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European Union regulators have fined Chinese e-commerce giant Temu €200 million (\$232 million) after finding that the platform failed to protect consumers from illegal and dangerous products sold on its site. The penalty, announced Thursday by the European Commission, marks

the first major enforcement action against Temu under the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) and signals Brussels' determination to hold online marketplaces accountable for harmful goods reaching European consumers.....
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Crumbling roads, vanishing millions

M861 million accounting gap and pavement strengthening scandal



RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

MASERU- The administrative rot within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport has reached a terminal velocity that threatens to pull the entire nation's fiscal house down with it.

While our citizens navigate potholed death-traps and our rural communities remain cut off from essential services by broken bridges, the very officials tasked with building our future are overseeing a culture of financial lawlessness, “ghost” assets, and blatant disregard for the law.

This is not merely a case of systemic inefficiency; it is a profound betrayal of the public trust where hundreds of millions of maloti are shuffled through ledgers that no longer reflect reality, and assets worth over half a billion maloti are treated as if they were disposable trinkets rather than state property.

The ministry has become a monument to the implementation crisis in Lesotho, where the only thing being “strengthened” is the opacity of the books rather than the pavement of our roads.

The depth of this crisis is laid bare in the recently released report by the Auditor-General, ‘Mathabo Makenete, on the Consolidated Financial Statements of the Government of Lesotho for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Makenete has taken the grave and unprecedented step of issuing an Adverse Opinion on the state's overall financial position, citing a staggering M3.09 billion discrepancy in reported cash balances.

In her blistering assessment, she notes that the financial statements “do not present fairly the financial position of the Government” and describes the delay for Chief Accounting Officers (CAOs) to submit reports as a “persisting challenge”. For the Ministry of Public Works (Head 313), Makenete's findings suggest a department that has effectively abandoned the principles of public financial management.

The most damning revelation regarding this Ministry involves the total collapse of asset management, a failure so massive it defies simple explanation.

According to the audit, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport purchased assets totaling a staggering M604.97 million during the 2023/24 financial year.

However, when the Auditor-General's team requested proof of these purchases, the Ministry was found to be among those that failed to produce a single asset register. This is a M600 million black hole in the heart of our administration.

To spend over half a billion maloti on equipment, vehicles, or machinery and then fail to

record where they are, who has them, or if they even exist is an open invitation to large-scale misappropriation and theft. Without a register, these assets are essentially “ghosts” in the system, and the Ministry has effectively told the taxpayer that M604 million has vanished into a void where no one is responsible.

This culture of “spending now and explaining never” is further highlighted by the Ministry's blatant disregard for the Appropriation Act.

The Auditor-General discovered that the Ministry of Public Works and Transport spent M251.48 million on the Pavement Strengthening - Paved Road project through a grant, despite having zero budget allocated for it by Parliament.

Under the law, spending public money without an authorized budget is a direct breach of the Constitution and the Public Financial Management and Accountability (PFMA) Act.

When a ministry operates outside the legal framework approved by the people's representatives, it ceases to be a government department and becomes a law unto itself.

This M251 million in unauthorized spending suggests a total breakdown in budgetary control and a refusal to follow the very laws the Ministry is meant to uphold.

The Ministry's internal accounting is equally shambolic,

characterized by a massive M861.19 million discrepancy between its own reported figures and the central government's official Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS).

The report reveals that while the Ministry claimed a certain level of capital project expenditure in its financial statements, the official IFMIS ledger—the legal record of the state—showed M861 million less.

This “ledger gap” is a symptom of a ministry that is simply not posting its transactions to the required systems, or worse, is maintaining two sets of books.

As Makenete warns, such inconsistencies render the Ministry's financial statements unreliable and misleading, making it impossible for Parliament or the public to know the true status of our national infrastructure projects.

The human cost of this administrative rot is reflected in the Ministry's payment arrears, which have exploded to M302.10 million as of March 31, 2024. This represents more than a 113 percent increase from the M141.48 million recorded just a year prior.

These are debts owed to local contractors, suppliers, and service providers—many of whom are small businesses struggling to survive on the margins. By failing to pay these bills within the statutory 30-

day window, the Ministry is effectively strangling the private sector and risking widespread business closures and job losses.

When the state owes M302 million but “loses” the records for M604 million in new assets, it is clear that the Ministry's priorities are not with Basotho.

Furthermore, the physical progress of the Ministry's projects tells a story of implementation paralysis.

Despite the massive sums being shuffled through the books, the Auditor-General noted that the paved roads pavement strengthening project had recorded only 15 percent progress by the end of the financial year.

The reasons cited—recruitment hurdles for labourers and contractor delays in submitting designs—suggest a ministry that is incapable of even basic project supervision.

Similarly, urban road upgrades executed less than 30 percent of their allocated budget, leading to what the Auditor-General describes as “low service delivery”.

We are paying for a ministry that knows how to incur debt and buy “unregistered” assets but does not know how to build a single kilometre of road efficiently.

The Ministry's performance on donor-funded initiatives is equally anaemic.

The Transport Infrastructure Connectivity project, for instance, showed a discrepancy of M101.15 million between the Ministry's reports and the official ledger. When international partners like the World Bank see such chaotic accounting, it damages Lesotho's reputation and threatens future funding for our development.

The Ministry is sitting on M802 million in development receipts, yet its “net flow” is a negative M817 million, suggesting a deep-seated inability to manage the cash it already has.

The lack of transparency extends even to the Ministry's fleet.

While the Ministry of Public Works is part of an environment where M1.84 million in accidents was reported across government, the report notes a systemic failure to submit required accident reports to the Auditor-General's office.

Without these reports, it is impossible to verify if government vehicles are being used for official business or if they are being written off due to the negligence of officers who face no consequences.

Why has the debt to local contractors more than doubled in a single year?

The time for excuses about “recruitment hurdles” and “system delays” is over.



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The M83 million asset ghost

Systemic rot exposed as the Ministry of Agriculture spends over M83 million on assets but fails to produce a single asset register.

RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

MASERU- The recently released report by the Auditor-General, 'Mathabo Makenete, on the Consolidated Financial Statements of the Government of Lesotho for the year ended 31 March 2024, is not merely a collection of dry accounting figures; it is a scathing indictment of a government that has lost its way.

While the Auditor-General has taken the unprecedented step of issuing an Adverse Opinion on the state's overall financial position—citing a staggering M3.09 billion discrepancy in cash balances—it is the performance of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (Head 301) that serves as the most painful evidence of administrative rot.

