FREE

Metro

News you can use

pg 07 **BUSINESS NEWS**

Revenue diversification key as SACU revenue is expected to decline

OPINION *When Society Puts Survivors on Trial Instead of those Accused of Rape – pg 05*

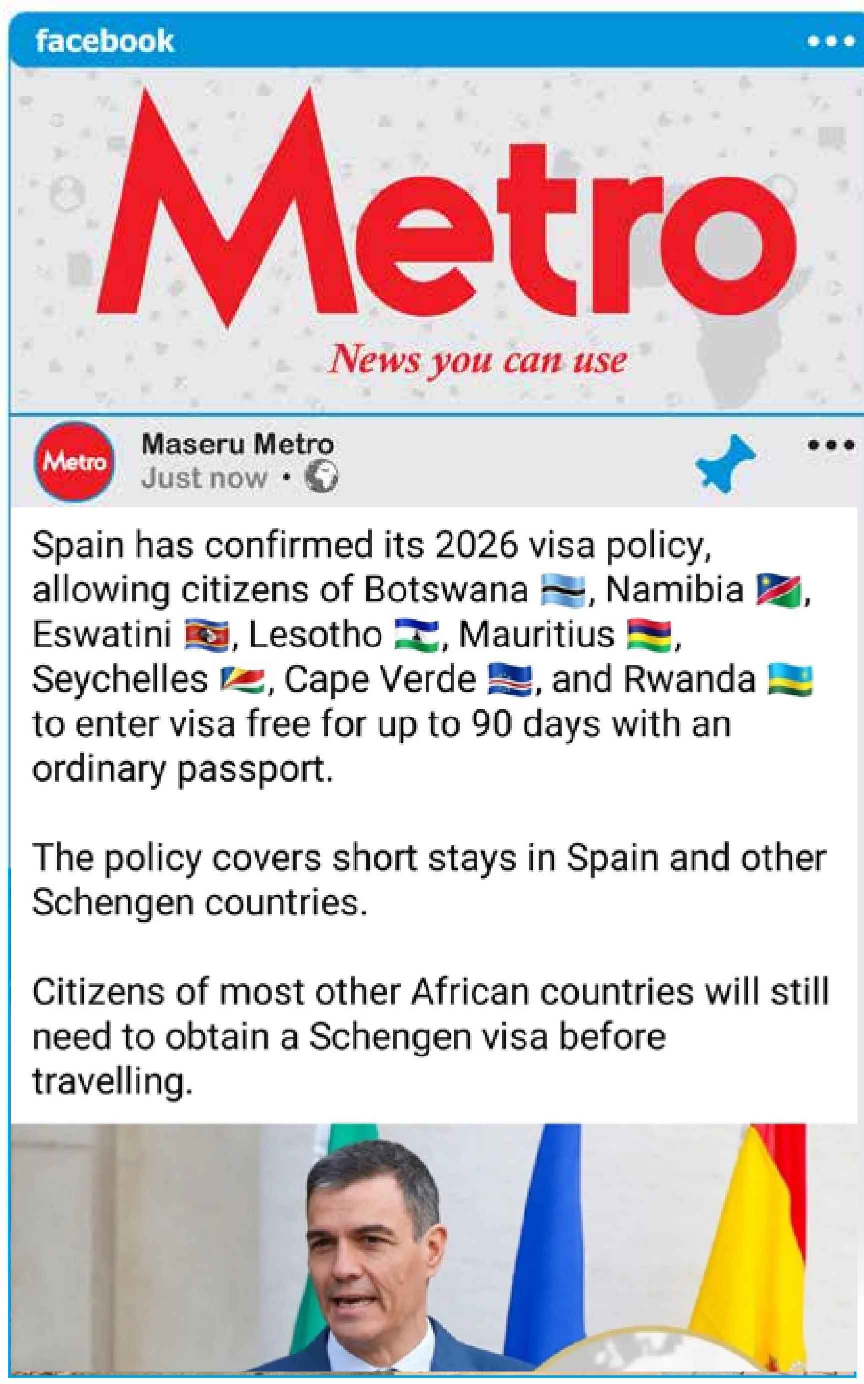
SPORTS NEWS *The 2026 Fifa World Cup officially killed the lie that sports and politics don't mix – pg 11*

Scan QR code
to get E-copy of Metro

WEDNESDAY JULY 22, 2026 | Tel.: 266 5886 5494 | editor@maserumetro.com | sales@maserumetro.com | Est. 2017

GOVERNMENT ON TRIAL: OPPOSITION ACCUSES MATEKANE ADMINISTRATION OF TRAMPLING THE CONSTITUTION

02



Government on trial: opposition accuses Matekane administration of trampling the constitution

- *Mokhothu warns Executive is transforming into "authoritarian administration" as list of defied court orders grows*
- *From the Ombudsman to axed NSS officers, six unimplemented judgments paint a picture of systemic contempt for the Judiciary*
- *PM's office silent as Mabote fails to respond to Government's mounting rule-of-law crisis*

RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

MASERU-The Office of the Official Leader of the Opposition, Mathibeli Mokhothu, has this week launched one of its most scathing attacks yet on Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane's Revolution for Prosperity (RFP)-led Government, accusing it of a "calculated and systematic pattern" of defying binding court orders that, if left unchecked, threatens to collapse constitutional democracy in the Kingdom.

In a strongly worded press statement issued from Parliament and dated 20 July 2026, the Office of the Leader of the Opposition catalogued no fewer than six separate instances in which the courts of Lesotho — from the High Court to the apex Court of Appeal — have handed down binding judgments that the Executive has either ignored outright or actively frustrated through administrative directives.

The statement does not mince words. It describes the Government's conduct as "not merely unlawful" but as "an open declaration that the Executive considers itself superior to the Constitution and the Judiciary." It warns bluntly that Lesotho is on "a dangerous path that threatens the very existence of constitutional democracy" in the country.

