

# Sunday Express

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Lesotho's only Sunday paper **E-Edition**



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# Police commissioner Molibeli speaks on alleged arrest



HOMOLO Molibeli.

In light of all the developments yesterday, particularly the heavy presence of the army, the *Sunday Express* could not independently confirm whether Commissioner Molibeli was speaking out of his own volition or under pressure from his alleged captors at the time of going to print.

Some sources even claimed that South African President and SADC facilitator to Lesotho, Cyril Ramaphosa, would today send his envoys to Lesotho to find out what had necessitated the army deployment. However, these reports could not be verified as President Ramaphosa's spokesperson, Khusela Diko, was not reachable on her mobile phone yesterday.

However, All Basotho Convention (ABC) spokesperson Montoeli Masoetsa said Commissioner Molibeli had informed him that he had not been arrested. Mr Masoetsa said he had spoken to the police boss hours after the allegations of his arrest surfaced.

"That is not true. Those people have not been arrested. I talked to Holomo and he told me that he was going into a meeting with Mokete and Lebajoa," Mr Masoetsa told this publication.

He also rubbished allegations that some senior ABC officials were working with the police to destabilize Dr Thabane's government, resulting in yesterday's events. The ABC is split through the middle between those who support Dr Thabane's estranged deputy, Professor Nqosa Mahao, and the premier himself. Mr Masoetsa is aligned to the Mahao faction.

Commissioner Molibeli has charged Dr Thabane and his current wife 'Maesaiah with the June 2017 murder of his then estranged wife, Lipolelo. 'Maesaiah is now on M1000 bail over the murder after he appeared in court on 5 February 2020 while Dr Thabane refused to answer to the charges in the magistrates' court last month. He instead said he would petition the Constitutional Court for an order to stop the courts from charging him of any crimes, claiming they are precluded from doing so as long as he remains prime minister. But Dr Thabane has not filed that application, raising eyebrows that he is simply bent on frustrating processes to go on trial.

In another televised address earlier this month, Dr Thabane had accused his enemies, including his own party's officials, of trying to topple him. He said then he had already instructed army commander Lt-Gen Letsoela to arrest his opponents in accordance with the Martial Law of 1999 and Lesotho's constitution. But yesterday's deployment was led by military police because Dr Thabane is said to be distrustful of Lt-Gen Letsoela whom he wants to fire because he is not loyal enough.

Dr Thabane returned to power in the June 2017 elections with a four-party coalition (comprising of the ABC, BNP, Alliance of Democrats (AD) and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL). That coalition now faces collapse after his own party's national executive committee (NEC) inked a deal with the opposition Democratic Congress (DC) and other smaller parties to form a new government.

There has been disharmony in Dr Thabane's government as the premier has been accused of relinquishing power to his young wife, 'Maesaiah, who is widely believed to be the power behind the premier. 'Maesaiah's abrasive style of harassing and humiliating state officials in public has not gone down well with many who have now rebelled against the soon to be 81-year-old Dr Thabane.

In the wake of the murder allegations against him and his current young wife, Dr Thabane had promised to step down at the end of July 2020. That is now in doubt in light of the prime minister's several latest actions including his bid to form a new coalition with the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and public statements by some of his loyal cabinet ministers that he is going nowhere.

Dr Thabane's ABC's NEC has forged a deal with the main opposition DC to replace him. That deal seems likely to succeed hence the premier's latest desperate actions, his critics say.

fresh one on Friday in which Dr Thabane issued him with a new suspension order.

As a last resort, and after losing another case in which he illegally prorogued parliament, the premier is said to have ordered the arrest of Commissioner Molibeli and his assistants by the army and to have them charged with treason. He is said to have ordered that they be kept in army custody until he had replaced them. Such detention would deprive them of any opportunity of going to court.

But Commissioner Molibeli told the *Sunday Express* last night that despite the widespread rumours, he had not been arrested by the army. He also said he was unaware of the heavy military deployment around Maseru and at the police headquarters as he had not been informed about it and had been out of town.

Apparently, the army had surrounded the police headquarters early Saturday morning with heavy tanks. Even though Maseru had generally experienced reduced traffic under the lockdown to contain Covid-19, the capital's streets became virtually empty after the army's deployment Saturday.

For much of yesterday, Commissioner Molibeli, DCP Mokete and ACP Lebajoa's mobile phones rang unanswered fuelling speculation that rumours of their arrest were indeed true.

At some point two different male voices answered the mobile phones of DCP Mokete and

ACP Lebajoa. The person who answered DCP Mokete's phone said that he (Mokete) was not able to talk to this publication because he was in a meeting while the one who answered ACP Lebajoa's phone said, "the owner of the phone is unable to come to the phone".

Later yesterday afternoon, Commissioner Molibeli eventually answered his phone and denied that he and his colleagues had been arrested by the army. He nonetheless said he was aware of the rumours of his arrest but did not know where they were emanating from.

"I am well and there is nothing wrong," Commissioner Molibeli told the *Sunday Express*.

"No one was arrested. I was not arrested. I wasn't called in for questioning (by the army). I am walking freely here (in Maseru) and I don't know where those reports (of arrest) came from. I am from Butha-Buthe now," he said.

Asked why the LDF had deployed heavily around the police's general headquarters, Commissioner Molibeli simply said he was not aware of the development.

"So, there were armoured vehicles there....?" he instead asked.

"Let me call them and find out. These (LDF) people did not report such a big development to me. They didn't say anything. These people may have caused trouble and they have not said anything to me."

Pascalinah Kabi/Limpho Sello

**P**OLICE Commissioner Holomo Molibeli has denied allegations that he is in army custody alongside his deputy Paseka Mokete and assistant commissioner Beleme Lebajoa.

Lesotho had been awash with information that the trio had been arrested in the army's early Saturday morning swoop of Maseru after Prime Minister Thomas Thabane, in a televised address, had appealed to the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) to deal severely with all those he claimed were destabilizing his government. After the prime minister's address the army had heavily deployed around Maseru. Dr Thabane's critics had equated the deployment to a *coup de 'tat*, not to overthrow an existing government, but to keep it in power in light of impending efforts by the premier's own party and the opposition to remove him through a legal no confidence vote (see story on page 4).

The prime minister has repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to fire Commissioner Molibeli after the top cop charged him with the murder of his ex-wife Lipolelo Thabane. The murder is said to have been aimed at paving way for the premier's younger wife, 'Maesaiah, to take over as First Lady. Lipolelo had won in court the rights to be First Lady.

Commissioner Molibeli has won all his court cases against the premier including a

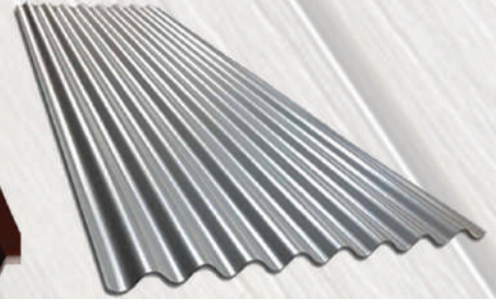
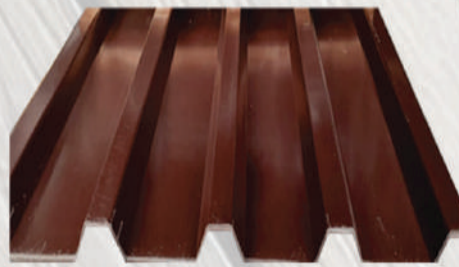
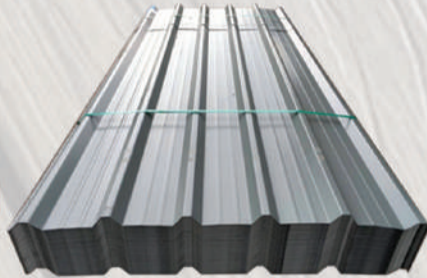


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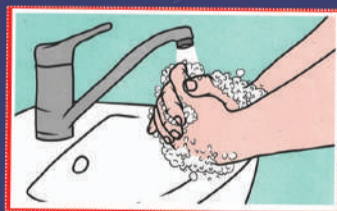
# COVID-19 AWARENESS

## #YOUARETHECHANGE

### WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

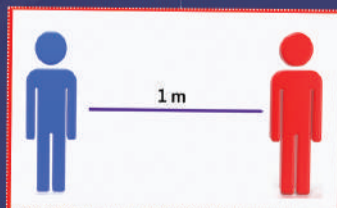
**Why?** Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.



### MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

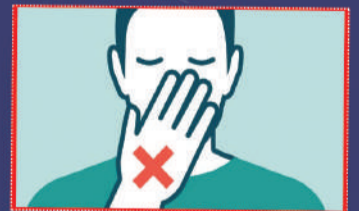
Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

**Why?** When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease



### AVOID TOUCHING EYES, NOSE AND MOUTH

**Why?** Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.



### PRACTICE RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

**Why?** Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19



## Mohalenyane Phakela

**T**HE Constitutional Court has nullified Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's decision to prorogue parliament, a ruling that paves way for his ouster from office.

Dr Thabane prorogued parliament from 20 March to 19 June 2020, arguing the country had to ban large gatherings to prevent the spread of the deadly coronavirus (Covid-19) which has infected millions and killed more than 200 000 people globally.

However, the move was immediately challenged by the national executive committee (NEC) of the premier's own faction ridden All Basotho Convention (ABC), his coalition government ally the Basotho National Party (BNP) and eight other litigants, who also sought an extra order for Dr Thabane's removal from office. The 10 applicants argued Dr Thabane had committed treason in proroguing parliament without King Letsie III's specific approval. They, among other things, accused the premier of proroguing parliament to, among other things, save his own skin by frustrating current parliamentary processes to remove him from office.

A three-member Constitutional Court bench on Friday upheld the application that the premier had illegally prorogued parliament and ordered its re-opening. However, the same court dismissed the application to have Dr Thabane removed from office saying that was beyond its remit. A court cannot order the removal of a democratically elected Prime Minister, the bench ruled.

The ruling paves the way for parliament to reconvene and allow the senate to approve a constitutional amendment bill clipping a prime minister's powers to cling to power by dissolving parliament whenever they lose a vote of no confidence.

The bill was unanimously approved in the National Assembly and now only awaits the senate's consent and King Letsie III's signature to become law.

Parallel to the process leading to the approval of that bill, a deal was crafted between the ABC's NEC and the main opposition Democratic Congress (DC) to forge a new coalition government. That proposed coalition is all but certain to topple Dr Thabane from power. It is that deal and the loss of the prorogation case that seem to have spurred the prime minister, who also faces charges of murdering his ex-wife Lipolelo, into mobilising the army this weekend to go after his opponents and save his government.

After the prime minister's televised address calling for the army to intervene on his behalf early on Saturday, the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) deployed heavily around Lesotho. It was reported earlier that the army had arrested police commissioner Holomo Moli-beli, his deputy Paseka Mokete and assistant commissioner Beleme Lebajoa. The three have been instrumental in the murder charges against Dr Thabane and have steadfastly refused to be cowed by the prime minister. Commissioner Moli-beli has won all his court cases against Dr Thabane's bid to fire him. The three were said to be in detention at Makoanyane Barrack.

But Commissioner Moli-beli later said that was not the case. After attempts to reach him and his assistants all day yesterday had been unsuccessful, he later told the Sunday Express that reports of his arrest by the army were incorrect (See lead story on page 2).

Critics have slammed yesterday's army deployment as a dangerous act by a prime minister who is now on his knees and wants to cling to power at all costs despite his promise to retire at the end of July 2020.

A three-member Constitutional Court bench comprising of Justices Sakoane Sakoane, Moroke Mokhesi and Polo Banyane ruled on Friday that Dr Thabane had "failed to ap-

# ConCourt nullifies Thabane's prorogation of parliament

... ruling paves way for no confidence vote against Thabane as embattled PM mobilises army to save him



THOMAS Thabane.

ply his mind" and acted "irrationally" by proroguing parliament. This because cabinet had designated parliament among the essential services not to be affected by the lockdown. The lockdown due to last until 21 April 2020 to help combat C-povid-19 has confined Basotho to their homes except for those in designated essential services like retail, security and health.

Dr Thabane unilaterally prorogued parliament after King Letsie III had not acted on the premier's advice to prorogue parliament within a same day 9pm deadline on 20 March 2020. Dr Thabane argued he was empowered by the constitution to act alone if the King ignored his advice but his critics disagreed and sued him.

The Constitutional Court heard arguments in the case from 3 April to 7 April 2020 and reserved judgement to Friday 17 April 2020.

The BNP, the ABC NEC, the main opposition Democratic Congress (DC) and seven others argued the prorogation was illegal because it was not approved by both King Letsie and Dr Thabane's coalition partners except Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki's Alliance of Democrats (AD) party. The BNP and Labour minister Keketso Rantšo's Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL) argued they had not been consulted despite being members of the four-party governing coalition.

Dr Thabane himself signed the 20 March 2020 government gazette announcing the prorogation instead of King Letsie as per routine protocol. The applicants deemed the move illegal and treasonous but the premier argued the constitution empowered him to proceed with his actions if the King failed to act on his advice timeously.

But the Constitutional Court found Dr Thabane had prorogued parliament illegally.

"The cabinet has resolved that parliament is an essential service which is not affected by the

lockdown, therefore, the question would be why was parliament prorogued if government gazetted it as an essential service? The court does not find an appropriate answer," said Justice Sakoane, who read the judgment.

"There is no justification for the prorogation. Countries severely hit by the pandemic such as China and Italy have not prorogued (their) parliaments and are busy legislating and mobilising resources to fight the pandemic. The prime minister failed to apply his mind in that due to the prorogation, parliament could not execute its constitutional right to mobilise resources. The prime minister executed his powers in an arbitrary and irrational manner.

"The application succeeds in that the prime minister acted irrationally. It is ordered that the prorogation proclaimed by the prime minister is reviewed, corrected and set aside. Parliament can continue with its business which was interrupted by its purported prorogation ..," said Judge Sakoane while dismissing the application to have Dr Thabane sacked because the courts don't have powers to order a prime minister's firing.

The court also ruled that Dr Thabane had acted irrationally when he gave King Letsie III a very short (same day) notice period to act on the advice to prorogue parliament. Such a short notice period amounted to a night time ambush of the King, disabling him from applying his mind to the issues placed before him.

The court also ruled that Dr Thabane failed to adhere to all the requirements of section 91(3) upon which he based his unilateral action.

"The fact of the matter is that the King had until 9pm (to prorogue parliament on 20 March 2020) but the court is not told whether the prime minister followed other necessary steps. This includes giving

a (further) notice to the King to act after he failed to act at 9pm and reporting to parliament as the prime minister is accountable to parliament on all executive decisions.

"The prime minister prorogued parliament at night and the earliest convenient time to report to parliament would have been over the weekend or on Monday 23 March 2020. The prime minister failed to comply with requirements of 91(3) of the constitution.

