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Lekhetho Makhanya

An opposition legislator has moved to force the government's hand over the abduction and torture of journalist and human rights activist Kananelo Boloetse, asking Parliament to set up an independent commission of inquiry.

Dr Mahali Phamotse, the Matlakeng constituency legislator and leader of the United Africans Transformation (UAT), has filed a notice of motion in the National Assembly. The notice is dated 24 September 2026.

It seeks to compel the House to move the case beyond the current police investigation and set up a full commission of inquiry. Dr Phamotse argues that the police are implicated in the ordeal and cannot properly investigate themselves.

The motion is seconded by fellow legislator and Popular Front for Democracy (PFD) leader Advocate Lekhetho Rakuoane. It also calls for a probe into the government's involvement in the attack on Boloetse, and for a full report to be tabled before the House.

Boloetse is an editor at the Newsday newspaper and a human rights defender with Advocates for the Supremacy of the Constitution (Section 2). He was abducted by three unidentified men at his home in Katlehong, Maseru, on the evening of 5 September 2026.

The motion follows a statement to Parliament on Monday by Home Affairs and Police Minister Voeswa Tsheka. She hinted that government may set up a commission of inquiry, but was quick to say it would cost money. She said she would ask the Ministry of Finance for a budget.

A belated statement

Monday's address was the first time the minister spoke to Parliament on the attack, more than two weeks after it happened. Until then, only Communications Minister Nthathi Moorosi had publicly condemned it and called for swift action. The rest of government stayed silent.

This silence continued even as the attack sent shockwaves through the country and abroad. Several international bodies issued statements condemning it and urged the Lesotho authorities to launch an independent investigation.

It took pressure from Parliament to break it. Last week, Dr Phamotse pressed the National Assembly Speaker to say when government would finally address the matter. Minister Tsheka's statement came only after that.

Police under suspicion

On Tuesday, Dr Phamotse pressed the minister again, this time asking why she did not think it necessary to set up an independent commission. She explained that the police are suspected of involvement in the attack on Boloetse, and that "therefore the police could not properly investigate themselves," she said.

She then turned to the minister directly: "You and your police counterparts are actually the suspects in this matter. The nation cannot trust in handling this issue properly, hence you should establish the commission."

These are serious allegations against the police, and they remain allegations. But the loud applause from MPs in the House showed how many share Dr Phamotse's sentiments. She and other opposition MPs then took turns firing questions at the minister.

Money before action?

Replying to Dr Phamotse, the minister said: "We found out with the police (that there was a need to establish the commission), but the proposed initiative has financial implications, therefore there is a need for us to approach the Ministry of Finance to request a Budget for this. It is dependent on the availability of funds from the Ministry of Finance. Allow me to make a request (to the Ministry of Finance), and I will come back to report to this House about progress."

Examined closely, the Minister's answer offers little. The request to Finance has not yet been made. No amount has been named and no date has been set. The commission, in the minister's own telling, depends on whether funds are available. In other words, government has said an inquiry is possible, but has stopped short of saying it will not happen.

This raises fair questions. If government truly wants those behind the attack brought to book, why did it take more than two weeks to address the nation's representatives? And why is the first thing the public hears about the proposed commission a warning about its cost? When a journalist is abducted, assaulted and dumped at Thaba-Bosiu, the price of finding the truth should not be the government's opening line.

What the minister told Parliament

In her address, Minister Tsheka said police investigations were continuing. She relied on a police report which says Boloetse was taken from his home by three men with covered faces. They assaulted him while his hands were fastened, threw him into their car and drove off. The minister gave the date as 6 September,

Is there money for the truth?

• Questions over govt's commitment in Boloetse case

a day later than the 5 September date recorded elsewhere.

The report says the men dumped him at Thaba-Bosiu. Boloetse found his way to the main road, where a passing motorist in an unidentified car found him and rushed him to a military base in Metolong. A military officer took him to hospital for treatment, and later to the Maseru Charge Office, where he reported the matter to the police.

According to the minister, he was released after making his report. When police later asked him to return to clarify some issues, she said, Boloetse refused, saying he would consult his colleagues. Police have since spoken to him by phone, she said, although he was never found at his home.

That account leaves gaps. Boloetse is a victim of a brutal attack, and an MP is telling the House that the police are suspects. Against that background, his wish to speak to colleagues before going back to a police station is not hard to understand.

The minister also defended the police, who she said spoke to reporters some days after the incident. She said: "The police' silence regarding progress made on their investigation, does not mean they have halted the investigation. Sometimes, successful investigations require investigators to be allowed ample time to do the job without disruptions."

She added: "Justice is never discriminatory, it is never selective in terms of any status of any person, whether the person is victim or suspect, or whether s/he is infamous or not. We are all equal before the law. Justice has to be done for all."

Fine words. But justice also needs action and, as the applause for Dr Phamotse suggests, many MPs doubt that the police can deliver it in this case. Time alone, as the minister suggests, will not settle that doubt. An independent

inquiry might.

The minister also gave crime figures. From January to September 2026, she said, police received 562 sexual offence reports and 215 reports of aggravated assault nationwide. She called the numbers very high and worrisome, promised to work harder for every victim and condemned all crime meant to harm human life.

Those numbers matter. But they say nothing about who took Boloetse, or when the public will know. Listing other crimes is not an answer to a question about this one.

Finally, the minister directed unhappy victims to the Police Complaints Authority: "Where victims are not satisfied with police services, the Police Complaints Authority is there to listen to their concerns and intervene. Doors to the Minister's office are also open for intervention."

What happens next

The motion is expected to come before the National Assembly, where members will decide whether to back a commission of inquiry. The minister has promised to report to the House on her request to Finance. Both will be watched closely.

Boloetse's attackers have not been publicly identified. The government has, so far, offered little beyond a police report, a warning about cost and a promise to return. Basotho, the press and the international bodies that have called for an independent probe will want more than that.

An independent commission would offer what a police investigation, however diligent, cannot: public confidence that those investigating are not investigating themselves. The question for government is simple. Does it want the truth about what happened to Boloetse, and is it ready to pay for it?



Home Affairs and Police Minister Voeswa Tsheka taking oath



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Lekhetho Makhanya

Defence lawyer Advocate Lepeli Molapo has told the High Court that Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) Sub-Inspector Mokheseng Ramahloko was fatally shot by soldiers because he refused to surrender and instead returned fire.

Adv. Molapo made the claim on Monday while cross-examining crown witness Sergeant Mokete Litulo of the LMPS. He argued that Ramahloko refused to surrender, "but instead, retaliated by shooting at the soldiers using his firearm."

Molapo is one of the defence lawyers representing the accused in the treason trial arising from the army's storming of police headquarters (PHQ) in Maseru on August 29, 2014, when Ramahloko was shot dead.

Several Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) members, including then Army Commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli, face treason and related charges. The other LDF accused are Captain Litekanyo Nyakane and Lance Corporals Motloheloa Ntsane and Leutsoa Motsieloa.

Politicians Mothetjoa Metsing of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and Selibe Mochoboroane of the Movement for Economic Change (MEC) are also accused in the trial.

All the accused face multiple charges, including murder, attempted murder, risk of injury or death, and aggravated assault. They have pleaded not guilty.

The court has heard that Ramahloko was shot dead by a group of soldiers who assaulted police officers on duty at PHQ that night.

Led in his testimony by prosecutor Adv. Re-thabile Setlojane, Sgt Litulo told the court he was on a night shift from 6:00pm on August 29 to 6:00am the next day. He said he was on duty with Lance Sergeant Thamae when Ramahloko came into the radio room to request a telephone.

Litulo explained that Ramahloko was attached to the Special Operations Unit (SOU) but was working a shift at the headquarters guardroom, controlling movement in and out of PHQ. The guardroom is next to the main gate for that

Defence challenges police account of Ramahloko's death

purpose.

Litulo said that as Ramahloko arrived, the radio room received a call from one Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (SACP) Loke, who urgently wanted to speak to Ramahloko. Ramahloko took the call in the same office, and Loke told him the army was on its way to PHQ.

Litulo said Ramahloko then rushed back towards the guardroom, "but he returned quickly to inform us that the soldiers were already at the main gate," Litulo testified.

Ramahloko also told them that soldiers were already assaulting the police officers deployed with him there. Asked how they knew the intruders were soldiers, Litulo said they wore army uniform, "although they all covered their faces with scarves and black hats," he said.

While Litulo, Thamae and Ramahloko were still in the radio room, they were joined by Mahanetsa, who was accompanied by two soldiers.

"He (Mahanetsa) stormed into the radio room with soldiers. With him were two soldiers armed with AK-47 rifles. They were on both his sides, left and right, and their rifle muzzles were pointed at us in the radio room. The rifle muzzles were visible from Mahanetsa's shoulders as the two soldiers drove him inside the radio room," Litulo told the court

He said the soldiers ordered the four men, Ramahloko, Thamae, Mahanetsa and himself, out of the radio room to join other officers at the main gate. They were made to walk through the entire headquarters building until they were outside.

"Immediately when we were outside the building, we were ordered to stop walking and forced to roll on our bodies while we were being kicked and beaten at the same time," Litulo

narrated.

As they neared the main gate in the same manner, Litulo said, he realised there were many soldiers in the headquarters yard, "heavily armed with AK-47 rifles but covering their faces with scarves and black hats".

The four were made to join other police officers seated in a line along the guardroom walls. Litulo estimated the time at about 4:00am, "and there were already passersby visible from outside the yard."

He said the soldiers asked the police officers held hostage to identify almost everyone passing by. Their intention, he explained, was to arrest every police officer who happened to be around the headquarters at that moment.

Mahanetsa also testified about the fatal shooting of Ramahloko in the radio room, saying soldiers shot him and then dragged his body from the radio room to the main gate.

Litulo said he later saw Ramahloko's lifeless body at the main gate. He, Police Constable Nkhabu and Thamae were then instructed to lift the body into a car boot and drive it to Makoanyane Military Hospital.

Both Mahanetsa and Litulo have told the court that Ramahloko hid an AK-47 rifle under the table in the radio room and hid his sidearm at his back.

Litulo maintained that Ramahloko never used his gun to shoot at the soldiers. Adv. Molapo countered that Ramahloko had fired shots before hiding his sidearm, "if it was availed by the police as an exhibit for court, Ramahloko's firearm would be taken for ballistic tests and the results would indicate that the firearm had been used shortly before Ramahloko could try to hide it."

Molapo claimed that Ramahloko's firearm was among the evidence items tampered with by the police in an attempt to conceal why the sub-inspector was fatally shot.

He also alleged that the police tampered with evidence by replacing the door to the Commissioner's Secretary's office, which he said was shot at during crossfire.

"During the crossfire, the door was shot and had holes in it," Molapo claimed. He said the door ought to have been presented in court as an exhibit, but the police authorities replaced it. He accused them of doing so "knowing well enough that the door was subject of the court in this continuing trial".

Litulo acknowledged that the door and the radio room wall panel, both shot at during the incident, had been replaced. He said his superiors did this to refurbish offices, "not tempering with evidence as you put it," Litulo explained.

He added that the refurbishment happened after the court had carried out a site inspection of the scene.

Molapo rejected that explanation, saying that even after the site inspection, "the property remained subject of trial as exhibit, until this trial is finalised, the police authorities know this better, and you (he referred to Litulo), as an officer of the law of your experience, know this," Molapo charged.

Molapo further alleged that police continued to tamper with the court's evidence when they allegedly confiscated a spent bullet and fragments from a broken cabinet and failed to present them in court as an exhibit.

He maintained that the police authorities tampered with the evidence knowingly, to conceal why the army fatally shot Ramahloko.



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Lesotho pressed to join Africa's mineral revolution



Part of the AU delegation meets high ranking Lesotho government officials during their mission to Lesotho earlier this week

Bereng Mpaki

Lesotho has been called on to fast-track its ratification of the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC) Statute, joining a continent-wide push to operationalize the decade-old institution that African Union (AU) designed to revolutionize administration of Africa's mineral wealth.