In a nation where food insecurity is a daily reality for thousands of Basotho, the Ministry's inability to account for its resources, its failure to track its assets, and its anaemic execution of development projects is nothing short of a national tragedy.

The Ministry of Agriculture is theoretically the backbone of our economy and the shield against hunger.

Yet, the Auditor-General's findings suggest a ministry that operates more like a chaotic flea market than a professional government department.

Perhaps the most alarming figure is the M135.35 million in accounts receivable reported by the Ministry as of March 31, 2024. This represents a massive 292 percent increase from the M34.56 million recorded only a year prior.

These are public funds that the Ministry has failed to collect, acquit, or clear. As Makenete rightly points out, such a significant increase indicates inadequate management of appropriated funds, which directly starves the government of the cash needed to deliver essential public services.

When over M100 million in "new" debt is allowed to accumulate in a single year without explanation, we must ask: who is being protected at the expense of the taxpayer? Even more egregious is the



Ministry's utter disregard for the most basic principles of asset management. According to the report, the Ministry of Agriculture purchased assets totaling M83.28 million during the 2023/24 financial year. However, when the auditors came knocking, the Ministry could not produce a single asset register.

This is a staggering revelation. To spend over M83 million on equipment, vehicles, or machinery and then fail to record where they are, who is using them, or if they even still exist is an open invitation to theft and misappropriation.

This lack of oversight means that millions of maloti in government property could be vanishing into thin air, with no way for the public to trace the loss.

The Ministry's internal accounting is equally shambolic. The Auditor-General highlighted a massive M76.13 million discrepancy between the Ministry's own financial statements and the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS).

While the Ministry's reports claimed a certain level of expenditure, the central government system showed M76 million more in spending.

This gap suggests that the Ministry is either incapable of using the government's required software or is intentionally bypassing it to hide transactions. Such inconsistencies, as the Auditor-General warns, render the entire nation's

financial statements unreliable and misleading.

The report also sheds light on a suspicious Letter of Credit arrangement involving the Ministry and First National Bank (FNB). The Ministry issued an advance payment through a Letter of Credit for a contract totaling M49.85 million.

However, the actual invoice submitted was only for M49.64 million. Despite the lower invoice, the full contract amount was paid, even though the Auditor-General notes that "less was delivered".

A difference of M208,737.35 remains unresolved and unretired. In any private business, such a "mistake"—paying more than was invoiced for goods that were never delivered—would result in immediate dismissals.

In the Ministry of Agriculture, it is simply listed as another "unresolved" matter.

While the Ministry is efficient at losing money and overpaying contractors, it is catastrophically slow at actually implementing the projects designed to help farmers.

The Auditor-General revealed that the Ministry of Agriculture had a project execution rate of only 44 percent—the lowest among the eleven major spending units in the country.

This is a slap in the face to the Basotho people. Major initiatives like the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project and the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP

II) are recording spending capacities as low as 13 to 22 percent.

These projects are funded by international partners like IFAD and the World Bank to stimulate our rural economy, yet the Ministry is sitting on the funds.

The situation regarding supplementary budgets is even more perplexing. During the year, the Ministry of Agriculture requested and received a supplementary allocation of M7.91 million.

Yet, by the end of the year, the Ministry had failed to utilize 24 percent of its revised budget. Why did the Ministry beg for more money if it could not even spend what it already had? This suggests a total lack of cash forecasting and a failure in budget oversight.

While the Ministry claims to be "facilitating" the production of eggs, beef, and pork, the reality on the ground is that its planned activities are not being carried out, and the objectives of food security are being missed.

The lack of transparency extends even to the Ministry's fleet. The report notes that the Ministry of Agriculture reported M711,000 in motor vehicle accidents during the period under review. However, in a recurring theme of defiance, the Ministry failed to submit the required accident reports to the Auditor-General's office.

Without these reports, it is impossible to verify if these accidents were genuine or if they are being used to cover up the misuse of government

vehicles. This obstruction of the audit process prevents any follow-up on the recovery of losses from negligent officers.

Furthermore, the Ministry appears to be operating outside the strategic goals of the nation. The Auditor-General observed that many ministries, Agriculture included, are being provided with budgets for activities that fall outside the interventions of the National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II).

This led to a "duplication of efforts" and a "mismatch of implementation" that results in the inefficient use of resources. While the Ministry collected M51 million in revenue—an over-collection of 48 percent against its original budget—this success is hollow when viewed against its failure to spend development grants.

Over-collecting from the public while failing to deliver the services promised in the budget is the hallmark of an extractive and failing administration.

The Auditor-General, Makenete, has done her duty. She has turned over the stones and shown us the rot underneath. She has pointed out that Chief Accounting Officers (CAOs) must "start to own the preparation of the reports for their spending units" and that the current delay in submissions is a "persisting challenge".

For the Ministry of Agriculture, the "ownership" of these failures is non-existent. We see a ministry that cannot track M83 million in equipment, cannot collect M135 million in debts, and cannot reconcile its books by M76 million.

The Auditor-General has warned that these discrepancies compromise the integrity of the nation's financial statements. When the backbone of our economy—agriculture—is this broken, the entire nation is at risk of collapse.

The time for "Nil" remarks and "unresolved" differences is over. Basotho deserve a Ministry of Agriculture that spends its budget on farmers, not on unrecorded assets and overpaid contracts. Makenete has sounded the alarm; it is now up to the public and the Parliament to demand the accountability that has been so blatantly ignored.

Namibian youth clean up for peace on africa day



Metro METRO REPORTER

WINDHOEK—When dozens of young volunteers descended on the Otjomuise Informal Settlement armed with brooms, gloves, and a shared sense of purpose last Saturday, they were doing far more than picking up litter.

They were making a statement — that peace is not only spoken at conference tables, but lived in the streets, the neighbourhoods, and the everyday choices communities make together. The “Peace My Namibia: Clean Environment, United Africa” campaign, held on 6 June 2026, brought together youth organisations, community members, and volunteers in a large-scale clean-up and awareness drive marking two significant occasions: Africa Day and the founding anniversary of HWPL (Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light), an international peace organisation that proclaimed its

Declaration of Peace on 25 May.

The event was jointly hosted by HWPL, the International Peace Youth Group (IPYG), and Rob Youth Foundation Namibia, drawing participants from across Windhoek who rolled up their sleeves for a day of hands-on civic action in one of the city’s informal settlements.

