Asset Declarations, which run from April to March annually. The DCEO announced that all Cabinet Ministers have submitted their asset declaration forms, a historic first for Lesotho.

To date, a total of 280 submissions have been received from key government officials, including the Prime Minister, Ministers, Government Secretary, Principal and Deputy Principal Secretaries, heads of oversight bodies, the Ombudsman, the Accountant General, DCEO officials, LAA officials, and senior public officials.

Mantšo acknowledged the challenges faced by the DCEO, citing legal

bottlenecks and public reluctance to report corruption. "Slow prosecution processes, legislative gaps, and lack of a specialised anti-corruption court, combined with fear of retaliation due to insufficient whistleblower protection, reduce public confidence," he said.

Despite these hurdles, Mantšo stressed that the DCEO remained committed to promoting integrity, accountability, and transparent governance. "Continued collaboration with the public, civil society, and the media will be essential in sustaining momentum against corruption. We consider the media our strategic partner and value its significant role in the fight against corruption. Corruption cannot be fought by enforcement alone. Cultural change matters, and we need the media to play this role," he added.

# Ombudsman throws down the gauntlet

**Ntsoaki Motaung**

The Office of the Ombudsman has submitted a Special Report to Parliament over the Ministry of Health's (MoH) refusal to comply with a High Court order to pay Motsoako Catering (Pty) Ltd a debt of over M9.5 million.

The complaint was lodged by Malefetsane Chele, managing director of Motsoako Catering, after the MoH failed to settle a debt arising from a default judgment in the com-

pany's favour.

Motsoako Catering had won a tender in January 2019 to provide catering services at the National Health Training Centre (NHTC), but was unable to begin operations due to legal challenges from outgoing caterers and a student strike.

Subsequent policy changes meant many students no longer used the cafeteria.

On June 10, 2020, the Commercial Court ordered the MoH to pay Mot-

soako Catering M9,517,384.80, plus 18.5 percent interest and a 10 percent collection commission. Despite this legally binding judgment, the MoH has not complied.

The Ombudsman found that the Ministry did not challenge the default judgment within the required legal timelines, making the court order binding. "The court order itself serves as sufficient justification for the payment of the judgment debt and the PS should comply," the report

stated.

The Ombudsman, Advocate Tlotliso Polaki, recommended that the debt be paid in three equal instalments: by September 30, 2024, December 31, 2024, and the final instalment by the end of March 2025, with accrued interest calculated in coordination with the Ministry of Finance.

Polaki has urged parliament to endorse these recommendations, emphasizing that non-compliance amounts to contempt of court.

# Lesotho's victory lap, from stigma to success on World AIDS Day

**...As a first patient and his mother lead Lesotho's historic HIV fight**

## Ntsoaki Motaung

The story of Lesotho's extraordinary progress in combating HIV/AIDS can be told in many ways. But perhaps nothing captures it more powerfully than the journey of 'Mamokoena Malaka and her son.

What began in anguish and uncertainty for their family has evolved into a symbol of resilience and national transformation. On World AIDS Day 2025, their story stood at the heart of celebrations, illustrating how far the country has travelled in its four-decade struggle against the epidemic.

Malaka's son was the very first patient attended to at the Baylor College of Medicine Children's Foundation-Lesotho when it opened in 2005. After losing her husband, Malaka sought help for herself and her child.

"I went there because I had just lost my husband," she said. "I had to step up and do everything to ensure we lived a healthy life." Her resolve was especially critical as her son followed four children who had passed away.

A year later, Malaka herself became Baylor's first adult patient. By the end of 2006, she had joined the organisation as a staff member.

### Overcoming the darkness of stigma

Their early years with HIV were marked by fear, hostility, and intense stigma. Malaka recalled that HIV was spoken about in dehumanising terms, including names like *Phamokate* and *Koatsi-ea-bosollahlapa*. She said her openness about her status caused neighbours to avoid her, mistakenly believing they could contract the virus through casual contact.

Support from her family became her anchor. Even today, they remain astonished at her son's good health. "They still cannot believe he lives with HIV because he was never sick, he was always stable and healthy," she said.

Treatment was initially overwhelming. At just five years old, her son had to take large volumes of medicine daily, multiple syrups requiring at least 50 ml each. "It was too much for a child that young," she said. She successfully advocated for a switch to seven pills, though that too was difficult.

Malaka herself endured a severe health crisis soon after starting treatment, suffering for more than six months while battling HIV-2. Doctors eventually halted her medication entirely, an unexpected decision that led to a dramatic and medically confusing recovery. Several blood tests were needed before clinicians accepted the improvement.

This experience shaped her future role. In 2009, she began ensuring that every patient at Baylor understood their medication, the importance of adherence, and possible side effects, knowledge she had gained the hard way.

One of her most painful moments came later, when her son asked how he had contracted HIV. "I told him the truth," she said. "I apologised and explained that I didn't know my status. That's why, when I found out, I took him to the health facility."

Today, her son is 25, a graduate, and a Chartered Accountant. "I want him to be an example that people living with HIV are able," she said proudly. She now encourages young people to take their treatment consistently, reminding them that "the difficult times are over, patients now take only one pill."

### A youth advocate's testimony: Reaching for dreams

Malaka's story found a powerful parallel in that of Rakhantsa Lehloibi, a young person who has lived with HIV since March 2008. For him, World AIDS Day offered a moment of deep reflection.



"I remember they used to say I would soon be gone, but I am still alive, and I will continue to live," Rakhantsa said with quiet defiance. He recalled the grim predictions that people living with HIV would not survive beyond ten years. With 2028 now on the horizon, he will soon mark two decades with the virus.

Like Malaka's son, he shattered every bleak forecast. "I was told I would not reach my dreams, but I am a graduate now and a proud youth in the fight against HIV in this country," he said. His remarkable journey has earned international recognition, featuring in publications beyond Lesotho, including in Zimbabwe, where his story won first place for its impact.

Lehloibi admitted that adhering to his medication was initially difficult, a challenge he eventually overcame with support from Malaka. He too moved from a demanding regimen of five pills a day to just a single pill.

"I am living proof that if you take your treatment consistently, you will live a healthy life. HIV will not stop you from reaching your dreams," he said.

### Royal call to action: King Letsie III on a war not yet won

The commemorations were anchored by the address of His Majesty King Letsie III, who acknowledged the nation's journey, "a journey marked by both victories and setbacks." The theme, "Overcoming Disruptions, Transforming the AIDS Response," resonated deeply with the country's four-decade-long fight.

The King celebrated Lesotho's remarkable resilience and highlighted a historic achievement, Lesotho has not only achieved but surpassed the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets set for 2024.

Lesotho's Historic HIV/AIDS Statistics are 97 percent of people living with HIV know

their status, 97 percent of those diagnosed are receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) and 99 percent of those on treatment are virally suppressed.

"This remarkable achievement is a testament to the power of concerted effort and unity," the King proclaimed.

However, the tone remained one of vigilance. The King stressed that the success must be fiercely guarded, with no room for complacency.

"I must emphasise that the war is not yet won," he stated, arguing that true victory will only be realised when every person living with HIV is receiving treatment, all citizens know their HIV status and new infections are eradicated.

The King also announced a major step forward in prevention, the expected introduction next year of Lenacarpathy, a newly tested pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

This long-acting, highly effective drug is seen as a crucial tool for curbing new infections and strengthening the country's response.

He concluded with a reminder to address the persistent stigma and discrimination that still acts as a barrier to people seeking help and support.

### UN lauds Lesotho's global leadership and courage

Pepukai Chikukwa, the United Nations (UN) Country Director, echoed the King's sentiment, reminding the assembly that "AIDS is not over" globally, with nearly 41 million people living with HIV and 1.3 million new infections in 2024 alone.