"The constitution also guarantees the King the right to be consulted. The fact that the King is obligated to act on the advice of the prime minister does not give the prime minister the right to force the King, especially at night. The short time for the King to act may have set him up for failure. The (prime minister's) power must be exercised in a manner which is fair and in good faith."

Section 91(3) of the constitution which Dr Thabane relied upon for his unilateral action empowers the Prime Minister to override the King if the latter ignores the premier's advice to act within a specified period. However, the PM can only do so after further informing the King that he now intends to go it alone.

The prime minister is at the earliest opportunity obliged to inform parliament of his actions to go it alone after which his decisions are deemed to have been done by the King. The court found no evidence Dr Thabane had followed those provisions of the law.

The court's ruling clears the way for parliament to reconvene and for the premier's foes to oust him after they first ensure passage of the amendment forestalling him from dissolving parliament after he loses a no confidence vote. That should be easy to achieve as that amendment has already been passed by the National Assembly and only awaits the Senate's approval.

In January 2020, Dr Thabane had promised to retire at the end of July 2020 as pressure mounted on him

after the police accused him and his current young wife, 'Maesaiah, of having masterminded the killing of his ex-wife Lipolelo. The latter had won the rights in court to be awarded all First Lady privileges despite her no longer living with Dr Thabane. She was killed just as Dr Thabane had returned to office in June 2017. Dr Thabane however attributed his decision to retire to his old age (he turns 81 next month) and his protracted 50 years in the civil service and in active politics and not to the pressure from the murder charges. He even promised to relinquish power earlier if his party chose a successor.

However, the premier's actions since then suggest that his promise to retire was a hoax meant to achieve the exact opposite. He only wanted to buy time to forestall his opponents, who wanted him gone sooner, while plotting to weaken them and manoeuvre to stay in power for much longer, critics say.

Apart from trying to forge a new coalition government with his former arch foe-Mothetjoa Metsing of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and Selibe Mochoboroane's Movement for Economic Change (MEC) and cling to power beyond his July promised retirement date, the prime minister's key allies like small businesses minister Chalane Phori have openly declared that Dr Thabane will not retire until his term officially ends in 2022.

Still, unless Dr Thabane uses the army to forcibly keep him in power and neutralise his enemies, the odds remain staked against him. The deal crafted by his party's NEC, with the main opposition DC, and which completely excludes him for any leadership post in government, has more numbers than his planned coalition with the LCD and MEC. In any event, it's not at all clear if the MEC will support Dr Thabane in a new coalition with the LCD as MEC leader, Mochoboroane, has previously turned down overtures to be co-opted into Dr Thabane's government.

At least 34 MP's from the ABC's total tally of 52 in the national assembly signed a pledge supporting the new proposed coalition between the ABC and the DC. The 34 together with the 26 from the DC and other parties supporting Dr Thabane's ouster — the BNP (five), Popular Front for Democracy (two) and the RCL (one) — easily guarantee the 61-majority required to form the new government in which Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro is proposed for prime minister with DC leader Mathibeli Mokhothu as deputy.

The Constitutional Court judgement nullifying the prorogation had made this deal all but certain to be achieved hence Dr Thabane's decision to hastily mobilise the army to deal with people he said are using the courts to topple him from power, various officials told the Sunday Express yesterday.

Dr Thabane's ABC NEC, the BNP, the BNP's Nthabiseng Makoae, ABC legislators; 'Matšepo Ramakoe, 'Matebatso Doti, Lepota Sekola and senator Kemiso Mosenene, the DC itself and its deputy leader Motlaletoa Letsosa, DC MP Lethusang Kompi were the first to 10<sup>th</sup> applicants respectively in the anti-prorogation case.

Dr Thabane, Dr Moleleki, His Majesty the King and Attorney General Advocate Haae Phoofolo were the first to fourth respondents respectively.

# Court blocks Thabane's bid to suspend Molibeli

Pascalinah Kabi

**B**ARELY a month after the High Court ruled against his move to oust Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli on the grounds of his alleged incompetence, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane has launched a fresh bid to suspend the police chief.

Just as he did to stop the previous attempts to suspend or sack him, Commissioner Molibeli has sought and obtained an interim High Court order to stop Dr Thabane from acting against him until his main application for the nullification of the planned suspension is finalised.

In granting the interim order on Friday, Justice Semapo Peete said, "the matter is sub judice (pending before the courts) and the status quo (Commissioner Molibeli remaining in office) must be maintained until the final determination (of Molibeli's application to stop Dr Thabane from suspending him)".

Justice Peete ordered the respondents — Dr Thabane, Police Authority and Attorney General — to file their answering affidavit on or before Tuesday 21 April and for Commissioner Molibeli to file his replying affidavit on 23 April 2020.

The main application will be heard on 27 April 2020 but yesterday Commissioner Molibeli was arrested by the military police along with Deputy Commissioner Paseka Mokete and Assistant Commissioner (ACP) Beleme Lebajoa. His arrest followed (See lead story on page 2). In his 15 April 2020 letter to Commissioner Molibeli, Dr Thabane says the move is necessary to facilitate investigations against the police boss after a case of perjury was filed him by one of his subordinates.

Dr Thabane said it was alleged that Commissioner Molibeli committed perjury when said that he was transferring one of his subordinates from Maseru to Qacha's Nek because there was only one senior officer responsible for that district.

The premier said he was advised that Commissioner Molibeli's statement was false because there were three senior officers at the level of senior superintendent and two senior inspectors in that district.

Dr Thabane therefore wants Commissioner Molibeli requesting that the latter to "show cause" cause why he should not be suspended to facilitate investigations into the alleged perjury.

In his court papers, Commissioner Molibeli states that Dr Thabane's latest bid to suspend him is motivated by the premier's desire to protect Police and Public Safety Minister, Lehlohonolo Moramotse, from being charged with contravening lockdown regulations by allegedly buying alcohol beverages in Maseru. Mr Moramotse was recently caught on camera buying liquor from a shop owner of Chinese origin in contravention of regulations forbidding the sale and purchase of alcohol. For the duration of the lockdown which began on 30 March and ends on 21 April 2020, all liquor outlets are supposed to be closed but this particular liquor shop was allegedly opened to enable the minister to purchase alcohol.

"One Mr Lehlohonolo Moramotse, who is also the 2nd respondent herein, contravened the COVID-19 regulations by buying alcohol beverages in Maseru, and we investigated the case," Commissioner Molibeli says in his court papers.

"Apart from the violation of

COVID-19 Regulations, there were also allegations of Mr Moramotse having performed an illegal water connection at Ha Motloheloa, which were also investigated."

Commissioner Molibeli said the two dockets were presented to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Advocate Hlalefang Motinyane who gave directives for the police to charge, arrest and arraign Mr Moramotse before the magistrates' court tomorrow.

Commissioner Molibeli said he was reliably informed by some intelligence sources that Mr Moramotse knew that he would appear in court and sought protection from Dr Thabane. He said since there was no other way of protecting the minister, the case of his alleged perjury was then used to suspend him "as a ploy to prevent the arraignment of Mr Moramotse".

He argued that Dr Thabane's move to suspend him was illegal in that only His Majesty King Letsie III had the power to suspend him and not the prime minister.

"The 1st respondent (Dr Thabane) therefore has no power in law to suspend me, as only His Majesty the King has the exclusive power to do so under the law. The 1st respondent's role in these circumstances is limited only to advising His Majesty," Commissioner Molibeli states.

Dr Thabane's renewed efforts to go after Commissioner Molibeli followed one Police Senior Inspector Leluma's decision to lodge a criminal case against the police boss.

According to Dr Thabane's "show cause" letter to Commissioner Molibeli, the police authority informed him of a criminal case brought against the police boss for alleged perjury.

"I have been informed by the police authority that you committed perjury by intentionally making a false statement in judicial proceedings before the High Court," Dr Thabane said.

He said it was alleged that Commissioner Molibeli suggested that he was transferring one of his subordinates from Maseru to Qacha's Nek because there was only one senior officer responsible for that district. He said he was advised that Commissioner Molibeli's statement was false because there were three senior officers at the level of senior superintendent and two senior inspectors.

"I have considered this matter and taken a view that the allegations against you, particularly when a criminal case has already been lodged against you in an institution that you head, it will be in the interests of justice that investigations into this matter are conducted fairly and objectivity.

"It follows therefore that it cannot be fair and right that you remain in office while criminal investigations are conducted against you by your subordinates. I have been advised by the police authority and reasonably believe that advice that there are reasonable fears among your subordinates to discharge their mandate and duties fearlessly because you are still in office.

"I therefore intend to exercise my powers to suspend you pending finalisation of the criminal investigations..."

"In the circumstances, I hereby invite you to show cause, if any, before I use my powers to suspend you from office pending investigations and in the interests of justice."

The premier's bid to suspend

Commissioner Molibeli is the latest in the long-running conflict between the two. The conflict began when Dr Thabane attempted to send the police boss on forced leave in January 2020. When that failed, the premier then attempted to suspend him.

That too failed after Commissioner Molibeli challenged the move in court. On 10 January 2020, Dr Thabane then wrote to King Letsie III advising His Majesty to immediately appoint Senior Assistant Commissioner Janki Hlaahla as the new police commissioner.

Dr Thabane claimed that Commissioner Molibeli had taken early retirement, a fact which was disputed by the latter in his ultimately successful court challenge.

In his court papers, Commissioner Molibeli accused Dr Thabane of seeking to get rid of him to avoid prosecution for the 14 June 2014 murder of the latter's estranged wife, Lipolelo. The police chief said investigations into Lipolelo's murder pointed to Dr Thabane's involvement. Dr Thabane denied attempting to fire Commissioner Molibeli to stop the Lipolelo murder probe. The premier claimed his decision was driven by his desire to rejuvenate the police force which was allegedly being hamstrung by what he described as Commissioner Molibeli's incompetence.

First Lady 'Maesaiah Thabane has since been charged with the murder of Lipolelo and the attempted murder of her friend, Thato Sibolla.

Dr Thabane has moved to stop the state from charging him by filing a Constitutional Court application saying he cannot be charged with any crime as long as he remains in office as prime minister.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

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# I didn't kill Soro: Mofomobe

Pascalinah Kabi

**T**HE Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Machesetsa Mofomobe, has denied allegations that he murdered the Senior Procurement Officer in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Khahliso Soro, two years ago.

The 39-year-old Mr Soro, who also headed the government's celebrations committee, was found dead in September 2018 near his home in Ha-Pita, Maseru almost a week after he went missing.

His decomposing body was found in an unoccupied house near his own residence by children who had been playing nearby.

His mysterious death left tongues wagging as he died a few weeks after he promised the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that he would name and shame high-ranking officers in the Home Affairs ministry who had embezzled public funds.

The alleged embezzlement is said to have occurred during the first Thomas Thabane-led coalition government that comprised of the All Basotho Convention (ABC), Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). The first coalition lasted from 2012 to 2015.

At the time, a family spokesperson Mohau Soro told the *Sunday Express*' sister *Lesotho Times* newspaper that they suspected foul play because Mr Soro was healthy when he was last seen alive.

Last week, some opposition supporters accused Mr Mofomobe, who is also the deputy leader of the BNP, of killing Mr Soro.

The opposition supporters made the accusations during a local radio programme where Mr Mofomobe was being hosted.

A listener, only identified as Mr Jase, called into the programme and alleged that he suspected Mr Mofomobe had killed Mr Soro as he had even telephoned the latter shortly before he died.

Mr Mofomobe replied by denying the allegations and challenged the listener to approach the police if he had any evidence linking him to the alleged crime. He said the suspects in Mr Soro's death were remanded in custody and they would have their day in court once there was compelling evidence that they murdered Mr Soro.

"You bring another issue, saying you suspect that I killed Khahliso Soro," said Mr Mofomobe.

"Your biggest problem and that of your leadership is failing to understand that people must appear in court when evidence is put forward. Some people are in jail and once investigations have been concluded, they will



MACHESETSA Mofomobe.

appear in court.

"I am ready tomorrow or any other time (to appear in court). If you didn't know, I personally went to the police and said, 'gentlemen, expedite investigations into Soro's murder'. We cannot just let people drag someone's (Mr Mofomobe's) name into the mud."

He said the police informed him that they had already interviewed people who claimed to have evidence of his involvement in Mr Soro's murder and all of them had failed to

produce the evidence that he was indeed involved.

"Ntate Jase, you claim to have evidence. I am going to appeal to the police to call you and ask that you give them evidence that I phoned Soro and that I killed him as you say. You will not be able to do so because it is not like that.

"Besides, I was not a Minister of Home Affairs in 2014. Why would I go after this child (Soro)? What would be my gripe with him

(Soro)?"

"...You need to go to the police and give them the evidence."

Mr Mofomobe said he was ready to stand trial if there was any evidence linking him to the crime unlike some politicians who approached the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and pleaded with the head of the SADC facilitation team to Lesotho, Justice Dikgang Moseneke, to protect him from prosecution.

This was in reference to Lesotho Congress for Democracy leader Mothetjoa Metsing and his Movement for Economic Change counterpart Selibe Mochoboroane who recently appealed to Justice Moseneke to stop the state from charging them for treason against the first government of Dr Thabane in 2014.

Justice Moseneke recently wrote to Dr Thabane directing that the charges be dropped in line with an October 2018 government-opposition agreement to stop all trials of politicians until after the implementation of the multi-sector reforms in Lesotho.

"People went to Pretoria to beg Ntate Moseneke to write a letter stopping treason charges against them and I will never go to Moseneke and ask him to protect me from allegations that I killed Soro. I will never do that. I will stand here and say I am ready to appear in court if there is evidence," Mr Mofomobe said.

He instead accused PAC chairperson Mr Mochoboroane of using the PAC to go after his political rivals. He alleged that Mr Mochoboroane told the Home Affairs Deputy Principal Secretary, Masia Johane, to inform the late Mr Soro that the PAC was not interested in nailing him for any alleged crime but it had its "eyes on someone else".

In a subsequent interview with this publication, Mr Mofomobe said that someone could have been him or fellow BNP senior member and Tourism and Hospitality Minister, Chief Joang Molapo.

On his part, Mr Johane said he did not recall Mr Mochoboroane telling him that the PAC was after someone else.

Mr Mochoboroane was not reachable on his mobile phone for comment.

In an unrelated issue, Mr Mofomobe said it was wrong of his rivals to want to "paint him with the same brush" with his former bodyguard who shot and injured three people in Quthing in December 2018. The bodyguard, Malebo Malebo - a soldier - was later arrested by his colleagues in the army.

"You cannot punish me for the actions of my bodyguard," Mr Mofomobe said, adding "justice must be served" in the Malebo issue.

## Gender-based violence cases rise during lockdown: Phamotse



MAHALI Phamotse.