For the organisers, the campaign was a deliberate merging of symbolism and action. Africa Day, observed on 25 May each year, commemorates the founding of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 and celebrates the continent’s unity and progress. By anchoring the clean-up to this occasion, the organisers gave the initiative a continental dimension — positioning environmental care as an act of African solidarity.

“Peacebuilding is not limited to conferences or dialogue alone,” one organiser noted. “It can also be demonstrated through practical acts of service that improve

communities and bring people together.”

Volunteers engaged in large-scale clean-up activities across the settlement, alongside environmental awareness sessions and community discussions on responsible waste management, unity, and sustainable development.

The campaign drew warm praise from prominent local figures. Alex Moses, from the City of Windhoek’s Waste Management Department, underscored the importance of collective responsibility.

“This cleanup is about working together as a community and taking responsibility for the waste that we generate,” he said.

“By joining hands, we can help keep our surroundings clean and create a healthier environment for everyone.”

Perhaps the day’s most striking testimony came from Siena Rautenbach, Constituency Development Committee Leader for the Khomasdal Constituency, who

described the event as genuinely historic. “For a very long time, we have never had a cleanup campaign of this kind in our area,” she told attendees. She also singled out the youth volunteers for particular praise, saying she was “truly impressed by their dedication.”

Participants echoed the sentiment, noting that initiatives of this nature encourage a stronger sense of responsibility, cooperation, and belonging — qualities that are as essential to building peace as any formal agreement or declaration.

Central to the campaign’s identity was the prominent role of young people — not as bystanders, but as the driving force behind the day’s activities.

In a country where youth disengagement remains a real concern, events that channel youthful energy into constructive community action carry considerable weight.

The campaign offered a practical model for

how young Namibians can become agents of positive change — not through grand gestures, but through showing up, working hard, and demonstrating genuine care for the places they call home.

For IPYG and its partners, that is precisely the point: that young people, when given purpose and platform, are capable of transforming their communities in lasting and meaningful ways.

The success of “Peace My Namibia” raises an important question: what might Windhoek — and Namibia more broadly — look like if campaigns like this became a regular fixture rather than a rare occasion?

Organisers expressed hope that the event would inspire similar initiatives across the country, reinforcing a core message: that sustainable, peaceful communities are built from the ground up — one clean street, one engaged young person, and one united neighbourhood at a time.

What the SADC disaster risk meeting means for Lesotho

LIAPENG RALIENGOANE

The recent Southern African Development Community (SADC) Committee of Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management meeting in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, provided an important platform for regional leaders to discuss how Southern Africa can better prepare for disasters and strengthen resilience in the face of climate-related challenges.

For Lesotho, the discussions come at a critical time. The country continues to face recurring droughts, food insecurity, environmental degradation and the growing impacts of climate change.

Reflecting on the meeting, the Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Hon. 'Makatleho Motsoasele emphasised that the discussions in Zimbabwe reaffirmed the importance of proactive disaster risk management. "As a country, we must continue investing in preparedness, food security and measures that protect vulnerable communities from climate-related shocks."

She reflected that the challenges facing the country have highlighted the need for a stronger focus on preparedness rather than simply responding to emergencies after they occur. That disaster risk management is no longer only about emergency response but also about ensuring that communities are equipped to withstand and recover from shocks.

Across the region, governments are increasingly shifting their attention towards prevention, early warning systems and resilience-building. This approach recognises

that the cost of preparing for disasters is often significantly lower than the cost of responding to them after lives, livelihoods and infrastructure have already been affected.

For Lesotho, strengthening food security remains particularly important. Climate variability continues to affect agricultural production, placing many households at risk of food shortages. As a result, disaster preparedness cannot be separated from efforts to improve agricultural resilience, water management and community livelihoods.

The minister's participation in the Zimbabwe meeting also underscores the

importance of regional cooperation. Many of the challenges facing Lesotho are shared by neighbouring countries. Droughts, floods and other climate-related disasters affect communities across Southern Africa, making it essential for countries to learn from one another and coordinate their responses.

The discussions held in Masvingo focused not only on responding to disasters but also on building resilient communities capable of adapting to future risks. This is an approach that aligns with Lesotho's development aspirations and the need to protect vulnerable populations from the increasing impacts of climate

change. While regional meetings often generate important commitments and recommendations, their success ultimately depends on implementation at the national level. The challenge for Lesotho will be translating these discussions into practical actions that strengthen preparedness, improve food security and enhance the country's ability to manage future disasters.

The emphasis placed by the minister on emergency preparedness and food security is therefore encouraging. It signals an understanding that resilience must be built before disasters occur, not only after they strike.

As climate-related risks continue to grow, investing in preparedness, strengthening communities and promoting food security will be essential for safeguarding lives and supporting sustainable development.

The SADC meeting in Zimbabwe served as a reminder that disaster risk management is not simply about responding to crises. It is about creating a future in which communities are better prepared, more resilient and less vulnerable to the challenges that lie ahead.

For Lesotho, this shift from reaction to preparedness may prove to be one of the most important investments the country can make.



Mnangagwa, Chiwenga allies rift widens over CAB 3



SYDNEY KAWADZA

Old fault lines are re-emerging within the ruling Zanu PF party as supporters of President Emmerson Mnangagwa push for a term extension, clashing with opponents of Constitution Amendment No. 3 Bill (CAB 3), who are widely seen as aligned with Vice-President Constantine Chiwenga.

The divisions came into sharper focus yesterday as Parliament opened debate on the proposed law.

The parliamentary debate followed a statement issued a day earlier by former military commanders and senior civil servants warning against the alienation of citizens from the constitutional order and the ruling party.

Represented by Vice Air-Marshal (Rtd) Henry Muchena, the group accused Mnangagwa of failing to act as a constitutionalist.

Muchena claimed that the former military commanders had “credible information that provincial party chairpersons were induced with motor

vehicles and payments of US\$100 000 each to support CAB 3”.

Political analysts told NewsDay that while opinions differ on the likely outcome of the dispute, the developments have exposed deep fissures within Zanu PF, setting the stage for a potentially volatile period.

University of Tshwane-based political analyst Ricky Mukonza said the open resistance to CAB 3 from within the ruling party – particularly from figures linked to the military – signals a breakdown in elite cohesion.

“The military has always been a key component of the ruling elite,” he said.

“When figures associated with Vice-President Chiwenga begin to speak out so openly, it sends a clear message that there is no unity on this issue.”

Mukonza added that the corruption allegations raised by the retired generals may be part of a broader strategy.

“They are building a case so that, if and when they decide to act, these statements can be cited as justification.

