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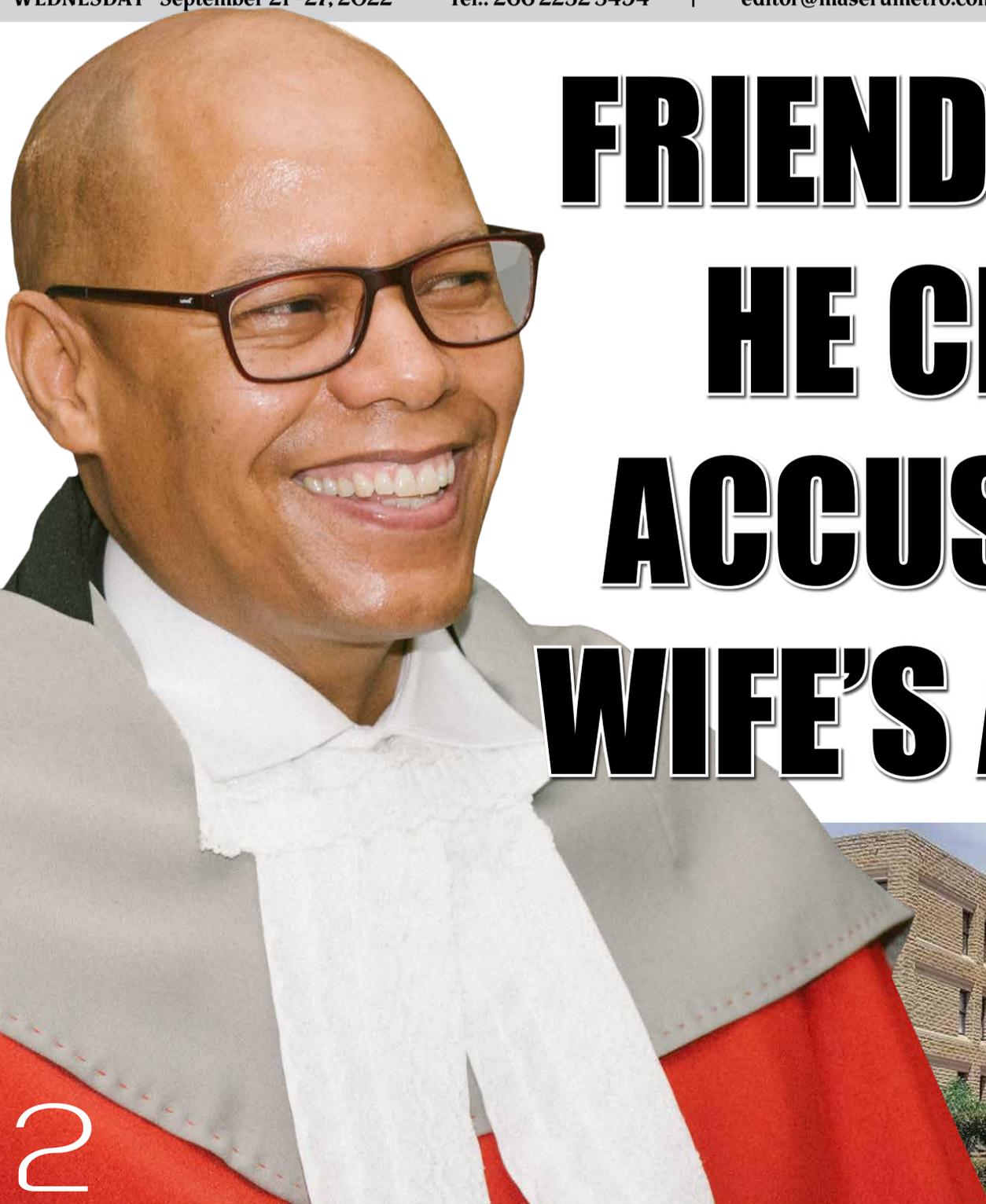
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**FRIEND CLAIMS
HE CHIDED
ACCUSED FOR
WIFE'S ASSAULT**



National News

Friend tells court how he chided accused for wife's assault



The High Court of Lesotho

STAFF REPORTER

MASERU – A close friend of Qamo Matela who is accused of the murder of his wife 'Mahlompho Matela says the deceased had bruises on the face and signs of assault when he took her to hospital before she later succumbed in another hospital in South Africa.

Lekhoaa Monaleli was in the High Court this week where he was testifying against his accused friend Matela.

Evidence before court shows that 'Mahlompho died on September 11, 2021 after she was brutalised by her "abusive" husband.

Prior to that day, Monaleli told the court how he received a phone call from the accused who needed assistance, saying his wife was not well.

"When I arrived at their residence in Ha Mabote, Maseru, I found the couple in the bathroom both sitting on the floor, the accused was holding his wife who was clearly unwell," the court heard.

Monaleli said his friend who looked agitated asked him to help him carry his wife to the car as she was unable to walk on her own.

"While waiting for Matela to fetch some of his wife's personal belongings before we took her to hospital, I realised she had bruises on the right side of her face, forehead and one of the eyes," he said.

His conclusion, the told the court was that the woman had been assaulted.

He added: "While waiting at Willies Hospital in Khubetsoana for Matela who had gone inside the hospital, I asked 'Mahlompho why had not sought help before. She told me that her husband had choked her earlier after they had argued since 4am."

He said later that day after 'Mahlompho was discharged from hospital, he drove the couple back to its home.

After he dropped them off, he sent Matela a WhatsApp message to express his displeasure at the way he treated his wife.

"I warned him that I would not let the matter go and we needed to talk at length about it. The following day I drove back to their home, this time with my wife, we wanted to know how 'Mahlompho was holding up.

"But Matela refused to let us see her, saying that she had taken her medication and was sleeping. Later when I phoned, he said she was still sleeping."

On Monday when the two friends met, they discussed the assault and Matela confessed to having assaulted his wife on Friday not Saturday like Monaleli had assumed.

"He claimed that during a long argument they had, his wife said he was talking

rubbish, adding he assaulted her to make her submissive," he said.

The witness said he later apologised to 'Mahlompho on behalf of his friend in a bid to bring peace between the fighting couple.

That Wednesday he went back to the couple's home to see how they were doing and 'Mahlompho complained of fatigue.

"The following day, a very anxious Matela phoned, saying his wife had collapsed and he needed assistance. I could not help as I was busy with other stuff but I later learnt that 'Mahlompho had been admitted at Maseru Private Hospital before she was referred to another hospital in South Africa for scanning procedures."