She praised Lesotho's exceptional leadership, recalling his first visit in 2017 to witness the country's bold move to embrace the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation for immediate initiation of ART for all who test positive, regardless of CD4 count.

"Lesotho was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to adopt these guidelines," she stated. "The health system went to the people."

Chikukwa highlighted Lesotho's place among only seven countries worldwide to reach all the 95-95-95 targets, noting the crucial detail that 93% of the 260,000 people living with HIV are virally suppressed. This high rate means the majority are able to live full, productive lives, increasing life expectancy and dramatically reducing the chance of transmission.

She pointed to a staggering statistic that places Lesotho as a global leader. New infections have fallen by 83 percent since 2010, compared to the global reduction of only 40 percent.

"Lesotho is at the top in terms of reducing new infections since 2010," she asserted. "For so many years, it has always been, Lesotho is the first in the negative sense. So I think now, when we talk first in the positive sense, it is worth celebrating."

To anchor the impressive achievements cited by King Letsie III and the UN Country Director, it is crucial to mention the national blueprint that guides these efforts.

Lesotho's fight is currently governed by the National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and STIs (NSP) 2023-2028. This is a multi-sectoral framework designed to confront all three epidemics as public health threats.

The overarching goal of the NSP and the national response is to eliminate the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030. This aligns with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The plan is explicitly described as "The People's NSP," emphasising that all efforts must be people- and communities-centred. This directly supports the powerful community stories of 'Mamokoena Malaka and Rakhantsa Lehloibi.



# Cross-border business council deepens regional trade efforts



CEO of LNDC, Thabo Khasipe

## Seabata Mahao

Lesotho and South Africa business communities have taken a major step toward strengthening regional economic cooperation with the launch of the Lesotho-South Africa Business Council (LesSABC), a joint initiative between the Private Sector Foundation of Lesotho (PSFL) and South Africa's Black Business Council (BBC).

The new council seeks to shift long-standing bilateral ambitions from "vision to action" by championing cross-border economic empowerment, improving trade efficiency, and accelerating the development of regional economic corridors.

Launched this week in Maseru, LesSABC aims to transform border interactions by identifying and advancing strategic corridor projects that can unlock growth for both countries.

It will also address key issues such as project financing, banking regulations and capital flow efficiencies, critical components of facilitating seamless trade and investment.

Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC)'s Chief Executive Officer, Thabo Khasipe, used the platform to highlight the structural disadvantages hampering Lesotho's development.

"Lesotho's land-locked status continues to weaken it compared to countries such as Eswatini, which borders both South Africa and Mozambique and thus faces fewer development constraints," Khasipe said.

He noted that analysts have long argued that it is "almost impossible for a small land-locked country to develop" due to limited access to export markets and global value chains.

Lesotho's small domestic market further restricts economies of scale, limiting its ability to build a diversified economy. Khasipe, however, identified the proposed Trans-Maluti Corridor as a transformative opportunity.

"We have the Trans-Maluti corridor, a highway that would be a silver bullet in unlocking Lesotho's industrial development,"

...The issue is how do we implement?

he said. The highway would connect Durban, SADC's busiest port, to central South Africa and Bloemfontein through Lesotho, cutting across the Maluti Mountains.

It is expected to reduce travel time by two hours and shorten the route by about 200km for cargo destined for inland mar-

kets such as Zambia and the DRC. Currently, traffic from Maseru must detour north before heading east, "losing 270km going in the wrong direction," Khasipe added.

BBC's Vice-President Gregory Mofokeng said it was now crucial to move corridor plans from concept to implementation.

"The corridors are there. The issue is how do we implement?" he asked.

He said once corridor projects are included in national and regional infrastructure pipelines, efforts can then shift to securing funding and mobilising government support.

"These projects are going to benefit both our countries... so it is in our interest to ensure their implementation," he said.

Dr Sindiswa Mzamo, Global President of the Circle of Global Business Women, urged both nations to view borders as economic assets rather than barriers.

"Borders should not be walls but gateways to shared prosperity," she said, noting that corridor development could stimulate new industries, logistics clusters and deeper integration.

She also called for the creation of cross-border economic zones linking the two countries.

PSFL's Chief Executive Officer, Thabo Qhesi, emphasised the council's role in supporting SMMEs, which are central to both economies. He said LesSABC creates a structured platform for private-sector collaboration, enabling the two countries to jointly address trade obstacles, pursue harmonised regulations, and improve cross-border infrastructure.

Qhesi further noted that Lesotho and South Africa already share strong economic ties, through labour migration, trade, value chains and membership of the Common Monetary Area.

"We are in the Common Monetary Area (CMA), and the Loti is pegged to the Rand, showing how this initiative will strengthen economic partnership between the two countries," Qhesi said.

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# Newsday Health

## Measles: Deaths drop 88% since 2000, but cases surge to 11 million worldwide

**Ntsoaki Motaung**

The global campaign against measles is at a decisive crossroads, marked by a historic public-health success on one hand and a worrying resurgence on the other. This is according to new findings from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Immunisation Agenda 2030 (IA2030) Mid-Term Review.

According to WHO, for more than two decades, a massive global immunisation effort has saved nearly 59 million lives with the highly effective and low-cost measles vaccine.

The report highlighted that between 2000 and 2024, the world witnessed an astonishing 88 percent drop in measles deaths. This success brought the annual death toll in 2024 to an estimated 95,000 people, mostly children younger than five, one of the lowest tolls on record.

Findings showed that despite the progress in saving lives, the narrative has dra-

matically shifted as measles cases are now surging worldwide.

An estimated 11 million infections were recorded in 2024, nearly 800,000 more than pre-pandemic levels in 2019. The virus, one of the most contagious known, is exploiting gaps in collective immunity across the globe.

"The impact has been uneven. Compared with 2019, cases rose sharply in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region to 86 percent, the European Region to 47 percent, and the South-East Asian Region to 42 percent," the report showed.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, underscored the gravity of the situation.

"Measles is the world's most contagious virus, and these data show once again how it will exploit any gap in our collective defences against it. Measles does not respect borders, but when every child in every community is vaccinated against it, costly outbreaks can be avoided, lives can be saved, and this

disease can be eliminated from entire nations," he said.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has intensified efforts to close these immunity gaps. The organisation is assisting lower-income countries with the introduction of the second measles vaccine dose, supporting timely preventive campaigns, and funding outbreak response activities.

In 2024 alone, Gavi aimed to reach up to 100 million children across 24 countries with measles-containing vaccines. This scale-up is backed by a US\$290 million injection into the "Big Catch Up" initiative, which seeks to reverse immunisation setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Gavi, the push is among the greatest measles-control efforts in its 24-year history.

Derrick Sim, Gavi's Chief Vaccines Programmes and Markets Officer, said sustained momentum is critical.

"Against a backdrop of increasing mea-

sles outbreaks, lower-income countries have undertaken historic efforts to improve coverage and respond to emergencies. For instance, first dose coverage in African countries went up by 2 percent in 2023. We must sustain this effort to reach the high levels of coverage needed to prevent outbreaks and deaths. Every child deserves protection from measles, and often it is the most vulnerable who are most at risk," he said.

Meanwhile, Lesotho conducted its national measles vaccination campaign from 20-24 October 2025. However, the Ministry of Health's public relations officer, 'Mateboho Mosebekoa, says the post-campaign evaluation has not yet been completed.

According to Gavi, Lesotho still faces significant challenges in measles immunisation. WHO and UNICEF estimates for 2024 put the country's second-dose measles vaccine coverage at 74 percent, well below the 95 percent threshold required to prevent outbreaks and achieve herd immunity.