“This is not being done casually.” He also noted that Chiwenga’s silence was “quite telling” and may indicate his position, warning that internal tensions could soon come to a head.

“There will come a time when these factions have to confront each other,” Mukonza said.

“This cannot remain a game of hide-and-seek indefinitely.”

While acknowledging that supporters of CAB 3 are likely preparing their response, he predicted the dispute would eventually surface more openly.

“There will be a boiling point, and when that happens, it could negatively affect elements of the current ruling elite, including influential actors outside formal government structures,” he said.

“Even so, any shift is likely to occur within the framework of continued Zanu PF dominance.”

Political analyst and visiting researcher at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Gideon Chitanga, said the unfolding situation raised questions about how

key power structures in Zimbabwe will respond.

“We always work with the historical notion. Some call it an assumption that Zimbabwe in politics is dominated by the securocrats, what Ibbo Mandaza called a securocratic State,” he said.

“So, are the securocrats in a position to defend the Constitution as they claim and will they win this fight?”

“How are they going to take this from internal negotiations or mediations through dialogue with President Mnangagwa or the faction that he represents? How will they translate this into different strategies?”

Chitanga said the ruling party appeared deeply divided, with many dissenting voices remaining silent.

“Zanu PF has reached another moment of rupture and this cannot be resolved without addressing the underlying issue of succession,” he said.

However, South Africa-based political observer Piers Pigou questioned the practical impact of the generals’ intervention, saying it remains unclear

how much influence they wield. “It will be important to see whether the issues they raise are reflected in parliamentary debate, or whether they remain external dissenting voices,” he said.

“We do not know who exactly they represent, what proportion of the military they speak for, or what influence they have.”

Pigou expressed scepticism that the intervention would significantly alter political dynamics.

“The fact that some retired military figures are accusing Mnangagwa of lacking constitutionalism is unlikely to shift the needle,” he said.

“Zanu PF leaders have faced more serious allegations over the years.

“Moreover, coming from individuals linked to the 2017 military intervention, such claims may carry limited weight.”

He added that while opponents of CAB 3 may draw on the generals’ stance to bolster their case, it remains uncertain how many within the party are actively resisting Mnangagwa’s agenda.

- NEWSDAY

WHO and Africa CDC unveil \$518m Ebola plan as DRC, Uganda death tolls rise

The DR Congo's health ministry reported 71 new cases of the rare Bundibugyo strain in just 24 hours



The World Health Organization (WHO) and the African Union's health agency have announced a \$518m plan to combat the deadly Ebola outbreak in conflict-ridden Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and neighbouring Uganda. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Friday that the plan, in collaboration with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), will run from June to November. It will cover emergency coordination, surveillance, testing, infection prevention, clinical care and community engagement. The initiative comes as authorities race to

contain the deadly virus, first declared in the DRC on May 15. It has since infected at least 452 people there, causing 82 deaths. In its latest situation report, the DRC's health ministry warned of "rapid and continuous community transmission", with the latest 71 cases confirmed in just a 24-hour period. The outbreak has also spread to Uganda, where authorities announced three more cases on Friday, increasing the total to 19, with two deaths. The latest outbreak involves the rare Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, which is believed to have been spreading under the radar for some time.

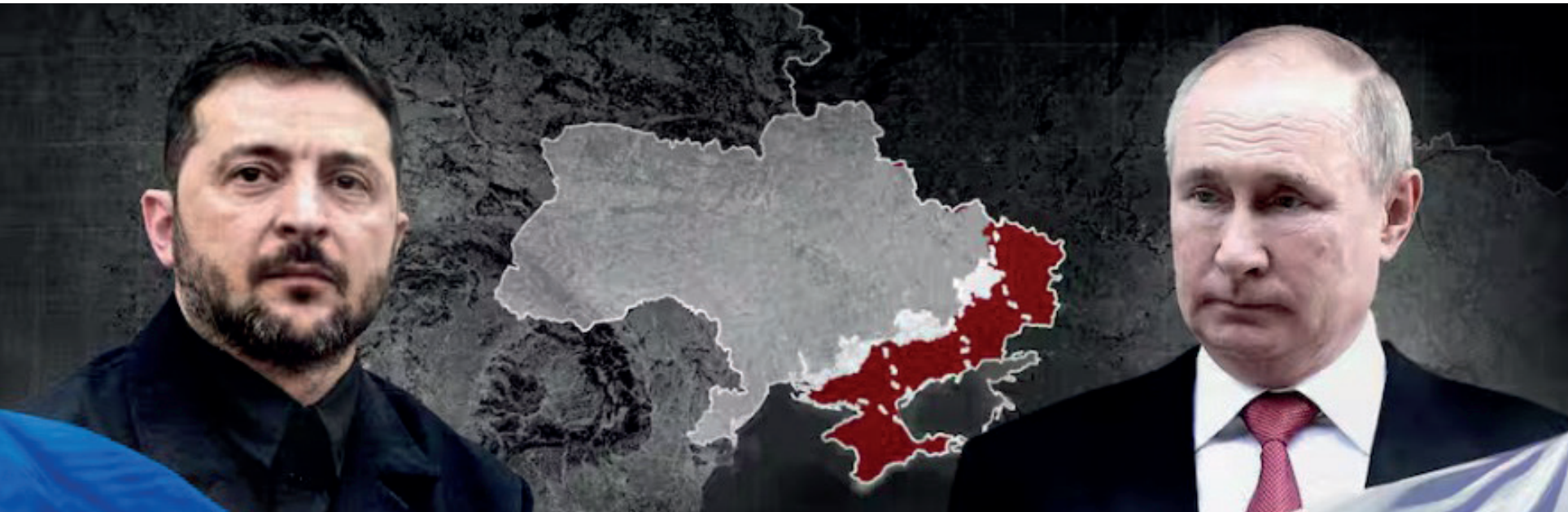
'Stop the outbreak where it is' Speaking at a media conference, Tedros expressed optimism that the WHO-Africa CDC health plan would bring the outbreak "under control". "The objective is straightforward: we need to stop the outbreak where it is, support countries that are responding today, and ensure that neighbouring countries are ready to detect and act quickly if cases appear," said Tedros. "This is a practical plan," he continued. "It sets out what we need to do now, together, to contain the current outbreak and reduce the risk of further spread." The current outbreak

is bigger than the two previously recorded outbreaks of the Bundibugyo strain, in 2007 and 2012, according to the Africa CDC. And without robust public health responses, the current outbreak could become one of the largest ever Ebola crises ever documented, rivalling the 2014-2016 epidemic in West Africa, warned officials with the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday. While three vaccines are being researched and are set to be fast-tracked for trials, there is no approved vaccine for it yet. Frustration has been growing in nearby Kenya, where, despite having

never recorded the disease, the United States is setting up an Ebola quarantine station for US citizens. Hundreds took to the streets of Nanyuki town, close to Laikipia Air Base on Monday and Tuesday and rallied in front of the planned centre. Americans who contract Ebola while overseas will be sent there rather than being allowed back home. At least two people were killed, and one person was injured when the demonstration turned violent on Monday. Kenya's President William Ruto has defended the base as crucial for the country's health partnership with the US. - AL JAZEERA