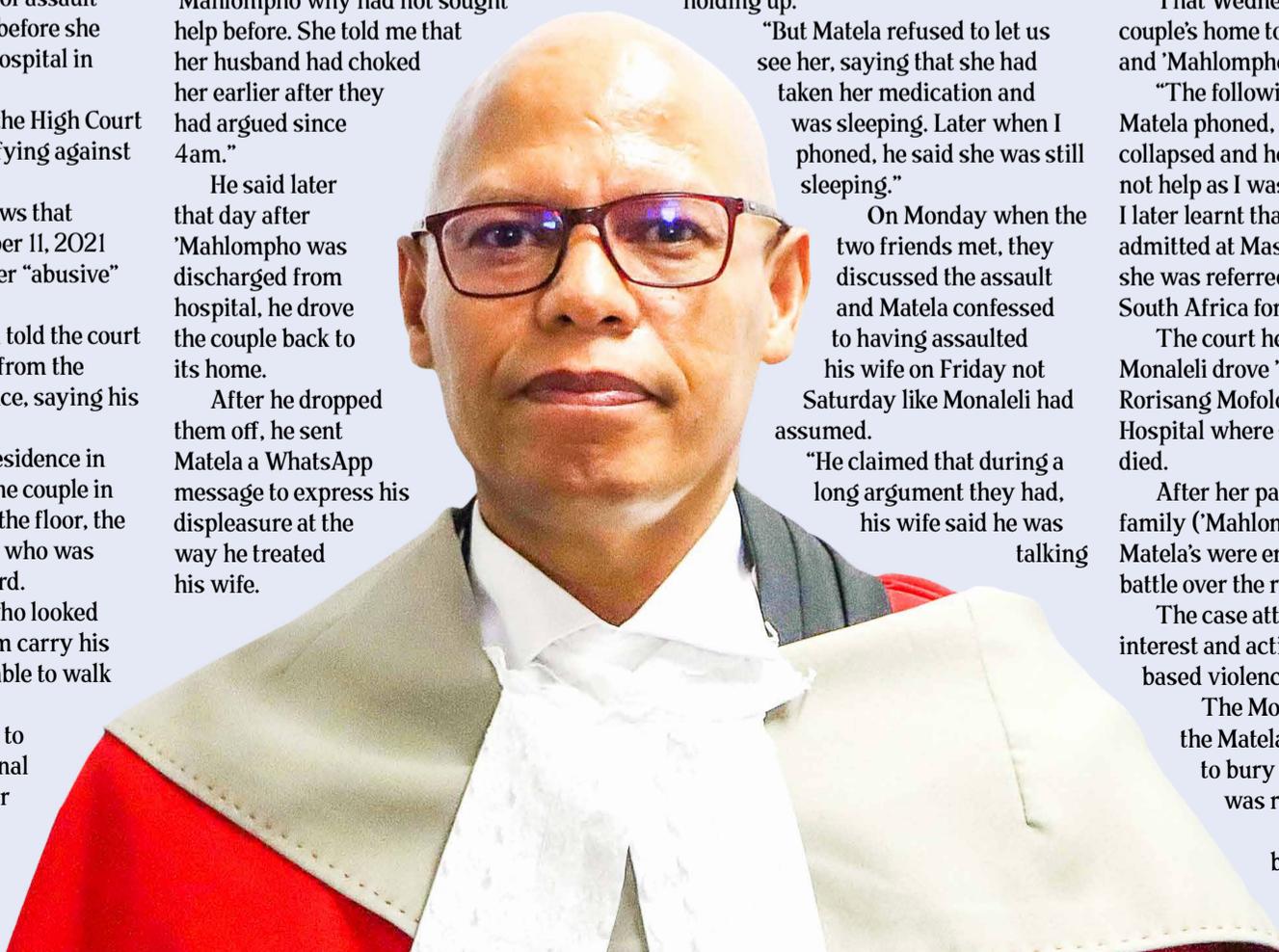
The court heard how that Friday Monaleli drove 'Mahlompho's sister, Rorisang Mofolo, to the Bloemfontein Hospital where she ('Mahlompho) later died.

After her passing, both the Mofolo family ('Mahlompho's maiden family) and Matela's were engulfed in a bitter legal battle over the right to bury the deceased.

The case attracted a lot of public interest and activism against gender-based violence.

The Mofolo family contended that the Matela's did not have the right to bury their daughter because he was responsible for her death.

The case continues before High Court judge, Justice Tšeliso Mokoko (pictured).



Basotho not keen to see Shao as lawmaker

MASERU - Some people in Lesotho are completely opposed to the idea of Jason Shao, a Chinese-born businessman, who is a naturalised Mosotho running for Parliament in the country's general elections scheduled for October 7.

The Chinaman has promised to create numerous job opportunities in Lesotho if he is elected as a lawmaker.

Shao who is contesting as an independent candidate has been a naturalised citizen of Lesotho since 2006.

The foreign national is representing Basotho Pele, a development organisation whose main objective is to bring change to Basotho.

The organisation is based in Maseru, but promises wide-ranging changes in sectors across the nation, including sports and agriculture.

Shao is hoping, therefore, that his policies – and not his background – will do the talking for him during this election campaign.

But the disgruntled members of the public contend that it is inappropriate for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to have allowed Shao to register as an elections candidate.

They contend that the Constitution of Lesotho clearly stipulates that anyone contesting for elections should know how to read and write Sesotho and English as the two official languages in the country.

They further argue that although he is now a citizen of Lesotho, he is however, not a fully-fledged Mosotho and can therefore not participate in serious issues



Chinese-born businessman Jason Shao

of the country such as the general elections.

They reason that similar behavior would not be tolerated in Shao's own country of origin, China.

"If Mr Shao stands for elections, Lesotho would be opening a can of

worms for other Chinese people to own everything they want and eventually take over the country," one of the people said on condition of anonymity.

Another man, Lehlohonolo Ramokoatsi charged that Lesotho

had turned into a Banana State where there are no laws and people do as they please, adding that was why Shao had the audacity to stand for the country's polls.

"The IEC should not have let him register in the first place, after

all, his own country cannot allow any naturalised citizen to run for the presidency," he said.

Sharing similar sentiments was Libuseng Thokoa, who argued that because Lesotho is a democratic country does not mean that 'foreigners' should get equal privileges to Basotho.

"Otherwise we are going to turn this country into a mini-China," she said.

Unveiling his manifesto last week at a rally in Ha Tsolo on the outskirts of Maseru, Shao said he is looking to achieve something no other overseas national has ever managed in Lesotho before.

The Chinese businessman decided to try his hand at politics – in a bid to become the country's first foreigner elected as an MP.

What previously seemed like a tall order for Shao has started to look more achievable in the past few weeks.

What's more, Shao wants the people of Lesotho to 'produce and manufacture' more of their own goods – and he believes that an advancement in local technology is needed to create a more sustainable future.

His message, it seems, is starting to cut through.

He has given several campaign speeches within the past few weeks, and he has until October 7 to convince Basotho that they can trust him with their vote.

The road ahead is not straightforward for the blossoming politician, though: There are a total of 65 political parties that are contesting 120 Parliamentary seats.

In all, 80 are delegated as constituency seats, and 40 are delegated to 'Proportional Representation' votes.

He has also brought the very Republic of South Africa into the mix. On more than one occasion, Shao has spoken about reducing Lesotho's reliance on South Africa – despite the nation being completely encircled by the RSA. - LeNA/The South African/Metro



National News

NMDS rubbishes tender claims

NEO SENOKO

business@maserumetro.com

MASERU - After the false information that has been circulating on social media regarding the National Manpower and Development Secretariat (NMDS) loan bursary debt collection tender, the institution has come out with guns blazing, rubbishing the allegations and describing them as false and misleading.

News have been circulating, mainly on social media platforms indicating that a company called KGT Incorporated has been appointed for loan bursary debt collection services on behalf of the

NMDS.

However, the NMDS has since shot down the said allegations.

"The National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) informs the general public of fake and false information circulating on social media platforms about a company/companies and/or a group of people one of them allegedly named KGT Incorporated claiming to have been appointed for loan bursary debt collection services on behalf of NMDS.

"The public is herein notified that the government and NMDS have neither appointed nor engaged any debt collector in anyway whatsoever, hence, any claim



NMDS Public Relations Officer, Mæketsi Rankhone

to recover loan bursaries on behalf of NMDS is a scam," NMDS said in a statement.

The institution went on to warn the public against such fraudsters, informing all stakeholders that it was not accountable for such claims.

The NMDS is a department under the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) mandated through the National Manpower Development Council Act of 1978 to provide loan bursaries to deserving Basotho students wishing to pursue higher education and training.

The NMDS specifically administers partially reimbursable loan bursaries on behalf of the government for students pursuing priority fields of study at tertiary and vocational schools locally, regionally and internationally.

The institution has been struggling to get it right with regard to the entire debt collection processes over the years and it seems the frustrations are enduring.

For instance, in 2015, a local firm, Jamale Holdings had its contract terminated for misrepresenting itself during the tender process.

According to the then reports, Jamale deceived the NMDS and the

Ministry of Planning, claiming to have partnered with a well-known expert and consultant, Christopher Bean of South Africa as it had no prior experience in debt collection. During the three years that it was engaged, Jamale never met the government's M5 million per month collection target.

Recently, the NMDS lost an amount of M1 519 790.55 which was meant to assist with the sponsorship of Basotho students in the past year, due to the fraudulent activities of some of its employees.

The ministry came across bank payment confirmation slips that were fraudulent from students so that they could receive sponsorship from the NMDS.

The fraud was confirmed by Standard Lesotho Bank, proving that the money involved was not deposited in the NMDS account number.

Another fraud involved falsification of education qualifications by students applying for sponsorship at NMDS.

The NMDS Public Relations Officer, Moeketsi Rankhone has since been implicated and charged with fraud by the Maseru Magistrate Court in July this year.





The National University of Lesotho (NUL)

NUL finally offers journalism qualifications

MASERU – Some three years after the U.S government pledged an over M750 000 grant coupled with other technical support to develop and introduce a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies at the National University of

Lesotho (NUL), the programme will finally be offered this academic year.

The long-awaited programme was initially supposed to have started in August 2019.

Information from the university's faculty of humanities shows that the programme is offered in collaboration with the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS), and applications for interested candidates are open until September 25.

The aim of the programme, the faculty notes is to cultivate a diverse group of committed change-makers within a stimulating environment, thus enabling them to explore, discover, develop and extend their individual abilities.