## Queen leads Lesotho health delegation to Rwanda

**Staff Reporter**

Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso of this week headed a high-level delegation from the Ministry of Health on a working visit to Rwanda aimed at studying the country's widely acclaimed human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme and its pioneering use of Zipline drones for medical supply delivery.

The mission, facilitated by the Rwanda Cooperation Initiative, focused on practical exchanges that could strengthen Lesotho's own health-system performance, particularly in cervical cancer prevention and last-mile healthcare logistics in mountainous terrain similar to that of the two countries.

During the visit, the Queen and her delegation received detailed briefings on Rwanda's HPV vaccination campaign, which has achieved among the highest coverage rates in Africa since its nationwide rollout in 2011 and subsequent integration into the routine immunisation schedule.

Delegates also observed operations at one of Zipline's distribution centres, where autonomous drones deliver blood products, vaccines, and essential medicines to remote health facilities within minutes – a system that has become a global benchmark since its launch in Rwanda in 2016.

In remarks at the conclusion of the technical sessions, Queen 'Masenate expressed



**Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso**

gratitude to the Rwanda Cooperation Initiative for the warm reception and comprehensive programme.

"We would like to come back because we have realised that we have a lot to learn and take back to our country," Her Majesty said. "We have seen some practices we would like to adopt."

The Queen was separately received by Rwanda's First Lady, Jeannette Kagame, at the headquarters of the Imbuto Foundation in Kigali. The meeting included a presentation on the foundation's initiatives in health, education, and youth empowerment, followed by an exchange on shared priorities between the two nations.

Areas of mutual interest highlighted during the discussions included adolescent girls' health, cancer awareness, and empowering young people as agents of development.

The visit highlights growing health diplomacy between Rwanda and Lesotho, two mountainous African kingdoms that face comparable geographic challenges in delivering services to rural populations.

Lesotho, which introduced the HPV vaccine in 2022 with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has been working to scale up coverage and is now exploring innovative delivery mechanisms suited to its terrain.

Delegates from the Ministry of Health included Minister Selibe Mochoboroane.



Theko Tlebere

# Common Concern

## The politics of changing colours: A reflection on voter behaviour, party identity, and political culture.

In recent weeks, a familiar scene has resurfaced across Lesotho's political rallies. Supporters dressed in layered regalia: a maroon t-shirt of the Basotho Action Party (BAP) hidden beneath a fresh white t-shirt of the Revolution for Prosperity (RFP), or community councilors previously elected under the Democratic Congress (DC) banner now proudly wrapped in blankets representing their "new political home" Socialist Revolution (SR). To many observers, this may seem like political renewal, a sign of evolving democratic choice. But to those who have followed Lesotho's politics for decades, this is not a trend. It is a cycle, and it raises fundamental questions about voter behaviour, political ideology, and how we define loyalty in our democracy.

Lesotho has long been marked by political migrations of individuals and groups shifting allegiances from one party to another, often dramatically and publicly, at rallies filled with song, colour, and celebration. This phenomenon is not new. What is new is how normalised it has become, to the point where wearing two political colours in a single rally no longer raises eyebrows. But beneath the surface of celebration lies a complex political puzzle: *What truly motivates party switching? And what does it reveal about the state of political culture in Lesotho?*

When a councillor elected with just 200 votes in a small Electoral Division appears at an RFP rally after winning his seat under DC, ABC, SR or BAP, several interpretations emerge. Is it a strategic move for personal gain and access to resources? Is it a sign of disillusionment with a former party now outside government? Or could it be an ideological shift toward the "stronger policies" of the new party?

In reality, the motivations are likely multifaceted. Lesotho's political economy has historically been driven more by patronage than policy. Political affiliation often determines access: jobs, tenders, influence

or simply a seat in a vehicle headed to a rally. For others, it may be a response to public mood, a desire to be "on the winning side," or a personal conflict with local leadership. Yet for a small but significant minority, it may be ideological, a genuine belief that policies of another party are more aligned with their vision for the country.

The critical question is whether parties recognise and differentiate these motivations. Do they offer political orientation and ideological grounding for new members? Or do the rallies end with the music, a t-shirt worn, a dance danced (ho haila), and no further engagement with the party's vision?

In such situations, can we say, are these new voters or old faces in new colours? One may ask: Does this influx of supporters into ruling and opposition parties alike, represent growth in political support or simply recycled voters drifting with the wind? When thousands line up for t-shirts and transport, is it enthusiasm, or opportunism? When the newly formed 'Ka Polasing' (BDF) of Bothata Mahlala distributes branded t-shirts to new "members," will this reflect in actual votes, or is the t-shirt the only reward they seek? Is there surely and evidence that the number of t-shirts issued tallies the number of those who have formally taken membership?

This raises a deeper question of political behaviour: Do Basotho vote based on ideology, leadership personality, material incentives, or communal pressure? The answer may lie somewhere in between. Many follow personalities rather than policies. Others believe power sits with the ruling party, and, therefore, access to the government requires being "seen" in the right colours. Some genuinely see hope in new leadership. But some attend every rally, not for allegiance, but for Need. In a country of high unemployment and poverty, politics sometimes becomes survival.

What does crossing the floor mean for the ruling RFP? If the ruling party attracts large numbers of supporters crossing the floor at their rallies, does it necessarily mean the government is popular and doing right by the masses? Or is it just the gravitational force of power? The distinction is crucial. RFP might see increased crowds at their rallies, but will this translate into increased constituencies in upcoming elections? Or are they merely inheriting political wanderers, who may leave just as easily when tides shift? The challenge for any ruling party is one of "conversion", converting temporary enthusiasm into structured participation. Without strong political education, these supporters may remain rally-goers, not party-builders. Without empowering participation at the grassroots level, the party risks building a fragile foundation full rallies, empty ideology.

Let's talk about party identity: Is it built or bought? When a person steps into a new political home, ideally, they should understand what they are joining. Yet in Lesotho, we rarely hear of structured party orientation. Do new members receive ideological grounding? Do they learn about policy priorities or party constitution? Do they learn about the party's vision for the nation? Do parties even have time for such? Or they are simply interested in the numbers and social media trends? Or does the political journey end with a free t-shirt and a shared song?

If political identity can be changed as easily as removing a blanket, then parties must ask themselves: Is the identity we are building strong enough to last beyond a rally? Party membership should imply commitment, not convenience. Political affiliation should reflect conviction, not temporary comfort. True political participation demands more than colour; it demands understanding.

We all have personal preferences, but

what should a Mosotho consider before joining a political party? Perhaps the deeper question is not why people move, but what should guide that movement. Ideally, a Mosotho joining a political party should reflect on:

**Policy alignment** — What vision does the party have for health, education, jobs, and local governance?

**Track record** — Has the party delivered where it has governed?

**Internal democracy** — Are voices heard, or does leadership dominate?

**Community impact** — Does the party empower people or merely mobilise them?

**Personal conviction** — Does this party speak to your beliefs, or only to your needs?

When joining a political home, one should ask not only what can I get? But also, what can I contribute? For democracy to mature, parties must build believers, not simply collectors of colourful, nicely printed t-shirts.

Lesotho's political landscape is rich with colour, but colour alone cannot build a nation. The question is not whether Basotho cross floors, but whether they cross mindfully. Democracy is not strengthened by singing alone (ka ho haila feela), but by participation, accountability, and political education.

If party switching remains driven by personality, resource access, or rally logistics, then political culture will remain shallow, and policy will remain secondary. But if movement between parties begins to reflect deep ideological preferences and policy convictions, then Lesotho may finally see a turning point.

The challenge is clear for citizens, for parties, and for the nation: Do we wear colours, or do we carry convictions? Because until that question is answered, Lesotho's politics may continue to dance, but may struggle to truly move forward. The future is NOW!