Nthatuoa Koeshe

**L**ESOTHO has registered a significant increase in the number of gender-based violence cases since the start of three weeks' lockdown compelling people to stay at home as part of measures to prevent the spread of the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This according to Gender, Youths, Sports and Recreation Minister Mahali Phamotse who said 19 cases of rape had been reported since the lockdown began on 30 March 2020. Dr Phamotse said the rape victims were females aged from five and 55 years.

Due to the lockdown which is expected to end on 21 April 2020, people are expected to stay in their homes and only venture out to buy groceries, attend burials or seek medical attention.

Businesses have been closed except for those offering essential services such as healthcare facilities, fuel service stations, grocery shops and media organisations.

Dr Phamotse told this publication that the lockdown had significantly increased chances

of women and children falling prey to their abuse as they were now stuck with potential abusers, mostly male relatives, for the whole day at home.

"Cases reported at Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU) show that 19 females from the age of 5 to 55 were raped in these past few weeks. A six-year-old boy was also molested," Dr Phamotse said, adding the numbers could be higher as many cases of rape and gender-based violence went unreported.

"These numbers could be higher because not everyone reports when abused even though they are advised to do so."

Dr Phamotse said in the last quarter of 2019, 15 cases of gender-based violence were reported and five of these were rape cases and another three were of minors who were subjected to various forms of emotional abuse.

"We understand that during this period of the lockdown the number of cases of abuse are likely to shoot up.

"But it is our responsibility as the ministry to combat abuse in its entirety so that

Lesotho can be free of gender-based violence," Dr Phamotse said.

She urged Basotho to use the Nokaneng App — an internet application designed to teach women about their rights, and services available for gender-based violence victims, survivors and caregivers.

She also pleaded with Basotho to join the fight against abuse and report all cases to the relevant authorities. Meanwhile, She-Hive Association said four individuals have reported cases of abuse to the association.

She-Hive Association is a women-led non-governmental organisation which strives to empower survivors of violence against women and children.

She-Hive Association's Executive Director, 'Mamakhethe Phomane recently told the *Sunday Express* that the four cases, which included children abused by their caretakers, were reported to the police.

"We received one case from Thaba-Tseka and three from Maseru. All these cases were reported to the police and are being taken care of," Ms Phomane said.



## PRESS RELEASE

# FLEXIBILITY ON INSURANCE POLICY HOLDERS DUE TO COVID-19



**A**lliance Group Investment Holding has noted with great concern the world-wide spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it is having on the economy, companies, and households.

The pandemic has led to a nationwide lockdown, which has unfortunately led to an economic standstill resulting in loss of income and job losses for some people and companies, thereby hampering their ability to meet their financial obligations which include amongst other things the payment of insurance premiums.

In the light of the above, Alliance Insurance, in line with the Government of Lesotho's policy to mitigate the negative impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on Lesotho citizens, has undertaken measures to assist clients during these trying times.

### 1. INSURANCE PREMIUM HOLIDAYS

#### Funeral and Investments

Alliance Insurance shall grant premium holidays of up to 6 calendar months on funeral and individual or retail investment policies to clients who are in financial distress. Clients whose income has declined by more than 30% as a result of this pandemic will qualify for the premium holiday. However, the issuance of the premium holiday is not automatic and clients will need to apply to be considered for the relief. Each application shall be assessed, and approved or declined, based on its merits.

Policies granted a premium holiday shall not lapse during the holiday period, and all valid claims incurred during this period shall be honoured subject to the provisions of the premium holiday terms and conditions.

Only policies that are fully paid on the date of application for the premium holiday will be considered. Clients who wish to apply for relief but have outstanding premiums on their policies will be given until 20 May 2020 to bring their policies up to date.

Applications should be submitted to Alliance between the period starting 01 May to 30 June 2020 and details of the application process will be communicated to clients in due course.

#### General Insurance Policies

All general insurance policies for Motor, Housing, House Contents, Business Combined and other policy types falling in this category the premium condition will still be in effect and clients are implored to ensure the payments are done as per policy conditions and avoid compromising of covers. In the event there are difficulties in abiding

by the agreed conditions kindly contact your broker or Alliance (only for policies insured directly) and when prudently possible, we will vary the terms of payments in order to avoid a lapse of coverage.

### 2. CLAIMS PAYMENTS AND OTHER PAYOUTS

All valid claims for general insurance and life policies including the employee benefits will continue to be processed as usual. We would like to bring to your attention that in some instances there will be delays due to unavailable service providers and institutions affected by the lock down.

### 3. INSURANCE POLICY RENEWALS

#### General Insurance Policies

The general insurance policies contracts should be expressly confirmed through the renewal instructions for the risk to attach. Each renewal is considered as a new contract and we therefore require that we are served with renewal instructions.

### 4. OTHER INSURANCE CONDITIONS LENIENCY

#### Funeral Policy Restructure

#### Funeral Policy Restructure

We will allow clients to restructure their funeral policies (e.g downsize benefits) to reduce their monthly premiums where they feel overwhelmed, and also allow them to go back to their original funeral plans without any waiting period being applied once they have recovered financially, within a 12 month period.

#### General Insurance Policy Conditions

In order to accommodate policy holders that are working from home, some of the general insurance policy conditions and warranties will be relaxed for the period of the lock down and for further details and explanation contact your broker or Alliance (for direct clients).

For more information contact the following:

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## Comment

# Let peace prevail

**W**E align ourselves with the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL)'s admonition to the authorities not to plunge this country into chaos in their self-serving power struggles.

As the CCL says in a story published elsewhere in this edition, this not the time for the politicians to be fighting each other for power but to be uniting to fight the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Not that there is ever a good time for destabilising power struggles, but these are unprecedented, cataclysmic times when the entire world is facing an existential crisis in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic which threatens to wipe mankind off the face of the earth.

More than 2, 3 million people had been infected by the virus and close to 157 000 deaths had been recorded by yesterday.

World economies have ground to a standstill as countries have imposed lockdowns which are keeping the citizenry in their homes even at the risk of running out of food and other necessities.

The lockdowns have been imposed in a desperate bid to prevent the spread of the deadly virus whose propensity for human victims is reminiscent of Biblical plagues and other divine punishments that led to the near extinction of the human race.

But in the midst of all this and instead of keeping our eyes firmly on the Armageddonic struggle against the virus, our politicians appear focused on their petty squabbles for power.

Prime Minister Thomas Thabane has since called on the army to deal with any threats to his government. Yesterday there were also scary rumours of the arrest of the Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli who has been involved in a long-running feud with the premier. This and the heavy military presence on the streets of Maseru yesterday had many ordinary citizens shaking with fear.

Yesterday's televised speech by the premier is the second such he has made in as many weeks calling upon the security agencies to defend his government against rivals within his own All Basotho Convention (ABC) and other parties bent on toppling his government.

As the fourth estate, ours is not to take sides but to speak truth to power. We appeal to all the political leaders to temporarily set aside their differences to fully focus on the task of implementing policies to save this nation from the threat posed by COVID-19.

Although our beautiful country is yet to record a single infection, it is never-the-less reeling from the impact of the disease which so far seen businesses close and many people losing their jobs.

Others will go without salaries this month as some companies cannot pay wages when there has not been any production. In such perilous times, we expect politicians to forget their differences and give direction to the country. Only when the virus has been conquered can the politicians get back to their petty squabbles if they so wish.

And if they want to replace the current coalition, they should do so within the confines of the law as has been the case in the past few years when constitutional provisions have been followed in parliament through no confidence votes to effect a change of government.

This country has suffered too much and for far too long as a result of the never-ending power struggles. The police and army have been at loggerheads and engaged in violent conflict due the politicians' squabbles. Civilians have been caught up in the crossfire and many people died in the previous conflicts.

It is never a picnic when the military is deployed on the streets and the latest deployment has already caused many to fear the worst.

It is therefore our heartfelt plea to all the politicians not to sacrifice the nation's peace at the altar of their selfish ambitions. We also appeal to all of our security agencies not to take advantage of the fact that the world's attention is on the virus to abuse the rights of citizens. We plead for peace now and always.



## Enterprises need to plan for physical distancing and a cashless economy

**W**HEN lockdown ends, people are going to want safe spaces in which to meet, do business and have fun. What can venues do to get ready?

China has ended lockdown in Wuhan, the city where the novel coronavirus first appeared, but it has become clear a return to "normal" life is not on the cards for that city — or indeed anywhere.

After 10 weeks in lockdown, residents of Wuhan are reeling, with the New York Times reporting that re-opened businesses are facing difficulties in getting back up to speed and that strict regulations on people's movements remain in place.

In South Africa, we should be planning for when we, too, are allowed to venture out. For popular entertainment and tourist venues, this is especially important.

Attractions such as museums, national parks, aquaria and water parks and shopping malls are an important part of the economy and need to be ready to respond to plenty of pent-up demand.

US and UK polls indicate that museums and other cultural attractions will be at the top of the list of places people will want to visit in order to spend time with family and friends again.

Research in the US by Colleen Dillenschneider looks at adults' "intention to visit" cultural entities and indicates that "most people are currently maintaining comparatively strong intentions to visit" within the next three to six months.

Similarly, in the UK, BVA BDRC, a consumer insights consultancy, has been tracking consumer sentiment towards travel, leisure and hospitality. Twenty-nine percent of respondents said they would "go on a day out to a visitor attraction" within the next three to six months. It should be noted that this relates to the US and UK summer, traditionally indicating higher intentions to visit places than during winter.

Dampened economic activity and de-

Sabine Lehmann

pressed international tourism will affect South African visitor numbers for the foreseeable future. But what can managers of facilities and attractions do now to minimise the impact?

Firstly, they need to assess their sites and customer bases to understand what demand might look like after lockdown. Open, outdoor sites are likely to be in higher demand than closed, confined spaces. A place that was heavily dependent on international visitors will look very different to the attraction that was dependent on local and domestic travel.

Sites that depended on older customers may see very different demand levels to those catering to a younger profile. Venues for conferences, events and concerts will have a different recovery trajectory to those that rely on individual visitors. What role will school groups play in the next six months, as the school year remains significantly disrupted?

Restarting micro-economies is likely to happen in segments, with highly localised demand at first (i.e. the closest neighbourhoods to customers), followed by day-trippers who can visit in cars or via public transport, then domestic visitors from further afield, and eventually international visitors. Timelines for such evolution are unknown, but destinations need to start assessing their historical consumer data to understand likely demand curves.

Places designed to accommodate large groups will clearly need a rethink, with physical distancing and contactless transactions essential. Such measures might well be

anathema to business people hardwired into attracting crowds. Structural changes could be costly and take time to set up.

Fortunately, the seeds of both physical distancing and a contactless economy already exist.

Physical distancing, for example, exists in the form of VIP queues, fast-track queues, special opening times (e.g. for pensioners, school groups or paid-up members) and there is experience with reduced capacity, such as during winter or off-seasons.

Contactless transactions are a reality in the form of pre-sale of tickets online, the use of credit cards or Snapscan for on-site payments, and membership cards as entrance tickets. How can this be escalated to ensure that less hard cash changes hands?

The phrase contactless economy refers not only to the exchange of money but also human contact. Enterprises that rely on direct human contact as part of the experience will need to look specifically at these contact points and assess how things can be done differently and safely.

Things are unlikely to get back to normal anytime soon, but we won't be in lockdown forever, either. When we get out, our priorities and needs will have shifted and the sooner we start planning for this new reality the better for us all. — DM

● Sabine Lehmann is founder and CEO of *Curiositas* and founder and chair of the *African Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions*.

## Words of Wisdom

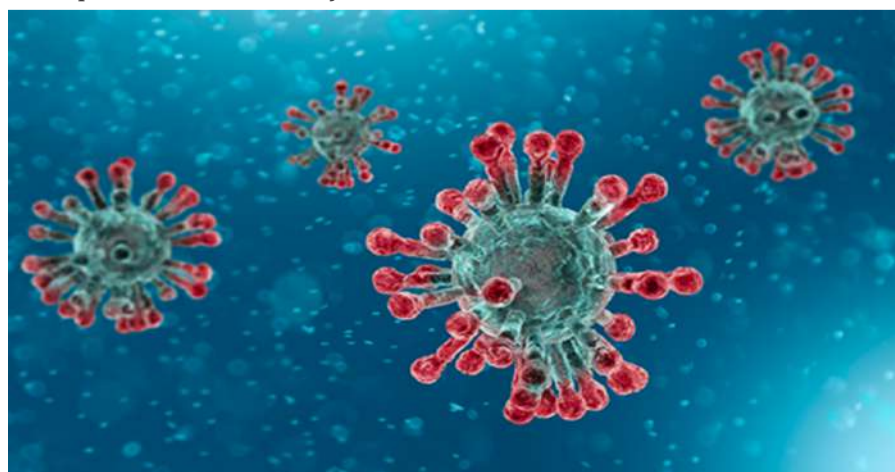


WITHOUT patriotic political education, a soldier is only a potential criminal.