It says students will be encouraged to place their work in national and international context, while demonstrating particularly at final level, the capacity to combine and integrate apparent disparate components in order to define their individual direction.

At the conclusion of the programme, the faculty shows that students will be expected to have acquired theoretical and practical skills appropriate to commercial, industrial and postgraduate outcomes.

The programme, it notes is aimed at full time students, adding that the expected and recommended duration of study is four years, which may however, be reduced if a student

obtains credits for sufficient prior learning.

In January this year, the NUL Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Kananelo Mosito made an assurance that the programme would kick start during the academic year 2022/23.

"As the university, we have long finalised whatever needs to be done," he said.

Prof Mosito said in Lesotho especially in the higher education component, before programmes are introduced, they need to be accredited thus run through structures which among others have to be approved by the NUL Senate.

After going through all structures, he said such programmes are handed over to the Council on Higher Education (CHE) before their eventual signature.

Commenting on the project, the former U.S ambassador to Lesotho, Rebecca Gonzales had said by fostering a free press, citizens were more informed, active and engaged in political decision-making.

Citizens, she said could better hold their governments accountable and enhance shared principles of functional, democratic society.

According to her, freedom of expression and freedom of information are enshrined as basic human rights in the African Charter of Human and People's Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948.

She said up and coming journalists need proper training as well as solid foundation in ethical journalism, adding that when they enter the workforce, they need to be in possession of critical thinking skills to research, investigate, analyse and distil information in order to advance ideals of transparency, accountability and journalistic integrity.

The proposed BA in Journalism and Media studies is a two major curriculum which prepares students for emerging market opportunities in media and related areas.

It is aimed at provision and acquisition of knowledge and development of skills in journalism and media industries during the four-year long period.

– LeNA

Africa News

Triple-blow for SA this week

- Expectations are for a 75 basis interest rate hike on Thursday
- SA gearing up for what could be unprecedented levels of load shedding



Numsa Secretary General, Irvin Jim

SOUTH AFRICA's economy faces severe headwinds in the coming weeks as load shedding intensifies, unions threaten to shut down industries, and the Reserve Bank looks set to hike interest rates.

The country is gearing up for what could be unprecedented

levels of load shedding this week after failures at numerous power stations this weekend forced power utility Eskom to implement stage 6 load shedding.

Economists at the Bureau for Economic Research (BER) said in a note on Monday that the power

failures, along with around 7 200MW of capacity being taken offline for planned maintenance, means that half of Eskom's total generation capacity was offline.

"Although the expectation is that several coal-generation units should be brought back online in the next day or two, high levels of load-shedding are likely for the rest of the week," it said.

As was seen with the second quarter GDP data, the impact of load shedding on the economy is devastating. The BER added that this current round of blackouts is likely to do the same with the third quarter output.

"The intensity of the current power cuts threatens the GDP recovery from the 0.7% q-o-q contraction experienced in 2022Q2. It also serves as another reminder of the urgency to fast-track increased private sector power generation, including securing funding for this," the bureau said.

But this is not the only thing threatening the country's economic prospects.

The National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) announced that it expects a strike certificate to be issued this week, the BER said, which will have a huge impact on the automotive sector if it proceeds.

Numsa is demanding a 12% wage increase from employers in the motor sector who have offered increases of between 3% and 4%.

"The date of the strike has not

been confirmed. However, in the meantime, members are said to be mobilising all over the country for a total shutdown of the automotive sector," the BER said.

Strike action over wages is a key pressure point for the economy because rising wage demand drives interest rates higher.

Markets, economists, and analysts will be looking to central banks this week for the next moves on interest rates – with the South African Reserve Bank expected to follow the global trend by hiking rates again.

Expectations are for a 75 basis interest rate hike on Thursday – though the BER said that it wouldn't be surprising if a 100bps move is mentioned by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

"Along with the majority of forecasters in the pre-meeting polls conducted last week, we expect a 75bps move by the SARB MPC. The sustained aggressive monetary policy stance by advanced central banks, notably the Fed and the European Central Bank, is an important reason why we expect the SARB to continue with a more aggressive policy stance," it said.

"In addition, there has been confirmation of rising domestic wage pressures since the MPC's previous meeting in July. With this in mind, another 75bps hike seems justified. In fact, it would not surprise us if we again see at least one MPC member favouring a 100bps move at this week's meeting."

Higher interest rates will add pressure to households carrying debt.

While the local economy is expected to struggle in the near term, the BER said there are some bright spots.

South Africa's consumer inflation figures for August are due on Wednesday (21 September), and economists anticipate that the figure will be slightly lower than before.

After rising to 7.8% y-o-y in July, the BER expects the annual headline CPI inflation rate to moderate to 7.3%, largely thanks to lower fuel prices which came into effect at the start of the month.

Petrol was down by R1.32/litre and diesel by 88c per litre costs during the month. This is expected to also temper food prices, with the BER anticipating some heat off food price inflation.

"We expect some of this as the oils and fat category likely stabilised in August after hefty increases in recent months. Anecdotally, there are indications that meat prices may also have stabilised, for now," it said.

Adding to the good news, the petrol price looks set to come down by R1.24 per litre in October, according to data from the Central Energy Fund. However, the positive spin doesn't carry over to diesel, which looks to be going up by as much as 50c per litre.

High diesel prices will have a knock-on effect on the freight and transport industries, which might put pressure on food price inflation once again. — BusinessTech



Tunisian national coast guard helps a child to get off a rescue boat back in April



His Majesty King Letsie III pays his last respects to the late Queen

Pallbearers carry Queen Elizabeth II's coffin to her final resting place

The world pays final farewell to Queen Elizabeth II

- His Majesty King Letsie III also paid his last respects to the late Queen
- Funeral was watched on TV by millions of people around the world

The world and the British nation on Monday paid a final farewell to Queen Elizabeth II, with a state funeral and military procession.

Global leaders and foreign royalty including His Majesty King Letsie III joined King Charles III and the Royal Family in the congregation at Westminster Abbey.

Hundreds of thousands of people lined the streets of London as the coffin was taken to Windsor where the Queen was laid to rest.

At the funeral, the Dean of Westminster paid tribute to the Queen's "lifelong sense of duty".

The Very Rev David Hoyle spoke of her "unswerving commitment to a high calling over so many years as Queen and Head of the Commonwealth".

The day began with final respects being paid by members of the public who had queued up to see the Queen's lying-in-state in Westminster Hall.

Then, in a spectacle not seen for generations, her coffin - on the State Gun Carriage of the Royal Navy, drawn by 142 sailors - was taken in a solemn procession to Westminster Abbey.

King Charles III walked alongside his siblings, Princess Anne and Princes Andrew and Edward. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Sussex walked side-by-side behind their father along a route lined by representatives of all parts of the military.

As the funeral procession entered the abbey, world leaders, politicians and foreign royalty

stood as her coffin was carried up the aisle to be placed on a catafalque, draped in the royal standard with the Imperial State Crown, orb and sceptre on top.

Some of the youngest members of the family were in attendance at the abbey - the Queen's great-grandchildren Prince George and Princess Charlotte, aged nine and seven, sat with their parents the Prince and Princess of Wales.

British Prime Minister Liz Truss and her husband Hugh O'Leary were present alongside cabinet ministers and all of the UK's surviving former prime ministers, seated in the abbey's quire.

About 100 presidents and heads of government joined the 2 000-strong congregation at the abbey - as well as US President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, there were French President Emmanuel Macron, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Chinese Vice-President Wang Qishan.

Europe's royal families were strongly represented - with kings and queens from Denmark, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Belgium and The Netherlands. Denmark's Queen Margrethe II - now Europe's longest-reigning monarch - sat opposite King Charles close to the coffin.

The Emperor and Empress of Japan also attended, alongside other overseas royalty including Malaysia's King and Queen and

King Abdullah II and Queen Rania of Jordan.

The religious service heard church leaders highlight the affection in which the Queen has been held by many people.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said: "People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer."

"But in all cases those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten."

He also spoke of how the Queen had declared on her 21st birthday "that her whole life would be dedicated to serving the nation and Commonwealth".

He added: "Rarely has such a promise been so well kept. Few leaders receive the outpouring of love we have seen."

Westminster Abbey is bound up with parts of the Queen's own personal history - it was where she was married and where her coronation took place. Her funeral heard Psalm 23 - The Lord Is My Shepherd, which

was sung at her wedding.