## Newsday Opinion

### Diabetes and the silent threat to sight

Dr Liteboho Mokete

Diabetes mellitus, as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), is a group of metabolic diseases characterised by high blood sugar caused by problems with insulin secretion, insulin action, or both.

While many people are familiar with diabetes, far fewer realise that it can quietly and permanently damage eyesight, sometimes without any early warning.

Globally, eye complications from diabetes are a leading cause of preventable blindness, particularly among working-age adults. In some cases, blurry vision may be the first symptom that brings a patient to a health facility.

The most serious of these complications is diabetic retinopathy. Sustained high

blood sugar levels damage tiny blood vessels throughout the body, including those in the retina, the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye.

This can cause blood vessel leakage and swelling, known as diabetic macular edema, which blurs central vision.

The tiny vessels can also become blocked, reducing oxygen supply to parts of the retina. In response, the body forms new but fragile blood vessels that are prone to bleeding.

These processes can ultimately lead to scarring, retinal detachment, and permanent blindness. Cataracts, another common cause of diabetes-related vision loss, occur when the lens of the eye becomes cloudy, preventing light from reaching the

retina.

Warning signs that should not be ignored include blurred vision, dark spots or floating shapes, difficulty seeing at night, and sudden loss of vision. Awareness of these signs can make a life-changing difference.

Protecting eyesight begins with regular dilated eye exams. Annual check-ups allow ophthalmologists to detect problems before they progress. Lifestyle modifications are also crucial. Reducing sugary foods, eating more vegetables and fruits, exercising regularly, and quitting smoking all help in controlling blood sugar levels. For those on medication, adherence to prescribed treatment and regular glucose monitoring are key. Early detection remains the strongest defence against diabetic blindness.

When eye complications develop, treatment is available. Cataracts can be removed, with the cloudy lens replaced by an artificial one. Diabetic retinopathy can be managed with laser therapy to seal leaking vessels, intravitreal injections to reduce swelling, and careful follow-up care to prevent further damage.

Importantly, laser treatment for diabetic retinopathy is available locally at Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH), giving patients access to vital care without needing to travel outside the country.

Diabetes does not have to steal vision. With awareness, timely intervention, and responsible management of the disease, we can protect the sight of today's generation and safeguard the vision of the future.



## Open Letter to the Minister of Health, Honourable Selibe Mochoboroane Mohlomi Hospital: A crisis we can no longer ignore

Dear Honourable Minister,

Allow me to apologise for addressing you publicly. I do so with respect and confidence that, as a public servant who has often affirmed the value of accountability, you will receive this letter in good faith.

Honourable Minister, I am sure that, like me, you would agree with the wisdom in the saying that the measure of any society is found in how it treats its most vulnerable. In our society and among our communities, *metseng le metsaneng*, you and I would also agree that there are none more vulnerable than those members of our community commonly labelled as *mahlanya*. You need only look outside the tinted windows of your official luxury 4X4 convoy to see the consequences: men and women living with severe mental illness wandering our streets, rummaging through rubbish, exposed to violence, stigma and weather alike. Their dehumanisation has become normalised to the point where we casually refer to them as *lehlanya*, as though they were less than human. Their suffering is visible, but their lives remain invisible to the state entrusted with their care.

These members of our families, who suffer from mental illness, often suffer loss of human dignity, rights, and humanity in the way they are generally regarded by the public. This neglect is symptomatic of the state of mental health services in our country under your leadership. While this is not entirely to be blamed on your government alone, it is nevertheless a stain on our national conscience and a sustained moral and political failure your government has happily ignored and politically sidelined because it is not a

vote-winner.

The 2023 Ombudsman's report laid this stain bare, and yet as we speak, its findings remain unimplemented and its urgency ignored. This failure is embodied most painfully in Mohlomi Hospital, our sole psychiatric referral centre, named after a healer whose values of *botho* and compassion we have clearly abandoned. I understand that you recently promised a new hospital and rehabilitation centre. When, Honourable Minister, should Basotho expect the sod-turning, or was this yet another well-timed political proclamation?

Honourable Minister, the definition of health you are sworn to uphold is clear: health is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being." Mental health is not an optional add-on to the health system; it is central to it. It should be your benchmark, your key performance indicator.

A recent visit to this hospital by international medical professionals and members of the Basotho diaspora community working with LeBoHA was not only an embarrassment but revealed conditions that not only are heartbreaking, but fall far short of the ideals of Chief Mohlomi. In the forensic unit—built for 30 patients—over 80 people are crammed into a space unfit for dignified human life. The place is overcrowded, and nothing works. As one of them narrating this sorry saga said, "Bo 'Me le bo Ntate, kannete ke mahlomola a tšabehang." Some of the visitors wept. They wept because what they saw was not an unfortunate oversight, but systematic neglect that has been allowed to fester under successive governments and now under your leadership.

Honourable Minister, it should trouble you deeply, or any Minister of

Health worth his salt, that these words describe the very institution entrusted with caring for our most vulnerable citizens, and this is happening under your leadership as the Minister of Health. Equally, it should trouble the conscience of a Minister of Health of a proud nation like Lesotho that these issues are not new. I remind you, Minister, of the 2023 Ombudsman's Report, which documented gross failures at Mohlomi hospital that have yet to be addressed, including by your government. They include severe shortages of psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, and occupational therapists; forensic unit overcrowding at nearly three times capacity, broken infrastructure, damaged water pipes, non-functional toilets, failing showers, inadequate heating and ventilation.

As if this was not enough, Honourable Minister, the report went further and lamented how patients have irregular food supply, insufficient bedding, lack of clothing and toiletries for patients and at the time, a national mental health policy and strategy was left unapproved for years.

This is not a list of recommendations, Honourable Minister, it is an indictment, a moral judgment on you as the Minister at the helm of the Ministry of Health now. This report, Honourable Minister, is sitting on your desk gathering dust, forgotten, much like those relatives of ours trapped within Mohlomi Hospital decay. The report is not merely an observation; it is an indictment of systemic failure, Honourable Minister. Its findings confirm what many Basotho have long known and explain the exodus of many professionals, leaving the country, who have lost hope at the sight of the mental health system that is progressively collapsing.

For decades, mental health has sur-

vived through donor goodwill, NGO interventions, and the resilience of underpaid health workers, Minister, as successive governments have politically sidelined it. This is not sustainable, Honourable Minister, nor is it befitting of us as a country that claims to value the dignity of every person, even those whom we derogatorily call *mahlanya*.

Surely, Minister, you would agree with me that as a leader, you can do better. Mohlomi Hospital should be a place of healing, compassion and where the personal dignity of people and their health is restored. Instead, it has become a national embarrassment, a sorry saga of inadequate resources, poor provision of mental health services and support to individuals and families, and above all, a symbol of the government's inaction and lack of caring.

Honourable Minister, the time for speeches has passed. The time for decisive leadership is now. Lesotho and Basotho, both in and outside the country, are watching, Minister. What concrete steps are you going to take to improve the situation at Mohlomi hospital?

This letter is written not out of hostility Honourable Minister, but out of a deep sense of duty. A duty shared by many Basotho and healthcare professionals at home and abroad. It is written because our people deserve better. It is written because mental illness should never condemn a person to invisibility, indignity, or despair. And it is written because the future of Mohlomi Hospital, and the fate of every Mosotho living with mental illness depends on decisive leadership and action now, not rhetoric.

**Yours sincerely,**  
**Dr Chris Mokolatsie**  
**Thaban'a Mahlanya,**  
**Thaba-Tsaka**

## How the country moves: A country in crisis, a parliament in retreat

Dr Tseliso Moroke

We must confront the uncomfortable truth: Lesotho is facing an economic breakdown and a governance crisis that demands urgent attention and decisive action. Despite the removal from the SADC watchlist, the country remains on the brink of disaster. Our people are not being guided; they are being misled.