However, even if Lesotho was to sign and ratify, as it has now pledged to do, the AMDC would still need 10 more ratifications to enter into force. As of January 2026 only four countries namely Guinea, Mali, Zambia and Nigeria had completed the process.

The ratification urgency was underscored this week when a joint delegation comprising the AMDC, the African Peer Review Mechanism's (APRM) continental secretariat, and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) arrived in Maseru to lobby Lesotho government officials, parliamentarians and the media to expedite ratification.

The Mission was composed of APRM CEO and ACCORD's Senior Advisor on Critical Minerals, Professor Eddy Maloka, Advisor to the CEO of the APRM Advocate Batlokoa Makong, Programmes Officer at AMDC Mkhululi Ncube, Consultant on Critical Minerals at ACCORD Ambassador Refiloe Litjubo, Counselor at the Permanent Mission of Lesotho to the African Union Advocate Ishmael Tatolo Sefeane, Joint Project Coordinator Carole Obure, and APRM Researcher Karabo Chadzingwa-Mochebelele.

The AMDC statute was adopted by AU Heads of State in January 2016 as the implementing arm of the Africa Mining Vision (AMV), which is the continental blueprint for turning mineral wealth into

shared prosperity. Ten years later, it is yet to start operations due to inadequate ratification numbers.

That stalled progress is why AU officials have intensified travel across the continent including Lesotho in 2026 to close the gap. Lesotho was among the first AU member states to embrace the AMV in principle, having aligned its as yet unused 2015 Minerals and Mining Policy with the AMV's aims, although it is yet to formally commit to the AMDC statute by way of ratification as of September 2026.

"Lesotho's commitment and call to action remains unequivocal. We will work towards signing within the immediate future and push the processes to ratify the AMDC Statutes," said Seboka Thamae, Deputy Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Mining.

He said ratification would not be a mere formality. "Our ratification deposit will not be done merely as a procedural formality, but as a strategic affirmation that Africa's mineral destiny must be shaped by Africans, for Africans."

Thamae outlined what Lesotho expects the AMDC to deliver once operational; harmonised mining policies and regulatory best practice to boost investor confidence while protecting environmental and social standards; technical support for geological surveys, mining cadastres and value-chain analysis; platforms for regional cooperation on cross-border infrastructure and green-minerals strategy; and collective continental advocacy to ensure African producers get fair value in global markets.

"These benefits are not unique to Lesotho. They are the very rationale for the

AMDC's existence," he said, adding that they can only be realised once the fifteen-ratification threshold is met.

Head of mission Professor Eddy Maloka, said their visit to Lesotho was more than just sensitisation and paperwork. He said the workshop provided an opportunity for stakeholders in Lesotho to retrospect and reflect on the areas that need to be addressed.

Maloka said he left encouraged by the government's reassurances, but urged Lesotho to avoid further in fulfilling its commitment.

Advocate Makong explained that AMDC is designed to fix specific, long-standing weaknesses in how African minerals are currently managed.

It will improve the quality of geological data available to governments, strengthening their hand in negotiations and leading to fairer investment deals. It will build state capacity to negotiate mining contracts that capture a greater share of resource rents through fiscal regimes sensitive to commodity price swings, while still protecting community access to infrastructure.

It will also pool regulatory and technical skills across the continent to close capacity gaps that individual governments cannot fill alone. And it will help governments capture more mineral wealth directly, whether through state ownership stakes or joint ventures.

Makong further noted that infrastructure remains one of the biggest obstacles, pointing to Africa's logistics costs running roughly 250 percent above the global average, a gap the AMDC aims to narrow by pooling resources through integrated re-

gional Development Corridors.

"It is our sincere conviction as the APRM that greater utilization and governance of Lesotho's mineral resources will ensure radial socio-economic transformation of Lesotho. It will ensure political stability and sustainable development and prosperity of the country.

"It ensures that the country is better positioned to effectively address the governance challenges identified in the APRM Review Reports. We are convinced beyond reasonable doubt that the AMDC is a tool that will crystallise and accelerate efforts by the Government in ensuring a better life for its citizens."

On her part, Chadzingwa-Mochebelele indicated that the Africa Governance Report 2025 (AGR-2025) on Natural Resource Governance - developed by the APRM in close collaboration with African Union African Governance Architecture, particularly the African Union Commission through the AMDC, urged AU Member States to implement continental frameworks on mineral resources, including the African Mining Vision.

The AGR-2025 was adopted by the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Governments in February 2025. The Assembly further urged all AU Member States to implement the recommendations contained in AGR-2025, she added.

In order for Lesotho's ratification to be finalized, the statute must clear both Cabinet and Parliament before being returned, signed, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, which will formally deposit the instrument of ratification with the AU Commission in Addis Ababa.

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Thaba-Tseka parents urged to embrace positive discipline



Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Teenage pregnancy is considered one of the major public health challenges facing the country. It can sometimes lead to school dropout and early marriage.

Studies show that teenage pregnancy, school dropout and child marriage are rife in underserved communities, and Thaba-Tseka is one of the districts that often make headlines because of them.

This week, Parliament's Women's Caucus, made up of members of both the Senate and the National Assembly, visited the district to engage parents, teachers, students and officials on these problems, which have rocked the district.

Various organisations and government initiatives are working to address teenage pregnancy and child marriage in Lesotho, but the challenges remain acute in Thaba-Tseka.

According to the Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey, the district has the country's highest rate of teenage childbearing, at 32%, compared with just 12% in Leribe. It also records the highest rate of forced child marriage, at 22%, often following teenage pregnancies.

Caucus Chairperson 'Mamamello Holomo expressed concern over gender-based violence (GBV) incidents and child marriage in the Panteng and Ha-Ramoliehi communities in the Thaba-Tseka and Mashai constituencies.

She said the caucus wants to see students finish their studies, secure a better future and become good citizens who will one day run the country and change its prospects.

"We are concerned about teenage pregnancies. Adolescents are not mature enough to raise a family. We have a nation whereby children are growing up without proper care and parental supervision, which could lead to a poorer and weaker nation," she said.

Supported by the Southern African Development Community Parliamenta-

ry Forum (SADC-PF), the outreach saw participation of legal experts, health professionals and police officers, who in one accord urged parents and guardians to take a more active role in guiding and disciplining their children.

Speakers said discipline should be firm, caring and aimed at helping children make responsible decisions. Parents were cautioned, however, against assaulting children, as physical abuse is a punishable offence.

Families and communities were encouraged to work together to keep children in school, protect them from early marriage and give them the support and guidance they need to build safer and more hopeful futures.

Holomo said some laws need to be amended and new ones enacted that would sufficiently address the societal challenges facing the nation. She noted that some adolescents leave their children alone and go to South Africa in search of economic opportunities.

The Chairperson of the Women's Caucus added: "It is not too late to change the status quo. As long as God gives us the opportunity, we will join forces. We should not accept that challenges within families should lead to GBV."

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says adolescent girls are more vulnerable than boys to unplanned pregnancy, and some drop out of school and enter early marriage. Although education policy provides for the reintegration of girls who leave school to give birth and care for their children, not all are reported to return.

Child Gender Protection Unit (CGPU) officer at Thaba-Tseka police station, Lance Sergeant Lintle Mankoe, said unexpected teenage pregnancy should not result in child marriage. She warned parents that they could face the consequences if found to have facilitated it.

"If your girl child is pregnant, approach

relevant institutions for guidance," she said.

Mankoe reminded parents that concealing or facilitating child marriage is an offence. Parents or guardians who cover up or consent to such arrangements could be charged under the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011, which sets the legal age of marriage at 18.

She also warned chiefs against allowing sheep to be slaughtered for an adolescent in a purported marriage. Senator 'Makholu Muoalle Moshoeshoe echoed this, cautioning chiefs against signing letters that facilitate the marriage of underage children. Moshoeshoe also challenged men to become role models for boys and to mentor those who did not attend initiation school.

Lance Sergeant Mankoe said her office receives reports of children as young as 15 entering child marriages. She warned older people against statutory rape, noting that sex with a child under 18 is statutory rape in Lesotho. Conviction in the courts attracts a 10-year prison term, often without the option of a fine.

She said a child who has been raped should be taken to hospital within three days and should not wash, as this could interfere with the collection of evidence.

She also condemned sexual offences committed by some women in so-called "sugar mummy" relationships, in which they lure young boys into intergenerational sexual relationships.

Lance Sergeant Mankoe called on parents not to spare the rod but to enforce discipline among their children, urging them to be firm on curfews and to set clear times for children to be home after sunset.

Ranyaliseng Maanela, a representative of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, warned communities that the Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022 prohibits parents from abdicating

their responsibilities and requires them to provide for their children's needs. He pointed out that abuse often happens within close relationships.

"Crimes should not be hidden but exposed so that it should be a deterrent to others," he said.

Maanela said the law entitles survivors of GBV to protection orders against perpetrators, and violating such an order is punishable.

Senator 'Mambataung Mokhathali, another member of the caucus, said whatever a child is taught and exposed to in childhood becomes part of adulthood, and called for positive upbringing and influence from their surroundings. Mokhathali said children exposed to adulterous communities are influenced in their behaviour, grow up sexually active and spread HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

MP 'Manthabiseng Maea urged parents to stop demanding that their daughters "return from where they come from" when they arrive home at night.

Residents also shared their experiences with the legislators. Panteng resident Leeto Ntabanyane expressed worry that when parents call out inappropriate behaviour among adolescents in the community, the adolescents' parents gossip about them.

"They are going to say that you have abused them."

Ntabanyane also said some parents condone sexual relationships among teenagers. When teenagers visit one another and spend long periods together at home, some women often say, "They are just children; they are learning, and nothing will come of it," only to discover later that the girl is pregnant. He also expressed concern that some adolescents refuse to attend school and loiter aimlessly in the community.

Another resident, 'Marichard Mothae, told the legislators that some adolescents fetched from marriages return to the marriages on their own, posing a challenge to parents. She was advised to report such cases to the CGPU, which intervenes not only when a crime has been committed but also in family matters.

"We work with Probation Officers. Part of our work [CGPU] is to also ensure that children don't abuse you[parents]," said Lance Sergeant Mankoe.

Another villager, 'Maseeng Maliehe, took a swipe at men who sexually assault children.

"Men who rape the children are overlooking us and go for the children. You will find that as you are walking with the child, these men will be interested in talking to the children and overlook you," Maliehe said.

Thaba-Tseka's CGPU office reported that it recently reversed a child marriage involving a 15-year-old girl from Qacha's Nek who reportedly met her partner on social media. Chief Selebeli Kotsa of Bocheletsane also said his office had annulled a child marriage.

The chief's move highlights the role traditional leaders can play in protecting children and upholding their rights. Ending child marriages safeguards young people from harm and gives them a better chance to remain in school and build a secure future.

More than funding: partners back Lesotho's youngest learners

Ntsoaki Motaung

On a bright morning in Mapoteng Community, Berea District, Sion Primary School was alive with music and hope.

The school was hosting a mission from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which had come to Lesotho to see first-hand how its support is changing lives. Children, teachers, parents and partners gathered to celebrate the progress and share their stories.

The day began with learners from Sion Primary performing a song they had composed to raise awareness about violence in schools and the wider issue of gender-based violence.

Their voices were strong and clear, and their message was simple: every child deserves to learn in a safe environment. The learners also performed traditional dances to show their appreciation for the support the school has received through the GPE.

How the GPE support works at the school

The support reached Sion Primary through the combined efforts of NECDOL, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Training, with funding from the GPE and coordination by the Lesotho Council of NGOs. Together, the organisations have worked to strengthen the foundations of learning in Lesotho, focusing especially on early childhood education.

At Sion Primary, this has taken the form of a new reception class, known as Grade R, funded under the GPE's Multiplier 1 programme. In practice, the intervention works at three levels:

- **The classroom.** The reception class opened in January 2026 with 30 learners. Two have since left after their parents moved them to other schools.
- **The teacher.** Teacher 'Mapaleo Qekisi was first trained to use the gadgets and tablets provided for teaching, and was equipped with learning materials and assessment tools. She later received training on the new curriculum.
- **The home.** Parents are involved as partners, using materials provided to create a safe space for learners.