As the abbey service came towards its end, the Last Post was played - by the same musicians who performed it at the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral at Windsor last year - before the nation came to a standstill for two minutes' silence.

The Queen's piper then played a traditional lament before the King stood silently as the national anthem was sung.

Among the personal touches at the ceremony was a handwritten message from the King, which was placed on top of the coffin in a wreath of flowers cut from the gardens of Buckingham Palace, Highgrove House and Clarence House at his request. It read: "In loving and devoted memory, Charles R."

The event was watched on television by millions of people across the country and around the world.

For those not invited, big screens were put up in cities across the UK, while some cinemas, pubs and other venues showed the event.

The committal service was conducted by Dean of Windsor David Conner, with a blessing from

the Archbishop of Canterbury.

As the service neared its end, the crown jeweller removed the instruments of state - the imperial state crown, the orb and sceptre - from the coffin before they were put on the altar, symbolising the end of the Queen's reign.

King Charles then placed on the coffin a small crimson regimental flag called the Camp Colour - traditionally used to indicate the location of the commanding officer.

The Lord Chamberlain, former MI5 chief Lord Parker, also "broke" his wand of office and placed it on the coffin. The snapping of the staff signals the end of his service to the sovereign as her most senior official in the Royal Household.

The coffin was then lowered into the royal vault, before the Sovereign's Piper played a lament.

The Queen was laid to rest on Monday night together with the Duke of Edinburgh at a private family service in the King George VI Memorial Chapel, located inside St George's Chapel, a statement on the Royal Family's official website said.

When Prince Philip died 17 months ago, his coffin was interred in the Royal Vault of St George's - ready to be moved to the memorial chapel when the Queen died.

The Queen's parents and sister, Princess Margaret are also buried in the vault.

Unlike the rest of the day, the event was not televised. A senior palace official had said previously it would be "entirely private, given it is a deeply personal family occasion". -BBC News



EDITOR'S NOTE

Mobile fuel stations to change the face of local business

The initiative by the Lesotho Petroleum Fund to introduce mobile filling stations should be well cherished as it will cover even the farthest areas of the country where access to petroleum products has always been a challenge over the years.

Just last week, a delegation from Petroleum Fund went on a fact finding mission to Zambia where they learnt about the implementation of the mobile filling stations project.

The team, which was led by the outfit's chief, Mr Thato Mohasoa returned home on Monday and is expected to give a full account of what is to happen going forward.

Among others, the team held meetings with key stakeholders and designated operators of mobile filling stations in Zambia as well as visited companies that are already in the industry.

The plan for Lesotho is to implement the programme particularly in the underserved parts of the country.

Considering the complexity of the national road infrastructure, the introduction of such initiatives will definitely make things much easier not just for motorists but for businesses as well. The roll out will further give birth to more business opportunities that are struggling to see the light of day due to this challenge.

Owners of these flexible filling stations are also likely to benefit through maximum and prolific profits. The flexibility of the mobile fuel stations cannot go unnoticed and that means consumers and businesses will be saved from long queues that are normal at most local fuel stations.

The mobile filling stations can be used for the refueling of cars, trucks and construction

or mining machinery for instance. Container units can always be reinstalled at different spots without problems and pretty fast.

Another advantage is that mobile filling stations are also much cheaper and are recommended due to high costs of investment to build a flexible petrol station. That is why it is going to be a solution for areas with less developed infrastructure across the country.

Because it is mobile, there is no way the station cannot be profitable as it can always be positioned or re-erected in another more profitable area.

So if the Petroleum Fund can be successful with the introduction of this project in the country, a lot more problems can be solved while at the same time more economic activity with greater contribution to the country's GDP shall also be seen.

Speak OUT! Your opinions matter. This page is dedicated to those who wish to express their views.

Elections, Self-awareness, and Competition Tensions 1: *Supposedly a means towards a peaceful environment for sustainable and inclusive social and economic development*

The inclusivity of elections ought to be a reminder and renewal to all eligible citizens of our responsibility to participate actively to sustaining peace and engaging ably and with commitment to building a vibrant economy and improving the conditions and quality of life for everyone. Democratic elections ought to be a reminder and renewal of commitment of every electoral candidate and political party to our responsibility to create a conducive and enabling environment for every able citizen to contribute fully to the wellbeing of every Mosotho. It is the only way in which any mentally healthy human being can sustain and improve their own lives meaningfully.

Yet, every meaningful achievement in life comes with meaningful and purposeful sacrifice. Only the mentally ill can expect growth out of consumption that has no productive toil as its basis at its foundation.

Every incidence in life has a lesson in it, and we learn from each other. There are nuggets to draw from the recent Kenya general elections: It is clear that it is current practice that electoral competitors would still try different things to win or to try and undo their competitors' victories. Yet, democratic elections have accessible processes for all foreseeable eventualities that all competitors can take recourse to in the event of unhappiness. We saw that in the way the case of unfair elections was built by inference from the judgement of the case. A number of things that did not go way out to include unlawfulness were tried and revealed in the court proceedings and reflected in the court judgement. The inauguration was a peaceful celebration. We too can pat ourselves on the shoulders for our recent peaceful handovers. We must maintain that honestly together with the steps that lead to peaceful handovers. Finally, of the things that the new Kenya President would have done that extend a hand of togetherness, we saw deployment of a former President to lead peacebuilding

efforts in the East Africa region. This brings to memory our own Morena Moshoeshoe I – extending a hand of friendliness to those he defeated in war. We have the rich history of our founder to be proud of and to seek to emulate that creates (sustainable) "nala". Moreover, we now know that the missing cornerstone in our national motto is BOTHO that competes it to "Botho, Khotso, Pula, Nala". The only veritable logic.

SUSTAINING QUALITY

PEACE & RESILIENCE

By Mafole Sematlane



It is very important for us to know how the cornerstone went missing and how we may retrieve it right from the elections' build-up to the inauguration of our new Prime Minister and sustain it, for a start, smoothly through a complete electoral cycle. The past issues of this column showed how our brains are designed to respond to our life challenges; how fear (and eustress – helpful stress) gets channeled through our brain for our protection; how extended fear (and distress – destructive stress) can become dangerous to us, lead to chronic stress, and cause us mental illnesses such as anosognosia – causing lack of self-awareness or inaccurate self-awareness - and lack of agency – a sense of victimhood caused by long-term suppression (and excessive fear) that reinforces a sense of apathy that we cannot be able to influence our environment (often except through violence). Mental conditions

that cause us not to own up to our limitations and failures, cause us not to learn from our own mistakes, but lead us to find scapegoats, blame, and destructive conflicts. The situation of competition is just the stage for such unhelpful tendencies that people who have not yet taken the trouble to heal from the sad legacies of colonisation often resort to. In years past football teams would not own to their inadequate or inappropriate preparations and would instead blame it on the other team or the referee. Fortunately, football outgrew that expression of fear. Remember, fear can be expressed as anger, hatred, disgust, anxiety, or panic and also manifest as ignorance, laziness (and even rejection of new evidence or knowledge), (extreme) selfishness or narcissism, or greed. Mainly because of our inaccurate self-awareness, where we often believe that we know even the things that we do not know, we often give in to the different expressions of fear only to discover later that we have shot ourselves in the foot. Yet, we would still not own up but apportion blames. Rallies are just (popularity) indicators, they are not votes nor results.

I have learned that political parties decided to hold their final rallies on different days in order, mainly, to enable themselves access to the limited number of buses available for hire. A very good decision that our political parties and leaders need to be applauded for. But, not just for that: The decision will go a long way to also reduce unfortunate incidents of excited behaviour that has disrupted traffic before and set stages for possible destructive conflicts. The decision allows supporters space for jolly excitement after the very final rallies.

We implore each other to enjoy our rallies and the excitement of electing a new government. Let us each and all remember that the purpose of elections is for us all to put a government in place that will create a conducive and enabling environment for all of us to be able excel and fulfill ourselves. And we can only do that successfully when all of us participate in economic activities after the elections. I may not be able to enjoy that if I become destructive because I may never know what my destructive behaviour may cause me or my loved ones.

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How Meghan, the Wicked Witch of Windsor, killed the queen



The Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle

The attacks on Meghan Markle are coordinated and targeted for reasons that her attackers find convenient to deny – Meghan is not like one of them

The only thing that compares in recent tweet villainy with the post of US-based Nigerian Professor Uju Anya on Queen Elizabeth II, was perhaps the visit of the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, to Windsor Castle.