Efforts to obtain comment from the Prime Minister's office were unsuccessful by the time of going to print. Government spokesperson Thapelo Mabote did not respond to questions sent to him regarding the allegations contained in the press statement, and was not available for comment.

A GROWING LIST OF DEFIANCE

At the centre of the Opposition's charge sheet is what it frames as an emerging institutional habit rather than a series of isolated administrative hiccups. The statement lists, chronologically and by name, a string of senior public officials who have obtained court orders reinstating them to their positions, only to remain locked out of their offices on the instruction of the Executive.

The most recent is Ombudsman Advocate Tlotliso Polaki. According to the statement, the Constitutional Court issued an interim order on 29 June 2026 directing that she continue serving in her office pending the final determination of a matter before the courts. Despite that binding order, the Opposition says she remains locked out following directives reportedly issued by the Minister of Law and Justice.

Her case is not the first of its kind. The statement recalls that in September 2025, the Constitutional Court ordered the immediate reinstatement of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Advocate Hlalefang Motinyane. Nearly a year later, she too remains denied access to her office, again reportedly on the instructions of the Minister of Law and Justice.

A similar fate, the Opposition says, has befallen the Commissioner General of the Revenue Services of Lesotho (RSL), Advocate 'Mathabo Mokoko, whose court-ordered reinstatement "continues to be ignored."

Perhaps the most politically charged item on the list is the continued non-implementation of the Court of Appeal's 7 November 2025 judgment ordering the reinstatement of 76 axed National Security Service (NSS) officers. The Court of Appeal is the highest court in the land, and the Opposition's statement pointedly stresses this fact — underscoring that even a ruling from Lesotho's most authoritative judicial body has failed to move the Executive to act, more than eight months after it was handed down.

The statement further alleges that the Government's disregard for court authority extends beyond the reinstatement of senior officials into the terrain of ordinary public servants. It cites the case of 'Mating Mahooana, who the Opposition says was dismissed from the Public Service on 2 July 2026 in direct violation of a Labour Court interdiction issued that same day. It also revives long-standing grievances dating back to 2024, when courts ordered salary adjustments and payment of arrears — backdated to September 2019 — for Lesotho Correctional Service (LCS) officers, arrears the Opposition says remain unpaid to this day.

Taken together, Mokhothu's office argues, these six cases "are not isolated incidents" but evidence of "a calculated and systematic pattern of executive disregard for judicial authority" that "strikes at the heart of the constitutional order."

"COURT JUDGMENTS ARE NOT SUGGESTIONS"

The press statement is unusually direct in its constitutional framing. It reminds the Government, in bolded emphasis, that "the Constitution is the supreme law of the Kingdom" and that "court judgments are not suggestions; they are binding legal directives." No minister, no principal secretary, and no government, it says, possesses the constitutional authority to suspend, ignore or frustrate the execution of judicial decisions.

The Opposition goes further, arguing that a government which persistently refuses to obey its own courts is "steadily transforming itself into an authoritarian administration," one that governs "through power rather than through law."

It is language rarely used so explicitly in official Opposition communication, signalling how seriously Mokhothu's office regards the trajectory of the current administration's relationship with the Judiciary.

Crucially, the statement ties this pattern of defiance directly to the credibility of Lesotho's ongoing National Reforms process — the multi-sector programme meant to strengthen constitutional governance, reinforce judicial independence and restore public confidence in state institutions following years of political instability.

"It is impossible to speak credibly about democratic reforms while simultaneously refusing to implement court judgments," the statement reads, adding that "a Government cannot claim to champion constitutionalism while actively dismantling its very foundations."

The Opposition also frames the issue as a human rights matter, not merely an administrative or political dispute.

It notes that the officials and public servants affected have been "deprived of their constitutional rights despite having obtained lawful remedies from competent courts," and warns that the pattern "sends a chilling message that even a successful litigant against the Government cannot expect justice to be enforced."

A CALL TO ARMS — AND A WARNING

Beyond the condemnation, the statement carries an explicit call to action. Mokhothu's office has appealed to a broad coalition to speak out against what it calls "this dangerous erosion of constitutional governance." The list of parties it appeals to is extensive: ordinary Basotho who believe in constitutional democracy and the rule of law; all democratic political parties "regardless of political parties regalia"; civil society organisations, churches, labour movements, professional bodies, human rights organisations and media houses; the legal fraternity; and international partners including the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and diplomatic missions accredited to Lesotho.

"Silence in the face of repeated violations of court orders is complicity in the destruction of democracy," the statement warns, before issuing what may be its most pointed line: "If the Executive can disregard the Judiciary today, tomorrow it will disregard Parliament, constitutional commissions, independent institutions and ultimately the rights and freedoms of every Mosotho."

The Opposition closes its statement by pledging to continue holding the Government to account, declaring that "Lesotho's future cannot be built upon contempt for the law," and insisting that democracy survives only when every institution — the Government included — is subject to the Constitution and obedient to the judgments of the courts.

SILENCE FROM THE EXECUTIVE

As of publication, the Prime Minister's office had not issued any public response to the allegations. Government spokesperson Thapelo Mabote could not be reached for comment despite attempts to do so this week, leaving the Opposition's detailed charge sheet — and its warning of creeping authoritarianism — unanswered from the Executive's side.

The unimplemented judgments cited in the statement span multiple arms of the security and justice sector, from the Ombudsman's office to the NSS, the DPP, the RSL, the Labour Court and the Correctional Service, suggesting the dispute over judicial compliance is not confined to a single ministry or a single case, but touches several of the institutions central to the country's reform agenda.

Whether the Government will respond formally to the Opposition's statement, or whether the affected officials — including Advocate Polaki, Advocate Motinyane and Advocate Mokoko — will pursue further legal or contempt proceedings to compel compliance, remains to be seen.