Putin rejects Zelenskyy's offer to meet and reaffirms Ukraine war aims

Russian president describes Ukrainian counterpart's letter as rude and says he sees no point in face-to-face talks



LUKE HARDING

Vladimir Putin has rejected an offer from Volodymyr Zelenskyy to hold a face-to-face meeting, insisting instead that Russia will achieve its war goals in Ukraine, including seizing all of the eastern Donbas region.

Speaking at the St Petersburg economic forum, the Russian president described the open letter from his Ukrainian counterpart containing the offer as rude. He refused to use Zelenskyy's name, referring to him only as its author. Asked if they could meet to discuss an end to the conflict, Putin replied: "So far I see no point."

Zelenskyy's letter, which was published on Thursday, proposed a meeting in a third country such as Switzerland or Turkey. It said diplomacy should start from the current frontline and that Ukraine was ready for a full ceasefire while negotiations took place.

The letter also alluded to Russia's recent military setbacks and the growing fuel shortages in Crimea caused by Ukrainian attacks on crucial supply

routes. Hours before the forum opened on Wednesday, Ukrainian drones hit St Petersburg's oil terminal, sending black smoke billowing into the sky.

Putin shrugged off the embarrassing strikes on his home city and said his territorial demands were unchanged. He said Russia controlled all of the Luhansk region – a claim Kyiv denies – and more than 85% of Donetsk region. He repeated his demand that Ukraine also give up all of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

Calling for "long-term peace", he asked: "What is this letter about? Is it a means to create an environment for a personal meeting? Or is it meant to make sure no personal meeting takes place. I think it's the second." Speaking to Russian troops, he said: "Keep working, brothers".

Zelenskyy said Putin's rejection showed the Kremlin had no wish to end the conflict. "Unfortunately, the Russian side is once again choosing war. Everyone heard the response. A weak response," he said in his nightly video address. "I think this response will have disappointed many

in the world."

Putin acknowledged Russia needed to strengthen its air defences but played down Ukraine's increasingly successful campaign against strategic targets. Ukrainian drones hit five Russian cargo ships in the occupied southern ports of Mariupol and Berdiansk, and in the Sea of Azov, overnight on Thursday.

The head of Ukraine's unmanned systems forces, Robert "Madyar" Brovdi, said the vessels had been transporting military fuel and stolen Ukrainian grain. Russia said five sailors from Azerbaijan were killed. Video from their ship showed extensive damage and its bridge wrecked.

Zelenskyy's latest peace offer won approval from key allies, including Donald Trump and France's president, Emmanuel Macron. Zelenskyy is scheduled to meet Macron, the UK prime minister, Keir Starmer, and the German chancellor, Friedrich Merz, in London to inject fresh momentum into attempts to end the war.

Observers suggested the letter had been written with Ukraine's allies in mind and with

the objective of needling Putin. It included a pointed reminder to Russia's president of the lessons for its rulers from history. "When Russia grows tired, change comes," it noted.

A US delegation headed by the chair of the country's fine arts commission, Rodney Mims Cook Jr, attended the St Petersburg forum. Cook, who is in charge of Trump's White House ballroom project, passed on the US president's regards to Putin.

From a position in the front row, he said: "President Vladimir Putin, it's very nice to see you ... I love this city and I think you are aware of that. You have a beautiful home town. I do give a good hello from your friend President Trump."

Addressing the plenary session, Putin shrugged off claims the Russian economy was falling apart because of the high costs of the war. The Kremlin's offensive has put the country's finances under immense strain, with rising prices, tax hikes and the highest borrowing costs in two decades hitting many citizens hard.

The economy shrank by 0.2% in the first quarter of 2026, its first

quarterly slump in three years, as strain from the war and western sanctions mounted. "We, of course, hear criticism from all sides that everything has collapsed," Putin said.

"We have descended to the same level at which eurozone countries have been living through for the past few years." Russia was pursuing a sovereign economy, he said, before making reference to Mark Twain: "Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."

Ukraine has intensified its attacks on Russia's energy infrastructure in recent months, hitting oil depots, refineries and export facilities and threatening to dent Moscow's most important income stream. By freezing Russian assets abroad, western nations eroded trust in their own currencies, Putin said.

"The sanctions and blocking of Russia's sovereign reserves have irreversibly impacted the standing of international currencies, the dollar and the euro," he said. "Just like Russia, any other country could lose access to their legitimate assets in dollars or euros, as well as western financial and payment systems."

- THE GUARDIAN

The auditor-general's report is a funeral for public accountability

Makenete's Adverse Opinion and the M3 Billion Black Hole that Should Alarm Every Mosotho



Tankiso Phapano



Auditor-General, 'Mathabo Makenete

RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

The recently released report by the Auditor-General, 'Mathabo Makenete, on the Consolidated Financial Statements of the Government of Lesotho for the year ended 31 March 2024, is a chilling testament to the institutionalized incompetence that plagues our nation.

While the Auditor-General has taken the unprecedented and grave step of issuing an Adverse Opinion on the state's overall financial position—highlighting a staggering M3.09 billion discrepancy in cash balances—it is the rot within the Ministry of Natural Resources (Head 315), specifically its energy sector, that should spark outrage in every Mosotho home.

In a country where electricity is a luxury for many and a costly burden for the rest, the Ministry's inability to account for its resources, its blatant misuse of emergency funds, and its catastrophic failure to implement renewable energy projects is a betrayal of the public trust.

The most shocking revelation in Makenete's report regarding this Ministry is the exponential explosion of its accounts receivable. As of March 31, 2024, the Ministry of Natural

Resources reported a mind-boggling M930.59 million in money owed to it—a 313 percent increase from the M225.27 million recorded just twelve months prior.

This is nearly a billion maloti in public resources that the Ministry has simply failed to collect, acquit, or clear.