Yet, after her ordeal even Anya is back, recuperating from the injury inflicted by the hounds and five days in Twitter jail (in case you missed it, Prof Anya tweeted to her approximately 70,000 followers that “I heard the chief monarch of a thieving, raping genocidal empire is finally dying. May her pain be excruciating”).

If large sections of the British press needed any proof that Meghan killed the queen, her Saturday visit to Windsor confirmed it.

There is no need to question how. About three weeks ago, the Duchess started a Podcast, Archetypes with Meghan. It’s a personal, chatty rendition of her odyssey, a tour of her growing up years and how she became the woman she is today. Except if you were born with a silver spoon in her mouth like the Saints of Fleet Street, you probably have a story like Meghan’s – messy, complicated and happy, with all the ups and downs – just plain human stuff.

It’s all there in the three episodes of Archetypes so far released by Meghan. I never knew such stories could hurt a fly until I read a vile jab by a British journalist that said Meghan’s podcast, which she only started in August, could have complicated the queen’s misery in her final days and perhaps led to her death.

In case you didn’t listen to any of it, the first episode on Spotify was about Serena Williams and the double standards women face when they’re labelled “ambitious”. The second was about Mariah Carey, whom she calls the “grand dame of our time”. And the third and final episode on 6 September, two days before the queen died, was a conversation with Mindy Kaling about the stigmas, joys and challenges of her life as a single, unmarried woman – the singleton, as she calls it.

Of course, we all know Meghan – the divorcee of mixed race who is three years older than Prince Harry. We know Meghan, an actress who has seen a bit of the world from California to Johannesburg and from Vancouver to Buenos Aires. We also know that the Windsors never quite liked that 2021 television interview hosted by Oprah Winfrey featuring Meghan and the Duke of Sussex, Harry.

She’s not exactly a piece of royal decoration and has never pretended to be. How sharing the story of her life – the lived experience of millions in her position – has become the death of the queen, takes the Megxit obsession in the British press to a whole new level.

For nearly three days this week, #GoHomeMeghanMarkle was in trend. And it all came to a head on Saturday when Meghan and Harry, in company with the Prince and Princess of Wales, William and Kate, had a walkabout to greet crowds gathered to mourn the queen outside Windsor Castle.

Of all that happened on that eventful day and the scores, if not hundreds, that Meghan and her husband met and greeted and shared a moment with, what got the mojo of the editors at the Daily Mail going was one woman in the crowd who refused to shake Meghan’s hand because she seemed unhappy with her attendance.

It was just the moment Megxiteers were waiting for. They made a song and dance of that awkward moment, all of which was to confirm, among other things, that this Witch of Windsor indeed killed the grand old queen.

The Mail, leading the pack, reminded us of how the monarchy may have been saved by a last-minute decision to exclude Meghan from family members who gathered before the queen’s death was formally announced at Balmoral. Meghan had initially set out with Harry, but when it dawned on Prince Charles that her presence could impede the queen’s Flight of Bliss, Harry was advised to leave his wife behind.

Even in what was supposed to be a moment of shared family grief, Meghan just couldn’t seem to do anything right. No one was prepared to cut her some slack or find a place in their hearts to grant that this woman had just lost her grandmother-in-law, too.

As journalists assailed her in print and special TV shows, she was not spared in the tweetsphere. “Meghan Markle’s own father,” one @SylvSnopsis said, “nearly died of a stroke and she hasn’t even bothered to call him... watching her swan around Windsor shaking hands and pretending to be sad after making the queen’s final years a misery is sickening.”

controversies from allegations of receiving dodgy payments for a passport application from a Turkish millionaire and being friends with Ghaddafi to being a paedophile.

In fact, the last one which outraged rights groups around the world, forced the queen to strip him of all royal duties. On a misery scale of one to 10, I’m not so sure where that stands in comparison with Meghan’s obstinacy.

And even King Charles III, the new successor to the throne, has not exactly been Mama’s good boy in recent times, has he? Only in June, when the queen could have used some good news about the royals, Charles collected bags of cash containing about €3-million from a Qatari politician during a meeting. The money was apparently for charity causes, but the sight of the heir apparent hauling bags of cash from the Qatari sheikh could hardly have made the queen proud.

Meghan hate is not a deep-rooted British sentiment reserved for an American brat who does not know her place and doesn’t care. Nor does it make sense behaving like folks from my neck of the woods who would say, even at the passing of a 120-year-old, that “the enemies have done their worst.”

The attacks on Meghan are coordinated and targeted for reasons her attackers find convenient to deny – Meghan is not like one of them.

In 2021, Bot Sentinel, a Twitter analysis service, reported that more than 114,000 tweets about Meghan and Harry revealed a campaign of targeted harassment and 83 accounts were responsible for about 70% of the negative content. The service also found that the majority of the hate and misinformation about Meghan and Harry originated from a small group of accounts with the same purpose – to tweet negatively about the couple.

This time, however, the hate appears to be fuelled by something darker – the fear that Harry’s forthcoming book (read Meghan-instigated onslaught) – could be a tell-all on the monarchy, especially the queen’s era.

Although the publication was due in November, after the queen’s death, the Daily Mail quoted sources that it could be delayed beyond Christmas. The press has continued to fuel suspicion that it could well be the book that finally destroys the House of Windsor. But it’s just what it is for now – suspicion.

The queen lived a good, full life – one that despite its joys and pains was by no means less revolutionary by the standards of the time. She was the first monarch to allow her coronation to be televised live and the first to create equality in succession, eliminating generations of testosterone-driven patriarchy.

These changes were just as extraordinary as those added on by Princess Diana upon which Meghan is laying her own unique bricks. Diversity, even iconoclasm, need not be such a bad thing.

Whatever may have been the queen’s frustrations about how her children, grandchildren or in-laws turned out are common to all parents, as I’m sure Meghan and Harry will find when their own children come of age.

-DM

MY TAKE

By Azubuiké Ishiekwene



Oh wow! If Meghan called her father in distress, would she have been obliged to inform this tweep and perhaps also ask for advice about a good time for the next chat?

It’s useless to pretend that Meghan did not have a difficult relationship with the queen or that she may not have underestimated her bargain when she agreed to marry into one of the world’s most traditional and conservative families. As I’ve said elsewhere the Windsors were not expecting Rachel Zane of Suits, certainly not after Diana. But Meghan is not Kate Middleton and she never pretended to be.

All this nonsense about Meghan being the death of the queen by trashing the monarchy and complicating the queen’s misery in her final years conveniently ignores the less than inspiring lives of other members of the royal family in that time.

Let’s leave Princess Anne’s headline-making moments in the closet. Prince Andrew has been involved in all kinds of

CURRENCIES

(How Lesotho's Loti fared against world major currencies this week)

Loti/SDR	Special Drawing Right (SDR)	22.04
Loti/Dollar	United States (US\$)	17.69
Loti/Rands	South African (ZAR)	1.00
Loti/Euro	European Union (€)	17.69
Loti/Yuan	Chinese (¥)	2.52
Loti/Yen	Japanese (¥)	0.12
Loti/Pound Sterling	British (£)	20.17

COMMODITIES

STOCKS

S&P500	3,462.93
NASDAQ100	12,023.85
Nikkei225	27,454.75
Dow Jones30	31,273.08
FTSE 100	7,245.10
JSE	66,603.00
Hang Seng	19,292.86

PRECIOUS METALS (Rates in US Dollars)

Gold p/ounce	1,897.98
Platinum p/ounce	802.00
Silver p/ounce	18.35
Copper p/ounce	0.22
Brent Oil p/barrel	93.04