What is clear is that the question of whether the Executive in Maseru is bound by the courts, or merely selectively cooperative with them, has now moved squarely into the political arena, with the Leader of the Opposition staking his authority on forcing an answer.

Brand Zambia: when peace becomes a strategic export

RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

There is a peculiar arithmetic to nation branding: it asks a country to convert something as intangible as public trust into something as marketable as a logo, a slogan, a feeling that lingers in the mind of an investor scrolling through options on a laptop screen.

Zambia has now placed its chips on this arithmetic. On March 3, President Hakainde Hichilema launched the Brand Zambia Initiative under the theme "Ignite the Spirit of Zambia," and in the months since, the Zambian government has moved to position peace, stability and institutional credibility not merely as domestic virtues but as tradeable strategic assets on the global stage.

The initiative received a notable diplomatic endorsement on July 5, when Haya Mvita, Director for Nation Branding at the Diplomatic World Institute, sat for an exclusive interview at the Zambian Mission in Brussels.

Speaking to press attached to the Embassy of Zambia in the BENELUX countries, Mvita described the initiative as a visionary milestone, framing it as far more consequential than a conventional marketing campaign.

Her intervention, released through a press statement issued by Aswell Kazembe Mwalimu, First Secretary for Press and Public Relations at the Embassy, deserves scrutiny not because its praise is unwarranted, but because nation branding exercises of this kind live or die on the gap between the story a country tells about itself and the story its institutions actually enact.

Mvita's central claim is that Zambia is being repositioned from a landlocked country into what she termed a land-linked hub, a formulation designed to reframe geographic limitation as a function of regional connectivity rather than isolation.

This is not a new ambition for Zambia, which has long sat at the crossroads of several Southern African Development Community transport corridors, but the branding exercise seeks to convert that geographic fact into a coherent national narrative capable of competing for investor attention against neighbours making similar claims.

The distinction Mvita draws is instructive: every country possesses a reputation, whether it curates one or not. The question, in her framing, is whether that reputation is deliberately shaped or left to accumulate by accident, shaped instead by headlines, rumour, and the residue of whatever crisis last made international news.

It is worth pausing on the rhetorical device Mvita used to illustrate the point. She invited her interviewers to consider what comes to mind at the mention of France, of Japan, of Zambia, arguing that each name summons an image, a feeling, an expectation, and that this cluster of associations constitutes national reputation in its rawest form.

It is an effective device precisely because it is so easily tested. Ask an average investor, an average tourist, an average diplomat unfamiliar with the region what comes to mind when Zambia is mentioned, and the answer is likely to be thinner and less flattering than what Brand Zambia hopes to cultivate.

That thinness is precisely the deficit the initiative is designed to close, and it is fair to note that closing it requires more than a launch event and a motto.

The motto in question, "Move Zambia," anchors the initiative to seven declared pillars: credibility, robust coordination, national heritage, institutional alignment, security, stability, and long-term socioeconomic transformation.

Each of these terms carries weight far beyond the communications strategy that houses them. Credibility, for instance, is not manufactured by a branding campaign; it is earned through consistent institutional behaviour, transparent public finance management, and predictable rule of law, the very terrain on which many resource-rich African states, Zambia included, have historically struggled to convince sceptical capital markets.

Institutional alignment likewise presumes a functioning coherence between the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and subnational government that campaigns cannot conjure into being; it either exists in practice or it does not, and international investors conducting due diligence tend to look past slogans toward audit reports, court rulings, and procurement records.

None of this is to dismiss the initiative outright. Mvita's broader argument, that national reputation is a tangible strategic asset driving trade, investment and international partnership, is difficult to contest as a matter of principle.

In a competitive global economy where capital is mobile and attention scarce, countries that fail to articulate a coherent value proposition risk being defined by the last negative headline rather than the sum of their actual conditions.

Zambia's recent history, including its debt restructuring negotiations and the broader macroeconomic adjustments under the Hichilema administration, has generated exactly the kind of headlines a branding initiative is meant to counterbalance.

Positioning peace, security and stability as the country's differentiators is, in that sense, a rational response to a specific reputational challenge rather than an arbitrary marketing flourish.

Mvita went further, linking President Hichilema's leadership philosophy, which she characterised as grounded in love, care and delivery, to what she called the SEED-POWER framework, an acronym she said she developed through her own academic research representing Sovereignty, Empowerment, Endurance and Development.

The pairing of an emotionally resonant leadership description with an academically framed governance model is a common device in nation branding literature, intended to give a campaign both heart and intellectual scaffolding.

Whether SEED-POWER becomes a durable analytical tool for assessing Zambian governance, or remains a rhetorical flourish confined to diplomatic press statements, will depend on whether it is operationalised into measurable indicators that outside observers, and indeed Zambian citizens themselves, can track over time.

The interview also arrived against the backdrop of a significant institutional milestone: the Diplomatic World Institute and its sister publication, the Diplomatic World Magazine, are marking their Silver Jubilee, a quarter century of positioning themselves as a bridge between diplomacy and global politics, trade, investment, culture, technology and finance.

That anniversary context matters, because it situates the Zambia interview within a long-running institutional practice of profiling nations and leaders for an audience of diplomats, investors and policy watchers, rather than as an isolated public relations event.

For Zambian citizens watching from Lusaka, Ndola or the Copperbelt rather than from a diplomatic mission in Brussels, the more pressing question is not whether the branding language is polished, but whether the pillars invoked, credibility, institutional alignment, security and long-term transformation, translate into lived improvements in governance, service delivery and economic opportunity.

A national brand can open doors in boardrooms and diplomatic receptions. It cannot, on its own, substitute for the institutional substance that ultimately determines whether the doors it opens lead anywhere durable.