We are currently navigating through crises without a coherent strategy because those in leadership have abandoned their roles in favour of mediocrity. Unqualified leaders have stretched

their power beyond their competence, and now the nation is suffering the serious consequences.

At the heart of this collapse lies Parliament. In my experience, it has become a concerning example of inefficiency; the institution engages in loud debates but produces little of substance. It has turned a blind eye to the critical issues it was established to address.

As elections draw near, parliamentarians' focus will shift toward securing their positions rather than saving the country and pushing for substantive reform. There seems to be a concerted effort to amend laws that primari-

ly serve their interests, rather than to develop a responsive legislature that tackles the pressing challenges of our time.

Parliament is now obsessed with procedure and maintaining order, but this cautious fixation on rules and fear of 'overreach' prevents it from addressing our nation's urgent problems, such as widespread corruption, weakening social services, failing health and education systems, and rising unemployment. While its motions may seem democratic, they lack the power or intention to bring about real change.

The truth is that this ineffective in-

stitution thrives because weak leaders fear genuine leadership. Real leadership makes the incompetent uncomfortable. Those who work to expose corruption, shut down patronage, and refuse to be swayed become targets.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. We all need to advocate for real leadership —leadership willing to face criticism and push through challenges. For our country to move, we need active engagement from all who commit to transparency and accountability.

It is time for the nation to aspire for a Parliament that serves its purpose, one that prioritises the well-being of our country over personal interest. One that understands and embodies its mandate. Only then will Lesotho overcome its current trials and begin to thrive under courageous leadership.



Rethabile Mathealira-Molapo

# Common Concern

## Sanism and the denial of voice to people with marginalised mental health conditions

In societies across the world, of the various mental health conditions people experience, depression and anxiety, being the more common and more relatable conditions for the general population, somewhat dominate the mainstream mental health conversation. These two conditions are slightly deemed more acceptable and are somewhat cloaked with some measure of respectability, provided that those affected by them remain cognitively functional and anchored in a shared sense of reality with society. Those with other conditions, such as those whose experiences feature some measure of psychosis, which involves them perceiving realities that those around them do not necessarily share, remain among the most silenced, misunderstood, and marginalised individuals.

Although modern psychiatric care has made significant strides in diagnosis and treatment, it has made less so in prevention and rehabilitation. The foundational power dynamics within mental health institutions and broader society remain largely unchanged, more so with mental health institutions. These dynamics often deny those diagnosed with mental health conditions a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their lives. Worse still, they are often treated as lesser beings, incapable of coherent thought or emotional perception, and are systematically denied recognition of their personhood. This denial is deeply rooted in a pervasive and largely unchallenged social prejudice against people who have been diagnosed with mental health conditions, especially those with marginalised mental health conditions - known as sanism. It is deeply embedded in legal, medical, and cultural institutions. Like gender discrimination or other forms of discrimination, it functions to dehumanise, delegitimise, and exclude people based on their mental health status. It legitimises discrimination and exclusion, justifying the denial of rights and reinforcing the belief that people with mental health conditions are less rational, less trustworthy, and qualitatively less human.

Sanism manifests in many forms: in the legal system where people with mental health conditions can be institutionalised involuntarily; in the workplace where their capabilities are underestimated or their diagnoses weaponised against them; in the media where mental unwellness is routinely equated with violence and danger; and in everyday interpersonal interactions, where disclosure often leads to pity at best, or discomfort and unease at worst.

One of the most consistent experiences reported by people with mental health conditions is the denial of agency. In psychiatric settings, this often manifests as forced admissions which often take place through prioritising family and even non-family members' preferences for admission over an established need to limit the admitted person's right to liberty, without due process of legal procedures outlined in mental health laws for minimum safeguards, or once patients are admitted, a refusal to take their concerns seriously, or to involve them in their own treatment planning, or once discharged to get their feedback on services rendered and inputs on future treatment and other possible helpful interventions, or even to get their insights on the source of their unwellness. Reported narratives of abuse and suffering are often dismissed. Psychiatric patients frequently report that when they complain of mistreatment, whether it be over-medication, medical restraints such as sedative injections and physical restraints like forced seclusion, which is a form of solitary

confinement, even as they express their anxiety and protest, their pleas tend to be ignored. When they experience verbal abuse or even sexual assault, they are dismissed outright. Their complaints are frequently either not believed or minimised, and in many cases interpreted as symptoms of their mental health condition. Their words are treated as hallucinations or delusions, rather than credible accounts of real events.

This silencing has life-threatening consequences, as deaths have, in some cases, arisen. When a person with a mental illness reports abuse and is not believed, perpetrators are emboldened to continue without fear of consequence. The psychiatric system, intended to be a place of healing, becomes a site of trauma and re-traumatisation. People are left not only to endure abuse but to do so in a system that denies the validity of their pain and the truth of their experience.

Commonly infantilised, it is not surprising that people with mental health conditions have experiences which mirror those of children who are violated by adults under the assumption that they cannot truly comprehend what is happening to them. Just as when a society of adults which grows up to recount experiences of childhood trauma reaches adulthood, often assumes children are too young to remember or process trauma, people with mental health conditions are assumed to lack the cognitive and emotional capacity to register abuse or even recognise injustice. In both cases, this assumption is false and sanist and makes them prime targets for violence, neglect, and control.

Looking at psychiatric spaces: The design of many psychiatric facilities reinforces this dynamic. Locked wards, institutional clothing, forced medication, and restrictions on movement all create an environment that diminishes personhood. Patients are often stripped not just of their rights, but of their identities, reduced to diagnoses, symptoms, and behaviours. And their personhood is erased by the psychiatric lens.

This dehumanisation extends to the way psychiatric treatment is delivered. Various measures, restraints, and forced drugging, often without informed consent, are routine practices. These interventions are justified by a paternalistic logic that views them as incapable of making decisions in their own best interests, and therefore as needing control rather than care.

The concept of "lack of insight," a clinical term frequently used to describe individuals who reject their psychiatric diagnosis or treatment, is another tool that reinforces the hierarchy of the sane versus the insane. Rather than being seen as a legitimate difference of opinion or a reflection of a person's lived experience, such rejection is interpreted as further evidence of illness, creating a circular logic in which disagreement is itself pathology. In this system, to speak against one's treatment is to prove one's unfitness to speak at all.

Discrimination and sanism also manifest differently in different groups or categories of patients. Locally, criminally charged persons in psychiatric care receive better treatment than those who are committed for ordinary mental health care purposes, receiving charitable visitors and enjoying recreational activities, as they are perceived as being less mentally ill, while those under civil admissions often spend their days idling like prisoners in the fenced-off backyard, aimlessly counting down

days until their discharge. Patients with depression and/or with suicidal ideation, especially those with favourable socioeconomic circumstances, tend to receive special care and enjoy private rooms, whereas those with psychosis are not deemed worthy of even where it has been directed by the medical practitioner in charge. Women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, while geriatric patients tend to receive much gentler care and experience no isolation for disruptive behaviour. These experiences are not isolated incidents or the result of a few bad practitioners; they are systemic and rooted in **sanism and its interaction with other factors of privilege and oppression**.

One of the most insidious effects of sanism is internalised oppression or internalised sanism. Many individuals who have experienced psychiatric labelling come to believe the negative stereotypes about themselves: that they are broken, incapable, or unworthy of love and belonging, that the abuse levelled against them for various reasons related and unrelated to their condition is justified. This internalised

sanism can deepen despair and make healing even more difficult, especially when combined with the trauma of institutional and domestic abuse.