EQUITIES

Bonds	18.44
Treasury Bills	3.67
Interest Rates	91

Mobile filling stations on cards



11

Metro BUSINESS

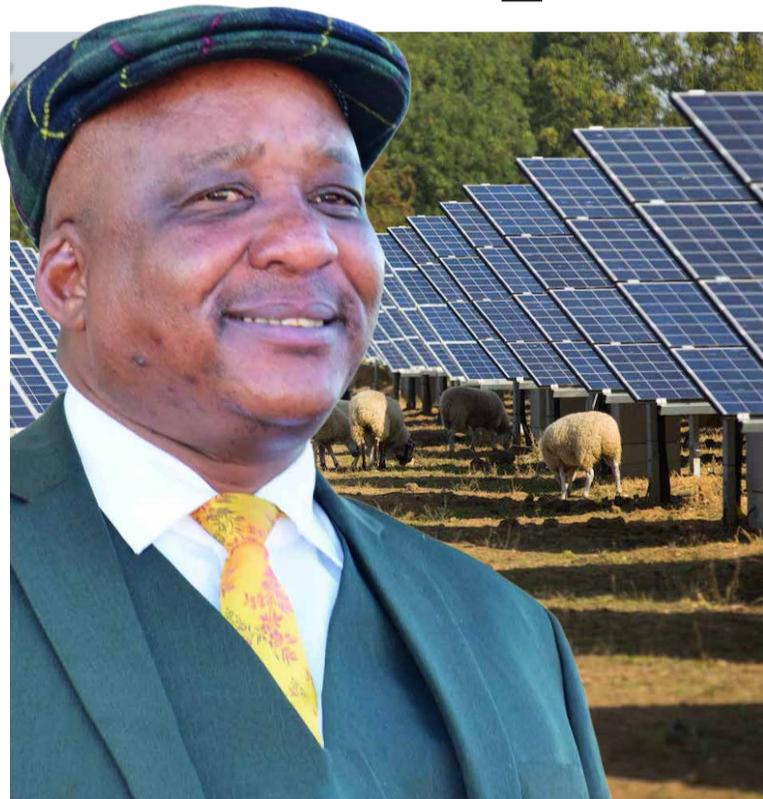
AGRICULTURE (Rates in Maloti/Rands)

Maize Meal p/kg	M7.00	Eggs p/tray	M45.00
Wheat Meal p/kg	M10.00	Milk (fresh) p/litre	M16.00
Cabbage p/kg	M14.00	Milk (sour) p/litre	M20.00
Potatoes p/kg	M10.50	Rice p/kg	M30.00
Brown Bread p/loaf	M10.00	White Sugar p/kg	M22.00
White Bread p/loaf	M11.00	Brown Sugar p/kg	M25.00
Sorghum Meal p/kg	M25.00	Beef p/kg	M85.00
Brown Beans p/kg	M30.00	Mutton p/kg	M90.00
Tomato p/kg	M15.00		

ENERGY (Rates in Maloti/Rands)

Petrol Unleaded 93 p/litre	M22.20
Unleaded 95 p/litre	M22.65
Diesel 50PPm p/litre	M23.20
Paraffin p/litre	M17.80
Water (Domestic) p/litre	M5.53
Water (Industrial) p/litre	M15.03
Electricity (Domestic) p/unit	M1.38
Electricity (Industrial) p/unit	M0.26
Gas p/kg	M20.00

Govt, Frazer Solar trial fails to proceed



Former Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Temeki Tšolo

MASERU - The Constitutional Court has postponed until October 13 - 14 the case in which the government is suing a German energy company Frazer Solar after a senior counsel involved in the matter failed to show up in court because he was diagnosed with COVID-19.

The lawyer concerned who is based in South Africa could not travel to Lesotho due to ill-health, the court was told on Tuesday.

Advocate Nick Ferreira for the applicants who made the request for

postponement, informed the court that the parties involved in the matter were in agreement that a lengthy postponement is not in the interest of justice.

He said this is because there are other matters pending before South African courts in relation to a contract which is the subject matter in the current application and they are awaiting a decision of the court in Lesotho.

The government of Lesotho has instituted legal action against Frazer

Solar in which it is seeking a review and setting aside of the decision by the former Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister to appoint Frazer Solar as a sole supplier of solar energy and power equipment to Lesotho.

The country is facing the loss of revenue from water and power sales to South Africa and may see its share of an undersea communications cable seized after it breached the terms of a contract with solar power company Frazer Solar GmbH.

Under a global enforcement order, following the award of 50 million euros in damages in an arbitration case in South Africa, Frazer said it had taken legal action to seize royalties that would be paid to Lesotho's government by the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority SOC as well as payments for power from Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd.

It had also had Lesotho's share in the Mauritius-based West Indian Ocean Cable Co. provisionally seized.

In this case Frazer Solar was awarded damages by South African arbitrator Vincent Maleka for Lesotho's alleged breach of a deal suspiciously struck between the government and the German company involving supply of solar energy and power equipment to Lesotho over four years. The deal was allegedly signed in 2018.

It is alleged that a binding agreement was sealed in 2018 between Frazer Solar and Lesotho for the provision of up to 40 000 solar water heating systems, 20MW of solar photovoltaic capacity, one million LED lights and 350 000 solar

lanterns nationwide.

Subsequently, Frazer Solar in April last year applied to the High Court in Gauteng petitioning it to endorse the arbitration award and allow the company to garnish Lesotho revenue from the water royalties from South Africa in terms of the treaty signed in 1986.

That prompted Majoro to request a reversal of the award to Frazer Solar as damages.

On November 4, lawyers representing the Lesotho government, noted that Frazer Solar had requested an urgent case management meeting with a view of seeking a postponement of the Lesotho Stay Application, the TCTA Application and the SAG (South African Government) intervention application."

The ENSAfrica law firm's Deon Lambert/Wandile Ndabambi wrote to SA high court Judge Matojane: "We will of course make ourselves available for an urgent case management meeting as Frazer Solar has requested should His Lordship convene one."

The lawyers continued: "However, in an effort to and perhaps even avoid the need for a case management meeting, we record for the benefit of all parties that the Kingdom of Lesotho is willing to agree to Frazer's request to postpone the matters set down for 10-12 November 2021."

This was subject to all concerned parties agreeing to liaise with one another to find new dates for the hearing of the applications set down or November 10-12 with such dates suiting the parties.

The South African government also intervened in the matter. It argued in the application that granting Frazer Solar damages from Lesotho's revenue due to it from the Lesotho Highlands

Water Project (LHWP) would irreparably harm the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The SA government also argued that the kingdom would retaliate by cutting water supplies to it in terms of the 1986 water treaty signed by the two countries.

Meanwhile, government's energy experts have previously revealed that the government's deal with Frazer Solar GmbH was never a good idea, looking at the M1.5 billion that Lesotho was to pay in 20 years.

Testimonies before parliament's Public Accounts Committee last year revealed that that the signatures that appeared on the supply agreement documents were those of former Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Temeki Tšolo and that of Robert Frazer of Frazer Solar, without the knowledge of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy.

Majoro also assembled a commission of inquiry into the 'purported' supply agreement between German company Frazer Solar GmbH and the government of Lesotho.

According to a government gazette published last year, the commission was tasked with probing events that led to the signing of the agreement of supply between the government and the services of notices in respect of the matter before arbitration and subsequent arbitration award.

The commission was to be led by High Court Judge Justice Molefi Makara, while its other members are former government minister Mohlabi Tsekoa and Advocate Sekake Malebanye.

The commission would investigate how Frazer Solar GmbH was introduced to the government of Lesotho including the persons in the country who were involved in the events that led to the signing; and enabled the company to lodge claims against the government.

The case continues before Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane assisted

Mobile filling stations on cards



A mobile filling station

NEO SENOKO

business@maserumetro.com

MASERU – A delegation from the Petroleum Fund that went on a fact finding mission to Zambia regarding the mobile filling station initiative is back in Lesotho and shall map a way forward.

stations in Zambia and visited other companies that are already in the industry.

The plan for Lesotho is to implement the programme particularly in the underserved parts of the country.

“The team went on a fact finding mission to Zambia following the

Fund Public Relations Officer, Rorisang Mahlo told Maseru Metro on Monday.

That, he said is the main reason the institution visited Zambia.

“Now that they are back, they will be able to share ideas and the best ways to go about introducing the initiative,” he added.

The Petroleum Fund was established with the mandate to finance petroleum-related projects, to address the objectives of its enabling legislation which address, among others, the purchase of petroleum products in times of need and the improvement of petroleum products throughout the country. Essentially it is about ensuring that the users get the benefit so that they don't feel the severity of these products.

Under its new strategic plan 2020-25, the fund outlines the importance of ensuring that petroleum products are available and

equitably distributed throughout the country as well as ensuring wider access to petroleum products and related services to the end-users. It also seeks to create an enabling environment that will attract investment and financing at all levels of the downstream petroleum value chain.

“

The team went on a fact finding mission to Zambia following the completion of a feasibility study on mobile filling stations. So, after the completion of the feasibility study we are supposed to kick start the implementation of the initiative. But before we even start with the rollout, it is only advisable to learn from those that are already in the industry

The team, which was led by the Petroleum Fund Chief Executive Officer, Thato Mohasoa left the country last week and returned on Monday.