— Thomas Sankara

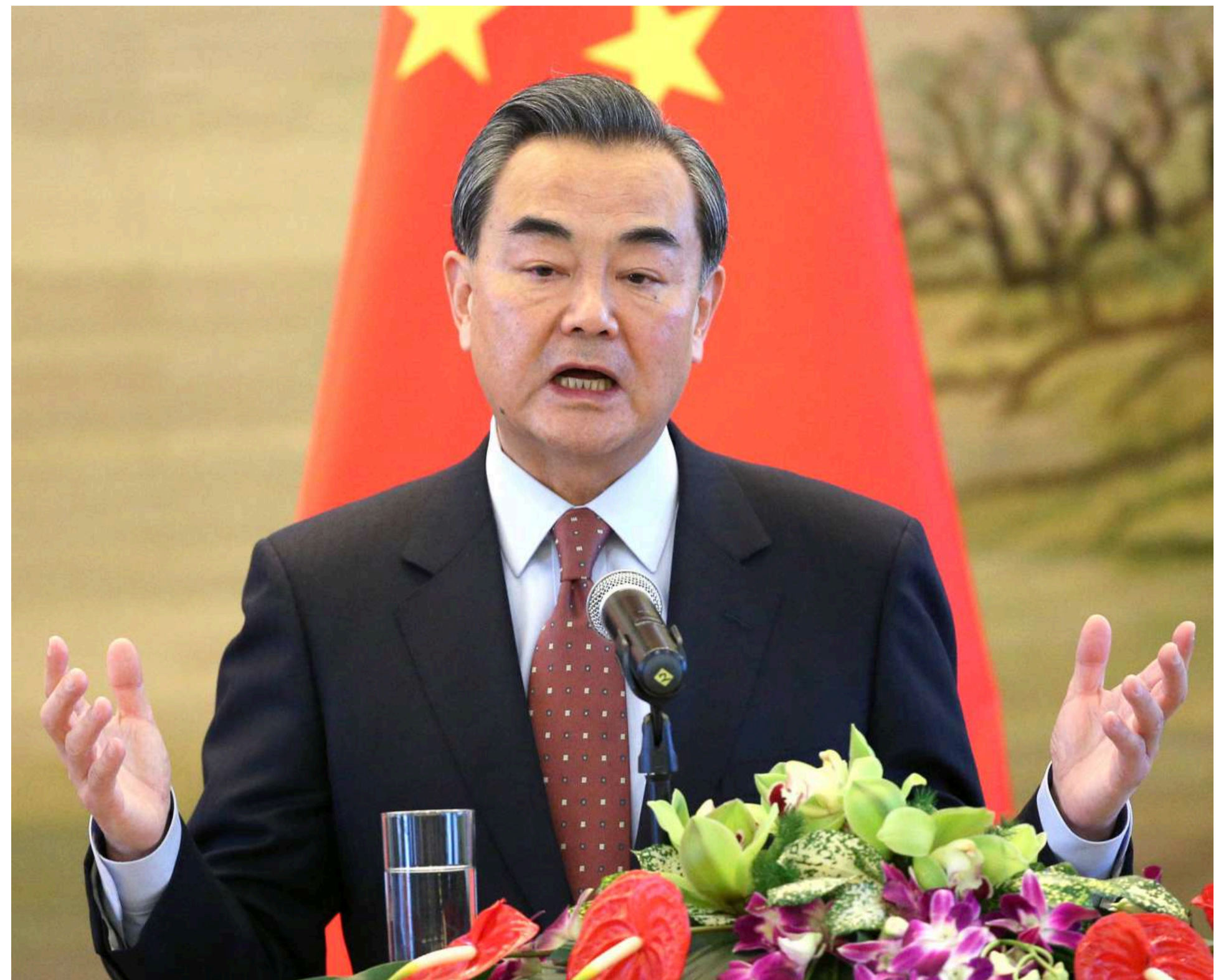
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# Remarks by the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Lesotho



CHINESE Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

**F**OLLOWING an article *Victimisation of Africans in China threatens Afro-Sino relations* published by the *Lesotho Times* on April 16-22 2020, the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Lesotho wishes to make the following remarks:

1. Currently in China, our most urgent task is to prevent imported cases and domestic resurgence of the pandemic. Guangzhou, the major border city with a large foreign population including many African residents, is facing an increasing risk due to more and more imported cases. To safeguard the hard-won anti-pandemic outcomes, Guangzhou has stepped up relevant measures and decided to quarantine and test everyone entering the border. During the process, some foreigners, including African nationals, breached relevant regulations and overreacted. A Nigerian coronavirus patient bit a Chinese nurse as he tried to escape from isolation. The incident caused panic among local residents and led to very bad social impact. The Chinese side believes that foreign nationals in China should abide by Chinese law and regulations particularly with regard to epidemic prevention and control. Just like Chinese nationals in Lesotho, who

should abide by the prevention and control regulations of Lesotho government during the state emergency.

Many African friends also pointed out that after verification, many of the videos circulating online have been found to be edited and did not tell the whole story. Both China and Africa should be vigilant against online contents that may mislead people's perceptions and sentiments.

2. China and Africa have maintained close communication and friendly consultation on the situation of African nationals in Guangdong province over the past few days. State Councillor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi had a telephone conversation with Chairman Faki of the African Union Commission. State Councillor Wang Yi pointed out that the traditional friendship between China and Africa is as solid as a rock and unbreakable.

It will not be affected as time passes and events arise, nor will it be disrupted by any alienating attempts. Chairman Faki said that the African side does not believe that China will adopt a policy of racial discrimination against the African people. Africa and China are friends and now comrades-

in-arms in the fight against the COVID-19.

The Assistant Foreign Minister of China Chen Xiaodong also met with African diplomatic envoys to China. The Chinese side reiterated that there has been no change in its friendly policy towards Africa. Facing grave risks of importing cases in Guangdong, China has strengthened its prevention and control measures and adhered to the principle of treating Chinese nationals and foreigners as equals, and will not adopt differentiated policies towards any special groups.

3. African governments and African diplomatic envoys in China generally believe that under the current situation when all countries are strengthening epidemic prevention and control measures, Guangdong's measures are responsible for all Chinese and foreigners and completely understandable. Foreigners who work and live locally should show their cooperation and support.

The African side appreciated that China takes Africa's concerns seriously and have noted the continuous improvement of the situation involving Africans in relevant cities in Guangdong. The African side will cooperate with China to educate and guide its

citizens to abide by China's provisions on epidemic prevention and control.

4. Taking into consideration the concerns of the African side, Guangdong has further improved its health management measures for foreigners. It is learned that on the premise of complying with China's provisions on epidemic prevention, many African nationals are returning back for self-quarantine, and proper arrangements have been made for African nationals in difficulties.

5. China and Africa are friends and now comrades-in-arms in the fight against the COVID-19. During our most difficult times fighting the virus, Africa offered us strong support. As the situation is getting more severe in Africa, the Chinese government and people have urgently delivered batches of supplies to the continent, which has been highly acclaimed by African countries and the African people.

The China-Africa friendship is unbreakable as it's deeply rooted in the heart of our people. After COVID-19 broke out, China and Africa once again demonstrated solidarity. Those attempting to smear or delude others, drive a wedge or sow discord will only end up empty-handed.

# State workers steal COVID-19 donations

Limpho Sello

**P**OLICE have arrested a National Reference Laboratory (NRL) employee and another from the Lesotho Blood Transfusion Services (LBTS) for allegedly stealing surgical masks and other protective equipment donated by Chinese businessman and philanthropist Jack Ma.

The stolen equipment is meant to help Lesotho to combat the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which has infected more than two million worldwide.

The first batch of the equipment arrived in the country three weeks ago and the theft of some of that equipment has resulted in the Health ministry engaging the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) in the storage and distribution of the second batch of donations to ensure it is not misappropriated and used for the benefit of criminal elements.

The second batch of donations arrived in the country on Friday.

According to the Police Spokesperson, Superintendent (Supt) Mpitso Mopeli, the two suspects are a 46-year-old woman employed as an office assistant at the NRL and a 45-year-old male employed as a driver at the LBTS.

Supt Mopeli said the suspects allegedly stole two boxes of surgical masks and another box containing an assortment of other protective gear from the NRL on Tuesday. He said upon their arrest, the duo had already sold the surgical masks for M3200 and they were still looking for buyers for the other protective equipment.

He said the police recovered one box of surgical masks from the person it had been sold to. The police also recovered only M800 of the M3200 realised from the sale of the surgical masks and another box of surgical masks allegedly stolen by the driver from Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru.

"By the time they were arrested, the suspects had already sold each box of surgical masks for M1600 and they were still looking for buyers for the other personal protective gear," Supt Mopeli said.

## ... Health ministry engages army to guard and distribute equipment as a result of the theft



"However, one box was recovered from the person who had bought it from the suspects and we also recovered M800 out of the proceeds the suspects received for the sale of the equipment."

Supt Mopeli said the suspects had since been arrested and the police were now awaiting a directive from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Advocate Hlalefang Motinyane to charge them with theft.

The stolen equipment is part of the consignment donated by Mr Jack Ma to Lesotho and other African countries late last month. All in all, Lesotho received a consignment of 20 089 COVID-19 test kits, 741 personal protection equipment (PPE), 100 000 surgical masks and 1111 face shields from the Chinese businessman's Jack Ma and the Alibaba foundations.

Supt Mopeli said following the theft of some of the equipment, the police have started their own follow up investigations to ensure the equipment reached all the intended beneficiary public health institutions and it is being used for its intended purpose.

Meanwhile, the Health Minister, Nkaku Kabi, has said his ministry has resolved to engage the LDF in the storage and distribution of the donated equipment to ensure it is not misappropriated and used for the personal benefit of rogue state employees.

He made the remarks on Friday when he received the second batch of donations by the Jack Ma foundations at the Moshoeshe I International Airport.

Flanked by LDF officials, Mr Kabi said, "we decided to involve the LDF because we encountered challenges of theft of the first batch of donated equipment by some of the state employees".

"When we received the first batch, the National Drug Service Organisation (NDSO) distributed it to all the facilities and in the process some of the equipment was stolen. That is why this time we have involved the LDF so that we don't burden the NDSO with having to answer some tough questions about the disappearance of equipment."

He said the LDF would keep the equipment safely before its distribution to beneficiary public health institutions.

On her part, the Deputy Minister of Health, Manthabiseng Phohleli, expressed shock at the theft of the first batch of equipment.

The Director General of Health Services, Dr 'Nyane Letsie, said the law should take its course and they were waiting to be informed when the suspects would eventually appear in court.

# Lesotho nationals safe in China: Makgothi

Nthatuoa Koeshe

**F**OREIGN Affairs and International Relations Minister Lesego Makgothi says Lesotho nationals are safe in China and continue to enjoy good hospitality despite widespread reports of Africans being harassed in the Asian nation.

The Africans, mostly Nigerians, have accused China of mistreating them over fears that they could spread the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) in that country. The claims came after stories of Africans being evicted from their residential homes in Guangzhou, China went viral on social media.

According to *Los Angeles Times*, African evictions came shortly after Guangzhou authorities announced that five Nigerians had tested positive for COVID-19. Within days, a campaign was launched to test and track all Africans in that port city.

"The sudden and sweeping move was consistent with China's response to the coronavirus. But it was propelled by a troubling logic that targeted people based on race rather than their contact history. The measure ignited a diplomatic outcry and a crisis on Guangzhou's streets.

"Some of the displaced Africans were long-time residents forced from their homes. Others were businessmen who'd completed 14-day quarantines, but then couldn't find any hotels that would accept them.

"They roamed the streets in the rain and slept under highway overpasses, huddled on the pavement in face masks. They filmed videos of police shouting at them, pressing young men to a wall, and of signs posted in apartment building and restaurants — including McDonald's — saying: 'No blacks', the *Los Angeles Times* reported on Thursday.

Videos posted on social media over the weekend also showed people of African descent being evicted from homes and hotels, sleeping rough and being refused service in shops.

COVID-19 broke out in China's Wuhan city

last December before spreading to other countries. As of yesterday, more than 2, 3 million infections have been reported and there were about 155 000 deaths worldwide. Many countries including Lesotho have imposed lockdowns closing businesses and limiting the movements of people to stop the spread of the virus.

Although China has recorded significant reductions in the number of new infections, Mr Makgothi recently told the *Sunday Express* the Asian country is still implementing compulsory coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for its nationals as well as foreigners.

He said China discovered that there were many illegal immigrants mainly from West Africa when it introduced the compulsory testing and many of these were shying away from being tested for fear of being found out. He said as a result the Chinese authorities were left with no choice but to order their evictions from their residences.

Mr Makgothi warned against misinterpreting events in China to suggest that there was wholesale targeting and ill-treatment of Africans. The minister said even the Chinese Ambassador to Lesotho, Lei Kezhong, had assured him that his country had not gone out of its way to target Africans for discrimination.

"China has introduced a policy of testing every individual in that country to ensure that no one poses a danger of spreading the deadly coronavirus," he said, in an interview with the *Sunday Express*. He added that Chinese health inspectors were forced to evict people from their residences who were found without a coronavirus green card showing that they had been tested and were free of the virus.

The minister also allayed fears that Lesotho nationals were affected by the evictions as all of them had valid visas and had not objected to the testing.

"There has not been any case (of eviction) involving a Mosotho. All Lesotho nationals in China for different engagements are there legally and they have valid visas," he said.



LESEGO Makgothi.

## Lockdown forces postponement of First Lady's case

Mohalenyane Phakela

**T**HE First Lady, Maesaiah Thabane, will have to wait until after the lockdown to know when she will finally stand trial for allegedly murdering her husband, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's estranged wife, Lipolelo in June 2017.

This after the Maseru Magistrate Courts postponed her case to a date that is still to be decided. Maesaiah is currently out on M1000 bail and she was initially supposed to be appear for her remand session on Tuesday. However, her remand hearing did not proceed with her lawyer, Advocate Rethabile Setlojoane, telling this publication that the state had informed that a new date would only be set for the case after the lockdown which expected to end on 21 April 2020.

The nationwide lockdown began on 30 March 2020 as part of measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The courts subsequently announced that they would significantly reduce operations by suspending proceedings for cases before the courts including remand hearings. However, urgent applications will still be heard and finalised during the period of the lockdown.

Maesaiah stands accused of the 14 June 2017 murder of Dr Thabane's former wife, Lipolelo. She has also been charged with the attempted murder of Thato Sibolla, who was travelling in the same vehicle with Lipolelo when she was gunned down in cold blood at Ha-Masana, Maseru. Ms Sibolla sustained injuries in the incident.

Shortly after being charged and remanded in custody by Maseru Magistrate Nthabiseng Moopisa on 5 February 2020, Ms Thabane was granted bail by Acting Chief Justice Maseforo Mahase.

During her previous appearance on 17 March 2020, Adv Setlojoane told Maseru Magistrate Thamae Thamae that if his client's trial did not begin on 14 April, he would apply for her dismissal in terms of constitutional provisions as well as the Speedy Court Trial Act which prescribe that suspects must be speedily tried.

Adv Setlojoane cited section 12 of the Speedy Court Trial Act which provides for the dismissal of cases and imposes fines on the crown counsel where it can be shown that they have wilfully failed to proceed with the trial of a suspect without justification.

Prominent Famo musician Mosotho Chakela, whose real name is Rethabile Mokete, is among those who have been charged alongside Maesaiah. The others are Seabata Sello, Molefi Matima and Macheli Koeshe. The four are however, at large and have so far failed to honour police summons to hand themselves in so that they can be tried for Lipolelo's murder.

The police have since declared them fugitives from justice and issued notices calling on the public to assist with information leading to their arrest. The police have also requested their South African Police Service (SAPS) counterparts to arrest the four should they locate them in South Africa where they are believed to be residing.

Dr Thabane has since filed a Constitutional Court application to stop the courts from trying him for the murder or any other crime as long as he remains in office.



MAESAIAH Thabane

# Expedite Thabane's retirement: CCL

'Marafaele Mohloboli

**T**HE Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) has appealed to the "relevant authorities" to expedite Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's retirement for the sake of his health and to relieve him of the "work pressure".

The CCL also bemoaned the instability and infighting in the governing coalition, saying the country could be plunged into chaos by politicians fighting each other instead of uniting to fight the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The governing four party coalition is teetering on the verge of collapse amid reports that Dr Thabane's own All Basotho Convention (ABC) has inked a deal with opposition Democratic Congress (DC) and other smaller parties to form a new government which excludes Dr Thabane and Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki's Alliance of Democrats (AD). (See stories on page 2 and 4).