What teachers and parents report

One parent, Matlotliso Thokoa, whose child is in Grade R, shared her gratitude for the Multiplier 1 programme funded by the GPE.

"This initiative contributes to quality education for our children," she explained. "When I compare my child in the recep-

tion class with her older siblings, the difference is huge. The child in reception can already read, while the older ones struggled at that age and still struggle in their classes."

Thokoa said she sees herself as a partner in her child's education.

"I take myself as a partner in making sure that early childhood education is safe and the best for the children. I play my role as a parent by using materials provided to create a safe space for learners. I know I have nothing to worry about when my child is at school, because she has a great relationship with her teacher and is always eager to go. For that reason, I am convinced Sion Primary School is a safe school and helps my child grow in all aspects."

Qekisi remembers well the excitement and challenges of the class's first days. She said the programme is already showing results.

"The results of the programme are already visible," she said. "The reception class learners are more developed in all five areas of child development compared to those who went straight to Grade 1 without early education. Even among those in reception, children who attended early childhood centres before are better developed than those experiencing early learning for the first time. This confirms the importance of early childhood education."

The partners' dinner

The mission's visit did not end at the school. That evening, a dinner brought together private sector leaders, government officials and international partners to reflect on the progress and the partnership's future.

Among the guests was Belay Addise, the GPE's Regional Manager for Eastern and Southern Africa, who thanked everyone for their commitment and explained the GPE's approach.

"We are not a donor entity," said Addise. "We mobilise money from institutional and sovereign donors and allocate it to partner countries. But more than funding, we bring people together. We don't have our own country strategy. Lesotho has its own national development plan. We encourage governments and partners to identify one key reform priority in education. In Lesotho, that priority has been foundational learning and early childhood education, which has a high return on investment."

The reception class at Sion Primary is the local face of that approach: early

childhood education is Lesotho's chosen priority, and the funding is turned into classrooms, trained teachers and learning materials.

Addise stressed coordination, data and domestic finance as the keys to real change.

"Are we coordinated in the sector? Do we have data and evidence? Do we have strong information systems? Is our planning gender-responsive? What is the situation with domestic finance? These are the main questions we ask countries to consider. Then we all agree on a partnership compact. In Lesotho, this compact has been valid for the last three or four years, and now is a critical time to look back and review the progress."

He praised Lesotho as a leading example of private sector engagement in education.

"We keep citing Lesotho as the best practice when it comes to private sector engagement. It is one of the smallest countries on the continent, but here we have the best example."

Addise also shared a proverb from his own country about the power of working together.

"Individually, a spider web is weak, but when webs come together, they can tie a lion. When the private sector in Lesotho comes together, your investment becomes more impactful and sustainable."

Mohale Ralebitso, CEO of Vodacom Lesotho, welcomed new private sector partners, including banks and insurance companies, and spoke about giving every child in Lesotho the opportunity to learn.

"If we leave some children out, not because they lack ability, but because they lack means, we cannot call our system fair. It is our shared responsibility to ensure every person can develop their abilities. I know firsthand how education changes lives. I am here today because I was lucky enough to come from a village that could provide the means for me to be educated," Ralebitso said.

He said the partnership had already unlocked \$2.5 million with the help of various organisations, and that visitors including tennis champion Roger Federer had seen the programme in action.

Ralebitso stressed science, technology, engineering and mathematics, but recognised that all disciplines matter in building complete human beings.

"Through this partnership, we have reached 500 students. Let's make it more. Let's cover every district. Government cannot do it alone. It is our job too."

He ended with a call to action: "If we raise everyone's standard of thinking, we can improve the world. Education is the key. Let's not allow Africa to remain the continent with the least educated children when partnerships like this can change that."

Dr Bob Muchabaiwa, UNICEF Country Representative, praised the leadership of the Ministry of Education and the coordinating role of the Lesotho Council of NGOs. He said education in Lesotho has become a national agenda, not just a sector issue.

"For us to achieve our goals, we must continue to work together in a coordinated and effective way. Domestic financing is important and is taking many forms, but what is striking in Lesotho is the private sector's belief in this agenda. Over the past week, we have seen many new actors join, and the number of private sector partners has more than doubled."

He said the private sector is working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to set up a sustainable mechanism for continuous investment in education.

"The ground is fertile," he concluded. "Together, we can help bring quality education to every Mosotho child in all 10 districts."

Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Training Ratšiu Majara spoke about the importance of unity and partnership in building the nation through education.

"Without education, this country would be ruined," Majara said. "Countries like Singapore invested in health and education, both the private sector and the government together. They do not have special resources, but their economies are growing because they invested in human capital."

He said the country has already seen progress since the partnership began.

"Every year, the quality of passes is improving at the basic education level, and more learners are accessing the education system. When these learners move to higher education and technical colleges, we will have a group of well-prepared people to lead our country forward."

Sion Primary is one example of how partnership is making a difference across Lesotho. With 369 learners, 16 teachers and a growing reception class, the school is laying the foundations for a brighter future. Through the combined efforts of government, the private sector, international partners and the local community, Lesotho is showing that when people come together, real change is possible.

Repo rate up to 7% amid mounting inflation risks

Seabata Mahao

The Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) has raised the repo rate by 25 basis points to 7.00 percent per annum, citing the need to maintain the country's exchange-rate peg, safeguard international reserves and preserve macroeconomic stability.

The decision was announced by CBL Governor DrMalukeLetete on Thursday, following the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting held on September 24, 2026. The CBL's September MPC meeting is also listed on its official calendar.

The increase comes a day after the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) raised its policy rate by 25 basis points to 7.25 percent, creating a 25-basis-point differential between the two rates. SARB said the increase was driven by heightened inflation risks amid a difficult global environment.

According to Letete, the MPC considers the 7.00 percent rate appropriate because the modest differential with South Africa is sufficient to support the loti-rand exchange-rate peg while allowing room to support domestic economic activity.

"The Committee considers this level appropriate as a modest interest rate differential of 25 basis points relative to the SARB repo rate of 7.25 per cent per annum. It is deemed enough to sustain the exchange rate peg and support domestic economic activity," Letete said.

He said the MPC would continue monitoring global, regional and domestic economic developments and remained prepared to act decisively to defend the exchange-rate peg, safeguard reserves and preserve macroeconomic stability.

Although inflation has eased, the CBL warned that the outlook has become more challenging.

Domestic inflation declined to 2.6 percent in August 2026, from 2.9 percent in July, mainly due to lower food prices and

slower increases in clothing and restaurant-service prices.

However, inflation is projected to rise to 4.4 percent in 2027, largely because of higher food prices.

Letete said weather-related disruptions to food supplies, higher oil prices and fuel levies, as well as the possibility of higher operating costs being passed on to consumers, represented upside risks to inflation.

"The Committee therefore deemed it necessary to maintain a cautious and data-dependent policy stance," he said.

The Governor said private-sector credit increased by 1.5 percent in July 2026, with business lending growing faster than household credit.

Despite the increase in credit, the credit-to-deposit ratio declined to 52.7 percent, which the CBL said pointed to adequate liquidity within the banking sector and manageable credit conditions.

"These developments indicate adequate banking-sector liquidity, manageable credit conditions and limited evidence of broad-based demand pressures," Letete said.

The developments come against a backdrop of weak domestic demand, with the central bank indicating that economic growth is expected to remain modest.

Domestic economic activity rebounded in July after contracting in the preceding month.

The recovery was mainly supported by construction, manufacturing and transport, according to the CBL.

However, Letete cautioned that the economy continues to face structural and external challenges, including labour-market weakness, subdued domestic demand, difficulties in the mining sector and uncertainty in the global economy.

Real GDP growth is expected to remain modest in 2026 before gradually picking



Governor Dr Maluke Letete

up in the medium term.

The country's external position remains adequate to support the exchange-rate peg, according to the MPC.

Net international reserves (NIR) stood at US\$1.209 billion as of September 18, 2026, providing a US\$139 million buffer above the CBL's target floor of US\$1.070 billion.

Import cover stood at 5.6 months during the second quarter of 2026.

The CBL projects that NIR will remain above its target floor throughout the forecast period, reaching approximately US\$1.217 billion by March 2027.

However, Letete warned that the reserve outlook remains exposed to risks including elevated global energy prices, rand volatility, geopolitical and trade uncertainty, commercial-bank flows and increased government spending.

Developments in South Africa remain particularly important for Lesotho because of the countries' close economic and monetary relationship.

The South African economy contracted modestly in the second quarter of 2026, although a recovery is expected during the second half of the year. Growth is projected at 1.2 percent in 2026, with medium-term growth estimated at around 2.0 percent.

South Africa's headline inflation increased to 4.4 percent in August, from 4.3 percent previously.

Against this backdrop, the SARB raised its policy rate to 7.25 percent. The SARB

confirmed that its September MPC decision was driven by upside inflation risks and a more difficult global environment.

The CBL also expressed concern over worsening global economic conditions.

According to Letete, major central banks have adopted more restrictive monetary policy settings, while global financial conditions have tightened as bond yields increased and portfolio flows into South Africa remained volatile.

Global growth is projected to slow to 3.0 percent in 2026 before recovering to 3.4 percent in 2027.

The outlook faces risks from escalating conflict, trade fragmentation and adverse weather conditions, while global headline inflation is projected to rise to 4.7 percent in 2026, from 4.1 percent in 2025, largely because of higher energy, fertiliser and transport costs.

The Governor said the renewed escalation of conflict in the Middle East and attacks on energy infrastructure in Russia had pushed crude oil prices above US\$100 per barrel, while disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz had added further pressure to the global supply environment.

With these risks weighing on the domestic and external outlook, the MPC said future monetary-policy decisions would remain data-dependent, with the protection of the exchange-rate peg and macroeconomic stability remaining central to its policy stance.

Lesotho moves to equip MSMEs for regional market growth

Staff reporters

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development is stepping up efforts to prepare small businesses to compete beyond the domestic market as the country seeks to turn regional trade agreements into practical opportunities for enterprise growth and export expansion.

About 70 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are expected to participate in a three-day capacity-building workshop on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and regional trade opportunities, scheduled for September 28-30 in Maseru.

The workshop is being organised by the Government of Lesotho in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Lesotho and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) Lesotho.

The initiative is aimed at addressing one of the key challenges facing smaller businesses: having access to markets does not necessarily mean having the capacity to sell into them.

"The workshop will bring together approximately 65-70 MSMEs to strengthen their capacity to access regional and continental markets through the African Con-



The Minister of Trade, Industry, and Business Development, Motlatsi Maselepo

tinental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), while also leveraging opportunities under the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Trade Protocol," a statement from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and business Development said.

"Despite AfCFTA creating access to a market of over one billion consumers, many MSMEs continue to face challenges related to Rules of Origin, compliance with trade standards, and the use of digital trade tools. The workshop aims to address these barriers and support implementation of Lesotho's National AfCFTA Implementation Strategy and Action Plan," the

Ministry added.

ECA explained that the workshop will strengthen the ability of Lesotho's MSMEs to use AfCFTA while also taking advantage of existing preferences under the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the SADC Free Trade Area.

The programme will focus on practical areas that can determine whether a small business successfully enters a regional market, including export readiness, trade compliance, market intelligence, rules of origin and digital trade.

The first day will focus on market intelligence and export opportunities, followed by trade frameworks and compliance on

the second day. The final day will feature a business-to-business seminar and market linkages involving potential buyers.

Understanding the rules governing regional trade is particularly important for local businesses. The Ministry of Trade and Industry says exporters need to understand conditions contained in trade agreements, including rules of origin, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and customs procedures.

The ministry's Department of Trade also identifies trade promotion, identifying products with export potential, product and market development and trade capacity-building among its functions.