Among others, the team held meetings with key stakeholders and designated operators of mobile filling

completion of a feasibility study on mobile filling stations. So, after the completion of the feasibility study we are supposed to kick start the implementation of the initiative. But before we even start with the rollout, it is only advisable to learn from those that are already in the industry,” Petroleum



Petroleum Fund CEO, Thato Mohasoa

Agriculture

How a SA producer grows 70 000t of citrus a year

The Mahela Group in the Letsitele Valley ascribes its success as a citrus producer to the sound investments it makes in the latest agricultural technologies and sustainable farming practices. In addition, the company has begun improving its cash flow and spreading risk by investing in subtropical crops, game and livestock farming.

As director of the citrus division, Eddie Vorster is responsible for all aspects of production. According to him, the region's warm days and cool nights are conducive to producing most types of citrus with well-balanced levels of sugar and acidity, as well as good fibre and moisture content.

Mahela produces a wide range of citrus, namely Shaddock (pomelos); Star Ruby grapefruit; Cara Cara navel oranges; Delta, Midnight, Turkey and other late Valencia oranges; Tango, Nules Clementine, Gold Nugget and Samba soft citrus; and Eureka and Genoa lemons. The fruit is produced mainly for the export market.

All the group's farms, apart from one, are located in Limpopo. The exception is a farm near George in the Western Cape. Each farm is under the watchful eye of a manager or, in the case of larger farms, two managers, each with a team of dedicated personnel.

According to Vorster, market changes present some of the biggest challenges they have to address every year. "These changes aren't only seasonal; they can occur at any time of the year.

The market will dictate a certain fruit size and we have to manage production to achieve those parameters. But depending on demand, these can easily change. Market information is crucial for us on the production side; the sooner we know what the market's needs are, the easier it is to manage production."



The Mahela Group in the Letsitele Valley

Citrus exporters like Mahela also have the burden of meeting phytosanitary regulations. In addition, logistical issues this year have proved a major challenge for most South African citrus farmers, especially those in the northern part of the country, and Mahela is no exception.

Mahela's citrus production starts at the nursery on The Junction farm near Letsitele.

"We use the latest technology to produce high-quality, certified-disease-free citrus trees for all our citrus farms," says Vorster.

"Good rootstocks have a positive effect on yield, fruit size and quality. Rootstocks vary in their adaptability to different soil types, as well as their tolerance of adverse soil conditions, pests and diseases. At the nursery, we make sure our trees have good root development, and that they'll thrive under our diverse conditions and be able to produce fruit for the next 30 years."

Mahela's nursery strives to produce quality trees by using certified seed and plant material. It has Citrus Research International accreditation, is a member of the South African Citrus Nurserymen's Association, is registered with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in terms of the Plant Improvement Act, and is accredited by the Southern African Citrus Improvement Scheme.

Citrus trees bloom for four to six weeks from September to October, and the first fruit set is in mid-October, depending on the cultivar. The second bloom usually occurs in late November and continues into early December. Depending on the area, the type of citrus and the cultivar, fruit picking starts in March and lasts until the end of September.

"We start our picking season with the lemons, followed by the Shaddock and grapefruit from early April until mid-June. The picking of navel oranges kicks off in the last week of May, soft citrus from the end of July until late August, and our other orange varieties from then until the end of September."

Citrus are suited to a wide range of well-drained soil types.

"We focus on proper soil and ridge preparation with a view to long-term production," says Vorster. Ridging is important, as it allows for more optimal soil, water and nutrient management, and creates a healthy and well-aerated root zone.

"Ridging has had a major impact on our cultivation practices and our integrated pest management focus. We also adapt our irrigation practices to suit the soil type and climate. On the Ohrigstad and George farms, we use low-flow drip irrigation in our orchards, while on our Letsitele, Hoedspruit and Weipe farms, we use micro-irrigation.

"Once the trees are in the ground, they may

be there for quite some time, so proper planning with careful consideration for all production and environmental aspects is needed. Most fruit trees require between six and eight hours of sunlight for good growth and fruit ripening, so the amount of sunlight the area receives during the growing season, as well as the soil type, will have an impact on them."

Being able to deliver fruit of the highest quality to demanding global markets starts with perfecting the basics of first-class production practices. Nutrition is a key element and, according to Vorster, all mineral nutrients must be available to the trees in sufficient quantities in order to achieve optimal yield and fruit development. There should also be a balanced supply of macro- and micronutrients.

Soil and leaf analyses are carried out annually to determine the correct applications of these nutrients. Macronutrients include nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium and sulphur.

The correct amount of nitrogen is important, as it affects growth and, together with potassium and calcium, is needed for leaf, flower and fruit production.

Phosphorus helps the trees store and use energy and take in other nutrients, and aids cell division and growth. Magnesium is crucial for photosynthesis and assists with phosphorus uptake, while sulphur improves root growth.

The micronutrients or trace elements include iron, zinc, manganese and molybdenum.

Mahela also uses organic fertiliser, compost and manure to address soil imbalances and optimise yields.

"Energy analysis is a routine task in our farming operation, and we base our fertigation programme on these results," says Vorster.

An unreliable supply of good-quality water is one of the main challenges facing fruit farmers in the Letsitele Valley, according to Vorster.

"Our water sources are important assets, but they need meticulous management. We try to approach our irrigation in a holistic manner to ensure sustainable water use and fruit production. Through implementing precision irrigation systems, we've managed to reduce some of the risks associated with citrus production by delivering precise quantities of water and nutrients to the roots of each plant," he explains. — Farmer's Weekly



Fresh All Summer





Reflecting on implementation of genomic surveillance for COVID-19 ...and beyond in the African region

The Minister of Health, Semano Sekatle was part of African Ministers of Health who attended a meeting on COVID-19 epidemiology focal points from selected high-risk countries in Africa including Lesotho.

The high-powered meeting which was convened by the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo was held from August 10 - 13.

In its report after the meeting, AFRO said since its first case was reported on 14 February 2020, the African region has experienced four distinct waves of COVID-19.

"Throughout each of these, WHO has continued to work with countries to scale up pathogen genomic surveillance to enable the effective detection and response to SARS-CoV-2 variants, through sustainable investments in infrastructure and human resources.

"To reflect on and further this work, AFRO convened the meeting whose aim was to discuss initiatives aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of COVID-19 surveillance, including genomic surveillance. The Regional Virologist at WHO AFRO set the scene," the report said.

"Currently, 40 out of the 47 Member States (85%) in the African Region have in-country capabilities for genomic sequencing and 46 Member States (98%) are sharing their genetic sequence data through a publicly accessible database. The Region has established a coordinated mechanism to sustain and strengthen these gains and has set up three centres of excellence for genomic surveillance, developed standardized guidance documents, offered capacity building for Ministries of Health's personnel and set up laboratory infrastructure for routine pathogen genomic surveillance, including wastewater surveillance," said WHO/AFRO Regional Virologist, Dr Nicky



The Minister of Health, Semano Sekatle

Gumede-Moeletsi.

Here are some highlights from stories shared by some of the countries in the meeting.

South Africa has built world-class capacities for quality and timely genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 and other pathogens with pandemic and epidemic potential, exemplified by the establishment in May 2020 of the Network for Genomic Surveillance in South Africa, two months after the report of the first COVID-19 case. To sustain and strengthen the gains made, the country is committed to mobilise domestic resources, strengthen the workforce and improve access to tools for pathogen sequencing in South Africa and other African countries.

"Through a robust collaborative mechanism, South Africa has sequenced and shared more than 44,700 SARS-CoV-2 samples representative of all regions and ages on a publicly accessible database.

"We have built significant

pathogen surveillance capacity for SARS-Cov-2 and other pathogens, and have integrated genomic surveillance into the broader public health surveillance system," said Dr Patrick Devanand, National Professional Officer, Emergency Preparedness and Response, WHO Country Office for South Africa

In Ethiopia, genomic sequencing capabilities were established during the pandemic and the data generated continues to support public health decision-making for both COVID-19 and other disease priority areas, such as antimicrobial resistance using a One Health approach. Despite promising gains however, Ethiopia still needs to address various challenges to improve capacity for and quality of sequencing, among which: the small number of functioning laboratories, shortage of laboratory supplies, and the lack of sufficient bioinformatics capacities to analyze and interpret the sequencing data for

timely action.