Dr Thabane is on record saying he will retire at the end of July 2020 or earlier if his party chooses a successor. Last month the ABC voted for Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro to succeed him but the premier has not even acknowledged the development or said when he will finally go now that a successor has been identified.

On Friday, the CCL issued a statement calling upon "those responsible" to expedite the premier's retirement. The CCL also appealed to the government not to be side-tracked from fighting COVID-19 by the bickering with the governing coalition.



THOMAS Thabane.

Reverend Ishmael Mqathazane read out the CCL statement at a press conference in Maseru on Friday. Reverend Mqathazane said the CCL was shocked to learn of Dr Thabane's renewed bid to get rid of Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli. (See story on page 5).

"We have previously advised the government that this is not the time to be fighting over power but this is a time to fight the coronavirus," Reverend Mqathazane said on behalf of the CCL.

"We are aware of the divisions within the four-party government which are negatively impacting on progress in the implementation of the national reforms.

"We are shocked to learn that while we are busy trying to unite government, there was yet another attempt to expel the Commissioner of Police - a move which might destabilise other security agencies in Lesotho especially during this critical time when the world is fighting COVID-19.

"This nation will perish while we are busy fighting one another. We might even lose sponsors who are helping us fight this virus. We would really like to appeal to those responsible to help speed up the prime minister's retirement as he had promised that he would even retire early provided that all is orderly.

"We are therefore appealing

that he (Dr Thabane) be helped to retire early due to the work pressure, the coronavirus pandemic and his own health. We are also for the speedy reopening of parliament so that members of parliament can pass laws and the budget is approved."

The Constitutional Court on Friday nullified the prorogation of parliament by Dr Thabane, saying the premier had acted irrationally without the approval of the head of state, His Majesty King Letsie III.

Dr Thabane had prorogued parliament from 20 March 2020 to 19 June 2020 citing the need to ban large gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19. (See story on page 4).

## Police Minister to appear in court tomorrow

Ntseben Motsoeli

**P**OLICE and Public Safety Minister Lehlohonolo Moramotse will appear in court tomorrow on charges of contravening the lockdown regulations imposed by the government to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID - 19) pandemic.

Mr Moramotse is accused of contravening the regulations by purchasing alcohol at a local liquor shop in Maseru. If convicted, Mr Moramotse could be fined M5000 or jailed for two months or both.

Mr Moramotse was recently caught on camera buying liquor from a shop owner of Chinese origin in contravention of regulations forbidding the sale and purchase of alcohol.

For the duration of the lockdown which began on 30 March and ends on 21 April 2020, all liquor outlets are supposed to be closed but this particular liquor shop was allegedly opened to enable the minister to purchase alcohol.

Police Spokesperson Superintendent Mpiti Mopeli on Friday said Mr Moramotse is expected to first report to the police for "pre-court formalities" before proceeding to the magistrates' court.

"He (Mr Moramotse) was supposed to have reported to the police earlier this week but his lawyer excused him saying he was occupied and pleaded to bring him in on Monday (tomorrow). He is expected to stop by the police charge office first for the first reading of his charge," Supt Mopeli said.

It remains to be seen if the minister will report to the police and actually appear in

court tomorrow.

This after Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli on Friday stated in his High Court papers that Mr Moramotse had approached Prime Minister Thomas Thabane to shield him from prosecution.

Commissioner Molibeli said this in his founding affidavit in a case where he wants the court to interdict Dr Thabane from suspending him from his post on the grounds that he committed perjury in a case involving the transfer of a police officer from Maseru to Qacha's Nek.

The police chief argues that the real motive behind Dr Thabane's bid to suspend him is to protect Mr Moramotse from being charged with contravening lockdown regulations by allegedly buying alcohol beverages in Maseru. (See story on page 5).

There has been widespread condemnation of Mr Moramotse for his alleged violation of the liquor ban.

In a statement this week, the opposition Democratic Congress (DC) called on Dr Thabane to fire Mr Moramotse and "deal decisively" with the businessman who sold him alcohol in contravention of the lockdown regulations.

"The Democratic Congress calls upon Prime Minister Thomas Thabane to relieve the Minister of Police Lehlohonolo Moramotse of his official duties and responsibilities immediately following his breach of lockdown regulations by buying beer at the time the (lockdown) regulations don't allow such purchases.

"DC also calls on the police to deal decisively with the minister and the Chinese man who opened the store on that day for solely

serving the minister. These two culprits should face the full might of the law," the DC it statement.

Movement for Economic Change (MEC) Spokesperson Napo Moshoeshe condemned Mr Moramotse's actions, saying this painted a picture of a government which had no respect for its own legal frameworks.

"We are in a very precarious period where government should not be sending negative signals that they are not genuine and honest about the lockdown regulations.

"It does not help that a cabinet minister acts against the regulations and sneaks out to buy alcohol. The prime minister went to the extent of proroguing parliament to stress the seriousness of the situation. For one of his ministers to be seen buying beer, this seriously undermines the lockdown regulations," Mr Moshoeshe said.

The Academic Forum for Development of Lesotho (AFDeL) — a registered association of academics and professionals in various economic and development fields in Lesotho, also condemned Mr Moramotse's behaviour.

"The AFDeL urges the relevant authorities to take swift action against the Police Minister to protect Lesotho's dignity and to ensure we are not a nation where the rule of law is a mere statement that can be flouted at will. We keenly await decisive action on the matter," AFDeL said in a statement.

On Friday, the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) said they were also surprised to learn that instead of encouraging the public to adhere to the lockdown regulations, "some prominent people in the government were the ones now suspected of breaching such regulations".

Ntsebenz Motsoeli

**T**HE official leader of the opposition, Mathibeli Mokhothu (pictured), has accused Prime Minister Thomas Thabane of threatening the independence of the judiciary and destabilising the country through his reckless statements.

The Democratic Congress (DC) leader also accused Dr Thabane of fuelling conflict among the security agencies by allegedly using the army in his bid to oust Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli.

Dr Thabane addressed the nation yesterday on national radio and television and accused some unnamed individuals of using the courts of law to destabilise his government. His comments were widely seen by many as a reference to political parties including his own All Basotho Convention (ABC) which on Friday succeeded in their Constitutional Court application to nullify Dr Thabane's prorogation of parliament. (See story on page 4). The comments were also seen as a reference to Commissioner Molibeli who also obtained an interim court order against Dr Thabane's moves to suspend him. (See story on page 5).

Mr Mokhothu subsequently gave a radio interview where he castigated Dr Thabane for his allegedly reckless statement which he said was meant to intimidate governance institutions.

Mr Mokhothu said Dr Thabane was disgruntled by the court's judgment which nullified his prorogation and ordered for the parliament to resume its business which was suspended by the prorogation.

"The prime minister is disgruntled by the court ruling that the prorogation was null and void," Mr Mokhothu said yesterday.

"The judgement is clear that the nation should act as though parliament was never prorogued and it should resume its business like nothing ever happened. This means that legislators should report back to parliament on Monday.

"The prime minister and those around him are also hiding behind the Coronavirus crisis to achieve his

# Mokhothu blasts Thabane for allegedly destabilising the nation

desires. Time and again he appears to be addressing the COVID - 19 issues yet his speeches are riddled with intimidating statements. Recently during one of those speeches he said that there was terrorism in the country. Today he claims that there were people threatening the stability of the government. This statement threatens the courts of law. Judges will feel under duress because the prime minister is intimidating them."

Mr Mokhothu also accused Dr Thabane of sowing seeds of division among the security agencies by allegedly using the army to oust Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli.

"We have heard reports that soldiers surrounded the police headquarters today (yesterday) allegedly to oversee the dismissal of the commissioner of police. There is no way one can send security personnel to fire their counterpart whose post is still protected by the law. Dr Thabane and Commissioner Molibeli have recently been to court and the latter won the case to block his intended dismissal by the prime minister.

"This is why he (Dr Thabane) says that some people use the courts of law to attempt to disturb the government. Such statements from him frustrate the ideal democratic dispensation. The courts of law will work under duress. The judiciary is important in a democracy and a last resort for people who seek justice.

"His (Dr Thabane)'s statement is reckless. He is the one who is disturbing the peace. We appeal to him to lead us with patience and abide by the law which he frequently calls on everyone to adhere to. He must lead by example. He should refrain from using intimidations on independent government institutions," Mr Mokhothu said.



## Diplomats call for peace and stability in Lesotho



CHRISTIAN Manahl.

Staff Reporter

**F**OREIGN diplomats in Lesotho have called for stability and the maintenance of the rule of law in Lesotho especially during this period when the whole world is facing an existential threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A 17 April 2020 statement jointly issued by the European Union (EU), high commissions of the United Kingdom and South Africa as well as the United States embassy speaks of the "importance of maintaining stability and the rule of law in Lesotho".

"As the international community focuses on fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of maintaining stability and the rule of law in Lesotho has never been greater. As the diplomatic representatives of the European Union, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, all of which have experienced high numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases, we urge a united approach that prioritises the protection of citizens and the provision of essential services.

"It is critical that first line responders and key workers be allowed to carry out their duties, according to the law, without interference or obstruction. We further underline the need for close co-operation between security agencies and national leadership in order to address the current challenge, which may remain with us for some time.

"We are committed to supporting Lesotho and its neighbours in addressing the impact of COVID-19, both on individual health and on the economy. Destabilising actions could be catastrophic for Basotho for generations; this is the time for all leaders to act together in the national interest."

The statement is signed by EU ambassador Christian Manahl, US ambassador Rebecca Gonzales and High Commissioners Anne Macro (United Kingdom) and Sello Moloto (South Africa).



REBECCA Gonzales.

April 19 - 25 2020



DJ Trybs  
determined  
to elevate  
hip-hop

Page 14

# Sneiman releases new single



Bataung Moeketsi

**M**USICIAN Sneiman (pictured) will tomorrow release his latest single *Ba Ileng* on digital platforms.

The track tells the age-old tale of reckless spending of one's inheritance and the consequences that follow this behaviour. The track is produced by Talani Ndlovu while Mokete Auda played the accordion and bass.

Sneiman narrates the story of a boy who is born with a silver spoon in his mouth but loses his parents and blows wealth on expensive clothes, alcohol and cars.

He also spends money on expensive junkets to Botswana and South Africa.

The trips earn him the nickname, *Abuti Gaborone, Abuti Maboneng, Abuti Maseru* which the Tšepe Sethuamajoe signed artiste sings about in the track highlighting the lavish glory days and his eventual sudden fall.

The protagonist is surrounded by plenty of opportunistic friends and beautiful young women termed as "slay queens" before the tables turn resulting in him becoming homeless.

As his fortunes wane, friends desert him but that does not dampen his spirits. Instead, he aspires to build his own wealth.

Sneiman told the *Xpress People* that the song was inspired by the common stories told in the villages about men and women who start off wealthy but squander is all.

"The sad stories inspired me," Sneiman said.

"Among such wasteful characters are soccer celebrities and other famous people who blow it all.

"I watched their testimonies and read about them. Instead of mocking them, I thought maybe we should make people aware of it."

Born Senei Makhalayane, Sneiman is a vernacular singer, songwriter, rapper and producer. His music fuses Sesotho traditions of song and modern Afro sounds in his raps.

He embodies a hustler as his name suggests, which is slang for salesman, and his style is inspired by Southern African miners whose Brentwood pants and expensive leather shoes is popular in Famo culture.

*Ba Ileng* is the first single off Sneiman's *Maweekente* album, the recording of which is complete and is slated for release later this year.

"The album is done. What is left now is the paper work and final mixing and mastering.

"People should expect to hear a whole new sound *manothi* as 80 percent of the album has an accordion and other live instrument," he said.

He said the video for the track in the next few weeks, falling in line with a series of music videos that make up the *Sneiman Series* soundtrack. His 2018 debut music video for *Shoeshine le Manothi* featuring Koete Sekhukhuni kicked off the series.

Sneiman will continue shooting the series once the coronavirus pandemic subsides. He also plans to tour the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

"I have already been billed to perform at various festivals due to be confirmed as soon as the COVID-19 pandemic ends," Sneiman said.



# DJ Trybs determined to elevate hip-hop

Bataung Moeketsi

**H**IP-HOP DJ and radio host, DJ Trybs (pictured), is determined to elevate the country's hip-hop industry to newer heights one spin at a time.

The National University of Lesotho (NUL) Electronics Engineering graduate's unrelenting over the past four years has earned him billboard placements across the country as he continuously graces numerous big stages. In the process, he has earned himself a Cuban Linx residency.

Born Thabelang Masuoane, DJ Trybs grew up in Khubetsoana before moving to Butha-Butha after completing Grade 7 at Unity English Medium. He is the youngest of three in a single-parent household led by his mother.

In an interview with the *Xpress People*, DJ Trybs spoke of his transformation from an A student into becoming one of Lesotho's top DJs.

He says he has been "geek" most of his life and found solace in reading books while excelling in his studies.

"I was a nerd, was in the science club and would participate in science exhibitions," DJ Trybs said.

"I only became a DJ in university from 2014 having started off as a rapper in high school.

"I started rapping when I was in grade 11 and became part of a clique called I&I Entertainment with the likes of Bible Verse, Sadon, Malome Vector and Boshoa Botsoere."

His love for hip-hop was stifled by a decline in conscious rap due to the rise of the trap sub-genre around 2016, which led to him finding an alternative outlet.

"I sort of lost my element but I still loved music and hip-hop, so my outlet became the turntables since that allowed me to play the music that I wanted as opposed to making it."

He attributes his consistency as a DJ and love for the craft to his rise while also working as a network engineer at a local telecommunications company and manning his *Sky Alpha HD* show, *The Kartel*.

With a tight schedule revolving around his 9am to 5pm job, DJ Trybs allocates Mondays to updating his schedule and reviewing upcoming gigs while on Tuesdays after work he creates mixes for his radio show.

"I must do something that benefits my craft daily. Dedication and commitment are some of the reasons for which I have risen so quickly.

"From the first time I stepped onto the stage at Black Affluence in December 2016 up to date, I have always delivered my best. I have always dug deep from my soul."

Last year, he performed at some of the biggest shows in the country including *Pop Bottles* at Afriski, Summer Shakedown and Regal's *The Resolution on New Years Eve*.

DJ Trybs says promoters' unwillingness to pay, lack of government support for the entertainment sector and Maseru's small audience are some of the setbacks that he has faced in his career.

While his day job restricts him from branching outside the country's borders, he insists that if artistes were to travel to the country's districts more, they would soon realise the love they enjoy across the country.

"I am one of the best DJs this side. Numbers don't lie and according to my bookings for the past three years, I have been the highest booked DJ in Lesotho.

"I have a vision of placing the hip-hop industry here at home on a higher platform," DJ Trybs said.

Only time will tell whether he will be able to achieve this feat but, in the meantime, DJ Trybs promises his followers new mixes and music. He also hopes to host a battle between himself, TenOver10 and Mura before the end of the Coronavirus induced lockdown.