The AfCFTA provides a potentially much larger customer base for businesses prepared to meet the requirements of continental trade. The ECA says the agreement covers all 55 African Union member states and a market of more than 1.2 billion people, with the potential to significantly increase intra-African trade as tariffs and other barriers are reduced.

The broader objective for Lesotho is moving from having trade agreements on paper to ensuring that local businesses have the knowledge, standards, networks and compliance capacity needed to actually use them.

International recognition for Econet

Seabata Mahao

Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) has received international recognition after global connectivity intelligence firm Ookla named it Lesotho's Fastest Mobile Network for the first half of 2026.

The recognition, based on independently collected, real-world consumer network performance data, provides an assessment of mobile network experiences across the country during the first six months of the year.

Patrick Linder, Vice-President of Telco Marketing Strategy and Design at Ookla, said the recognition reflected ETL's leading network performance.

"We are excited to announce that ETL has the Fastest Mobile Network in Lesotho, validated by Speedtest Verified," Linder said.

He said the recognition highlighted the performance of ETL's network, adding that Ookla was proud to affirm the achievement.

The recognition comes as ETL undertakes one of its most extensive network modernisation programmes, with recent upgrades nearly tripling its active



Econet Telecom Lesotho's Chief Executive Officer, Dennis Plaatjies

5G footprint while also strengthening 4G coverage across Lesotho.

According to the company, the investments are intended to improve customers' everyday digital experiences, including faster browsing, smoother video streaming, more responsive gaming and digital services, clearer voice calls and

improved access to connectivity.

ETL Chief Executive Officer Dennis Plaatjies said the recognition was a reflection of sustained investment in network infrastructure and the contribution of teams across the organisation.

"Receiving these Speedtest Awards

from Ookla is a moment of immense pride for everyone at ETL," Plaatjies said.

"These accolades are far more than industry recognition, they are an independent validation of our commitment to continuously investing in a network that delivers exceptional experiences for our customers every day."

Plaatjies said reliable connectivity was becoming increasingly important to Lesotho's digital development as more aspects of everyday life moved online.

He noted that improved connectivity was helping businesses expand, enabling students to access learning opportunities, keeping families connected and allowing entrepreneurs to access new markets and opportunities.

The recognition comes amid growing demand for high-speed broadband, digital financial services, artificial intelligence-enabled services and other emerging technologies.

ETL said it would continue expanding and modernising its network to meet changing customer needs while supporting Lesotho's broader digital development.

"While we celebrate this milestone, we see it as motivation to continue investing in our network and delivering even greater value for the people of Lesotho," Plaatjies said.



Ntsoaki Motaung

Lesotho's young people are facing tough times. Many are jobless, and life in rural areas is especially hard. Climate change is making it harder still to grow food and earn a living. Now a new programme is offering some hope.

Supported by the Government of Japan and UNICEF, the programme is giving young people the chance to learn new skills and start businesses in climate-smart agriculture.

It began in February 2026 and will run until February 2027. It is expected to directly help 450 young people aged 15 to 35, at least 60 percent of them young women and girls. About 1,000 family and community members are also expected to benefit indirectly as these young people earn more and produce more food.

There are not enough jobs, and many young people lack the skills or resources to start their own businesses. This is especially true for girls, young women and young mothers, who find it harder to get land, money or training. Many rural households depend on farming, but frequent droughts, soil erosion and unpredictable rain make it difficult to grow enough food.

In some areas the situation is even more serious. According to Manko Manko, Executive Director of the local NGO Agrivision Lesotho, the community of Ha 'Mamathe has a high number of early and unintended pregnancies. He explained that young women and girls often have few choices, and some end up relying on men for money, which can put them at risk.

"Young people in Lesotho face limited access to market-relevant skills, productive resources and enterprise opportunities," says UNICEF. "These barriers are made worse by climate shocks, declining agricultural productivity, poverty, gender inequality and the effects of HIV on households."

The programme aims to break these cycles by giving young people practical skills and support. Its main focus is climate-smart agriculture, which means using new methods and technology to farm in a way that is good for the environment and can withstand climate change.

Participants will be trained in climate-smart farming, agribusiness, agro-processing, food manufacturing and business planning. Training in financial literacy, savings, investment and cooperative development will give them the tools not only to grow food, but to build and manage successful businesses.

There will also be peer learning, coaching and mentorship to help participants turn their new skills into real economic opportunities. Selected youth groups and enterprises will receive start-up grants, along with continuing technical support.

Manko said, "The main aim of the project is to respond to the major problem of high youth unemployment. It is an emergency project. At the end of the programme, participants should be able to produce food and provide for their families."

He added that the project includes a focus on nutrition, an area young people often do not take part in.

Japan, UNICEF join hands to give hope to young people in Lesotho



Adolecents and Youth gather at Ha 'Mamathe- Ha Boose Moreng for the Youth Pathways to Economic Empowerment Programme.

"Mostly youth do not take part in nutrition-related initiatives, so this is a major step in ensuring they take part," he said.

Sixteen nutrition clubs have been set up and will receive support through the project.

The programme will also try to reach youth who have dropped out of school. Many of them, according to Manko, end up involved in crime or alcohol abuse because they have no work. By giving them new skills and a chance to earn money, the project hopes to keep them busy and away from risky activities.

UNICEF is running the programme with three national NGOs: Agrivision Lesotho, Rutanang Community Foundation and Barali Foundation. They will work closely with government ministries, local authorities, community leaders, community-based organisations and existing youth groups to

find and support the young people who need help most.

Participants are selected in a participatory and inclusive way, with the whole community involved in choosing who will join, so that the programme reaches those most in need.

Some young people are already seeing benefits. 'Mamphu Lenyatsa, 34, from Ha Boose, said poverty and unemployment push some youth into crime and alcohol abuse. After joining the sessions, she learned how to build secure, improved plots for farming.

She said, "After the programme, I expect to have skills to produce for commercial agriculture. I know my life may change for the better."

Moitheri Mothibeli, 27, also from Ha Boose, said many young people in his community turn to crime or alcohol because they have

nothing else to do. Already interested in agriculture, he has learned new skills through the programme, such as building a compost plot to grow more nutritious vegetables.

"I would be happy if after the programme, I see a lot of youth get into farming and come together to produce on a larger scale," he said.

The hope is that the programme will serve as a model for how social protection and livelihoods support can work together to lift communities out of poverty. According to UNICEF, the initiative complements Lesotho's social protection system by helping vulnerable households build income and resilience.

It also supports national priorities on youth employment and climate adaptation, while contributing to food security, gender equality and better outcomes for children. Support from Japan is seen as vital, showing how international partnerships can help countries like Lesotho respond to urgent needs and long-term challenges.

By working with local organisations and government bodies, the programme aims to create lasting change, not just for the current group of young people but for future generations.

UNICEF's work in Lesotho is part of its global mission to help disadvantaged children and their families. It operates in more than 190 countries and territories to make sure every child has a fair chance in life.



Between drought and danger: The double burden on Mafeteng women

Ntsoaki Motaung

Women, young girls, and vulnerable groups in the Mafeteng district are facing severe and life-threatening risks due to harsh weather conditions, poor infrastructure, and rising levels of violent crime.

These alarming findings were brought to light in an official report tabled by the Parliamentary Women's Caucus following a two-day field visit to the area from May 26 to May 28, 2025.

The delegation of lawmakers was led by the Chairperson of the Caucus, 'MakatlhehoMotsoa-sele.

The team traveled directly to the villages of Reisi and Matholeng to hold public discussions, known locally as "pitsos," to listen to community members detail how extreme weather, bad roads, and high crime rates negatively affect their everyday safety and access to essential healthcare.

According to the Parliamentary Women's Caucus report, the public hearing in Reisi village was attended by roughly 120 residents ranging in age from 10 to 70.

The majority of attendees were unemployed youth, highlighting the deep socio-economic vulnerability of the local population. Community members explained that the complete absence of proper roads and local health services forces women, girls, and the elderly to brave extreme weather conditions simply to access healthcare.

The report documents that pregnant women in Reisi face particularly dangerous conditions. To receive maternal healthcare services, expectant mothers must travel a distance of 8.8 kilometers. Along the way, they are forced to cross three rivers that regularly overflow and flood during the rainy season, completely blocking them from reaching health centers.

Residents shared painful stories recorded in the report illustrating the tragic impact of these barriers. In one instance, a woman went into labor while being transported to a clinic on a tractor trailer. Tragically, she lost her baby due to the rough and violent movements of the tractor traveling over a bumpy, unpaved road.

Another woman recounted losing her baby while giving birth at home because she had no way to get to a hospital. The local Area Chief warned that women and girls walk long distances in constant fear, which exposes them to severe risks of physical abuse and attacks.

Children in the village face similar life-threatening obstacles. The report highlights that because there are no middle schools in Reisi, young students must walk long distances in harsh weather every day.

To reach school, children have to navigate deep gullies, or dongas, created by heavy droughts. During rainy periods, these crossings become deadly; community members noted a recent incident where primary school pupils were swept away by a flooding river while attempting to cross.

In the neighboring village of Matholeng, a gathering of about 100 women aged between 18 and 50 voiced deep distress over escalating gender-based violence (GBV) and brutal murders that have terrorised their community.

Residents shared terrifying accounts of crime, including the recent brutal murder of an elderly woman who was decapitated ('a



khaoloaqoqotho').

Community members also highlighted the targeted killing of a local man who was murdered simply because he was a member of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Locals expressed intense frustration over the legal system, noting that murder suspects are often only brought in for questioning or quickly released on bail, leaving dangerous perpetrators free to walk the streets.

Safety concerns extend beyond physical attacks. One mother recounted how her young son was kidnapped and held for ransom. When

she reported the kidnapping to the local police, officers allegedly refused to go into the area because they were afraid of the crime-ridden neighborhood. Police only visited the scene the following day, where they found the young boy dead.

Furthermore, residents reported an incident where three primary school children were hit by a motor vehicle allegedly driven by a police officer. The local Area Chief added that widespread drug and alcohol abuse in town shacks is fueling further crime, causing young girls to become victims of human trafficking. Residents

strongly criticised the police in Mafeteng for dragging their feet and leaving violent crimes unattended.

Following these field engagements, the Parliamentary Women's Caucus report stressed that climate change policies must directly account for sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and the safety of women and girls.

To address the severe challenges found in Mafeteng, the report outlines several key recommendations and actions for Parliament including building proper road infrastructure to ensure residents can reach essential services and emergency medical care safely, even during extreme weather events, building high schools nearby in Reisi so that children have a safe, local environment to learn without having to make dangerous daily journeys.

Properly equipping local healthcare facilities to rapidly respond to medical emergencies and climate-related illnesses, updating Lesotho's draft Climate Change Bill and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to formally include sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and address the specific needs of vulnerable populations and providing specialized training for law enforcement agencies to effectively handle gender-based violence cases and urging Parliament to fast-track legal reforms like the Bail Bill.

The Parliamentary Women's Caucus has officially submitted this comprehensive report to both Houses of Parliament for adoption, urging lawmakers to act quickly to build climate resilience, improve infrastructure, and end the cycle of violence in Mafeteng.

Thoboloko Nišonyane

Lesotho continues to face serious challenges in protecting women and girls from gender-based violence (GBV). The country is often reported as having one of the world's highest rates of rape.

This week, the Minister of Home Affairs and Police, Voeswa Tsheka, told the National Assembly that police had received 562 reports of sexual offences between January and August 2026 alone, figures she said painted a grim picture of the scale of violence still being inflicted on women and girls just eight months into the year.

Of those cases, 215 involved physical assault so severe that survivors were nearly killed, the Minister said, a statistic she described with evident alarm as she briefed lawmakers on the state of GBV in the country.

Tsheka expressed deep concern over the continuing criminal activities being inflicted on members of the public, telling Parliament the numbers reflected a crisis that could not be ignored.

"These figures are high and concerning. All these matters are important to the police, and we assure survivors that the police are working hard to ensure that perpetrators face the full might of the law, regardless of their status," the Minister said.