Brand Zambia has set an ambitious narrative in motion. Its success will be measured less by the eloquence of its launch than by whether Zambia's own institutions, in the months and years ahead, give that narrative something solid to stand on.

Sudan sentences RSF chief Hemedti to death: Who's he, what's he accused of?

Port Sudan trial of paramilitary leaders centres on atrocities in West Darfur.

CAOLÁN MAGEE

A Sudanese court has sentenced Rapid Support Forces (RSF) leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, to death after convicting him of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide over atrocities committed in West Darfur.

The court, sitting in the army-controlled city of Port Sudan, also sentenced 15 other senior figures of the RSF, a paramilitary group locked in a war with the Sudanese army since 2023, to death over the same crimes.

Here's what we know:

What's the background to the ruling?

Sudan descended into civil war on April 15, 2023, after a bitter power struggle between the army chief, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and Hemedti. Their forces had operated alongside one another before they turned their weapons on each other.

The dispute centred partly on how and when the RSF would be integrated into the regular army as Sudan tried to transition back to civilian rule. Fighting erupted in the capital, Khartoum, and quickly spread across the country with RSF fighters seizing much of the capital while the army retained key military positions and relied on its advantage in the air.

In the western region of Darfur, the RSF and its allied militias were accused of ethnically targeted killings, sexual violence, looting and mass displacements of non-Arab communities, particularly the Massalit in and around el-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state.

The balance began to shift after the army launched a counteroffensive, retaking Wad Madani, a city in east-central Sudan, and advancing through the capital. In March 2025, it recaptured the presidential palace and pushed the RSF out of most of Khartoum, dealing the paramilitary force one of its most significant defeats of the war.

But the army's victory in the capital did not end the conflict. Most of the fighting then moved westwards. The RSF consolidated its position across much of Darfur and captured el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state and the army's last major stronghold in the region, in October 2025. Fighting also intensified across Kordofan, the vast region connecting Darfur with central Sudan.

Recent attention has focused on el-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state about 360km (224 miles) southwest of Khartoum, where the RSF has massed forces around one of the army's most strategically important strongholds in southwestern Sudan.

El-Obeid lies at the intersection of roads linking central Sudan with Darfur and the country's southern states. Control of the city, therefore, could shape the movement of troops, weapons and supplies across several fronts.

The United Kingdom and more than two dozen other states have warned that about half a million civilians face the risk of large-scale atrocities as fighting intensifies around el-Obeid. The United Nations says civilians have endured siege-like conditions and repeated drone attacks as the two sides battle for territory surrounding the city.

Who is Hemedti?

Born about 1974 into the Mahariya branch of the Rizeigat community in Darfur, Hemedti first rose to prominence through the Janjaweed, a collection of predominantly Arab militias deployed by former President Omar al-Bashir's government during the Darfur war in the early 2000s.

In 2013, al-Bashir's government brought many Janjaweed fighters into the newly created RSF, placing Hemedti at its head.

Despite becoming one of al-Bashir's most powerful allies and benefitting politically and economically under his government, Hemedti joined Sudan's military leadership in removing the longtime president during a popular uprising in 2019.

Hemedti and al-Burhan subsequently became the two dominant figures in Sudan's military-led political order. Together, they removed the civilian-led transitional government in an October 2021 coup before their alliance fractured over the proposed integration of the RSF into the army and control of the state, leading to the breakout of the Sudan war.

What were Hemedti and other RSF leaders convicted of?

The Port Sudan trial centred on atrocities committed in el-Geneina, including the June 2023 killing of West Darfur Governor Khamis Abakar.

The court found Hemedti and the other defendants guilty of orchestrating attacks on civilians, widespread destruction and looting, and the targeting of schools, places of worship and residential neighbourhoods.

Among those sentenced were Hemedti's brother and deputy, Abdelrahim Hamdan Dagalo; another brother, al-Qoni Hamdan Dagalo; and the RSF's West Darfur commander, Abdul Rahman Juma Barkallah.

Judge Mohamed al-Amin ordered the confiscation of RSF assets and instructed the authorities to seek Interpol red notices for the arrests and extraditions of those convicted.

The ruling marks the first conviction of the RSF's top leaders since the civil war began. Its practical impact remains unclear, however, because the group controls large parts of western Sudan and those convicted remain beyond the army-led authorities' reach.

International action

Global pressure has mounted on the RSF outside Sudan's courts with the United States sanctioning Hemedti after determining that members of the RSF and its allied militias had committed genocide in Sudan in January 2025.

The International Criminal Court's deputy prosecutor said this month that investigators had obtained evidence connecting atrocities in el-Geneina and el-Fasher to top RSF leaders although the court has not publicly identified potential suspects.

On Wednesday, a UN fact-finding mission concluded that the RSF had committed genocide during its siege and capture of el-Fasher, citing mass killings, gang rapes, abductions and the deliberate use of starvation against civilians as part of an intentional and systematic policy.

The RSF has denied committing genocide or war crimes.

The Sudanese army has also faced accusations of war crimes. UN investigators found that both the army and RSF have carried out large-scale attacks on civilians and vital infrastructure.

- Al Jazeera

When Society Puts Survivors on Trial Instead of those Accused of Rape

LIAPENG RALIENGOANE

The current issue of a young girl who died by suicide after allegedly being raped by a content creator in Nigeria has once again exposed an uncomfortable truth about our societies: we are often quicker to interrogate survivors than we are to condemn those accused of sexual violence.

While investigations into individual cases must be left to the justice system, the public reaction reveals a culture that still struggles to understand consent and accountability.

One of the most harmful misconceptions is the belief that going to someone's house automatically implies consent to sex. Legally and morally, this is false. Consent is not inferred from a location, an outfit, a previous relationship or a social visit.