# Yourstars

## Aries - March 21 - April 20

New relationships could evolve through group activities. Your tendency to dramatize may be a little much for your partner to take constantly. You may be out of sorts if you have been extravagant or have let children or friends take advantage of you financially. You'll meet new friends if you try new activities.

Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

## Taurus - April 21 - May 20

Try not to allow others to burden you with additional responsibilities. Look into career choices and courses being offered. Make plans to do the things you enjoy. Try not to discuss important matters with colleagues.

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Keep your thoughts to yourself for the time being. Call a good friend. You can expect to face opposition on the home front. You can make life easier for an older member of your family.

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## Cancer - June 22 - July 22

Take work home but be sure to spend some time with your mate. There might be one who is quite willing to take the credit for your work. Be careful when dealing with investments. Secret affairs could cause upset.

Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

## Leo - July 23 - August 22

You may not be as well received in group endeavors if you try to force your will on others. You won't have to look for the action. Don't let those close to you get under your skin. Think before you act.

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Prove your worth; concentrate on getting the job done and steer clear of office politics and gossip. Avoid friends or acquaintances who drink too much. You are best to avoid joint ventures, and whatever you do, don't lend to friends or relatives. You may find that your quick wit and charm will help you in obtaining allies.

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Make sure any presentation you have is ready. It might be best to keep your ideas to yourself this week. You can stabilize your financial situation if you make property investments. You could have trouble persuading others to accept your ideas and opinions.

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## Scorpio - October 23 - November 21

You may want to look into warm vacation spots. Travel or short trips will probably be your best outlet. Don't let situations get out of hand. Stick to your own projects and by the end of the day you'll shine.

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New relationships will surface through work relate events. Follow through on some of the good ideas that come up, and you could have a real winner of a deal. Take the whole family and make it an enjoyable outing. Find a quiet spot where you can work diligently and stay out of the way.

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## Capricorn - December 21 - January 19

Comfort is a necessity. Check your motives. Just be yourself. You may want to pull out some of those unfinished projects you've got tucked away. You should channel your efforts into getting rid of bad habits.

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## Aquarius - January 20 - February 18

Real estate investments could be to your advantage. You may end up being blamed if anything goes wrong. You must take care of health problems that have been lingering. You can have a great time if you go out with the one you love.

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You can make money but not through hare-brained schemes or gambling. For now, just do the best you can. Don't get involved in secret affairs or underhanded involvements. Do what's best for the people you love most.

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# The conversion of Dolores Hart



DOLORES Hart played a nun in Francis Of Assisi in 1961. Just a few years later, she became one in real life.

Andrew Milne

**D**OLORES Hart was compared to Grace Kelly and starred opposite Elvis Presley, but she gave up fame at just 24 to live a monastic life as a nun, renouncing all earthly pleasures.

It was 1963 and Dolores Hart had the world at her feet. As she nurtured a budding film career, a crowd of ardent admirers grew around her.

All of Hart's blessings were sustained by her fresh, all-American screen presence that blended Ann Margaret and Lauren Bacall. A gentle kiss shared between Hart and mid-century heartthrob Elvis Presley had allowed her to step out of obscurity and into the limelight.

But 1963 would also be the year when Hart shocked Hollywood and the rest of the world by renouncing her starlet career. She gave up the life that had paired her with the "King of Rock and Roll" and instead decided to follow the "King of Kings." With hardly a backward glance, Hart tossed away her promising acting career and sought refuge as a nun.

This is the story of Mother Dolores Hart, the reverse *Fräulein Maria*.

Dolores Hart: In the beginning

In a life replete with surprises, one of the first is that Hart wasn't born Catholic, though she was named after another nun, her Aunt Dolores Marie.

Dolores Hicks was born in 1938 to teenage parents named Bert and Harriet, who were both aspiring actors. She would primarily be raised by two grandparents in Chicago. Her father, following his dream to be in the pictures, departed for Hollywood, leaving behind a 3-year-old Hart.

She grew up around family, including a great-grandmother who would routinely bestow advice of the heart to her as she braided her granddaughter's locks: "Don't ever cut your hair, dear, until it's really love."

As a child, Hart was sent to a parochial school called St. Gregory because it was close to her home. As Hart explains it: "My grandparents didn't want me to get run over by streetcars."

Hart's family life was light on religion but she nevertheless converted to Catholicism at the tender age of 10. Years later, Mother Dolores Hart confessed that it hadn't been the call of The Holy Spirit that brought her into the fold at such an early age. Rather, it was because the Catholic children got treats after communion, and the other children were excluded.

She said, "That's how they got me, chocolate milk and doughnuts."

But long before surrendering to catechesis and sacraments to sate her sweet tooth, Hart's heart had been stolen by another great love: film.

Hart's grandfather was a projectionist at a movie theater, and young Hart would accompany him to the projector booth (she said it was her job to rouse him after he fell asleep manning the reel). She'd stare at the films from the booth, and watch the larger-than-life figures light up the screen. Like her parents before her, Hart felt the bite of the acting bug.

## Stranger than Fiction

After playing the lead in a Los Angeles school production years later, Hart confessed to an admirer that all her acting techniques came from watching movie performances in that projector booth.

### A rise to stardom

Dolores Hart moved to Los Angeles to live with her mother, and began auditioning for roles in high school (notably for *Saint Joan*, the *Joan of Arc* vehicle that skyrocketed Jean Seberg to fame and notoriety).

She didn't get that part, but she did make it to Marymount College, and soon broke into the movie industry.

Her career picked up steam almost miraculously — she appeared in *Lonelyhearts* with Montgomery Clift and *Wild is the Wind* with Anthony Quinn, stepping with ease into playing the role of the innocent ingenue. The performance she's most remembered for, however, was her first as a leading lady opposite Presley in *Loving You*.

"I think the limit for a screen kiss back then was something like 15 seconds. That one has lasted 40 years," recalled Hart.

She was a star on the rise, dubbed "the new Grace Kelly." While she denies ever becoming involved with Elvis, she did have a romantic life. Hart became engaged to a longtime boyfriend, the businessman Don Robinson.

Invitations were sent out, and as a mark of Hart's ascendance to true mid-century Hollywood aristocracy, Oscar-winning costumer Edith Head designed her wedding gown.

And, almost as quickly as her star rose, she snuffed it out. In 1963, aged 24, Dolores Hart ended her engagement and announced that she was renouncing Hollywood to sequester as a nun.

"Even my best friend, who was a priest, Father Doody, said, 'You're crazy. This is absolutely insane to do this,'" Hart told the *Washington Post*. Her aunt, Sister Dolores Marie, who had given Hart her namesake, "was livid. Because she loved having a niece who was famous."

### Dolores Hart's call to faith

What made this beautiful young woman give up her earthly paradise?

One push came in the form of a role. She starred in the film *Lisa*, in which a Jewish World War II refugee has a spiritual awakening in British Palestine.

"That film was the one that made me really think about the possibility of being a nun. I've never really spoken about it until now," Hart recalled in a 2008 interview. Another pull was made of brick and

mortar — she had known what a nun's life was like because she was a frequent visitor to a convent. One weekend, seeking tranquility, she visited a Connecticut convent called the Regina Laudis Abbey. She found peace, and her future home.

"After that, whenever I was on the East Coast, I would go there," she said. "I began to notice each time I went it was becoming harder and harder to leave. I had this feeling. I was home."

The Abbey became a source of strength and connection for Hart. When she was having cold feet about her engagement, she went to her spiritual home for clarity.

"In a blinding snowstorm I took a walk up the hill where the founder had put a cross and an altar. When I found the altar, I knew I had to talk to the Abbess," recalled Hart.

The Abbess asked the actress: "What is it that you want?"

If this were one of her religious films, Hart would have heard God speak with her directly. It didn't go down quite so dramatically in real life. Years passed before she was certain, but she realized she wasn't meant to be married to a man. She felt she was supposed to be devoted to God. After informing her fiancé of her decision, he recalled years later:

"I was crushed. Are you kidding? I'm a human being. I loved her deeply and still do, and I always will."

Robinson, as a devout Catholic, ultimately supported Hart's decision. Her work complete, Hart sheared off her beautiful golden hair and took her vows in 1966.

But she didn't retreat from the world entirely. Once Dolores Hart became Sister Dolores, she still recognized that there was purpose in acting, and founded an open-air theatre on the Abbey grounds.

She said, "It wasn't until we started a theater on the Abbey land that I really could see how I could help young people find their vocation in Christ through the medium of the theater."

Mother Dolores Hart has published several books, and she was the subject of 2012 HBO documentary *God Is The Bigger Elvis*, which was nominated for an Oscar. She still finds time to counsel friends from her old life when they visit her abbey. In a 2013 interview, Hart recalled a theological discussion she had with one friend, a retired actress, about the nature of the afterlife.

Hart said, "Once we were talking about heaven and Valerie said, 'I'm not Catholic, so what does it mean, when you go to heaven, that you're going to get your body back? And I said, 'That's what the Lord says.' And Valerie said, 'When I go, I'm going to ask him for my boobs when I was 18, my waist when I was 33 and my ass when I was 36.' And I said, 'Valerie, if that's what you want, ask for it. Faith teaches you to ask for whatever you need.'"

From young convert to film starlet to religious figure, Dolores Hart's life has been the stuff of modern-day hagiography, a story destined to inspire more film adaptations in the future. — at

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This is the story of Mother Dolores Hart, the reverse *Fräulein Maria*.

Dolores Hart: In the beginning

In a life replete with surprises, one of the first is that Hart wasn't born Catholic, though she was named after another nun, her Aunt Dolores Marie.

Dolores Hicks was born in 1938 to teenage parents named Bert and Harriet, who were both aspiring actors. She would primarily be raised by two grandparents in Chicago. Her father, following his dream to be in the pictures, departed for Hollywood, leaving behind a 3-year-old Hart.

She grew up around family, including a great-grandmother who would routinely bestow advice of the heart to her as she braided her granddaughter's locks: "Don't ever cut your hair, dear, until it's really love."

As a child, Hart was sent to a parochial school called St. Gregory because it was close to her home. As Hart explains it: "My grandparents didn't want me to get run over by streetcars."

Hart's family life was light on religion but she nevertheless converted to Catholicism at the tender age of 10. Years later, Mother Dolores Hart confessed that it hadn't been the call of The Holy Spirit that brought her into the fold at such an early age. Rather, it was because the Catholic children got treats after communion, and the other children were excluded.

She said, "That's how they got me, chocolate milk and doughnuts."

But long before surrendering to catechesis and sacraments to sate her sweet tooth, Hart's heart had been stolen by another great love: film.

Hart's grandfather was a projectionist at a movie theater, and young Hart would accompany him to the projector booth (she said it was her job to rouse him after he fell asleep manning the reel). She'd stare at the films from the booth, and watch the larger-than-life figures light up the screen. Like her parents before her, Hart felt the bite of the acting bug.

## Stranger than Fiction

After playing the lead in a Los Angeles school production years later, Hart confessed to an admirer that all her acting techniques came from watching movie performances in that projector booth.

### A rise to stardom

Dolores Hart moved to Los Angeles to live with her mother, and began auditioning for roles in high school (notably for *Saint Joan*, the *Joan of Arc* vehicle that skyrocketed Jean Seberg to fame and notoriety).

She didn't get that part, but she did make it to Marymount College, and soon broke into the movie industry.

Her career picked up steam almost miraculously — she appeared in *Lonelyhearts* with Montgomery Clift and *Wild is the Wind* with Anthony Quinn, stepping with ease into playing the role of the innocent ingenue. The performance she's most remembered for, however, was her first as a leading lady opposite Presley in *Loving You*.

"I think the limit for a screen kiss back then was something like 15 seconds. That one has lasted 40 years," recalled Hart.

She was a star on the rise, dubbed "the new Grace Kelly." While she denies ever becoming involved with Elvis, she did have a romantic life. Hart became engaged to a longtime boyfriend, the businessman Don Robinson.

Invitations were sent out, and as a mark of Hart's ascendance to true mid-century Hollywood aristocracy, Oscar-winning costumer Edith Head designed her wedding gown.

And, almost as quickly as her star rose, she snuffed it out. In 1963, aged 24, Dolores Hart ended her engagement and announced that she was renouncing Hollywood to sequester as a nun.

"Even my best friend, who was a priest, Father Doody, said, 'You're crazy. This is absolutely insane to do this,'" Hart told the *Washington Post*. Her aunt, Sister Dolores Marie, who had given Hart her namesake, "was livid. Because she loved having a niece who was famous."

### Dolores Hart's call to faith

What made this beautiful young woman give up her earthly paradise?

One push came in the form of a role. She starred in the film *Lisa*, in which a Jewish World War II refugee has a spiritual awakening in British Palestine.

"That film was the one that made me really think about the possibility of being a nun. I've never really spoken about it until now," Hart recalled in a 2008 interview. Another pull was made of brick and

mortar — she had known what a nun's life was like because she was a frequent visitor to a convent. One weekend, seeking tranquility, she visited a Connecticut convent called the Regina Laudis Abbey. She found peace, and her future home.

"After that, whenever I was on the East Coast, I would go there," she said. "I began to notice each time I went it was becoming harder and harder to leave. I had this feeling. I was home."

The Abbey became a source of strength and connection for Hart. When she was having cold feet about her engagement, she went to her spiritual home for clarity.

"In a blinding snowstorm I took a walk up the hill where the founder had put a cross and an altar. When I found the altar, I knew I had to talk to the Abbess," recalled Hart.

The Abbess asked the actress: "What is it that you want?"

If this were one of her religious films, Hart would have heard God speak with her directly. It didn't go down quite so dramatically in real life. Years passed before she was certain, but she realized she wasn't meant to be married to a man. She felt she was supposed to be devoted to God. After informing her fiancé of her decision, he recalled years later:

"I was crushed. Are you kidding? I'm a human being. I loved her deeply and still do, and I always will."

Robinson, as a devout Catholic, ultimately supported Hart's decision. Her work complete, Hart sheared off her beautiful golden hair and took her vows in 1966.

But she didn't retreat from the world entirely. Once Dolores Hart became Sister Dolores, she still recognized that there was purpose in acting, and founded an open-air theatre on the Abbey grounds.

She said, "It wasn't until we started a theater on the Abbey land that I really could see how I could help young people find their vocation in Christ through the medium of the theater."

Mother Dolores Hart has published several books, and she was the subject of 2012 HBO documentary *God Is The Bigger Elvis*, which was nominated for an Oscar. She still finds time to counsel friends from her old life when they visit her abbey. In a 2013 interview, Hart recalled a theological discussion she had with one friend, a retired actress, about the nature of the afterlife.