"Genomic surveillance has played an important role in informing the response to COVID-19 in Ethiopia. A five-year National Strategy to guide the coordination and implementation of surveillance activities for SARS-CoV-2 and other pathogens between 2022 and 2026 is being developed," said Kebede Shitaye, Epidemiologist/Public Health Specialist, WHO Country Office for Ethiopia

Leveraging the genomic sequencing capacities built during the Ebola outbreak in 2018, the Democratic Republic of the Congo swiftly triggered sequencing for SARS-CoV-2 after the first case was reported. Since then, the country's Regional Reference Laboratory has also been sequencing SARS-Cov-2 samples from four countries (Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo), with support from WHO and other partners. This

sequencing capacity is now being used for other national priority diseases such as monkeypox, polio, measles, malaria, cholera, and yersinia pestis.

"The Democratic Republic of Congo was one of the first countries in the world to share sequences for SARS-CoV-2 on the Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data (GISAID).

"The first sequence was publicly published on 25 March 2020, two weeks after the first case was reported. We are committed to strengthening existing sequencing capabilities and introducing genomic environmental monitoring activities in the near future," said Dr Justus Nsio, Epidemiologist, Ministry of Health, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Nigeria's genomic sequencing capacities has been built across diverse public and private sectors institutions, including the National Public Health Institute and academic and research centres, to help inform the response to COVID-19.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Nigeria has shared over 7 000 sequences on the Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data (GISAID).

"The sequencing capability built during the COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for us to strengthen pathogen genomic surveillance for other priority pathogens in the country.

"We are committed to strengthening coordination, human capacities and infrastructure for genomic surveillance," said Dr Abubakar Jafiya, Epidemiologist, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, Nigeria

Outputs from the meeting and reflections from countries on the role of genomic surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies will enable the Region to plan effectively and integrate pathogen surveillance into the broader public health architecture. -WHO/AFRO

Health

Reflecting on the implementation of genomic surveillance for COVID-19 and beyond in the African Region

Since its first case was reported on February 14, 2020, the African region has experienced four distinct waves of COVID-19. Throughout each of these, WHO has continued to work with countries to scale up pathogen genomic surveillance to enable the effective detection and response to SARS-CoV-2 variants, through sustainable investments in infrastructure and human resources.

To reflect on and further this work, the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) convened a meeting of COVID-19 epidemiology focal points from ministries of health of selected high-risk countries in Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo) which took place from August 10 – 13, 2022.

The aim was to discuss initiatives aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of COVID-19 surveillance, including genomic surveillance. The Regional Virologist at WHO AFRO set the scene:

"Currently, 40 out of the 47 Member States (85%) in the African Region have in-country capabilities for genomic sequencing and 46 Member States (98%) are sharing their genetic sequence data through a publicly accessible database. The Region has established a coordinated mechanism to sustain and strengthen these gains and has set up three centres of excellence for genomic surveillance, developed standardized guidance documents, offered capacity building for Ministries of Health's personnel and set up laboratory infrastructure for routine pathogen genomic surveillance, including wastewater surveillance."

- Dr Nicky Gumede-Moeletsi, Regional Virologist, WHO/AFRO

Here are some highlights from stories shared by countries in the meeting.

Ethiopia

Genomic sequencing capabilities were established during the pandemic and the data generated continues to support public health



The COVID-19 vaccine

decision-making for both COVID-19 and other disease priority areas, such as antimicrobial resistance using a One Health approach. Despite promising gains however, Ethiopia still needs to address various challenges to improve capacity for and quality of sequencing, among which: the small number of functioning laboratories, shortage of laboratory supplies, and the lack of sufficient bioinformatics capacities to analyze and interpret the sequencing data for timely action.

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Democratic Republic of Congo

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- Dr Abubakar Jafiya, Epidemiologist, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, Nigeria

South Africa

South Africa has built world-class capacities for quality and timely genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 and other pathogens with pandemic and epidemic potential, exemplified by the establishment in May 2020 of the Network for Genomic Surveillance in South Africa, two months after the report of the first COVID-19 case. To sustain and strengthen the gains made, the country is committed to mobilize domestic resources, strengthen the workforce and improve access to tools for pathogen sequencing in South Africa and other African countries.

"Through a robust collaborative mechanism, South Africa has sequenced and shared more than 44,700 SARS-CoV-2 samples representative of all regions and ages on a publicly accessible database. We have built significant pathogen surveillance capacity for SARS-Cov-2 and other pathogens, and have integrated genomic surveillance into the broader public health surveillance system."

- Dr Patrick Devanand, National Professional Officer, Emergency Preparedness and Response, WHO Country Office for South Africa

Outputs from the meeting and reflections from countries on the role of genomic surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies will enable the Region to plan effectively and integrate pathogen surveillance into the broader public health architecture. In line with the recently launched Global Genomic Surveillance Strategy for Pathogens with Pandemic and Epidemic Potential 2022-2023.

AFRO launched its Transforming African Surveillance Systems flagship project, which aims to enhance surveillance through strengthened pathogen genomic sequencing and will integrate conclusions and lessons learned from the August meeting.

- WHO Africa

**HARD BREAKFAST?
SOFT BREAKFAST?
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Comic book artist and writer Bill Masuku

Cassper vs Priddy Ugly, why the boxing match might not happen

SA hip-hop stars Cassper Nyovest and Priddy Ugly are set to face off in a celebrity boxing match on Saturday 1 October at the SunBet Arena in Pretoria. This marks Cassper's third boxing match after fighting YouTuber Slik Talk in December 2021 and Naakmusiq in April this year.

According to Daily Sun, the Billiato boss might not be able to fight Priddy Ugly next month. The

publication reports that Cassper weighs more than Priddy Ugly which is a cause of concern in the boxing world.

As per Daily Sun, when Cassper Nyovest and Priddy Ugly first weighed in ahead of their boxing match, Cassper was 32kg heavier than Priddy Ugly. The Tito Mboweni hitmaker is reportedly working hard at losing 16kg before the fight on 1

October.

Priddy Ugly told the publication that the match would have to be cancelled if Cassper does not lose the weight in time.

"Cassper has to lose some weight and go down to 90kg, but that will still make him 16kg heavier than me and there is limited time," said the rapper.

"I hope he can make the weight. He's still got two weeks. I am also

aware that it's not very healthy to be losing that much weight in a short space of time."

In the build-up to his fight against Priddy Ugly, Cassper has been sharing some of his high-intensity training videos on social media. Taking to Twitter on Thursday 16 September, said he wants to fight Big Zulu after hopefully defeating Priddy Ugly.

"14 days till I give Pretoria a great

show. I sweat blood and tears for this fight. Get your tickets today at Web tickets and let's meet at Sun Arena 1 October!!! After I knock this Priddy Ugly dud out, want Big Zulu next fight!!!" wrote Cassper.

Ahead of the celebrity boxing match, Priddy Ugly is also getting his training in at the gym. The question is, who will win the match on October 1? — The South African



Vodacom League champions, Matlama FC

LeFA unhappy with Matlama poor showing

...as the team takes an early exit at the CAF Champs League

MASERU - Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) has expressed its discontent at the manner in which Vodacom League champions, Matlama exited the continental Confederation of African Football (CAF) Champions League by losing 4-0 on aggregate score against Coton Sport of Cameroon over the weekend.

After being hammered 3-0 at home in the first leg match played in Bloemfontein, South Africa two weeks ago, Matlama suffered another setback on Sunday evening when they went down 1-0 in the return leg in Cameroon.

LeFA media officer, Mikia Kalati cited reasons of ill-preparedness on the part of

the Lesotho champions for a competition of that magnitude.

He said the team management held several meetings with LeFA's Secretary General, Mokhosi Mohapi who outlined everything that was required for the club to get ready for the CAF Champions league.

However, Kalati lamented that Matlama failed to comply hence, the heavy first leg defeat, adding that had the Sea-point-based outfit adhered to the requirements, the results would have been different.

He said for starters, the team was supposed to have secured the services of a CAF C licensed-coach, which did not happen as it used under qualified coaches

as per the CAF requirements.

He said after LeFA had a long discussion with Matlama management, things improved a bit in terms of performance, hence, they lost by an odd goal away.

Had they not squandered their goal scoring chances at home, Matlama could have done much better.

Kalati urged local teams to take a lesson from Matlama's disappointing loss and consider it as a learning curve going forward to avoid any early exits in big competitions.

Attempts to get Matlama's comment on this particular issue drew a blank as their

management was not available at the time of going to press.

However, Matlama's deputy communications and marketing manager, Tankiso Moletsane said the loss was mainly due to the fact that their opponents were more experienced and had better exposure to international football.

Matlama were expected back home on Tuesday.

The team's coaches with the relevant CAF coaching qualifications including former Likuena mentors Moses Maliehe and Seephephe "Mochine" Matete could not be part of the squad on both legs due to ill-health. - LeNA