Every year, Lesotho renews its commitment to protecting the rights of women and girls. Yet the figures Tsheka presented this week suggest that much more needs to be done to turn those commitments into meaningful, measurable change, a gap the Minister's own tone in Parliament appeared to acknowledge.

Recent research shows both the scale of the problem and some signs of progress. The 2025 Lesotho GBV Indicators Follow-up Study, conducted by Gender Links in partnership with

GBV shocker!

...as 562 sexual offences are recorded in 8 months

the Bureau of Statistics, found that 66.7% of women in Lesotho had experienced GBV in their lifetime, down from 86% recorded in the 2013 study.

Lifetime intimate-partner violence has also fallen, from 62% to 45.7%, while violence reported in the previous year dropped from 28% to 14.8%. The same research found that nine out of ten women who experienced intimate-partner violence did not report it.

The Minister also updated lawmakers on the sexual offence allegations involving an adviser to the Prime Minister at State House, saying investigations had been completed and the case had since been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for appropriate action.

A few weeks ago, a prominent woman clergy member alleged she had been sexually harassed while seeking sponsorship for women's empowerment projects, attributing the alleged conduct to one of the Prime Minister's advisers. This publication has the adviser's name but will publish it once the suspect appears in court and is formally charged.

Despite the volume of reported cases, accountability remains strikingly low: available data show that fewer than 16% of alleged perpetrators were arrested, and fewer than 2% faced any legal consequences; a disparity likely to deepen concerns raised by the Minister about whether survivors can trust the system

to deliver justice.

Afrobarometer data reported by Newsday found that 58% of people surveyed in Lesotho believed women risk being victimised if they report GBV, underscoring the climate of fear that may be contributing to underreporting even as raw case numbers climb.

Taken together, the statistics point to both progress and continuing gaps. Reducing violence further will require effective implementation of the law, accessible support services, proper investigations, and stronger accountability for alleged perpetrators; areas the Minister's own remarks in Parliament suggest still fall short of where they need to be.

Meanwhile, the Counter Domestic Violence Act (CDVA) 2022 has strengthened the country's legal framework on paper, but available evidence indicates it has not yet translated into arrests, prosecutions, or protection for most survivors of GBV.

Among its unfulfilled provisions is a proposed specialised Family Court to handle GBV cases, which has yet to materialise more than three years after the Act's passage.

In March this year, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals office made an observation that resonates with the numbers now before Parliament: "Rights are not strengthened by statements alone. If you think women's rights are only promises on paper, look at Mali, Lesotho and Togo."

Nisoaki Motaung

At the Education Partnership Compact Midterm Review in Maseru on Wednesday, a new force for change took centre stage; the young parliamentarians of Lesotho.

Representing children across the nation, these young leaders joined government officials, civil society and international partners in delivering a powerful message that education in Lesotho must become more inclusive, equitable and responsive to children's real experiences.

Education is a right, not a privilege
Bongiwwe Beleme, a child rights ambassador for the Lesotho World Rights Association, addressed an audience of development partners, teachers and policymakers. Her words reflected the hopes and frustrations of countless children.

"I am not just speaking as a child, or on behalf of the children's parliamentarians, I am a parliamentarian myself and a child rights advocate, asking a simple question, When we review our education commitments, are we only measuring what we have delivered, or are we asking what children are actually experiencing?"

Beleme reminded the audience that children are right-holders, while institutions, governments and adults are duty-bearers.

"Education is not simply a service to be provided when resources allow. It is a right that must be progressively realised, protected, and made meaningful in children's daily lives," she said.

This principle is echoed in Lesotho's Education Act and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which state that the best interests of the child should always come first and that every child has the right to education.

She challenged decision-makers to look beyond statistics. "Are our systems truly fulfilling the rights of every child, including those easiest to overlook?" Beleme pressed for more than access, or a seat in a classroom, calling instead for quality, safety and participation. "A child needs a genuine opportunity to learn,

develop, and participate. Quality early childhood education matters because inequality can begin before a child even enters primary school."

Inclusion and safety: Leave no child behind

Beleme highlighted the barriers facing children in remote communities, children with disabilities, those living in poverty and those who speak minority languages. "Equality means identifying those barriers and deliberately responding to them," she said.

She also spoke about the school environment. "A child cannot fully exercise the right to education in an environment where they are unsafe, humiliated, abused, bullied, or excluded. Safety is not an additional benefit after education; it is part of what makes education meaningful."

She called for investment in child protection, safeguarding, safe reporting mechanisms and trained teachers. "Safety and respect are essential ingredients in realizing the right to education."

Education for the whole child

Beleme's vision for education went beyond academics. "The world is changing, and our education system must prepare children not only to pass exams, but to participate confidently in society. We need opportunities for digital literacy, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem solving. Confidence, dignity, and a sense of belonging are all part of a child's development."

She referenced Article 11 of the African Charter, which calls for education to develop a child's personality and abilities to the fullest potential. "Education should develop the whole child, not just the examination candidate," she emphasised.

Children's voices in decision-making

Beleme argued that children must be actively involved in shaping education policies. "Article 7 of the African Charter protects children's rights to express their views. Child participation means more than inviting young people to an event and then moving on. It means cre-



Children, leaders, and partners unite to demand safe, quality, and inclusive education for every child in Lesotho

Beyond a seat in the classroom

• Children demand quality education, safety and a say

ating safe and meaningful opportunities for children to identify barriers, propose solutions, give feedback, and see how their contributions are reflected in decisions."

She described her own experience in

education sector consultations, demonstrating that children can offer valuable, practical insights because they live and experience the education system directly.

From data to action: The call for accountability

As Lesotho reviews its education progress, Beleme insisted on accountability and clarity. "For each major priority, we should know what needs to be changed, who is responsible, what resources are required, how progress will be measured, and how children and communities will know whether change is happening."

She encouraged using data not simply for reports but to support better training, fair budgeting and stronger decision-making,

"Most importantly, we should use that evidence to act, not simply to produce reports."

Government's perspective: Investing in the foundations

Minister of Education and Training Ntoi Rapapa responded to concerns about the allocation of resources, stressing the importance of basic education as the foundation for all future learning. "Some question why we invest so much in basic education over tertiary education. But how do you get to tertiary if you don't first have basic education?"

The Minister pointed out that around 400,000 children are in basic education each year, compared with fewer than 30,000 in tertiary. "The numbers dictate how we allocate resources for human de-

velopment."

He outlined the government's efforts to expand early childhood education, including the construction of new reception classrooms and the hiring of more than 300 qualified teachers for early

grades.

Despite progress, challenges remain, including limited resources and some schools not meeting minimum standards. "We must balance standards with reality. If ten children are left outside the classroom, while thirty are inside, those ten may never get a chance to go to school. We need to think deeply about how best to accommodate everyone," said Rapapa.

He also stressed the need for better monitoring and registration of schools, especially in remote villages, and for policies that ensure both access and quality.

Civil society: Schools must be safe havens

Sekonyela Mapetja, representing the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (LCN), brought a civil society perspective. He warned against "teaching to the converted" by focusing only on those already in the system and neglecting the most vulnerable.

LCN, he said, represents a wide network working with communities across Lesotho and carries the responsibility of bringing evidence and lived experience into national education discussions.

Mapetja raised tough questions about whether reported progress reflects real change on the ground, especially during harsh winters when government offices are heated but children in schools often go cold. "If teachers don't matter in winter, what about the kids?" he asked, highlighting the need for schools to be places of comfort and safety.

He argued that schools should be places children want to go, not just for learning but for safety, support and a sense of belonging: "School should be a home away from home."

Mapetja also emphasised the importance of leadership and accountability within the education system, referencing Lesotho's Education Act and the need for the ministry to lead by example.

The Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Training RatšiuMajara presented data on the progress of the Partnership Compact.

He said there have been notable achievements including, expansion of

reception classes to primary schools, supported by community campaigns and teacher training, major investments from the Global Partnership for Education, World Bank, government, and private sector in refurbishing classrooms, providing teaching materials, and supporting vulnerable learners, improved school readiness through early childhood education, even though not all enrolment targets were met due to space and funding issues and increased transition rates from primary to secondary school, though challenges remain with repetition rates and gender disparities in progression.

However, operational delays, such as slow classroom refurbishments and delayed procurement of materials, have slowed some progress he disclosed.

International partners: Encouraging inclusion and evidence-based action

Belay Addise, Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Manager for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), congratulated Lesotho on its transparent and inclusive review process. "The consultation was very inclusive, with over 26 organizations and experts from different areas of education. That shows a high level of commitment," he said.

Addise stressed the importance of evidence-based decisions, inclusion and gender equality as Lesotho sets future priorities. "Your compact should identify areas for potential financing, and future support will depend on clear evidence that policies work and children's rights are being fulfilled."

The legal foundation: National and international laws

Lesotho's Education Act, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child all guarantee every child's right to education.

These laws require governments to ensure that children can learn in safe, dignified and inclusive environments. Article 4 of the African Charter says the best interests of the child must always come first, while Article 11 guarantees the right to education for every child.



Belay Addise GPE Regional Manager for Eastern and Southern Africa, stresses the importance of coordination, data and domestic financing of Education in Lesotho



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Vacancy Announcement

Title	External candidates link	Deadline
Knowledge Management Consultant	https://wd3.my-workdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Le-sotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Knowledge-Management-Consultant_JR126917	03.10.2026

NB.: It’s important to us to create an accessible, inclusive workplace for everyone, so please email 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.



PUBLIC NOTICE

PROPOSED HA RAPOKOLANA AERIAL MEDICAL LOGISTICS HUB - ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Ministry of Health invites public comments on the proposed aerial medical logistics hub at Ha Rapokolana. The hub will support the transport of medicines, laboratory samples and other medical supplies to health facilities using unmanned aircraft, commonly known as drones.

As part of the ongoing Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, community members, institutions and interested parties are invited to submit views, concerns and recommendations. Comments are welcome on land use, grazing, livelihoods, employment, water, noise, safety, access routes and other matters related to the Project.

COMMENT PERIOD: 22–28 SEPTEMBER 2026
CLOSING DATE: 28 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 17:00

Submit comments by email: letsie@gmc.co.ls / 1112neil@gmail.com

Telephone, SMS, WhatsApp: +2665866890 or written submission using the contact details provided. Comments will be recorded and considered in the assessment. Submission of comments does not imply support for the Project.

TSEBISO HO SECHABA
SETSOANTŠO SA MORERO OA SETSI SA LIPALANGOANG TSA LISEBELISOA TSA BONGAKA KA LIFOFANE TSE SE NANG MOFOFISI HA RAPOKOLANA TLHAHLOBO EA LITLAMORAO TIKOLOHONG LE SECHABENG

Lekala la Bophelo le mema sechaba ho fana ka maikutlo mabapi le morero o sisintsoeng oa setsi sa lipalangoang tsa lisebelisoa tsa bongaka Ha Rapokolana. Setsi se tla sebelisa lifofane tse se nang mofofisi, tse tsejoang ka hore ke li-drone, ho isa meriana, lisampole tsa laboratori le lisebelisoa tse ling tsa bongaka litsing tsa bophelo.

E le karolo ea tlhahlobo e ntseng e tsoela pele ea litlamorao tikolohong le sechabeng, baahi, mekhatlo le bohle ba nang le thahasello ba memeloa ho hlalisa maikutlo, matšoenyeho le lithahiso. Litaba li kenyelletsa tšebeliso ea mobu, makhulo, mekhoha ea boipheliso, mesebetsi, metsi, lerata, polokeho, litsela le litaba tse ling tse amanang le morero.

NAKO EA HO FANA KA MAIKUTLO: 22–28 LOETSE 2026
LETSATSI LA HO QETELA: 28 LOETSE 2026 KA 17:00

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Contact person : Mr. Sekete Letsie / Mr. Ramahlapane Thejane
Telephone, SMS and WhatsApp / Mohala, SMS le WhatsApp: +266 58668690
Email : letsie@gmc.co.ls / 1112neil@gmail.com
Written submissions / Moo mangolo a isoang teng: Ministry of Health Department of Health Planning and Statistics.