Hart said, "Once we were talking about heaven and Valerie said, 'I'm not Catholic, so what does it mean, when you go to heaven, that you're going to get your body back? And I said, 'That's what the Lord says.' And Valerie said, 'When I go, I'm going to ask him for my boobs when I was 18, my waist when I was 33 and my ass when I was 36.' And I said, 'Valerie, if that's what you want, ask for it. Faith teaches you to ask for whatever you need.'"

From young convert to film starlet to religious figure, Dolores Hart's life has been the stuff of modern-day hagiography, a story destined to inspire more film adaptations in the future. — at





PEOPLE queue for paraffin at one of the garages during the national wide lockdown in Maseru.



QUEEN Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru is currently being demolished.

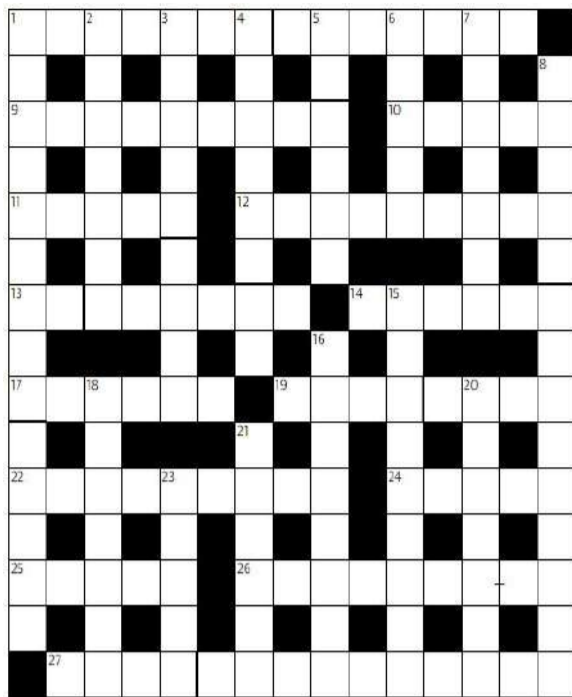


A MAN looks for valuables in a waste area in Maseru.



CONSUMERS queue to buy groceries at one of the stores in Maseru.

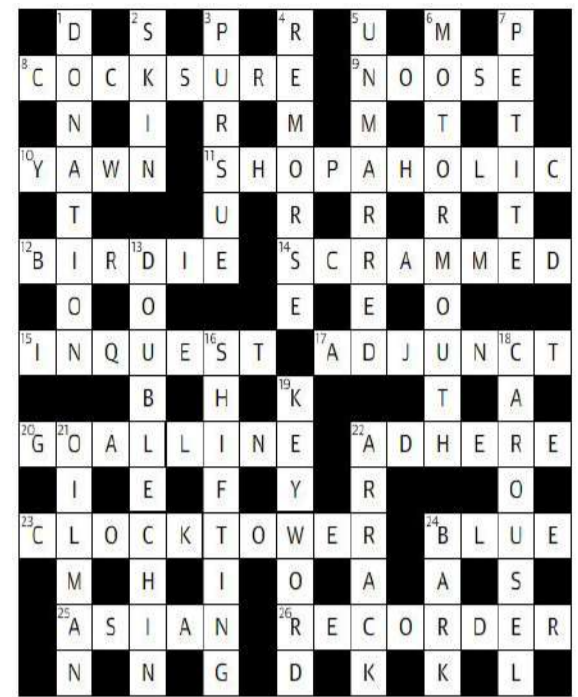
# Crossword Puzzle



- Across**
- 8 Arrogant male turning us on (8)
  - 9 Ring through snout for end of rope, maybe (5)
  - 10 Boring person with new style, in retrospect (4)
  - 11 Ooh! I love purchasing, initially getting cash out (10)
  - 12 One under empty bar drinking single to pass out (6)
  - 14 Son packed and went off (8)
  - 15 Hearing Italian on vacation before adventure (7)
  - 17 Accessory with evening dress: one must get into function (7)
  - 20 Side on pitch try, tired at end of game (4,4)
  - 22 Stick plug in this space (6)
  - 23 See one pulling faces with hands up on this? (5,5)
  - 24 Adult butterfly (4)
  - 25 Like getting home to eat a Chinese? (5)
  - 26 Instrument in song by Queen (8)

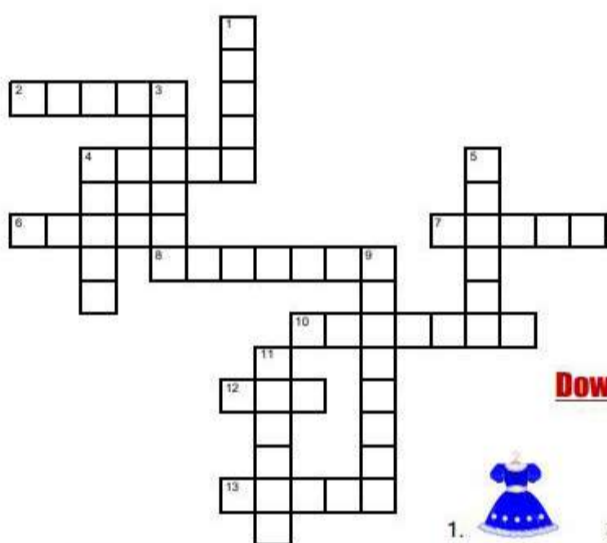
- Down**
- 1 Party people getting present (8)
  - 2 Middle part of classic family film (4)
  - 3 Go after money you picked up for investment (6)
  - 4 Deep regret as vibrations not leading to ecstasy (7)
  - 5 Perfect single knocking off Number 1 (8)
  - 6 One likes to chat old male up with right opening (10)
  - 7 Small bird in water (6)
  - 13 Could be unfit: primarily heavy with it? (6,4)
  - 16 Separating without husband moving (8)
  - 18 Song's good within musical (8)
  - 19 Type date, line going over part of index (3,4)
  - 21 Train overcrowded at the start: main line to occupy platform worker? (6)
  - 22 Topless bar: stand to get strong drink (6)
  - 24 British vessel in bay (4)

# Last week solution



# Kiddies

## Clothes - Crossword



**Across**



**Down**

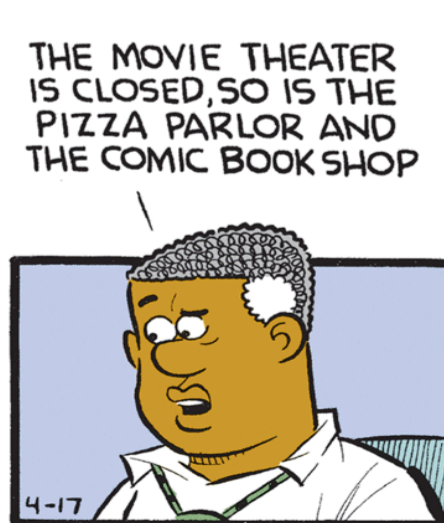


## Muscular System



- SMOOTH MUSCLE
- CARDIAC MUSCLE
- FIBERS
- TENDON
- NERVE
- MYOSIN
- ACTIN
- TISSUES
- FLEXOR
- EXTENSOR
- BICEPS
- BATELLA
- MASSETER
- SHEATH

# Curtis



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# Namibia's youngest MP enters the crucible as Africa's youth lead the way

ONE of Africa's youngest cabinet members to date is experiencing a baptism of fire.

Emma Theofelus, 23, was appointed Namibia's information, communication and technology deputy minister a week after coronavirus hit Namibian shores. "I have literally been learning on the job so far," she says.

Part of Theofelus's role is to help lead communication to the public on preventative steps against the pandemic.

The former youth activist and justice ministry legal officer was having a quiet Saturday at home when the surprise call came from State House.

"I have been put in a position, regardless of what limitations I might have, to show up and do the best that I can do," says Theofelus, who has had to learn very quickly how to navigate governance and political issues.

So far Namibia has seen "tremendous results" in giving real-time information about coronavirus to the media and the public while thwarting fake news, she says.

The appointment of younger leaders to high office is not entirely new in Africa. Thomas Sankara, for example, was 33 when he became president of Burkina Faso in 1983, and Abiy Ahmed was appointed Ethiopian prime minister last year at the age of 41.

But Theofelus is female, particularly young and representative of a continent where almost 60 percent of the population is under 25 years old, and where many presidents are among the oldest in the world.

In neighbouring Botswana, trade economist and consultant Bogolo Kenewendo was only 29 when she was appointed minister of investment, trade and industry. Like Theofelus, she didn't rise through party political ranks but rather was appointed for the skills she could bring to the portfolio. This is especially unusual in southern Africa, where the credentials of the older liberation war heroes, born of struggle, often weigh more heavily than educational qualifications.

The same was true for Vera Daves da Sousa, 35, who became Angola's finance minister last year. She is now tasked with reviving an oil-based economy suffering its worst recession since civil war ended in

2002.

In the past decade regional powerhouse South Africa has welcomed a larger number of younger cabinet members, too. For example, last year Ronald Lamola, 35 and a lawyer by training, was appointed justice minister. He rose to prominence a decade ago as part of the youth league of the governing African National Congress (ANC), where he was a close ally of Julius Malema, one of the most prominent young African politicians in recent times. They went their separate ways after Malema was expelled and formed his own party.

In the past month, Lamola has been part of a team consisting of mostly older ministers regulating South Africa's tight coronavirus lockdown. In an unprecedented move by the president, another young colleague, communications minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, was this week ordered to take leave for breaking these rules after she was pictured on social media having lunch at a friend's house. Ndabeni-Abrahams, also from the ANC Youth League, was 33 when she became deputy minister in 2011.

It is in South Africa's national legislature where the ages are truly dipping. The ANC's Itumeleng Ntsube made history by becoming the youngest member of parliament in the country's history after last year's general elections.

Ntsube, aged 20 at the time, was joined by at least four former student activists who made names for themselves a couple of years earlier in the #FeesMustFall protest movement.

Across the border in Zimbabwe, where Robert Mugabe clung to power until the age of 93, former Olympian swimmer Kirsty Coventry, then 35, was appointed minister of youth, sport, arts and recreation in 2018 by President Emmerson Mnangagwa. In the same year, Jessie Majome, from the opposition MDC Alliance, became the youngest



EMMA Theofelus.

parliamentarian aged 25.

Mugabe was also known for appointing young ministers, such as the firebrand youth leader Saviour Kasukuwere, who became deputy minister of youth development and employment creation in 2005 at the age of 35.

But having young leaders in government isn't always good news. Instead of advancing youth interests, the appointment of young people as ministers in Zimbabwe "has been done over the years expeditiously and selectively", says Harare-based Ibbo Mandaza, director of the Sapes Trust thinktank.

"It's mostly done half-heartedly, because the older generation doesn't want to give up power," he says. "It's also done as a way of co-opting and buying off the opposition."

Mandaza says Coventry was ap-

pointed to woo white Zimbabweans. "There has not been a pattern of a systematic attempt for generational change in the region."

Some heads of state have made young appointments to compete favourably with the opposition. For example, MDC leader Nelson Chamisa is 42, while in South Africa Julius Malema turns 39 this year.

The 2018 Gates Foundation report, which focused on youth population growth, said investment in the booming youth population could be good for African economies because if young people are healthy, educated and productive, they could "do the kind of innovative work that stimulates rapid growth".

Theofelus says she genuinely believes President Hage Geingob has good intentions. "The first time I met him I was 17, and from what

I've observed he's always been surrounded with young people," she says. "This was perhaps him walking the talk that young people are the leaders of tomorrow and we have to prepare them today."

This does put a lot of pressure on her as a representative of young people, she says.

Melanie Verwoerd, a Cape Town-based political columnist who in 1994, aged 27, became an ANC MP and the youngest woman in South Africa's first democratic parliament, says that while she believes it is important to have young public representatives, and while younger people have enormous energy, on a personal level age would have made her a better politician.

"As a young MP I had enormous energy, so I was working myself to the ground," says Verwoerd. "But I was incredibly productive."

Now, she says, "there is a sense and balance that comes with age and experience. I think I would be wiser; I would certainly be a lot less hot-headed."

Being young in high office also brings frustrations. Aged 34 she became ambassador to Ireland, where her youth meant many colleagues in the diplomatic corps didn't take her seriously. "They would look me up and down and the ambassadors would say: 'You look hopelessly too young to be an ambassador.' And I had a standard refrain to say: 'Ja, they tried the old men, and that didn't work out so well, and now they're giving the younger women a try.'"

Youth per se is not necessarily an important quality for leadership.

"If it's the right person for the job and the right responsibility, I think age makes no difference. It's just important that, in particular for young people, there are mentors, there are people who guide them through the process," says Verwoerd. "Maybe it becomes a little more important than for experienced, older people."

— *The Guardian*

## Stranded SA travellers are slowly being brought back home

Peter Fabricius

MORE than 60 stranded South Africans returned from Brazil this week and about 300 returned from Miami on Wednesday. The South African government has so far repatriated more than 600 of the 3 639 South Africans known to have been stranded abroad by coronavirus lockdowns and is "slowly whittling down" the list.

International Relations and Co-operation Minister Naledi Pandor has disclosed that one of the South Africans who has returned had not been properly screened before departing for South Africa and so had infected other members of the party with the virus. All of them had gone into quarantine and were being cared for, she said in recorded remarks sent to the media. Pandor said she was pleased that more than 60 stranded South Africans had returned from Brazil this week and about 300 had returned from Miami on Wednesday while more were expected from the US on Thursday.

But some "sticky areas" were proving difficult, she said.

"For example, Thailand. We haven't yet cracked it. As well as permissions from some countries. We are waiting for Pakistan to give us the go-ahead. There's a charter ready to return around 84 South Africans from Pakistan.

"We haven't got the permission as per our procedures. So, I'm hoping we will get that in the next day or two. We're working on the USA because we still have some citizens in New York and other cities."

Apart from repatriations from overseas, the government was also bringing home around



INTERNATIONAL Relations and Co-operation Minister Naledi Pandor said she was pleased that more than 60 stranded South Africans had returned from Brazil.

150 to 200 South Africans a day across land borders, from countries like Namibia, Botswana and Lesotho. Pandor's spokesperson Lunga Ngqengelele told *Daily Maverick* that not all of the 3 639 South Africans on the department's list had to be repatriated by the government. This was the list of those who had registered with South Africa's embassies and other diplomatic missions abroad or with the department's 24-hour command centre in Pretoria "as people who had wanted to be repatriated".

He recalled that in her first statement on repatriating South Africans stranded abroad by the lockdown, Pandor had said the government's priority was those stranded at airports, students asked to move out of their residences, the elderly and the sick.

"As we go through the list, we find there are some who don't meet these criteria," he added. It was not clear how many of the 3,639

did meet the criteria. Some of those returning had chartered their own flights. Pandor said that repatriations, whether by land or air, were sometimes delayed because officials had to confirm all of those seeking to return were South African citizens.