Consent must be freely given, informed, specific and can be withdrawn at any point. Entering someone's home is permission to enter their home not permission to be sexually violated.

Yet whenever allegations of rape emerge, the same questions are repeatedly directed at survivors. Why did she go there? What was she wearing? Why didn't she leave? Why didn't she report immediately?

These questions subtly shift responsibility away from the alleged perpetrator and onto the person who says they were harmed. They reinforce the damaging idea that survivors are responsible for preventing rape rather than insisting that perpetrators are responsible for not committing it.

This pattern is not only unfair, it is dangerous. It discourages survivors from reporting crimes, fearing they will face public humiliation, character assassination and endless scrutiny.

For many, the trauma does not end with the assault. It continues in police stations, courtrooms, social media comment sections and even within their own families.

Rape is a crime because someone chose to violate another person's bodily autonomy. That choice belongs entirely to the perpetrator.

The blame cannot be transferred to the survivor because they accepted an invitation, trusted someone or found themselves in a vulnerable situation. We do not ask victims of robbery why they owned expensive phones or victims of assault why they walked down a particular street.

Yet survivors of sexual violence are routinely expected to justify every decision they made before the crime occurred.

As a society, we need to replace suspicion with empathy and prejudice with understanding. Supporting survivors does not mean abandoning due process. Every accused person deserves a fair hearing and every allegation deserves a proper investigation. But fairness should never require degrading survivors or treating them as though they are on trial simply for speaking out.

The young girl's death should prompt more than momentary outrage. It should force us to examine the attitudes that make survivors feel isolated, doubted and blamed. We must build a culture where consent is properly understood, where legal principles guide public conversations and where accountability rests squarely on those who commit acts of sexual violence, not on those who endure them.

Until we stop asking survivors to explain why they were raped and start asking perpetrators why they chose to rape, we will continue to normalise the very violence we claim to oppose.

CONTACT US

NEWSROOM
Email: editor@maserumetro.com
Tel: 266 58 86 5494

ADVERTISING:
sales@maserumetro.com
Tel: 266 68 81 2200

WEBSITE:
www.maserumetro.com

MetroNewspaper
MaseruMetro
MaseruMetro
Maseru Metro News

Metro

An identity should not have an expiry date

RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

There is a peculiar cruelty buried inside a small green or blue card that every adult Mosotho is required to carry. It is not the photograph, which is usually unflattering. It is not the fingerprint panel, which most people never look at twice.

It is the date stamped quietly in the corner, the one that tells you that in ten years' time, the document that proves you exist will cease to prove anything at all.

Your fingerprints will not change. Your iris will not change. The unique biological signature that the state used to certify that you, and no one else, are who you say you are will remain exactly as it was on the day it was captured.

And yet the card will expire, and with it, bureaucratically speaking, so will you.

This is the quiet absurdity at the heart of Lesotho's national identity system, and it is one that successive governments, this one included, have chosen not to confront. The National Identity Cards Act of 2011 fixed the validity of the identity card at ten years.

It was, at the time, presented as a modernising step, a leap from the old, paper-based, easily forged documents of the past into abiometric era where the state would finally know, with certainty, who its citizens were.

That leap was worth taking. What was not worth taking, and what nobody has adequately explained since, is the decision to bolt an expiry date onto a document whose entire justification is that it is built on things that do not expire.

Fingerprints do not need to be renewed. The whorls and ridges that were pressed onto a scanner in Maseru or Mokhotlong in 2014 are, barring injury or disease, the same ones that exist today and will exist in twenty years. The iris, similarly, is understood by every serious identity system in the world to be one of the most stable biometric markers available to science, more stable in many respects than a signature or a photograph, both of which the state is perfectly content to leave unchanged on documents for far longer than a decade.

If the entire point of biometric identification is that it fixes identity to the body rather than to a piece of paper that can be lost, smudged, or forged, then the logic of expiry collapses. You cannot simultaneously tell a citizen that his fingerprint is the unimpeachable proof of who he is, and then tell him ten years later that the proof has run out.

What has actually run out, in every meaningful sense, is not the citizen's identity. It is the government's capacity to manage the renewal process it created for itself.

This is the part of the story that ought to embarrass every minister who has held the Home Affairs portfolio since the system went live.

The National Identity and Civil Registry rolled out its biometric register from 2013 onward with real ambition, and to its credit, it succeeded in bringing millions of Basotho into a modern identity database for the first time.

But a decade is not a long time in government planning, and it arrived faster than the department was ready for. We are now

living through the entirely predictable consequence: a mounting backlog of citizens whose ten years are up, queuing at

overstretched offices, some travelling long distances from the mountains to district centres only to be told to come back another

day, others discovering that their expired card has quietly locked them out of banking services, SIM card registration, school

enrolment for their children, or a job interview that required proof of identity on the spot.

There has even been a motion before Parliament asking that the expiry be suspended altogether, a tacit admission from within government itself that the system cannot cope with what it demanded of citizens.

This is what happens when policy is imported without being interrogated. Ten-year expiry windows exist in many identity systems around the world, but those systems typically sit inside wealthy, administratively dense states with thousands of registration points, digital renewal channels, and same-day issuance.

Lesotho has none of that in sufficient measure. We are a small country with a thin administrative footprint, a diaspora of labour migrants working across the border in South Africa who cannot simply pop into a district office on a weekday afternoon, and a rural population for whom a trip to renew a card can mean a full day's wages lost and a taxi fare the family cannot spare.

To impose the same renewal cycle on this country that a far richer, far more urbanised nation might impose on itself is not modernisation.

It is a failure to design policy for the country we actually have, rather than the country the drafters perhaps wished we were.

And here lies the deeper indictment. This is not a new problem that caught the current administration by surprise. The ten-year clock has been ticking since the Act came into force, which means every government since 2011 has known, or ought to have known,

exactly when this crisis would arrive. Ten years is not an ambush.