Vacancy: Accountant

Location: Maseru, Lesotho
Employment type: Full-time, on-site
Closing date: 5 October 2026

About Newsday Media Ls

Newsday Media Ls is a dynamic media company committed to innovation in journalism and visual storytelling. As a leading creator of online visual journalism and a current affairs video-on-demand platform in Lesotho, we publish digital news daily, a print newspaper every Friday, and a monthly hybrid newspaper. Our content reaches audiences through multiple platforms and formats, making news accessible to diverse communities.

We value creativity, accuracy and timely reporting. We are looking for an Accountant who can bring the same care and professionalism to the financial management of our business.

The role

The Accountant will manage Newsday Media Ls's day-to-day financial operations and provide accurate, timely information to support decisions across the company. The role calls for someone who is organised, discreet and comfortable working to deadlines in a fast-paced media environment.

Key responsibilities include:

- Processing invoices and recording payments and other financial transactions.
- Maintaining accurate ledgers and preparing journal entries.
- Performing bank reconciliations and resolving discrepancies.
- Preparing financial statements and regular reports for management.
- Assisting with budgeting and forecasting, and monitoring cash flow.
- Supporting month-end and year-end closing activities.
- Helping ensure compliance with applicable accounting standards, Lesotho tax regulations and other financial requirements.

- Working with colleagues to resolve financial queries and explain financial information clearly.
- Providing analysis to help management understand financial performance and make informed decisions.

Qualifications and experience

The successful candidate should have:

- A bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification in Accounting, Finance or a related field.
- Strong general accounting skills, including ledger management, journal entries and reconciliations.
- Experience in financial reporting, budgeting, forecasting and cash flow monitoring.
- Proficiency in accounting software and Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet tools.
- Knowledge of local tax regulations, compliance requirements and relevant accounting standards.
- Strong analytical, numerical and problem-solving skills.
- Clear written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to explain financial matters to colleagues without a finance background.
- The ability to work on-site in Maseru, manage competing deadlines and maintain accuracy and confidentiality.

Professional certification is an advantage. Experience in a media company or another fast-paced business environment is also beneficial.

How to apply

Email your **CV** and **qualifications** to managingeditor@newsdayonline.co.ls with "Accountant" as the subject line.

Closing date: 5 October 2026



IMPORTANT NOTICE

WITHDRAWAL AND RE-ADVERTISEMENT:
DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Reference is made to the vacancy advertisement for the position of **Director Corporate Services**, published on media platforms from 23 July 2026.

The Lesotho Public Procurement Authority (LPPA) **hereby notifies** the public that the advertised position is **withdrawn with immediate effect**, and the **corrected position profile will be re-advertised** in due course.

The LPPA regrets any inconvenience this may cause to applicants who have already submitted applications and wishes to thank all candidates for their interest in the Authority. Applicants who wish to be considered are encouraged to re-apply once the corrected position is re-advertised.



Government of Lesotho

Invitation to Bidders

BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

The Ministry of Law and Justice (MLJ)

Government Printing

03rd September 2026

SUPPLY OF A 3 WHEEL ELECTRIC FORKLIFT, LEASING OF PHOTOCOPIER MACHINES, AND
SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF A SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM - MLJ/GP/FRKLFT/CCTV/PHT/2026/2027

- The Ministry of law and Justice has been allocated funds to be used for the acquisition of a 3-wheel electric forklift, leasing of photocopier machines, and supply and installation of a surveillance system for the Department of Government Printing and Stationery.
- The entity invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the provision of the above goods.
- Bidding shall be conducted in accordance with Open National Competitive Tendering procedures contained in the Public Procurement Act 2023 and the Regulations made under the Act.
- Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document at the address given below at 8(a) from 8am to 3:30pm.
- The bidding document which has been prepared in English may be purchased by interested bidders at 8(b) upon payment of a **non-refundable** fee of **One thousand Maloti only**. The method of payment will be cash payable at accounts office Government Printing and Stationery, from **8am-3:00pm only, from 03rd September to 08th October 2026..** The receipt must be presented to the **Procurement Unit Office Government Printing and Stationery**
- Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before 10:00 am, 08th October 2026. All Bids must be accompanied by a bid security of 2% of their bid price, expressed as a fixed amount and not with decimal points. Bid security must be valid until 18th December 2026. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address given below at 8(d) at 10:30am, 08th October 2026.
- There **shall** be a pre-bid meeting/ site visit for **LOT 3 Bidders**.
- Bidders should take note of the following:
(a) Documents may be inspected at: Government Printing and Stationery, Procurement office, Maseru Industrial Area, Lioli Road, Opposite Hippo Knitting

- Factory.
- (b) Documents will be issued from: Government Printing and Stationery, Procurement office, Maseru Industrial Area, Lioli Road, Opposite Hippo Knitting Factory.
- (c) Bids must be issued to: Government Printing and Stationery, Reception Area, Maseru Industrial Area, Lioli Road, Opposite Hippo Knitting Factory.
- (d) Address of bid opening: Government Printing and Stationery, Conference Room, Maseru Industrial Area, Lioli Road, Opposite Hippo Knitting Factory.
9. The planned procurement Schedule (subject to changes) as follows:

Activity	Date
(a) Publish bid notice	03rd September 2026
(b) Pre-bid meeting for LOT 3 Bidders	14th/September/2026 at 10:00 am
(c) Bid closing date	08th October 2026
(d) Bid closing Time	10:00am
(e) Evaluation process	12th October 2026 to 23rd October 2026
(f) Display and communication of Notice of Tender	30th October 2026
(g) Contract signature	20th November 2026

10. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR CLARIFICATIONS**

For additional information or request for clarifications on issues concerning the request should be in writing, please contact the following office:

Ministry of Justice and Law
Department of Government Printing and Stationery,
Maseru
Tel: **+26622311160/22313023** /+266 6313 2552/+266 6313 2455
Email: lawjustice.procurement@gov.ls



INVITATION TO TENDER
Supply and Delivery of Promotional Material
Procurement Reference: LNDC-LAS-2026-12

- The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) has allocated funds to be used for Supply and delivery of **Promotional Material**
- The LNDC invites sealed bids from **eligible local service providers** for provision of the above said goods.
- Bidding & bidder eligibility shall be conducted in accordance with the Open National Competitive Bidding procedures prescribed in the Public Procurement Act, 2023 and the Regulations made under the Act.
- Interested and eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document at the address given in Table below, at Item 7 (h) from the **04 September 2026** between **08:30am and 16:30pm**.
- The bidding document which has been prepared in the English language is **available free of charge in soft copy by emailing procurement@lndc.org.ls**.
- Late bids shall be rejected.
- The planned Procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
(a) Issue of Request for Bids	04 September 2026
(b) Non-compulsory pre-bid meeting	15 September 2026 @ 10:00 am
(c) Bid closing date	08 October 2026 @ 10:00 am
(d) Public Opening	08 October 2026 @ 10:15 am
(e) Evaluation process	12 - 16 October 2026
(f) Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	14 October 2026
(g) Contract Signature	30 November 2026
(h) Address	LNDC Development House, Block A, Reception Area



INVITATION TO TENDER
Supply and Delivery of Office Furniture
Procurement Reference: LNDC-LAS-2026-11

- The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) has allocated funds to be used for Supply and delivery of **office furniture**.
- The LNDC invites sealed bids from **eligible local service providers** for provision of the above said goods.
- Bidding & bidder eligibility shall be conducted in accordance with the Open National Competitive Bidding procedures prescribed in the Public Procurement Act, 2023 and the Regulations made under the Act.
- Interested and eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document at the address given in Table below, at Item 7 (h) from the **04 September 2026** between **08:30am and 16:30pm**.
5. The bidding document which has been prepared in the English language is **available free of charge in soft copy by emailing procurement@lndc.org.ls**.
- Late bids shall be rejected.
- The planned Procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
(a) Issue of Request for Bids	04 September 2026
(b) Non-compulsory pre-bid meeting	15 September 2026 @ 10:00 am
(c) Bid closing date	08 October 2026 @ 10:00 am
(d) Public Opening	08 October 2026 @ 10:15 am
(e) Evaluation process	12 - 16 October 2026
(f) Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	14 October 2026
(g) Contract Signature	30 November 2026
(h) Address	LNDC Development House, Block A, Reception Area



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*Good Governance
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US Embassy launches water technology training for Lesotho experts



U.S. Embassy Political-Economic Chief Sean Lawler

Staff Reporter

The United States Embassy in Maseru has launched a two-week training programme aimed at strengthening Lesotho's capacity to manage its water resources using remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Held under the Ambassador's Water Experts Program (AWEP), the training brings together 30 participants from Lesotho's water and natural resource institutions, including the Ministries of Natural Resources, Energy and Environment, the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), and the Water and Sewerage Company (WASCO).

The programme will run from 23 September to 1 October 2026.

Speaking to journalists ahead of the workshop, U.S. Embassy Political-Economic Chief Sean Lawler said the initiative is a joint effort between the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of the Interior, designed to give local specialists practical tools to monitor water resources from space and apply that information to decision-making on the ground.

"Beginning this week and running through October 1, thirty participants from Lesotho's Ministries of Natural Resources, Energy, and Environment, the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, and the Water and Sewerage Company will train in remote sensing and geographic information systems," Lawler said.

He said the programme is intended to strengthen science-based policymaking and improve the management of Lesotho's water resources. According to Lawler, the skills gained during the training could help local experts locate groundwater, estimate hydropower potential, identify water quality problems, and strengthen the country's response to floods and

droughts.

The training is also expected to support preparedness for climate-related challenges, including effects associated with El Niño.

"This training aims to advance science-based policymaking to best manage Lesotho's most valuable and precious resource, water," he said.

Lawler described the programme as a working exchange, built to ensure Lesotho's specialists retain and apply the skills long after the American experts complete their assignment.

Leading the technical training are two water specialists from the U.S. Department of the Interior: Ian Maycumber, a Senior Water Resources Engineer at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Eastern Colorado Area Office, brings experience in water scheduling, reservoir operations, hydro-meteorological monitoring and hydrologic forecasting.

Lawler said Maycumber has worked on hydrologic forecasting systems in several countries, including Belize, Kenya and Malawi.

The second expert, Dr Tyler King, is a Supervisory Research Hydro-

logist with the U.S. Geological Survey's Observing Systems Division in Boise, Idaho. King leads national-scale initiatives involving satellite-derived hydrologic products and oversees multidisciplinary teams working on geospatial datasets, automated workflows and cloud-based data systems.

Lawler said King had also trained Kenyan water professionals in remote sensing as recently as 2024.

"Our instructors from the U.S. Department of the Interior represent some of the finest scientific talent the United States government has to offer, and they are here to work side by side with technical staff from Lesotho's Department of Water Affairs, Ministry of Energy, and the Leso-

tho Highlands Development Authority," he said.

Lawler noted that the U.S. Department of the Interior, established in 1849, has a long history of applying science-based approaches to natural resource management, and said the same approach is now being extended to Lesotho through AWEP.

He also linked the initiative to broader economic and diplomatic ties between Lesotho and the United States, saying scientific cooperation could strengthen institutional relationships while opening opportunities for American companies interested in hydropower, technology, agriculture and other sectors.

"Science diplomacy is not charity; it is investment," Lawler said, adding that sharing expertise helps build institutional relationships and demonstrates the United States' commitment to strengthening local capacity. He said a more water-secure Lesotho could contribute to greater economic prosperity and create opportunities for stronger commercial relations between the two countries.

Lawler thanked Minister of Natural Resources Moleko and the Ministry of Natural Resources for facilitating the programme, as well as the Basotho professionals taking part in the training.

"This is precisely the kind of hands-on, results-driven cooperation that defines the U.S.-Lesotho relationship at its best," he said.

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16 artists, one song for Lesotho's 60th

Seabata Mahao

Sixteen Basotho musicians have been brought together to create a special national song as Lesotho prepares to celebrate its 60th Independence Anniversary.