To challenge sanism is to insist on the full humanity of people with mental health conditions. It is to recognise that they, like everyone else, possess a deep inner world, capable of insight, reflection, and growth. It is to affirm that they are not simply the sum of their symptoms or the labels imposed upon them.

This recognition demands systemic change. Mental health systems must shift from paternalistic models to rights-based, trauma-informed approaches that prioritise consent, dignity, and collaboration. Peer-led advocacy and survivor movements must be centered, as they offer a powerful counter-narrative to mainstream psychiatry, one rooted in lived experience, mutual support, and collective liberation.

Legal systems must also evolve to safeguard the rights of people with mental health conditions, to ensure that their testimony is taken seriously, their autonomy is respected, and their protection from abuse is guaranteed. Education and public awareness campaigns are needed to dismantle the myths and fears that sustain sanism and to cultivate compassion, understanding, and solidarity.

Most importantly, we must listen to the voices of those who have been silenced, especially within the walls of psychiatric institutions. Their stories are not incoherent noise. They are not the ravings of madness. They are truths, often painful, often complex, that demand to be heard.

To be a person with a mental health condition in today's world should not be equal to holding a precarious position, vulnerable not only to internal struggle but to systemic violence and silencing. People with mental health conditions should not be denied a voice in matters affecting them, treated as lesser beings, and subjected to abuse with impunity, all under the shadow of sanism. As long as we continue to view them as incapable of thought, unworthy of trust, and impervious to pain, we perpetuate a cycle of dehumanisation and harm. It is way past time to hear, honour, and uphold the voices of those whom the world has long ignored and abused. Only then can we begin to build a society in which all minds, regardless of how they are labelled, are treated with the dignity and equality they deserve.

### PETROLEUM FUND



#### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

#### INSURANCE BROKERAGE SERVICES

PF/RFP/2025/2026-08.

The Petroleum Fund is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, which was established through Legal Notice No. 96 of 1997 under the Finance Order of 1988. The organisation is further delegated, under the Fuel and Services Control (Delegation Notice) Number 32 of 2021, the powers to set the price and time at which Petroleum Products may be adjusted. It is managed by the Board of Directors, while day-to-day activities are administered by the Secretariat, headed by the Chief Executive Officer, and its operations are guided by the Lesotho (Petroleum Fund) Regulations of 2021.

To ensure effective and efficient management of insurance covers for its staff, assets, and operations, Petroleum Fund invites reputable and experienced Insurance Brokerage Service Providers to submit proposals for the provision of brokerage, advisory, and insurance administration services. The aim is to secure comprehensive, cost-effective, and reliable insurance solutions while ensuring effective risk management, claims handling, policy monitoring, and advisory support.

Interested, eligible bidders may obtain the Terms of Reference from the Petroleum Fund Website (<https://petroleum.org.ls/procurement/>) from Monday, **the 01st December 2025**. Requests for clarifications should be made in writing on or before **17:00hrs on Friday, the 19th of December 2025**, to the following e-mail address: [supplier@petroleum.org.ls](mailto:supplier@petroleum.org.ls).

The Proposals must be submitted to Petroleum Fund offices in sealed packages clearly marked '**PF/RFP/2025/2026-08 INSURANCE BROKERAGE SERVICES**', containing Technical Proposals and Financial Proposals sealed in separate envelopes. The deadline for submission of proposals is **12:00hrs on Wednesday, the 14th of January 2026**, with a public opening of Technical Proposals at **12:15hrs** on the same day, the **14th of January 2026**.

**Online submissions may be made by sending encrypted Technical and Financial proposals to [supplier@petroleum.org.ls](mailto:supplier@petroleum.org.ls) by the set deadline.**



## OPPORTUNITY

Title	Link for External Candidates	Deadline
<b>TAF Strategic Advisor Consultancy (50 days)</b>	<a href="https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/TAF-Strategic-Advisor_JR118295">https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/TAF-Strategic-Advisor_JR118295</a>	<b>16 December 2025</b>
<b>TAF School Feeding Policy Consultant (80 days)</b>	<a href="https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/TAF-School-Feeding-Policy-Consultant_JR118294">https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/TAF-School-Feeding-Policy-Consultant_JR118294</a>	<b>16 December 2025</b>

**NB.:** It's important to us to create an accessible, inclusive workplace for everyone, so please email [global.inclusion@wfp.org](mailto:global.inclusion@wfp.org) if you are shortlisted and need any disability related adjustments for your interviews/test/technical assessment. Our reasonable accommodations team will then connect with you to confidentially discuss your options.



Ministry of Trade, Industry & Business Development  
COMPETITIVENESS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION (CAFI) PROJECT

## INVITATION FOR BIDS

## SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF HAIL NETTING FOR SEVEN (7) FARMS FOR LESOTHO HORTICULTURAL INCUBATION AND TRAINING CENTRE

1. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project. The Government intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for the **Supply, Delivery and Installation of Hail Netting for seven (7) farms for Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and training Centre (CAFI-WB-G-06)**.

2. The Ministry of Trade, Industry & Business Development through the CAFI Project Implementing Unit now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the **Supply, Delivery and Installation of Hail Netting for seven (7) farms for Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre**.

3. Table 1

Ref	Farms	Delivery and Installation Sites	Estimated Completion Period (Weeks)
1.	Majaheng Farm	Mapoteng Majaheng, Berea District	4-6
2.	Peka Fresh Produce	Peka, Leribe District	4-6
3.	Botle Farms	Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District	4-6
4.	Nala farmlands	Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District	4-6
5.	Healthwise Farm	Thaba Khupa, Thaba Bosiu, Maseru District	4-6
6.	Ts'akholo Farm	Ts'akholo, Mafeteng District	4-6
7.	Mountain Fruit Growers	Ha Ntsi (Nazareta), Maseru District	4-6

4. Bidding will be conducted through national competitive pro-

curement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" Sixth Edition, February 2025 ("Procurement Regulations") and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.

5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from *Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project Management Unit* from following email Address: [tmohejane@cafi.org.ls](mailto:tmohejane@cafi.org.ls) and copy [nieutsoa@cafi.org.ls](mailto:nieutsoa@cafi.org.ls) and [itsoinyane@cafi.org.ls](mailto:itsoinyane@cafi.org.ls) and inspect the bidding document during office hours *Procurement Unit from 09h00 to 16h00 hours* at the address given below.

6. A complete set of bidding documents in English may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of LSL1,000.00. The method of payment will be direct deposit to the *Nedbank Account Name is: Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project Maloti Account (Ministry of Trade and Industry), Account Number is: 11990167259 and Branch Name is: Maseru Branch*.

7. A mandatory site visit will be conducted on the dates below to allow suppliers to familiarize themselves with the scope of work.

Farms	Sites	Site Visit Date
Peka Fresh Produce	Peka, Leribe District	11/12/2025 at 09h00
Majaheng Farm	Mapoteng Majaheng, Berea District	11/12/2025 at 11h00
Botle Farms	Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District	11/12/2025 at 14h00
Nala farmlands	Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District	11/12/2025 at 15h00
Ts'akholo Farm	Ts'akholo, Mafeteng District	12/12/2025 at 10h00
Mountain Fruit Growers	Ha Ntsi (Nazareta), Maseru District	12/12/2025 at 12h00

Healthwise Farm	Thaba Khupa, Thaba Bosiu, Maseru District	12/12/2025 at 14h00
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8. Bids must be delivered to *Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project, 1st Floor 'Matanki House, Corner Balfour and Kingsway Road on or before January 15, 2026, at 10h00*. Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below on *January 15, 2026, at 10h15*.