It is a countdown that anyone in the Ministry of Home Affairs could set a calendar reminder for. Instead, we are treated to the now-familiar spectacle of a Lesotho state agency reacting to a crisis of its own making as though it were an act of God, scrambling for mobile registration units and extended office hours only after the queues have already formed and the anger has already spread on radio call-in shows and in taxi ranks. Where was the decade of preparation?

Where was the investment in decentralised, digital renewal that would have let a citizen confirm their continued identity with a fingerprint scan at a local council office in minutes rather than a full day's journey?

A government that builds a biometric system sophisticated enough to capture an iris scan but too under-resourced to let that same citizen renew a card without losing a day's income has misplaced its priorities.

The honest answer is that identity documents should not expire at all, or at the very least should not expire on a timeline this short in

a country with these constraints. What should be renewed, periodically and without drama, is the photograph, since faces do age, and perhaps the physical card itself, which can wear out or be damaged. But the underlying certification of identity, the fact that this fingerprint belongs to this person and no other, should stand for as long as the person lives, updated only when circumstances

genuinely change, such as a legal name change or a correction of an error in the original record.

Countries that take biometric

identity seriously increasingly separate the physical card, which can be reissued cheaply and quickly, from the underlying biometric certification, which does not need to be reverified from scratch every decade.

There is no technical reason Lesotho could not do the same. There is only the absence of political will to admit that the current model is not working and to redesign it around the lived reality of the people it is meant to serve.

None of this is an argument against having identity documents, or against biometric technology, which has genuine value in

preventing fraud and strengthening the integrity of the civil register.

It is an argument against a government, and a succession of governments before it, treating a poor country's citizens as though they had the administrative luxury of a wealthy one.

Basotho did not ask to be identified by fingerprint and iris only to be told, a decade later, that their identity has an expiry date the state itself cannot honour. If the biology does not change, the bureaucracy has no excuse

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

Revenue diversification key as SACU revenue is expected to decline

Metro **NEO SENOKO**

MASERU- With the expected decline in the South African Customs Union (SACU) revenue for the 2025/26 financial year, government has to put more effort on revenue diversification, particularly through nontax revenue sources such as water royalties, to support sustainable spending and economic growth.

The deterioration in SACU receipts places significant pressure on government finances, necessitating prudent budget management. SACU revenue is known to be highly pro-cyclical, resulting in large fluctuations in revenue during economic booms and slumps.

For the fiscal year 2025/26, total revenue is projected at M29,815.4 million, representing 67.1% of GDP. Tax revenue is expected to rise, while SACU receipts are anticipated to remain volatile. Water royalties are forecast to significantly contribute to revenue, increasing from 7.2% of GDP in 2024/25 to 11.1% in 2025/26.

These projections highlight the importance of revenue diversification, particularly through nontax revenue sources such as water royalties, to support sustainable government spending and economic growth.

Expenditure, on the other hand is expected to remain at 70.0% of GDP, with both recurrent and capital spending forecast to decline as a percentage of GDP over the medium term, due to anticipation of lower SACU receipts.

Conversely, investment spending is projected to increase, driven by both government and donor funding. This projected decline in government spending as a proportion of GDP may require prudent budgeting and expenditure prioritisation to ensure sustainable fiscal policy and continued economic growth.

While Lesotho successfully secured a one-year extension of AGOA and a moderation of tariffs to around 15 percent, tariffs remain elevated by historical standards, and global trade tensions continue to weigh heavily on long-term investment planning. "Heightened uncertainty in global trade and financial markets underscores the importance of preserving fiscal buffers, safeguarding external stability, and remaining vigilant to spillovers through trade, SACU revenues and regional fiscal conditions," Minister of Finance Dr. Retselisitsoe Matlanyane had emphasized when announcing the 2026/27 budget speech presentation.

Matlanyane added that the country's external position has weakened due to declining textile and diamond exports. While the balance of payments remains supported by LHWP-II capital inflows, the current account deficit is expected to widen in 2026, before improving as construction imports normalise.

"Foreign reserves are projected to remain adequate at around six months import cover, though sensitive to SACU volatility, diamond prices and fiscal execution risks," Matlanyane added.

Heavy reliance on SACU transfers, poses a major macro-fiscal vulnerability, especially given South Africa's economic performance and regional trade dynamics.

Over M1 billion paid to ex-Basotho miners

NEO SENOKO

MASERU- The Tshiamiso Trust has paid more than M1 billion to eligible Basotho ex-mineworkers and their dependents for qualifying silicosis and tuberculosis claims linked to employment in South African gold mines.

The Tshiamiso Trust was established to implement the settlement agreement reached between six mining companies and claimant attorneys in the historic silicosis and TB class action.

The companies are African Rainbow Minerals, Anglo Americans South Africa, AngloGold Ashanti, Harmony Gold, Sibanye Stillwater and Gold Fields. The milestone was announced this week during a media briefing in Maseru as the Trust continues to strengthen partnerships aimed at identifying and assisting potentially eligible claimants across the Lesotho.

The announcement comes during a week of stakeholder engagement in Lesotho, including a workshop convened by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

The workshop provided an important opportunity for stakeholders to share progress, strengthen collaboration and discuss ongoing efforts to support former mineworkers and their families.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Tshiamiso Trust Dr. Munyadziwa Kwinda has expressed gratitude to the many partners whose collaboration has enabled the Trust to reach thousands claimants across the country.

“This milestone reflects what can be achieved through sustained partnership and shared commitment. We extend our sincere appreciation to the government of Lesotho, social cluster committee under the leadership of Mokhothu Makhalanyane, ex-mineworker associations, community leaders and service providers whose support has strengthened outreach efforts throughout Lesotho,”

“The leadership shown by the Social Cluster Committee in bringing together a broad range of stakeholders has been invaluable in advancing awareness and claimant support initiatives. Most importantly, this milestone represents compensation reaching former mineworkers and families who have waited many years for recognition of the impact that occupational lung diseases have had on their lives,”Kwinda said.