The project, led by the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) in collaboration with the Lesotho Music Rights Association (LEMRA), is expected to produce a song that celebrates Basotho identity, culture, unity and patriotism.

The song is expected to feature during the country's Independence celebrations and forms part of activities marking Tourism Month.

Speaking at a press conference in Maseru on Monday, LTDC Chief Executive Officer Mamello Morojele said music provided an opportunity to bring Basotho together as the country commemorates an important milestone in its history.

She called on Basotho to embrace the initiative and participate in the celebrations, saying the 60th anniversary should allow every Mosotho to play a role in celebrating the country.

Morojele also urged the musicians involved in the project to give their best, describing the initiative as an invitation for Basotho to come together and celebrate their country through



16 artists, one voice for Lesotho's 60th

music and culture.

For LTDC Head of Strategic Marketing Phomolo Lebotsa, the project demonstrates the important relationship between creative arts and tourism.

Lebotsa said music was deeply connected to African culture and celebrations, making it an appropriate medium through which to commemorate six decades of Lesotho's independence.

"As Lesotho celebrates 60 years of independence, it is appropriate for the country to have a song that reminds Basotho of their identity, culture and patriotism," he said.

He said the project brings together artists from different backgrounds and genres to use Sesotho, creativity and music to tell the story of the nation.

Beyond the celebrations, Lebotsa said the song should have a lasting impact by inspiring

younger generations and reminding Basotho of the cultural characteristics that distinguish the country.

He also highlighted the role of culture in tourism, saying visitors are interested in experiencing how people live, learning about their traditions and understanding their heritage.

LEMRA Chairperson Francis Ntlhoki said the association had been tasked by the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture with coordinating the artists and ensuring that the song is produced to the required standard.

He said the selection process considered different musical genres and generations, with artists chosen according to the contribution they could make to the overall message of the composition.

The song is intended to promote unity, Basotho culture, youth empowerment and love for the country.

Ntlhoki said bringing 16 artists together for one composition had not been without challenges, particularly because of the financial requirements involved in producing the song.

Despite the challenges, he said the project was now nearing completion, with only two artists still expected to finalise their contributions.

The collaboration represents an effort to use the creative industry not only as entertainment but also as a platform for cultural expression and tourism promotion.

The song is being developed as part of Tourism Month activities, which are being observed under the theme of technology and innovation in tourism.

Lesotho will join the international tourism community in commemorating World Tourism Day on September 27 under the theme, 'Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism'.

Stunna, Sannere miss out on independence song

Chris Theko

Two of Lesotho's most celebrated and popular musicians, Ntate Stunna and Sannere, will not feature on a commemorative song being produced to mark the country's 60th anniversary of independence.

The song is a joint initiative between the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) and the Lesotho Music Rights Association (LEMRA), bringing together artists from different generations and musical genres to celebrate Lesotho's heritage, unity and national identity.

Sannere confirmed that he was invited to participate in the project but said his demanding schedule prevented him from taking part.

"I was invited, but unfortunately I could not be part of it because of the amount of work I currently have on my hands," Sannere said.

Ntate Stunna, meanwhile, said his decision not to participate was a professional one after he considered the terms and scope of the engagement.

"I was actually approached to be part of the project. Unfortunately, after receiving the full terms and scope of what was required, we weren't able to reach an agreement that made sense for my participation," said Ntate Stunna.

He stressed that his absence should not be interpreted as a lack of interest in celebrating Lesotho's milestone.

"So it's not really a case of me not wanting to celebrate Lesotho's 60th Independence.

You know how deeply I care about Lesotho and our culture. It was simply a professional decision around the terms of the engagement," he said.

"I would have loved to be part of the song under the right arrangement," he added.

The development comes as preparations intensify for Lesotho's 60th Independence celebrations, with the song expected to form part of the official celebrations.

Speaking at a press conference in Maseru on Monday, LTDC Chief Executive Officer Mamello Morojele said the initiative was aimed at promoting patriotism, unity and national pride through music and culture.

Morojele called on Basotho to embrace the initiative and participate in the celebrations, saying the 60th anniversary presented an opportunity for every Mosotho to become part of the country's history.

She also encouraged musicians invited to participate in the project to give their best, describing the initiative as a firm invitation from the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture for Basotho to come together and celebrate their country.

She said the song forms part of Tourism Month activities and that the media briefing was held to provide an update on preparations for the project.

LTDC Head of Strategic Marketing Phomolo Lebotsa said the creative arts play an important role in tourism and the economy, noting that music is deeply connected to African culture and celebrations.

"As Lesotho celebrates 60 years of

independence, it is appropriate for the country to have a song that reminds Basotho of their identity, culture and patriotism," said Lebotsa.

He said the initiative seeks to bring together Basotho artists to promote the country through Sesotho, creativity and music, while inspiring future generations and reminding Basotho of what distinguishes them as a nation.

Lebotsa said culture was also an important component of tourism, as visitors were interested in experiencing how people live and learning about their traditions.

For his part, LEMRA's Francis Ntlhoki said the association had been tasked by the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture with coordinating the participating artists and ensuring that the Independence song was produced to the required standard.

He said LEMRA had identified artists who could contribute to the project while taking into consideration different musical genres, generations and the overall message of the composition.

According to Ntlhoki, the song is intended to promote unity, Basotho culture, youth empowerment and love for the country.

A total of 16 artists have been brought together for the project, although the process has faced challenges, including financial considerations.

In an exclusive interview with Newsday on the sidelines of the media briefing, Ntlhoki confirmed that both Ntate Stunna and Sannere had been approached to participate in the project.

"They were indeed invited to be part of the



Phomolo Lebotsa, Head of Marketing and Acting Chief Executive at the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC)

song. They were sent emails and made aware that their contribution is on an honorarium basis. Unfortunately, they declined, citing that the fee is too low," he said.

Each participating artist was offered an honorarium of M12,500.

Ntlhoki said the song was now nearing completion, with only two artists still expected to finalise their contributions.

The song is expected to be performed as part of the celebrations marking Lesotho's 60 years of independence.

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Sannere sends wife to collect NMA honour

Chris Theko

The 3rd National Music Awards, held last Saturday at the 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre and powered by Jam Session Sounds, celebrated some of Lesotho's biggest musical talents, but the ceremony was also marked by controversy after Sannere appeared to reject his honorary award.

Celebrated musician **Sannere** has found himself at the centre of controversy after he refused to personally go on stage to receive the **Best 21st Century Rising Male Artist honour**, despite being present in the auditorium when his name was announced. Instead, Sannere sent his wife to collect the award on his behalf.

What initially appeared to be an unusual moment at the 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre has since taken on greater significance following Sannere's reaction after the ceremony.

Taking to Facebook, the musician appeared to question why he was being classified as a "rising" artist in his own country.

"In my country Lesotho I'm considered a rising male artist."

The brief but pointed statement has fuelled debate over whether Sannere regarded the award as an honour or an unintended slight to his career.

For an artist with an established presence in Lesotho's music industry, the description "**rising male artist**" has become the central point of contention. Sannere has been active in the industry for years, making the category appear, to some observers, inconsistent with his experience and standing.

His decision not to personally accept the award has therefore been interpreted by sections of the public as a deliberate protest against the category rather than simply a personal choice to have his wife collect it.

The incident has divided opinion.

Some music fans have rallied behind Sannere, arguing that an artist who has spent years contributing to the local industry is entitled to question whether a particular category accurately reflects his career.

Others have taken issue with the manner in which he expressed his dissatisfaction, arguing that an award remains an acknowledgement of an artist's contribution and that sending someone else to collect it while being present at the ceremony could be perceived as dismissive of the recognition.

The controversy also raises questions about the NMA's honorary award system.

Unlike the 20 competitive categories, the five NMA honours **are not decided through public voting**. They are selected by the Awards committee.

Sannere was one of five honorary recipients this year, alongside **Mookho Moqhali**, who received Best 21st Century Rising Fe-

male Artist; **Ntate Mahase**, who received the Queen Mamohato Lifetime Achievement Award; **Justice Mofoleng**, who received Best Recognized Artist; and **Majara**, who received Best Performing Artist.

The NMA organisers have yet to publicly explain the criteria used to determine the "Best 21st Century Rising Male Artist" category or respond to the criticism surrounding Sannere's reaction.

That silence leaves one of the night's most obvious questions unanswered: **What exactly does the NMA mean by a "rising" artist, and why was Sannere placed in that category?**

However, the Minister of Tourism Sports, Arts and Culture Stephen Mputi who had been present at the awards, made brief statement on facebook "The Award is awarded to an artist who has demonstrated exceptional growth, achievement and impact, and whose career is rapidly gaining recognition and prominence", said the minister.

He further pleaded with the public to support Lesotho's artists.

"Because when our artists rise, Lesotho rises with them, when our music is heard, Lesotho is heard. And when the world celebrate Basotho talent, the world celebrate Lesotho".

A Night of Major Wins

Despite the controversy, the third edition of the National Music Awards produced a long list of winners across its competitive categories.

Litshepe LR took **Song of the Year**, while **Manyarela** was crowned **Artist of the Year**. **Selloane Thakanyane** won **Single of the Year**, and **Nthabiseng Florah** took **Record of the Year**.

Other winners included **Tumi Ntshasa** for **Best Traditional Gospel Artist**, **Tom Rakote** for **Best Jazz Artist**, **Nthabiseng Mohanela** for **Best Afro Soul** and **Ntate Stunna** for **Best Sotho Hop**.

Master Peace won **Best Amapiano**, **Alphonse** took **Best Radio Music Presenter** and **BabenaCee** was named **Newcomer of the Year**.

Mamphokoe won **Best Traditional Music Album**, while **Pelo e tlotlehang ea Jesu** took **Best Group of the Year**. **Molianeoe** won **Best Famo Artist** and **Bakhethiloong Morena** took **Best Clap N Tap**.

Puleng Phoofolo was named **Best International Artist**, with **Adren** winning **Best Hip Hop Artist** and **Pheko Rafolatsane** taking **Best Producer**.

Lebona Mosti won **Best Upcoming Artist**, while **Minister Spokes** took **Most Played Song**.



Sannere

Local rider lands sponsorship deal



Local rider Sechaba Chabeli

Seabata Mahao

Local rider Sechaba Chabeli has received a significant boost ahead of this year's Roof of Africa, after securing sponsorship from Ramabanta Trading Post Adventures and Beta South Africa, a partnership organisers hope will set a new precedent for how Lesotho's motorsport talent is backed at home.

Chabeli will compete in the Silver class aboard a Beta 200 RR, a two-stroke enduro motorcycle built for demanding off-road conditions, after the sponsorship deal secured him both the machine and the technical backing needed to take on one of the world's toughest hard enduro events.

The sponsorship is being led by Ramabanta Trading Post Adventures, a long-established mountain lodge and adventure-tourism destination situated near the Roof of Africa route, with Beta South Africa joining as co-sponsor to supply Chabeli's race machine.

The backing extends beyond the bike itself after receiving suspension work from South African off-road specialists TBR Suspension, who customised the fork and shock settings to Chabeli's weight, ability and riding style, giving him equipment tailored specifically for the Oxen Hill terrain.

Chabeli will also have access to mechanical and technical support alongside the Beta factory team throughout the three

demanding race days, support that local riders have rarely had at previous editions of the event.

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to ride a Beta at this year's Roof of Africa. Getting onto the Beta 200 RR is something I'm genuinely excited about, the bike feels incredible, and I'm looking forward to seeing what we can achieve together," Chabeli said.

"A huge thank you to Ramabanta Trading Post Adventures and Beta South Africa for making this possible."

Ramabanta Trading Post Adventures representative Seamus Tšepo McCarthy said the sponsorship was specifically designed to get behind Chabeli and, through

him, encourage more Lesotho businesses to invest in homegrown riders.

"We have seen Sechaba get increasingly competitive in the hard enduro scene and felt it was time that we kickstart the practice of local brands backing local riders," McCarthy said.

"Luckily, we have a good relationship with Beta, and we were over the moon when they decided to join us supporting Sechaba."