As the Auditor-General notes, such a massive spike indicates a total collapse in the management of appropriated funds, which starves the government of the very liquidity needed to provide basic services.

When the state allows nearly a billion maloti to sit as "uncollected debt" while our infrastructure crumbles, it is not just bad accounting; it is economic sabotage.

The mismanagement of our crown jewel, the 'Muela Hydropower Plant, provides a specific and painful example of this fiscal lawlessness.

The Auditor-General exposes a suspicious "Letter of Credit" or contingency grab where the Ministry requested and received M114.75 million from the Contingency Fund for the refurbishment and maintenance of the 'Muela plant.

The catch? Under Section 113 of the Constitution, the Contingency Fund is reserved for urgent and unforeseen

emergencies.

Makenete explicitly lists this M114 million allocation as a breach of the Constitution, stating the expenditure was neither urgent nor unforeseen. To treat the maintenance of a national power plant—something that should be part of a routine, planned budget—as an "emergency" to bypass parliamentary oversight is a classic hallmark of fund misuse.

While the Ministry is quick to grab "emergency" millions, it is remarkably slow at collecting what it is actually owed by the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC).

The report reveals that the LEC owes the Ministry M53.96 million for the sale of electricity from 'Muela. This debt is allowed to fester even as the Ministry begs for supplementary funds.

Furthermore, the LEC itself appears to be in a state of financial collapse, with the report noting it has been unable to honor its obligations to ESKOM and EDM for bulk electricity supply, putting our entire national grid at risk of being disconnected.

The Ministry's performance on renewable energy projects, which are supposed to lead Lesotho into a sustainable future, is nothing short of a implementation funeral. The

Auditor-General's analysis of budget execution is a litany of zeroes and failures.

The Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program (SREP) under a Climate Grant recorded a zero percent spending capacity.

The SREP project under the Lesotho Renewable Energy and Energy Access Project (LREEAP) fared little better, with execution rates as low as 30 to 35 percent.

Even the high-profile Ramarothole 70 MW Solar Generation Project, funded by an EIC loan, managed only a 74% execution rate.

When donor funds and loans from the IDA and the World Bank sit idle in bank accounts while Basotho continue to live in the dark, the Ministry of Energy is effectively telling our international partners that their assistance is not wanted.

The Ministry's internal accounting is a masterclass in obfuscation.

One of the most damning discrepancies noted by Makenete involves pending litigation claims. The Consolidated Financial Statements (CFS) reported that the Ministry of Natural Resources had a litigation exposure of M154.07 million. However, the Ministry's own internal Financial Statements (MFS) reported a paltry M636,000. This is a M153.44

million discrepancy.

How can a Ministry "lose" the record of M153 million in potential legal liabilities? This level of inconsistency renders the Ministry's books completely unreliable and misleading to the public and Parliament alike.

Furthermore, the Ministry's asset management is nonexistent. During the 2023/24 financial year, the Ministry of Natural Resources was part of a group of spending units that failed to produce a single asset register for audit, despite the Ministry reporting the purchase of assets.

Without a register, there is no way to know if the vehicles, equipment, or machinery purchased with our tax money actually exist or if they have been diverted for private use. This lack of oversight is an open invitation to the misappropriation of government property.

Even when the Ministry does spend money, it often does so in violation of the law.

The report highlights cases across the government where spending occurred without a budget, and the Ministry of Natural Resources was noted for having physical progress on its capital projects "generally lagging behind scheduled timeframes".

The Ministry's overall implementation rate for GoL capital projects was a pathetic 9 percent. This is a ministry that knows how to collect revenue—over-collecting by M51 million in some areas—but has no idea how to spend that money on the development of the country.

The Auditor-General has performed a vital public service by shining a light into this black hole of accountability.

She has pointed out that Chief Accounting Officers (CAOs) must "start to own the preparation of the reports for their spending units". For the Ministry of Natural Resources, this "ownership" is currently absent.

We see a ministry that cannot track its assets, cannot reconcile its legal liabilities by M153 million, and cannot collect nearly a billion maloti in debts while Basotho pay some of the highest electricity tariffs in the region.

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B BUSINESS

Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle."
– Napoleon Hill, author

Out of your vulnerabilities will come your strength." – Sigmund Freud, neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis

SLB transforms local entrepreneur

Metro **NEO SENOKO**

MASERU- Standard Lesotho Bank (SLB) has officially inaugurated the new Spetzo's Food Hall at the LNDC Centre in Maseru, marking a profound milestone in the institution's ongoing journey towards nurturing local entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The vibrant dynamic commercial hub houses a curated collective of premium homegrown culinary brands, including Spetzo's Pizza and Chops, Mo's Gelato, and Purple.

This landmark launch fundamentally manifests the bank's structural commitment to driving sustainable socio-economic growth, providing localised support, and creating tangible commercial spaces for Basotho business owners through high impact, collaborative strategic partnerships.

Speaking during the celebratory launch event, Malatola Phothane, Head of Enterprise Banking at Standard Lesotho Bank, underscored the Bank's primary corporate philosophy of transforming latent market possibilities into lucrative actualised opportunities.

"Today marks what we call the embodiment of partnership for growth. We have realised the dream of an entrepreneur, and our goal in Business Banking is to ensure that the dreams of the entrepreneurs we serve are met, whether through sound financial advice or credit extension.

This launch underscores our commitment when we say Lesotho is our home, and we drive her growth."



Phothane said.

To actively stimulate consumer traction and drive commercial traffic to the newly launched facility, Phothane announced a powerful financial incentive program powered by the bank's transactional infrastructure.

For the duration of the campaign, customers who utilise their Standard Lesotho Bank debit or credit cards to swipe at the establishment will receive a direct M20 discount on Spetzo's highly sought-after pizza; effectively slashing the retail price from M100 down to M80.

In his own remarks, Teboho Nchaba, the visionary founder and owner of Spetzo's, reflected on his corporate evolution and highly commended Standard Lesotho Bank for its unwavering developmental

support since his brand's inception.

Nchaba stated that Standard Lesotho Bank has stood firmly beside them since the very beginning of their journey.

He said the localised food hall model is a game changer for Maseru, allowing multiple distinct vendors to actively mitigate systemic risks, share substantial overhead operation costs, and build a sustainable, collective ecosystem.

In his closing executive address, Samuel Seboka, Chief Executive of Standard Lesotho Bank, lauded the collective determination of the culinary vendors and boldly re-engineered the bank's institutional purpose.

"This initiative is a true reflection of collaboration. It is not easy for a business concept to pass all the testing stages to reach

fruition, but experience is the best teacher.