While the M1billion milestone marks a significant achievement, stakeholders remain focused on the work that lies ahead.

Efforts continue to identify, locate and assist potentially eligible claimants, particularly in remote and undeserved communities.

“Our focus remains firmly on finding and assisting those who may qualify for compensation. We will continue working closely with stakeholders across Lesotho to ensure that no eligible claimant is left behind,” Kwinda added.

The Chairperson of the Social Cluster Committee in the National Assembly Mokhothu Makhalanyane also welcomed the continued collaboration among stakeholders working to support ex-mineworkers and their families.

“The progress achieved to date demonstrates the value of cooperation across institutions and communities.

We remain committed to supporting initiatives that help ensure eligible Basotho ex-mineworkers and their dependents are informed, assisted and able to access the compensation to which they are entitled,” Makhalanyane said.

Growing demand exposes gaps in adolescent-friendly health services

LIAPENG RALIENGOANE

Thaba-Tseka - The Adolescent Corner at Paray Hospital is providing critical health services to hundreds of young people every month but staff and youth representatives say gaps in infrastructure, connectivity and access are limiting the facility's ability to fully meet the needs of adolescents.

The corner currently provides services to about 457 adolescents aged between 10 and 24 years every month, offering tuberculosis (TB) services, health education, HIV testing and counselling, among other youth-friendly health services.

Registered Nurse Midwife Tšola Konote said while the centre continues to play an important role in supporting young people, the facility faces several challenges that require urgent attention.

He said the infrastructure is one of the major concerns, as the available space is too small and does not provide the privacy required by adolescents accessing health services. «The rooms are just partitioned, and this affects the privacy that young people need when they come for services,» Konote said.

He added that the lack of digital resources is also affecting young people's access to information. «There is no Wi-Fi for young people to connect while waiting for services. There are also no computers, which means young people do not have enough access to information. We also need pamphlets that they can read and learn from,» he said.

Konote further highlighted the need for recreational facilities, saying playgrounds would help create a more welcoming environment for adolescents while they wait for services. He explained that because Paray Hospital is a Catholic Church-led facility, the Adolescent Corner does not offer family planning services.

Youth Ambassador at the Adolescent Corner, Boitumelo Nthejane said distance remains another challenge, particularly for young people living in remote villages.

She said some adolescents travel from villages located about two hours away, making access to services difficult due to transport challenges. «Young people from faraway villages struggle to reach the adolescent corner. There is a need for free transport to help them access these important services,» Nthejane said.

She also emphasised the need for Wi-Fi connectivity to improve access to information and support for young people visiting the centre.

These challenges facing the Adolescent Corner at Paray Hospital were raised during a three-day mission in Thaba-Tseka by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Vodacom Lesotho Foundation and partners aimed at assessing the support required to strengthen youth-friendly health services.

UNFPA Country Representative John Kennedy Mosoti said the visit was aimed at ensuring that personnel have the necessary skills and resources to provide effective services to adolescents.

He said UNFPA, together with Vodacom as one of its partners, is working to ensure adolescent corners provide meaningful and youth-friendly response services.

«We have heard the challenges and needs raised here. We will look at programmes that can be upgraded so that young people can be taken care of in a way that helps address challenges such as child marriage and early and unintended pregnancies, which remain high in the district,» Mosoti said.

Head of Vodacom Lesotho Foundation, Tšepo Ntaopane said the organisation's partnership with UNFPA is part of its commitment to empowering young people and communities.

«Vodacom is celebrating 30 years in Lesotho. We seek to reconnect with Basotho and these visits are examples of how we are giving back by ensuring no mother should die while giving birth,» Ntaopane said.

«We are passionate that every Mosotho and every child live up to their full potential. Basotho should remain connected for their better future,» he added.

Seputla Sebogodi: Remembering the legendary life and legacy of a 'Generations' icon

LUTHO PASIYA

South Africa is mourning the loss of one of its finest performers after legendary actor Seputla Sebogodi died at the age of 63.

According to a statement released by his family, the veteran actor died on the evening of Wednesday, July 15, following medical complications related to diabetes.

"Seputla Sebogodi leaves behind an extraordinary legacy in South African theatre and television," the family said.

"He will be remembered for his memorable performances in 'Generations', 'Suburban Bliss', 'Bophelo ke Semphego', 'Redemption' and most recently 'Scandal!', as well as his acclaimed theatre work in productions including 'Big Dada', 'Waiting for Godot', 'The Rivonia Trial', 'Once a Pirate' and 'Mooi Street Moves', among many others."

The family added: "His legacy will live on through his remarkable body of work and the many lives he touched."

They also requested privacy as they mourn their loss, adding that details of the memorial and funeral services will be shared in due course.

For more than three decades, Sebogodi built a career that few South African actors could match. Whether playing a feared businessman, a political firebrand or a lovable father figure, he brought every character to life with authority, humour and authenticity.

To many viewers, he will always be remembered as Kenneth Mashaba in "Generations". His portrayal of the wealthy businessman with his commanding presence, cutting dialogue and unforgettable laugh made him one of the most recognisable television villains in South African history.

Long before "Generations", Sebogodi had already established himself as a respected performer through "Bophelo ke Semphego", where he introduced audiences to his dramatic range.

He later revealed another side of his talent in the comedy "Suburban Bliss", proving that he could make audiences laugh just as easily as he could leave them speechless.

His career continued to evolve with memorable performances in "The River", "The Republic", "Redemption", "Z'bondiwe" and, most recently, "Scandal!", where a new generation of viewers came to appreciate his commanding screen presence.