9. All Bids must be accompanied by Bid Securities as follows

Ref	Farms	Amount (LSL)
1	Majaheng Farm	10,000.00
2	Peka Fresh Produce	10,000.00
3	Botle Farms	10,000.00
4	Nala farmlands	10,000.00
5	Healthwise Farm	10,000.00
6	Ts'akholo Farm	10,000.00
7	Mountain Fruit Growers	10,000.00

10. Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder's beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.

11. The Ministry of Trade, Industry & Business Development through CAFI Project reserves the right to cancel the procurement process at any stage before the bid opening, during the bidding process, or prior to awarding the contract without incurring liability or obligation to any bidder. Cancellation may occur due to changes in project requirements, budget constraints, administrative or technical challenges, irregularities, non-compliance with regulations, or if the process no longer aligns with project objectives or funding availability.

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# House of Georges Malelu spreads footprint across Africa

**Chris Theko**

The House of Georges Malelu is continuing its rise as one of Africa's most daring voices in sustainable luxury, unveiling a bold collection made entirely from recycled materials at Port Harcourt Fashion Week in Nigeria.

In partnership with Sechaba Milling Co., the Lesotho-born designer presented a couture piece that not only pushed creative boundaries but also sparked important conversations around environmental responsibility, cultural preservation, and innovation in African fashion.

George Malelu is no stranger to the global stage. Born in Lesotho and raised between two countries, he carved out a name for himself as one of Africa's accomplished luxury fashion designers.

His international acclaim skyrocketed when he and his late creative partner, Quitearia Kekana, designed a show-stopping gown for global superstar Beyoncé during her performance at the 2018 Global Citizen Festival in South Africa.

The pair was already a powerhouse name in luxury fashion, but the moment cemented their place among the continent's most influential couture talents, demonstrating Africa's ability to create fashion at world-class standards.

Today, Malelu continues to build on that legacy with bold, culturally infused and sustainability-driven design work that challenges conventional definitions of luxury.

Using unconventional materials is not a trend, but rather a creative identity shaped early in his life.

"I have always been fascinated by using unconventional materials in my designs. In college, it started out of necessity because I could not afford expensive fabrics. But I soon realised it worked so well with my designs since I enjoyed being crafty and innovative. Recycling and transforming what is considered waste into something beautiful has always been part of my aesthetic," Malelu said.

The showstopper of his Nigeria showcase, a sculptural dress made from Sechaba Milling maize meal bags, drew admiration across the continent.

"I would describe the Sechaba Milling dress as a celebration of how sustainability can meet elegance. I used maize meal bags to create a modern silhouette that could easily pass as a cocktail or wedding dress," Malelu explained.

His work is also deeply rooted in African heritage.

"In our cultures, garments traditionally came from animal skins, plants, and natural sources. Sustainability is in our DNA; we have been recycling long before it had a name."

His new collection, Pitiki, reflects this phi-



losophy, using maize meal bags to reinterpret the iconic Thethana skirt, a traditional piece historically created from repurposed materials.

"Unconventional materials can absolutely be luxury if executed well. The difference lies in the finishing and embellishment."

The partnership with Sechaba Milling Co. came after Malelu followed their recycling-themed designer competition online.

"I liked the story behind it and was already on the same page about recycling," he said. "But the backlash around the judging took attention away from their message. I wanted to flip the script back to what they were trying to achieve."

After a meeting facilitated by Patrick Motšoene, the collaboration officially took shape.

"They not only sponsored part of my trip to Nigeria but also provided tonnes of maize meal bags that made the entire collection possible," he said.

Malelu hopes the partnership can spark a broader impact.

"I hope this collaboration inspires pride in our local resources and shows how fashion can uplift communities. It's about bridging industry with culture," Malelu said.

Working under extreme time pressure, Malelu and his team produced the centrepiece dress in just 24 hours.

"What went through my mind was simple: I needed to create a masterpiece. As a household name working with their bags, I knew I had to surpass what had been seen before," said Malelu.

Malelu highlighted that during this process, team synergy was crucial.

"Teamwork is dreamwork because we each bring different expertise," noted Malelu. "I developed the concept, others were on the machines, and some cut motifs from the bags."

Showcasing in Nigeria brought a sense of pride and homecoming.

"It felt like taking a piece of home to another

Facebook Live broadcast, the designer remained grateful for the platform.

"I believe it was well received, but by the time I showcased, people were tired, and some were starting to leave."

Malelu hopes his journey inspires the next generation. "I hope young creatives play a part in waste reduction and environmental responsibility," Malelu said.

While he refrains from revealing upcoming collaborations, Malelu hints at promising developments.

"Sechaba Milling and the House of Georges Malelu have started a powerful conversation. There are exciting projects ahead," he shared.

Despite personal and business challenges that temporarily dimmed his creative flame, he is firmly back on course. And has since decided to come back home from South Africa.

"I came back home to reconnect with my roots," he said. "Now I'm ready to translate that reconnection into my designs and take my brand back into the world."

Grounded by faith and purpose, Malelu's vision for his legacy is clear.

"I want to leave a legacy that says no matter where you come from, it is possible to conquer

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# Star-Studded Mohale Media film premiere lights up Victory Hall

Chris Theko

Victory Hall came alive on Saturday as Mohale Media & Toppers Acting Agency premiered their much-anticipated film Graduation: Class of 2025 to a full house.

The launch drew filmmakers, actors, youth and business leaders, reflecting the growing momentum of Lesotho's creative sector.

The event also celebrated the second cohort of graduates from the Mohale Media & Toppers Acting Agency training programme.

Fourteen students completed year-long training in film production, editing, acting, performing and public speaking, marking another important step in strengthening local talent development.

The film features a strong ensemble cast including Mme Lillian Dube, Lehlohonolo Mayeza, Matseliso Mohale, Seipati Mahamu, Keketso Pits'o, and Katleho Mabote. Their performances were warmly received, with the audience connecting to the film's themes of resilience, ambition and friendship.

The programme opened with Mayeza, who spoke on the value of humility in the creative journey. He was followed by Keketso Pitšo, who urged young people to protect their dreams and believe in their vision even before others do.

Actor Katleho Mabote reminded aspiring



artists that success demands patience, while Seipati Mahamu emphasised passion as a guiding force through challenging moments.

A highlight of the evening was an emotionally charged address by businessman and philanthropist Bishop David Ramela. Sharing his story of rising from humble beginnings, he encouraged the youth to embrace adversity as part of growth.

He spoke of perseverance, entrepreneurship and transformation, noting how small be-

ginnings fuelled the employment of thousands across South Africa. His message of hope and self-belief drew loud applause.

Veteran actress, Lillian Dube, later took to the stage to reflect on purpose and artistic integrity. She reminded the audience that every person must follow the path that resonates with them, adding that acting, though often underestimated, mirrors real life. She closed with a heartfelt message urging the youth to pursue their dreams with excellence.



The premiere also showcased performances by Nate Milo, DJ Saucy, Minister Spokes, Rorisang Motsamai, Juvy, Nate Chilly and Ntate Leraisa, while Cura, Drama Queen and Energy kept the audience engaged as MCs.

Organisers hailed the night as a resounding success for Lesotho's creative economy. They thanked partners and supporters for helping elevate local storytelling and for nurturing a new generation of filmmakers and performers.

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# Seutloali's most defining year under spotlight

**Seabata Mahao**

Fresh from clinching last weekend's African Bank Soweto Marathon (42km), long-distance star Khoarahlane Seutloali says 2025 will go down as the most defining and successful season of his running career.

The Mafeteng-born athlete now has his sights set on the 2028 Olympic Games, but says his journey remains focused on steady, disciplined growth rather than rushing qualification.

Speaking after wrapping up what he described as a season unlike any other, Seutloali reflected on a year marked by consistency, mental strength and some of the biggest victories of his life. He said his long-term dream is to see Lesotho strongly represented on the world's biggest sporting stage.