Standard Lesotho Bank must be a catalyst to speed up the growth of our entrepreneurs, not an entity trying to make money out of them," Seboka asserted.

Challenging his internal banking teams and municipal stakeholders, the Chief Executive outlined a forward-looking vision to transform the LNDC Centre space into a national benchmark for modern SME incubation.

He pointed out that injecting vibrant economic activity into the city center during evening hours will trigger broader macroeconomic circulation, effectively establishing robust local commerce as a self-sustaining lifestyle change for the entire Basotho nation.

Nchaba's Spetzo's

Pizza is also one of the best performing youth businesses that are the beneficiaries of the Bacha Entrepreneurship Project sponsored by the Bank, RSL and BEDCO.

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HEALTH

Persons with visual impairments call for greater inclusion and respect

MASERU - The challenges faced by people with visual impairments extend far beyond the loss of sight. They include discrimination, limited access to information, harmful stereotypes and barriers to essential services such as healthcare.

These issues were highlighted last Friday during a training workshop on disability concepts organized by the Lesotho National League for Visually Impaired Persons (LNLVIP), where participants explored the intersectionality of gender and disability and its impact on the lives of visually impaired women and girls.

Speaking during the training, LNLVIP President Kopano Tšilonyane emphasized that disability does not diminish a person's worth, capabilities or right to participate fully in society.

Rather, it is societal barriers, negative attitudes and inaccessible systems that continue to exclude persons with disabilities.

He called for increased public awareness, accessible information and more inclusive services that recognize the rights and dignity of visually impaired women and girls.

Also for job posts to have clauses that indicate that people



with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

LNLVIP Coordinator Kelello Fanana said visually impaired women and girls often face multiple forms of discrimination because of both their gender and disability.

Fanana noted that many are excluded from opportunities, denied access to information and subjected to attitudes that undermine their dignity and confidence.

«Women and girls with visual impairments face unique challenges that are often overlooked. Understanding these challenges is important if we are to create a society where everyone has equal opportunities and can participate fully,» she said.

One of the most powerful testimonies came from Mpeo Khrehloa, a visually impaired young woman

who shared her personal journey.

Khrehloa explained that she was not born blind but lost her sight following an unfortunate incident when she was eight years old.

She said growing up with a visual impairment presented numerous challenges, particularly as she entered adolescence.

According to Khrehloa, many visually impaired girls are not adequately prepared for puberty because parents often avoid discussing issues such as menstruation with them.

«When I started menstruating, I learned about it from my peers at boarding school. My elders had not prepared me for it,» she recalled.

She explained that the lack of information leaves many visually impaired girls vulnerable to embarrassment and

discrimination.

«People sometimes say visually impaired girls stain themselves during their monthly periods because they do not understand the challenges we face. Such comments affect our confidence and self-esteem,» she said.

Khrehloa also highlighted difficulties faced by visually impaired women in relationships and when seeking healthcare services.

She said instead of focusing on providing healthcare, some health workers become more interested in a person's disability and private life.

«At times, health workers ask questions such as whether you are dating a visually impaired man.

Their focus shifts from helping you to discussing your disability,» she said.

According to



Khrehloa, such experiences discourage many visually impaired women from seeking healthcare services.

She further revealed that some health workers make insensitive remarks about relationships involving persons with disabilities.

«Some even say men are dogs for being in relationships with disabled women, as if we are not human beings with the same feelings, needs and rights as everyone else,» she said.

Khrehloa stressed that there is a need for disability-sensitive healthcare services and greater awareness among service providers.

LNLVIP is an advocacy organization of the visually impaired and partially sighted people in Lesotho. It was founded in 1986 and legally registered the same year.



SOCIETY

Doja Cat slams Elon Musk as a 'hairless no-neck chimpanzee' over X feature Doja Cat



Bernelee Vollmer

If there is one celebrity who consistently treats social media like her personal diary with no editor in sight, it is Doja Cat.

And this week, the rapper reminded everyone exactly why her online presence remains one of the internet's most unpredictable attractions.

Doja took to X with a simple request for platform owner Elon Musk: bring back the audio post feature.

The request itself was straightforward. The

delivery, however, was pure Doja Cat.

"Hey Elon, if u see this, please put the audio post feature back on here. Thanks, u frog build looking b****. Barrel chested ewok u look like u eat sand," she tweeted.

As if that wasn't enough, she returned for a second round, writing: "Elon Musk put the audio post feature back on this app. Thanks, you hairless no-neck havin, chimpanzee. Face look like it was drawn from memory.

"When u swim on ur back at the beach shit look like a man o' war. Hourglass ankles. Not tryna be mean though,

sorry."

Sis did not just ask for a feature update. She arrived with the energy of someone leaving a one-star review after being personally offended by an app update.

The audio post feature was fighting for its life somewhere in the background while Musk was catching strays that nobody saw coming.

The request was technically polite, but the insults were doing CrossFit, cartwheels and overtime

Sis did not just ask for a feature update. She arrived with the energy of someone leaving a one-star review

after being personally offended by an app update.

The audio post feature was fighting for its life somewhere in the background while Musk was catching strays that nobody saw coming.

The request was technically polite, but the insults were doing CrossFit, cartwheels and overtime all in the same sentence.

While some fans were shocked by the sheer creativity of the insults, others pointed out that this is classic Doja Cat behaviour. The rapper has built a reputation for saying exactly what is on her mind, whether fans agree with it or not.

Over the past few years, she has repeatedly clashed with followers online, pushed back against obsessive stan culture, and openly questioned the expectations that come with celebrity.

She previously went viral after criticising actor Timothée Chalamet's comments on ballet and opera, before later walking it back and admitting she was reacting out of a desire for attention and approval.

That mix of blunt honesty and self-correction has become part of her online pattern.

- IOL

Mafoso succumbs to his first defeat

...as Kenya humiliates Likuena



of the best talent in the country, including the Botswana based midfielders Lehlohonolo Fothoane and Neo Mokhachane, Likuena could not break down the Kenya defense for the entire 90 minutes while the South African based striker Motebang Sera also failed to make a significant impact.

The national team supporters were left frustrated after the encounter, with some ruling out the possibility of Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) participation in 2027.

"I do not think we stand a chance in this edition looking at the teams that we are going to face. It is going to be very difficult for us to collect any points against both Morocco and Gabon considering our

standard of football. These are countries that have been there before and we are talking about a Gabon side that narrowly missed on the World Cup slot recently. That shows how tough the group is for us," another football supporter, Khothalang Mohale shared in an interview with Metro.