Sebogodi's talent also reached international audiences. He appeared alongside Academy Award winner Viola Davis in the Hollywood film "The Woman King" in 2022. His film career also included "Beat the Drum" and "Critical Assignment", confirming his reputation as one of South Africa's most respected actors.

Despite his success on television and film, the stage remained close to his heart.

Theatre was where he sharpened his craft and where he continued to challenge himself throughout his career. His performances in productions including "Big Dada", "Waiting for Godot", "The Rivonia Trial" and "Mooi Street Moves" earned praise from critics and audiences alike.

Just weeks before his death, Sebogodi was still doing what he loved. He appeared in "Black Moon" at the National Arts Festival, once again demonstrating his commitment to live performance.

His contribution to the arts did not go unnoticed. Sebogodi received two South African Film and Television Awards and earned widespread respect as one of the country's finest character actors.

Beyond acting, he also found success as a gospel musician, releasing albums including "Nkuke Morena" and "Re Tshwarele Melato".

News of his death prompted an outpouring of tributes across social media.

"May our Nkwešeng rest in peace. His legacy will live on indeed. What an actor. We are very appreciative that he shared his talent with us. Fare thee well, buti Seputla," wrote X user @Diamond_Blackie.

Another user, @thabanisandile3, reflected on the fragility of life, writing: "Life is unpredictable and fragile. May his soul rest in peace. He was just trending recently on social media. We didn't know it was goodbye."

@BrownOxx shared a recent encounter with the actor, saying: "Haibo!! I just met him recently at the Grahamstown Arts Festival, and he said he had a bit of the flu but would be fine. RIP grootman."

As tributes continue to pour in, one thing is certain. Seputla Sebogodi leaves behind more than memorable performances.

He leaves behind characters that became part of South Africa's cultural history, stories that entertained generations and a standard of excellence that will continue to inspire actors for years to come.

His voice may be gone, but his work will ensure that he is never forgotten.

– IOL

www.maserumetro.com

FREE

Metro SPORT

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2026

The 2026 Fifa World Cup officially killed the lie that sports and politics don't mix

John Goliath

When Fifa expanded the World Cup to 48 teams, the official narrative was one of unity, inclusivity, and a celebration of the world's game.

Yet, as the curtain fell on a tumultuous tournament across North America, the 2026 edition will be remembered less for its tactical innovations and the form of the world's greatest papers, but more for how politics unapologetically invaded the pitch.

From the opening week, geopolitical tension overshadowed the sport. The Iranian national team found themselves at the centre of a diplomatic nightmare when domestic political strain and tightened foreign policy led to severe travel restrictions.

The team was not allowed to remain on American soil between fixtures and had to travel back to their Mexico base soon after playing their matches.

Yet, they handled the situation with such grace and humility, endearing themselves to the football world.

When Fifa expanded the World Cup to 48 teams, the official narrative was one of unity, inclusivity, and a celebration of the world's game.

Yet, as the curtain fell on a tumultuous tournament across North America, the 2026 edition will be remembered less for its tactical innovations and the form of the world's greatest papers, but more for how politics unapologetically invaded the pitch.

From the opening week, geopolitical tension overshadowed the sport. The Iranian national team found themselves at the centre of a diplomatic nightmare when domestic political strain and tightened foreign policy led to severe travel restrictions.

The team was not allowed to remain on American soil between fixtures and had to travel back to their Mexico base soon after playing their matches.

Yet, they handled the situation with such grace and humility, endearing themselves to the football world.

When Fifa expanded the World Cup to 48 teams, the official narrative was one of unity, inclusivity, and a celebration of the world's game.

Yet, as the curtain fell on a tumultuous tournament across North America, the 2026 edition will be remembered less for its tactical innovations and the form of the world's greatest papers, but more for how politics unapologetically invaded the pitch.

From the opening week, geopolitical tension overshadowed the sport. The Iranian national team found themselves at the centre of a diplomatic nightmare when domestic political strain and tightened foreign policy led to severe travel restrictions.

The team was not allowed to remain on American soil between fixtures and had to travel back to their Mexico base soon after playing their matches.

Yet, they handled the situation with such grace and humility, endearing themselves to the football world.

FINISHING POSITION / STAGE	USD AMOUNT	RANDS (ZAR)
1 SPAIN 1ST PLACE	$51 MILLION	R928,200,000
2 ARGENTINA 2ND PLACE	$34 MILLION	R618,800,000
3 ENGLAND 3RD PLACE	$30 MILLION	R546,000,000
4 FRANCE 4TH PLACE	$28 MILLION	R509,600,000
QUARTERFINALISTS (8 TEAMS)	$20 MILLION	R364,000,000
ROUND OF 16 (16 TEAMS)	$16 MILLION	R291,200,000
ROUND OF 32 (32 TEAMS)	$12 MILLION	R218,400,000
GROUP-STAGE TEAMS (48 TEAMS)	$10 MILLION	R182,000,000

Fans comfort Lionel Messi after heartbreaking World Cup final defeat to Spain

LUTHO PASIYA

As Lionel Messi came to terms with Argentina's heartbreaking World Cup final defeat to Spain, millions of fans around the world rallied behind the football legend.

His emotional Instagram message prompted an outpouring of support, with supporters thanking him for years of unforgettable memories and praising his leadership, resilience and lasting impact on the game.

Sharing an image of himself alongside his silver medal, the 39-year-old legend delivered a candid reflection on the emotional weight of missing out on back-to-back World Cup titles.

"The pain is immense, and this wound will take time to heal," Messi wrote.

"But I also hold onto all the good things... The matches we turned around by giving it our all -moments that will remain in our memories forever- and the support of an entire country which, combined with this group's hard work and effort, brought us back among the world's elite once again.

"It is hard to fully appreciate our achievement right now, but this group reached two consecutive World Cup finals."

-iol