The sponsors say their support for Chabeli is intended to go beyond this year's race. They see the partnership as a potential foundation for building a Lesotho team capable of competing in major hard enduro events across the region, with Chabeli's backing serving as a template for how future riders could be supported.

The long-term goal is to use lessons from Chabeli's sponsorship to create pathways for emerging Basotho riders to develop their skills and eventually earn places on such a team.

Chabeli is among a growing number of Lesotho-based riders competing in this year's event, but his sponsorship deal has made him one of the standout local storylines, giving fans a homegrown rider to follow as he goes up against international competitors on home terrain — now backed by the kind of professional-grade equipment and support usually reserved for factory riders.

His run at this year's Roof of Africa comes as the event itself enters a new chapter. The spectacular Roof of Africa (ROA) burst into life yesterday, turning Maseru into a hive of activity as international riders, teams and tourists descended on the capital for one of the world's most renowned hard enduro competitions.

The main race gets underway today and continues tomorrow at the rugged Oxen Hill terrain in Matsieng, just outside Maseru, terrain that will now put Chabeli's newly tailored suspension and machine to the test.

The 2026 edition marks a milestone for the event after its incorporation into the international Hard Enduro World Championship calendar, drawing some of the world's top off-road riders to Lesotho and raising the stakes for local competitors like Chabeli.

Unlike its traditional November slot, this year's competition runs from September 23 to 26, with the Lesotho Off Road Association (LORA) hosting the event in collaboration with the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC).

The programme includes the time trial today, followed by the main race on September 25 and 26. Avani Maseru is serving as the event headquarters, while the route passes through areas including Thaba Bosiu, Bushmans and the Ramabanta area, fitting territory given Ramabanta Trading Post Adventures' role as Chabeli's lead sponsor.

The Roof of Africa, held in Lesotho since 1967, is widely regarded as the "Mother of Hard Enduro" and is considered the oldest event of its kind in the world.

Seabata Mahao

The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) has injected M300 000 into the revival of the Mokhotlong Highlands Marathon, with organisers targeting at least 650 runners for the December race.

The Authority has officially partnered with Eventful Moments to stage the 2026 LHDA Mokhotlong Highlands Marathon, scheduled for 6 December 2026, as part of activities marking the 40th anniversary of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP).

The marathon is expected to attract local and international athletes and will comprise five categories, the flagship 42.2km marathon, 21.1km half marathon, 10km, 5km and a 1.6km children's race for participants under the age of 12.

All five races will finish at the Senqu Bridge, a major infrastructure landmark constructed under Phase II of the LHWP and inaugurated in April this year.

The event marks the return of the Mokhotlong Marathon after Eventful Moments staged a similar race in 2024. The competition was not held in 2025, with financial challenges among the reasons for its absence.

LHDA Chief Executive TenteTente said the partnership with Eventful Moments demonstrated the Authority's commitment to using project infrastructure and investment to create wider benefits for communities.

Tente said the 40th anniversary of the LHWP provided an opportunity to reflect on four decades of engineering and national development, while also exploring ways in which the project could generate benefits beyond water infrastructure.

"This opportunity, this milestone provides an opportunity not only to celebrate four decades of engineering excellence and national development, but it also demonstrates that project investment can continue to create value for the communities in tourism, wellness, enterprise development, and social inclusion," Tente said.

He said the marathon would promote the highlands as a tourism destination while encouraging active lifestyles and supporting local economic activity.

According to Tente, the high-altitude environment would also provide elite athletes

LHDA bankrolls marathon into life



LHDA Chief Executive TenteTente



Eventful Moments, Tsoinyane Rapapa

with an opportunity to train and compete at altitude, while recreational runners would be able to experience Mokhotlong's scenery, culture and hospitality.

"We are particularly proud that the race will culminate at the iconic Senqu Bridge, which was inaugurated in April this year," he said.

Tente said the Authority wanted the marathon to become a catalyst for sustainable economic opportunities in Mokhotlong,

particularly by involving businesses across the tourism value chain.

"We want this marathon to become a catalyst for sustainable economic opportunity in Mokhotlong by creating meaningful participation across the tourism value chain, from accommodation providers and transport operators to local tour guides," he said.

He added that tourism development and investment were among the key pillars of the LHDA's 10-Year Strategy, given the sector's potential to stimulate economic activity, create livelihoods and position project areas as tourism destinations.

Speaking on behalf of Eventful Moments, Tsoinyane Rapapa said the marathon would contribute to the promotion of Mokhotlong as a destination for tourism, high-altitude training and community-led enterprises.

Rapapa said organisers were targeting at least 650 runners from Lesotho and abroad.

"We have set ourselves a target to reach at least 650 runners from both local and foreign participation, and we will do our best to reach that," Rapapa said.

He said the race's high-altitude setting could help attract elite international runners, adding that the marathon's 42.2km route would reach elevations of up to 3 482 metres above sea level at ThabanaNtlenyana, Lesotho's highest point.

The race is therefore being positioned not only as a sporting competition but also as a platform for sports tourism and destination branding.

With the route ending at the Senqu Bridge, organisers expect the event to combine athletics with the natural and cultural attractions of the Mokhotlong highlands while marking four decades of the LHWP.

Rapapa said details of the prize money for the various categories would be announced at a later stage.

M160k boost for soccer academy

Seabata Mahao

Millennium Park Soccer Academy (MPSA) has secured a season-long commercial sponsorship worth M160,000 from Mark Lesotho, providing a major financial boost to the grassroots football institution's youth development programme.

The sponsorship is expected to support the academy's day-to-day operational costs while also subsidising its social development initiatives aimed at children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Established in 2017 by Liphakoe head coach Kalaele Tseka, who is currently working towards a CAF A Licence, MPSA has spent the past eight years developing young footballers through structured tactical and technical training.

The academy currently has more than 250 active youth players across its various divisions.

For years, however, the academy operated without corporate sponsorship, with Tseka often meeting operational shortfalls from his own pocket to keep the programme running and ensure that children from low-income families had access to sportswear and other basic necessities.

Speaking at a media briefing in Maseru yesterday, Tseka said the financial challenges facing the academy were particularly severe because of the socio-economic circumstances of many of the children it serves.

"We face severe operational challenges



M160,000 boost for Millennium Park Soccer Academy

as we work with heavily underprivileged children," Tseka said.

He said some players come from households where parents are unemployed or are being raised by elderly grandparents, with hunger sometimes affecting their ability to participate effectively in training.

"When we train them, we look for physical energy that simply isn't there. We quickly realised that several of these children arrive at training hungry, completely uncertain of their next meal," he said.

In response, the academy introduced life-skills programmes designed to identify and assist its most vulnerable players.

Tseka said MPSA's mandate extends beyond producing footballers, with the academy seeking to address social challenges while developing players technically from an early age.

He said one of the academy's key objectives was to address tactical and technical deficiencies before players reach senior football, arguing that national team coaches should not have to correct fundamental weaknesses that could have been addressed during a player's formative years.

"I recognised a critical need to introduce structured coaching at a tender age, which prompted me to establish the Millennium Academy," Tseka said.

"Our ambition is to elevate national football development, ensuring that our players are thoroughly prepared to represent the national team on the international stage."

The partnership was facilitated by former

MPSA player Kananelo Makhanya, who is currently in the United States on a football scholarship while pursuing medical studies.

Makhanya, the son of Mark Lesotho founder KaraboMakhanya, approached the company about supporting the academy's community-based football development model.

Speaking on behalf of Mark Lesotho, which operates the Spur franchise at Maseru Mall, Makhanya said the company wanted its corporate social investment to support initiatives capable of producing tangible benefits for Basotho children and sport.

"We are formally committing our resources to complement the exceptional work you are already executing on the ground. It is vital that the raw talent of Basotho children is properly coached from a young age to benefit the country," he said.

"We are partnering with you to validate your efforts, signal that we recognise the power of sport in our nation, and actively participate in nurturing this talent."

Makhanya said the academy's holistic approach was an important factor in the decision to support it.

"I am particularly impressed that their curriculum extends beyond pitch training. The academy supports these children in every department of their lives, including mental health counselling and structured career guidance," he said.

"We intend to bolster those initiatives to ensure the academy's impact is felt nationwide."



Mofolo to debut in league of global marathons

Seabata Mahao

Long distance prospect Kamohelo Mofolo is set to make his world marathon major (WMM) debut when he lines up for the 42.2km New York City Marathon on 1 November, 2026, with his coach James McKirdy confident that the young athlete is developing rapidly ahead of the demanding race.

Mofolo, who will turn 21 on race day, will be competing in only his second marathon after making an impressive debut in Cape Town in May, where he clocked 2:08:50.

WMM is a prestigious global series comprising the largest, most renowned, and highest-profile marathon races in the world.

The series comprises annual races (in order of their founding) for the cities of Boston (1897), New York (1970), Berlin (1974), Chicago (1977), London (1981), Cape Town (1994), Sydney (2000), and Tokyo (2007). For runners, competing in these races represents the ultimate bucket-list achievement in long distance running, globally.

Speaking exclusively with Newsday about Mofolo's preparations, McKirdy said the focus has shifted towards marathon-specific training after much of the year was dedicated to developing the athlete's speed.

"Kamohelo has been doing a remarkable job in this marathon segment. He's been focused and I believe he's been truly enjoying the process of the work," McKirdy said.

According to the coach, Mofolo entered his Cape Town debut with limited running volume as the training programme had largely concentrated on speed throughout 2026.

"With the Commonwealth Games finished, our focus has been volume and marathon-specific work," he said.

McKirdy said Mofolo has responded positively to the increased workload, describing him as happy, energetic and genuinely excited about the challenge ahead.

"He's a joy to serve. He's happy and energetic... and I believe genuinely excited



Long distance prospect Kamohelo Mofolo and his coach James McKirdy

for what's ahead of him. That internal feeling helps the external development," he said.

The lessons from Cape Town have also played an important role in shaping the build-up to New York. McKirdy said every marathon provides an opportunity to learn, but identified the gap between Mofolo and the podium as one of the key takeaways from his debut.

"I think the main takeaway was the gap between the podium and where he is. That's a good thing," he said.

The coach believes Mofolo is now a more developed athlete than he was before Cape Town.

"There is really no comparison. He's simply more developed and we hope to see it come out on race day," McKirdy said.

New York, however, presents a significantly different challenge. The race is renowned for its hills and potentially difficult weather conditions, and McKirdy said preparations have gone beyond physical training to include the mental demands of racing in adverse conditions.

"New York is known for the hills but also challenging weather. Outside of the training, I'm having Kamohelo focus on not letting poor weather affect his mind," he said.

Rather than placing excessive emphasis on a finishing time, McKirdy said the team intends to use the demanding environment to develop Mofolo's ability to manage difficult races.

"This will be his second marathon, coming off of his 2:08:50 debut in Cape Town this past May. New York is an incredibly challenging race, so we aren't too focused in time, but rather we want to use the adversity that Lesotho allows for to teach Kamohelo how to manage such a difficult race," he said.

McKirdy believes Mofolo's background could prove valuable when confronted with the demands of a World Major Marathon.

"It's a major, yes... but it's a race that breaks the best in the world. I believe this is where Kamohelo, and all Basotho, has an advantage. Life is not easy in Lesotho... he was made for the challenge," he said.

For New York, the immediate objectives will centre on pace control and effort management, rather than being drawn into the ambitions of other competitors.

"Not allowing anyone else to dictate what we decide to do," McKirdy said.

With more work still to be completed before race day, the coach remains confident that Mofolo will be ready when the time comes.

"We still have work to do in the segment, however, he will be ready when the time comes," he said.

And while expectations around the young Basotho runner will inevitably grow following his 2:08:50 debut, McKirdy urged supporters to allow Mofolo to approach the race without unnecessary pressure.

His message to supporters was simple: "Wish the young lad a happy birthday, as he turns 21 on race day!"

"As far as expectations go, do not place any - as with any of the athletes I serve - because we are always giving the best of ourselves. That's enough," McKirdy said.



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