"The next Olympics do not form part of my priorities now, but I wish to see Lesotho being well represented at the Games. My focus is on personal development and improving my performance," he said.

Seutloali capped his extraordinary season with Sunday's Soweto Marathon triumph, crossing the line in 2:20:09 to beat compatriot Lebanya Nkoka, who finished in 2:22:47. It was the perfect ending to a year in which he dominated almost every major race he entered.

The Soweto victory added another shine to a stellar 2025, during which he also claimed:

- The 2025 Two Oceans Ultra Marathon (April) in 3:11:04
- The 2025 Lesotho Minet Independence Marathon (October) in 2:22:35
- The 2025 OUTsurance Gun Run 21km (September) in 1:02:27



These achievements were not accidental for Seutloali. They were the product of what he says has been the most disciplined and spiritually grounded season of his career.

"It was not an easy season as it had its own challenges, but whenever I meet challenges,

I give God a chance to take control. Training hard and maintaining discipline have been my major weapons."

He credits much of his success to his long-time coach, South African mentor Andrew Booyens, with whom he has worked since

2018.

"The man behind these successes is my coach. He plays a vital role in my career. The support I get from my family, sponsor Under Armour, and teammates at Hollywood Club has also been a blessing," he said.

Seutloali's remarkable form has also highlighted Lesotho's altitude advantage and deepened the belief that the country's athletes can consistently excel internationally.

Lesotho's women echoed the nation's brilliance at the Soweto Marathon. Just a week after finishing second in the Kimberley Marathon, 'Neheng Khatala powered to victory in the 21km race, while 'Malineo Mahloko secured a gold medal after finishing in the top 10 with a time of 2:51:08.

The men's 42km race saw dramatic shifts. Jobo Khatoane led at the 1:46:00 mark, with Seutloali staying patient in the chasing pack. But by 2:01:50, Seutloali, Khonkhobe and Phakade surged ahead, and Seutloali eventually broke away to seal the title, a finish symbolic of the tactical maturity that shaped his season.

The Minister of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture, Motlatsoi Maqepleo, praised the athletes for elevating the national flag.

"I congratulate Khoarahlane Seutloali for winning the 42km race. What an outstanding performance. I also congratulate 'Neheng Khatala for winning the 21.1km race, and further commend Lebanya Nkoka and Malineo Mahloko for finishing in the top 10," he said.

He added that the athletes' impressive earnings underline the importance of investing in athletics.

"Truly, we have exceptional talent in long-distance running, combined with the advantage of altitude."

## Kick4Life match towards A Division title

**Seabata Mahao**

Kick4Life Juventude tightened their hold on the A Division Southern Stream summit on Sunday after grinding out a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Quthing LMPS FC in difficult conditions in Quthing.

Kick4Life currently lead the standings with 18 points, ahead of Swallows FC on 13 and Quthing LMPS on 11.

The league leaders travelled south for their penultimate first-round match and were forced to contend with both their opponents and a waterlogged pitch. Recent heavy rains left the surface barely playable, prompting referees and officials to consult both teams before kick-off.

Following a mutual agreement, the match went ahead, though 30 minutes behind the scheduled 15:00 start, as players tested the swampy ground that would shape the entire contest.

From the outset, both teams struggled to control the tempo. Players slipped repeatedly when attempting to accelerate or bring the ball under control, turning the opening half into a test of resilience rather than technical football.

Despite occasional sparks of attacking intent, neither side managed a breakthrough, and the match went into halftime goalless.

Kick4Life's head coach made a pivotal change at the break, introducing Bakuena Masupha in search of greater pace and phys-

ical presence up front. The decision paid off almost immediately.

Fifteen minutes after coming on, Masupha pounced on a loose ball and scored what proved to be the winning goal. His clinical finish not only energised Kick4Life but also deflated the home side, who had battled bravely to keep the visitors at bay.

With the lead secured, Kick4Life displayed composure and tactical discipline, expertly managing the remainder of the match on the treacherous pitch. Their defence held firm under late Quthing LMPS pressure, securing a gritty win that extends their unbeaten streak to eight games.

The victory marked their fifth of the campaign, to go along with three draws, keeping them firmly at the top on 18 points.

Kick4Life now turn their attention to their last first-round fixture on 13 December against Summit FC, hoping to close out the year unbeaten and in full control of the Southern Stream title race.

Meanwhile, despite their recent road accident, Mzamane FC remain top of the Northern Stream with 19 points, followed by Lilemela FC on 15 and Bua-Sono United on 14.

### A Division weekend round-up:

#### Southern Stream Results:

Swallows 2-1 05 United; Mahlaseli 0-0 Villa (Summit); Quthing LMPS 0-1 Kick4Life Juventude; Qoaling Highlanders 0-2 Liponono; ACE Maseru vs All Aces (postponed).

#### Northern Stream Results:

Rangers 1-1 Mzamane; Happy Hearts 1-1 Lilemela; Bua-Sono 0-0 Litshelio; BB Warriors 2-1 Black 5 (CCX); Litshilo 0-2 Sehenehene.

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# Minister deflects blame over Setsoto stadium



## Staff Reporters

The Minister of Sports, Tourism, Arts and Culture, Motlatsi Maqelepo, has distanced himself from the long delays that continue to frustrate the sports fraternity over the protracted rehabilitation of Setsoto Stadium.

The upgrade has dragged on for nearly five years, following the stadium's 2021 ban from hosting official international matches due to its failure to meet CAF and FIFA standards.

Since then, Lesotho has been forced

to play its "home" fixtures in neighbouring South Africa, an arrangement that has highlighted the crippling impact of not having accredited football facilities.

Speaking during a recent assessment visit to the site, Maqelepo addressed rising public frustration, saying misunderstandings about government procedures had fuelled confusion about the project.

He insisted that procurement processes began immediately after the government announced plans for a full stadium overhaul, but stressed that

these processes are bound by strict legal timelines.

"Our Ministry announced the full upgrade of Setsoto Stadium. Immediately after that, the procurement processes began, starting with the submission of Expressions of Interest," he explained.

"We then issued the Terms of Reference and commenced another legally guided process. Ultimately, we will select a contractor through a transparent procedure."

Maqelepo also acknowledged the disappointment of sports supporters, who have endured five years without a true

home ground.

"Sports supporters are indeed frustrated, but unfortunately, their frustration is directed at me unfairly, even though I am doing everything in my power to support the construction of the stadium," he said.

He noted that government procedures, though often slow, are essential for accountability. Citing advice from a former leader, he said many people expected public projects to unfold as quickly as "kneaded dough ready in 10 minutes and fried in hot oil while you enjoy fat cakes."

"In government, there are processes that ensure things are done properly, and a project like the Setsoto Stadium must go through all the necessary stages, including feasibility studies, traffic studies, and design work."

He reaffirmed the commitment of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to deliver a "world-class international stadium that brings pride to the Kingdom of Lesotho," noting that in the 59 years since independence, the country has yet to build a proper national stadium.

The Minister also revealed that the long-awaited turf for the stadium has finally arrived in Lesotho, assuring the nation that installation will begin shortly. He said the pitch is expected to be ready by late January 2026.

"The next phase is the installation of the turf. This is one of the projects that has presented significant challenges, but we have made good progress," he stated.

He added that Setsoto Stadium will reopen for local sporting activities once the currently scheduled arts and cultural events are completed.

"Our target is the end of January 2026," he said, though upgrades to bring the facility in line with CAF and FIFA requirements will continue beyond the turf installation.

Built in 1992 and last renovated between 2010 and 2011, the 20,000-seater stadium has suffered years of neglect. While successive governments have promised refurbishment, the facility has remained in disrepair, an embarrassing symbol of stalled development and unfulfilled commitments.

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