Likuena will have to overcome Gabon and Niger and Morocco in their quest to qualify for their first ever AFCON finals scheduled for 19 to 18 July 2027 in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.



Fifa World Cup: 3 key playmakers for Bafana against Mexico

NEO SENOKO

MASERU- The Lesotho Men's senior National Team, Likuena head coach Bob Mafoso has succumbed to his first defeat on Sunday, with his charges suffering a hefty 4-0 humiliation at the hands of Kenya in the last of two international friendly games against the

Harambee Stars. In the first encounter on Thursday last week, the two countries played to a goalless draw at the Lucas Moripe Stadium in South Africa. Under the tutelage of former South Africa international Benny McCarthy, the Harambee Stars proved to be a mammoth task for Likuena in the second encounter on Sunday at the same venue.

The visitors were quick enough to take an early lead in the first half (15minutes), courtesy of striker Mohammed Bajaber. The two teams went to a half time break with Kenya leading by a single goal, however things turned from bad to worse for the Bob Mafoso charges as the Harambee Stars went on to score three more goals to complete a 4-0 triumph. Lined up with some

ZAAHIER ADAMS

The Fifa World Cup is finally upon us, and that means Bafana Bafana will be taking on co-hosts Mexico in the tournament opener on Thursday. Kick-off is at 9pm at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. The pressure will be on hosts Mexico to deliver all three points as a host nation, but there will also be significant expectations on a rejuvenated Bafana side under coach Hugo Broos.

Here are three Bafana players that could have a massive influence on the game. **Relebohile Mofokeng** At 21, the Orlando Pirates sensation Relebohile Mofokeng will have everything to prove on the biggest stage. Here's a player who could easily go on to ply his trade in the biggest leagues in the world, but first he has to replicate the form he has shown at his club.

His attacking flair though is what could set him apart, and he could easily pull off something like Siphiwe Tshabalala did in the opening fixture of the 2010 Fifa World Cup.

Lyle Foster Another serious attacking talent, Lyle Foster is Mr Dependable for Bafana. The 25-year-old is currently on the books for English outfit Burnley and could be the most dangerous attacker at Bafana's disposal.

Foster, however, is low on confidence at the moment according to Broos - but he will have worked on that during their preparation in Mexico.

Ronwen Williams While it's a bit of a stretch to classify goalkeeper Ronwen Williams as a playmaker, his performance will be vital to Bafana's aspirations. This is especially true if they find the significant Mexican attacking threat difficult to handle and Bafana opts to 'park the bus'. Mbekezeli Mbokazi will also go a long way in marshalling the Bafana defence.

Williams, though, will no doubt will be called on to make a number of saves, and any slight mistake could prove catastrophic.

@Michael_Sherman
-IOL Sport

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GROUP STAGE FIXTURES

GROUP A - MEXICO - SOUTH AFRICA - KOREA REPUBLIC - PLAY-OFF WINNER D 11 JUN MEX vs RSA 15 JUN KOR vs PWD 19 JUN MEX vs KOR 19 JUN RSA vs PWD 23 JUN KOR vs RSA 23 JUN PWD vs MEX	GROUP B - CANADA - PLAY-OFF WINNER A - QATAR - SWITZERLAND 12 JUN CAN vs PWA 16 JUN QAT vs SUI 20 JUN CAN vs QAT 20 JUN SUI vs PWA 24 JUN SUI vs CAN 24 JUN PWA vs QAT	GROUP C - BRAZIL - MOROCCO - HAITI - SCOTLAND 13 JUN BRA vs MAR 17 JUN HAI vs SCO 21 JUN BRA vs HAI 21 JUN SCO vs MAR 25 JUN SCO vs BRA 25 JUN MAR vs HAI	GROUP D - USA - PARAGUAY - AUSTRALIA - PLAY-OFF WINNER C 14 JUN USA vs PAR 18 JUN AUS vs PWC 22 JUN USA vs AUS 22 JUN PAR vs PWC 26 JUN AUS vs PAR 26 JUN PWC vs USA	GROUP E - GERMANY - CURAÇAO - CÔTE D'IVOIRE - ECUADOR 15 JUN GER vs CUW 19 JUN CIV vs ECU 23 JUN GER vs CIV 23 JUN ECU vs CUW 27 JUN CIV vs CUW 27 JUN ECU vs GER	GROUP F - NETHERLANDS - JAPAN - PLAY-OFF WINNER B - TUNISIA 16 JUN NED vs JPN 20 JUN PWB vs TUN 24 JUN NED vs PWB 24 JUN TUN vs JPN 28 JUN JPN vs PWB 28 JUN TUN vs NED
GROUP G - BELGIUM - EGYPT - IR IRAN - NEW ZEALAND 17 JUN BEL vs EGY 21 JUN IRN vs NZL 25 JUN BEL vs IRN 25 JUN NZL vs EGY 29 JUN IRN vs EGY 29 JUN NZL vs BEL	GROUP H - SPAIN - CAPE VERDE - SAUDI ARABIA - URUGUAY 18 JUN ESP vs CPV 22 JUN KSA vs URU 26 JUN ESP vs KSA 26 JUN URU vs CPV 30 JUN KSA vs CPV 30 JUN URU vs ESP	GROUP I - FRANCE - SENEGAL - PLAY-OFF WINNER 2 - NORWAY 19 JUN FRA vs SEN 23 JUN PWF2 vs NOR 27 JUN FRA vs PWF2 27 JUN NOR vs SEN 1 JUL SEN vs PWF2 1 JUL NOR vs FRA	GROUP J - ARGENTINA - ALGERIA - AUSTRIA - JORDAN 20 JUN ARG vs ALG 24 JUN AUT vs JOR 28 JUN ARG vs AUT 28 JUN JOR vs ALG 2 JUL ALG vs AUT 2 JUL JOR vs ARG	GROUP K - PORTUGAL - PLAY-OFF WINNER 1 - UZBEKISTAN - COLOMBIA 21 JUN POR vs PWF1 25 JUN UZB vs COL 29 JUN POR vs UZB 29 JUN COL vs PWF1 3 JUL UZB vs PWF1 3 JUL COL vs POR	GROUP L - ENGLAND - CROATIA - GHANA - PANAMA 22 JUN ENG vs CRO 26 JUN GHA vs PAN 30 JUN ENG vs GHA 30 JUN PAN vs CRO 4 JUL CRO vs GHA 4 JUL PAN vs ENG