"So, we work at it. But remember all countries are in lockdown so it's not a matter of saying, 'I want to come back' and it happens tomorrow. We have to negotiate. We've got to be sure that the people who come back are very knowledgeable about the fact that they will have to come into quarantine back in South Africa for 14 days at a minimum. And anyone who resists that, well unfortunately we won't assist you.

"We also have to ask our countries overseas to ensure that at least they have done some processing in terms of checking that they're not sending persons who are infected. We did

have one unfortunate occurrence, where we had one of our returns who was infected and we'd not been made aware at point of pick-up, and a number in that group became infected. But they are now in quarantine. They're receiving the necessary care.

"Because this virus doesn't show immediately. So, unless you're quite careful in terms of the assessment, you don't pick it up and then you find yourself confronted with transmission and a likely challenge. But we are exercising due care.

"As Dirco we are working very closely with the Department of Health to advise us on all the correct procedures to follow, even with respect to the crews of the various aircraft – we're using SAA most of the time. We do have a quarantine period for them so that we don't in any way offend the regulations that have been put in place.

"Because we can't say because we are picking up people we must be treated differently. All of us have to fall in line as we have appealed to all South Africans. Let all of us follow the regulations not just to save our lives but to save the lives of others."

Pandor did not mention the group of some 20 South Africans who are still stuck in Abidjan, capital of Côte d'Ivoire. Last weekend the South African embassy there tried to persuade the government of Ghana to let them in so they could board an SAA aircraft returning from Germany that would be diverted to Accra to collect them. The group paid R7 000 each for their tickets but then the embassy informed them two days before the flight that Ghana wouldn't let them cross the border because of its coronavirus restrictions. — DM

# Real estate broker duties

**A** REAL estate broker works to negotiate and arrange real estate transactions. This licensed individual has daily duties that include writing contracts and overseeing transactions for sales and purchasing activities on homes, land and commercial properties.

A broker has attained a higher-level license than a real estate agent and can hire real estate agents to work as a team under their supervision.

### Licensing levels

In some states, every real estate professional is licensed as a broker, such as in Colorado and New Mexico. However, even if you are licensed as an independent broker, you must attain another higher-level license if you want to hire agents or other brokers to work under you.

There can be considerable risk involved if agents are not properly trained and supervised, particularly with regard to fair housing and environmental regulations. Brokers who allow agents to make major mistakes can end up sharing in the penalties, both financial and legal.

Agents often set up their websites. A supervising broker assumes the responsibility of reviewing their agents' websites periodically to make sure no regulation violations exist.

### Real estate brokers working for sellers

While an agent working on a broker's behalf will often take on the following duties, the broker handles transactions for sellers as well. In some states, all licensed individuals are brokers, though only some are licensed to supervise agents. Some of a broker's duties on behalf of sellers include:

- Listing homes for sale on the local, MLS, Multiple Listing Service
- Sharing the brokerage listings with other MLS broker members to get buyers to the property
- Sharing the listing commission with successful buyer brokers
- Advising the home seller in preparing their home for listing and showings
- Supervising showing, report to sellers results and feedback



- Coordinating and helping buyers to visit and view properties
- When a decision is made to attempt a purchase, helping the buyer craft their initial offer and purchase agreement
- Working with the buyer on their behalf in negotiations with the seller through their agent/broker
- Once a purchase contract is executed, coordinating the transaction process on the buyer side
- Delivering and explaining documents in the transaction process
- Coordinating inspections, reports and repair negotiations
- Assisting buyers through to closing and taking possession

### Brokers and supervising agents

When a broker is licensed to have agents working under them, sometimes called a supervising or managing broker, their agents handle most or all of the brokerage transactions. As part of the supervisory responsibilities for agents, the broker:

- Verifies continued licensing of all brokerage agents
- Instructs and trains or provides training resources for agents
- Is responsible for agent behaviour, performance, and legal compliance
- Provides some services and marketing resources for agents
- Often maintains a brokerage website for agent marketing

Real estate brokers licensed at the highest state levels set standards of practice in the area and are tasked with maintaining high levels of customer/client service and compliance with all state-based real estate laws.

Considerable risk exists in the operation of a brokerage. To minimize this risk, brokers assume the responsibility of educating and constantly monitoring their agents.

Many agents are happy to work in that manner, but ambitious agents may choose to take advantage of the higher-level opportunities that come with working as a real estate broker. —thebalancesmb

- Submitting any offers to the seller for consideration
- Helping the seller negotiate offers to try and execute a purchase contract with a buyer
- Working on the seller's behalf in coordinating the transaction process
- Delivering and explain documents, disclosures and transaction items
- Working with the seller through the closing and their move-out from the home

### Working with buyers

On the other side of the transaction, brokers work with people wanting to buy a property by providing advice and services to help them to find a property that fits their needs and completing the steps of the transaction, such as:

- Helping buyers locate all properties in their desired area in their price range and meeting their criteria

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Sid Lowe

# Andrés Iniesta: Barcelona will never be the same

**T**HE midfielder, now at Vissel Kobe, eagerly awaits the resumption of football and says he has no plans to slip quietly into retirement

“Every time I see a photo of a game or a full stadium, I feel desperate to play football again,” Andrés Iniesta says after 54 days without. For his club Vissel Kobe, Emperor’s Cup winners in January, the new J-League season started on 21 February and stopped again four days later due to the coronavirus crisis. It was due to restart on 15 March, then 29 March, and then 6 May. Now they hope it might be on 9 May. But who knows? And that is in a country seen as a model of pandemic management, one where, Iniesta says thankfully, “the situation appears to be under control”.

It is just before dinner time, another evening on lockdown in his family flat, high above the city and about 6 500 miles from home in Spain. “There will,” he adds, “be a before and after.” Quite what that after looks like is a question that lingers, for football and for him.

By the time the J League resumes, Iniesta could well be 36 (his birthday is on 11 May). This could be a watershed, time perhaps to look to retirement plans — coaching, rarely associated with him, comes up in conversation — but he resists. In fact, Iniesta thinks “all this time not playing will give me the energy to keep going even longer”.

Until then, time drags on. “From the start of the virus, schools were closed, mass gatherings were cancelled. Things like wearing masks, some of the hygiene measures, are normal here anyway and that’s helped to reduce the spread,” Iniesta says. “Now we’re just waiting, staying home, going out as little as possible. The little ones (Valeria, nine; Paolo Andrea, four; Siena, just about to turn three; plus, Romeo, 10 months) are doing classes online. They know there’s a virus that’s dangerous.”

The kids stay in and back in the tiny village of Fuentebilla so do Iniesta’s parents. “All sorts of things go through your mind,” he says. “People are handling it naturally here [but] maybe we’re more influenced by what we see or read about Spain than what’s actually happening here. Here you can go for a walk, but sometimes we don’t because you’re influenced by Spain, thinking: ‘Is it the right thing to do?’ That can be disconcerting.”

“You ask yourself when can we get back to normal life? When can we leave our homes? When can we give each other a hug? We don’t know if the weather improving will mean the virus is reduced like any other virus or the flu, if a vaccine will be found? All those things are up in the air.”

The football season, too. “The key moment was the (Tokyo) Olympics,” Iniesta explains. “They tried everything for it to go ahead. Once it was postponed (giving the J-league more room for manoeuvre in July and August), the league decided not to return until 9 May. So that’s when we go back ... in theory. Not having a clear target is hard. There have been moments when we thought we were going back this day or that day, then it’s paused again.”

“When it comes to preparation, planning, motivation, stepping up your training because games are approaching ... well, it’s impossible. You train full-on when there’s still a month left, or maybe more. The good thing,” Iniesta says, “is we’ve only played one game.”

It is easier to let go, in other words. “Hopefully there will be a turnaround and everything changes radi-

cally for the better, but getting back to playing looks difficult now,” he adds.

“It’s a difficult situation. It must be very hard [for teams like Liverpool, who may be denied a title]. Or a second division team on the verge of being promoted, told this season is null and void, that it doesn’t count. Or, the other way round: a team in the relegation zone is saved. Pfff. I don’t know how you resolve it.”

“Football is part of society; it can’t escape that. You feel a responsibility to do the right thing as a person and as someone in the public eye. This will have an impact; there will be measures that stay in place, changes, a before and after. We have to try to make the best of a terrible situation.”

Could one benefit be that clubs, hit economically,

are forced to draw on their youth systems? At Barcelona, perhaps it could force a return to an identity built on La Masia — the stone farmhouse in the shadow of the Camp Nou where Iniesta lived when he first departed Fuentebilla, a small boy in tears? A return to the days when the Ballon d’Or podium was all Barcelona youth-teamers, Iniesta standing with Xavi and Lionel Messi, the only one of the three remaining.

For many, these have been days of nostalgia. For Iniesta, too, completing the documentary that follows his biography, touching on those moments at Stamford Bridge and in South Africa; the depression he suffered; the death of his friend, the Espanyol captain Dani Jarque; and now his new life in Japan.

There is one thing he still doesn’t reveal:

what Frank Rijkaard said after leaving him out of the side for the 2006 European Cup final. “It would be wrong to repeat the words he said to me,” Iniesta says. Then there’s a joke, lost down the line. Nor, speaking of jokes, is the moment when he met Peter Crouch in the film — a running gag in the former England striker’s podcast — and why would it be? “I’m aware of it,” Iniesta says, “I just don’t remember if it was me who asked for the photo or if it was him.” Crouch would like to come to Japan, he is told. “Well, I’ll be here,” he says. “What’s he up to right now?”

Otherwise, it’s all there. “Good moments, bad moments. I have always been clear that this has been my way of doing things, respecting others, trusting in myself, confronting things as they have presented themselves, taking them on without complaining when I wasn’t playing or when I saw something that wasn’t fair, always trying to make the most of the opportunity to play. And in the end, that’s the point: it’s about how you approach it.”

It’s about the journey, one for which he notes in one moment of the film: “I paid the toll.” That is most visible in the eyes of his parents, José Antonio and Mari. “My mum has almost never spoken publicly and it’s emotional hearing her,” Iniesta says. Yet, the moment when the passing of time is marked and melancholy most takes hold may even be when Messi talks about their generation, the finest in Barcelona’s history: in the tone, the eyes, the slipping away of his sentence, there’s a realisation that the end is near.

It is hard not to link that to the moment the club is going through now, lurching from crisis to crisis. Barcelona can feel like it has lost its religion, La Masia less-fertile ground now; more a battleground. Those days seem a long way off, even though Iniesta departed less than two years ago, Xavi three years before, and Carles Puyol and Víctor Valdés a year before that. Messi, Gerard Piqué, and Sergio Busquets remain but are all well into their second decade at the club.

“That generation will never be repeated but what follows does not have to necessarily be worse in terms of how the club fares,” Iniesta says. “I had seen Puyol go, I had seen Víctor go, and then Xavi had gone ... you concentrate on your own day-to-day, you still have a great team around you, top players.”

Yet you can’t help wondering if a player like Iniesta would be given the chance any more. If something has been lost and the only way to recover those ideals, that identity, is to recover that generation, bring them back. Worse, you cannot help wondering if he had gone prematurely; if it need not have been the end, his departure linked to the drift, a disconnect. In the film, that hint hangs heavy, a lingering sense there is blame to be apportioned.

“Erm ... ‘blame’, no ... it’s no one’s

fault. In the end, things happen the way they have to happen. And they happened like that and I took the decision because I felt it was the one that I had to take.”

Had to? “It is true that if things are done differently you feel differently. It’s like a relationship and in a relationship if you have a problem with your wife or with a friend and you don’t talk, you don’t talk, and then the moment comes that you do, things have already deteriorated or one person thinks one thing, another [thinks] another. But I don’t think it’s blame, because everyone sees things in a different way and all I am doing is giving my opinion and for sure on the other side there is another.”

“There have been all sorts of eras in the club’s history: young players used to get a chance in the first team when results were bad and they had to turn to the youth team. That happened in my era,” Iniesta says.

“But then you have the period when you have 10, 11, 12 players from the youth team in the first-team squad. It depends on who the coach is, the situation of the club, but I always think that a player in the youth system who is good enough to play in the first team reaches the first team.”

“It was many years living this club, growing up here since we were very young, getting into the first team and staying there for 10, 12, 15 years, becoming captains. We were all formed here as people. It’s difficult for something like that to happen. It’s very difficult. We’re talking about Barcelona, a club with the best players. Víctor, Puyol, Xavi, me: we came up in a scenario to Busi (Sergio Busquets), Piqué, and Leo (Messi).”

“We’re people who have been at the club our whole lives and we have that ‘plus’ that others don’t have. The moment could come when all of those players coincide at the club [again]. Without doubt, the likes of Víctor, Xavi, Puyol, have to go back because it wouldn’t make sense for them not to.”

And you? “Right now, I’m trying to extend my playing career as much as possible, I want to kick a ball for as long as I can because that’s what makes me happy. I’ve got a contract until next year, 2021, but I’m looking at things at the end of every season and I feel good, motivated. I want to keep playing and we’re delighted to be here.”

“When it does end, I have always said that I would love to go back to Barça. It all depends on how? In what role? What situation? Who is at the club? That’s some way off. But with everything I experienced there, all the feelings I have, I would love to go back.”

The next cycle has already begun. In January, Barcelona offered the manager’s job to Xavi, Iniesta’s midfield partner, defenders of a footballing faith. Xavi turned it down, for now, but admits he does want to return to coach the team. Víctor Font is preparing his candidacy to be president in 2021, in opposition to the current board, and Xavi would be his manager. What if he called Iniesta to go with him?

“I don’t know if I will coach or not. And Xavi is four years ahead of me: I don’t know where he will be when I stop playing. Let’s see. As a formula, it’s very good.”

As a formula, it was the best. For now, though, Iniesta just wants to play football. “It’s what we all want,” he says.

— The Guardian



ANDRÉS Iniesta.

# No budgetary assistance for Rugby

Moorosi Tsiane

**F**EDERATION of Lesotho Rugby (FLR) secretary general Litšitso Motšeremeli says they will not be getting any funds from the World Rugby to relieve them from the financial challenges emanating from the coronavirus epidemic.

Although World Rugby chairperson Bill Beaumont announced on Thursday that they would give out US\$100 million to assist rugby unions in need of immediate emergency funding, Lesotho does not qualify.

“Global sport is facing a crisis never seen before and at this most challenging time we are taking unprecedented action as a sport united to support global rugby, its unions, competitions and players through the enormous challenge presented by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Beaumont said in a press release.

“The measures announced today will provide support and short-term relief in the form of a US\$100 million relief fund, while we are making excellent progress towards calendar options that reflect and address a dynamic, complex and uncertain environment.

“I have chaired many productive meetings in recent weeks with my union, region, competition and player colleagues and we are moving rapidly towards a viable calendar solution and, while compromises are being made, the outcome will be in the best interests of the whole game.

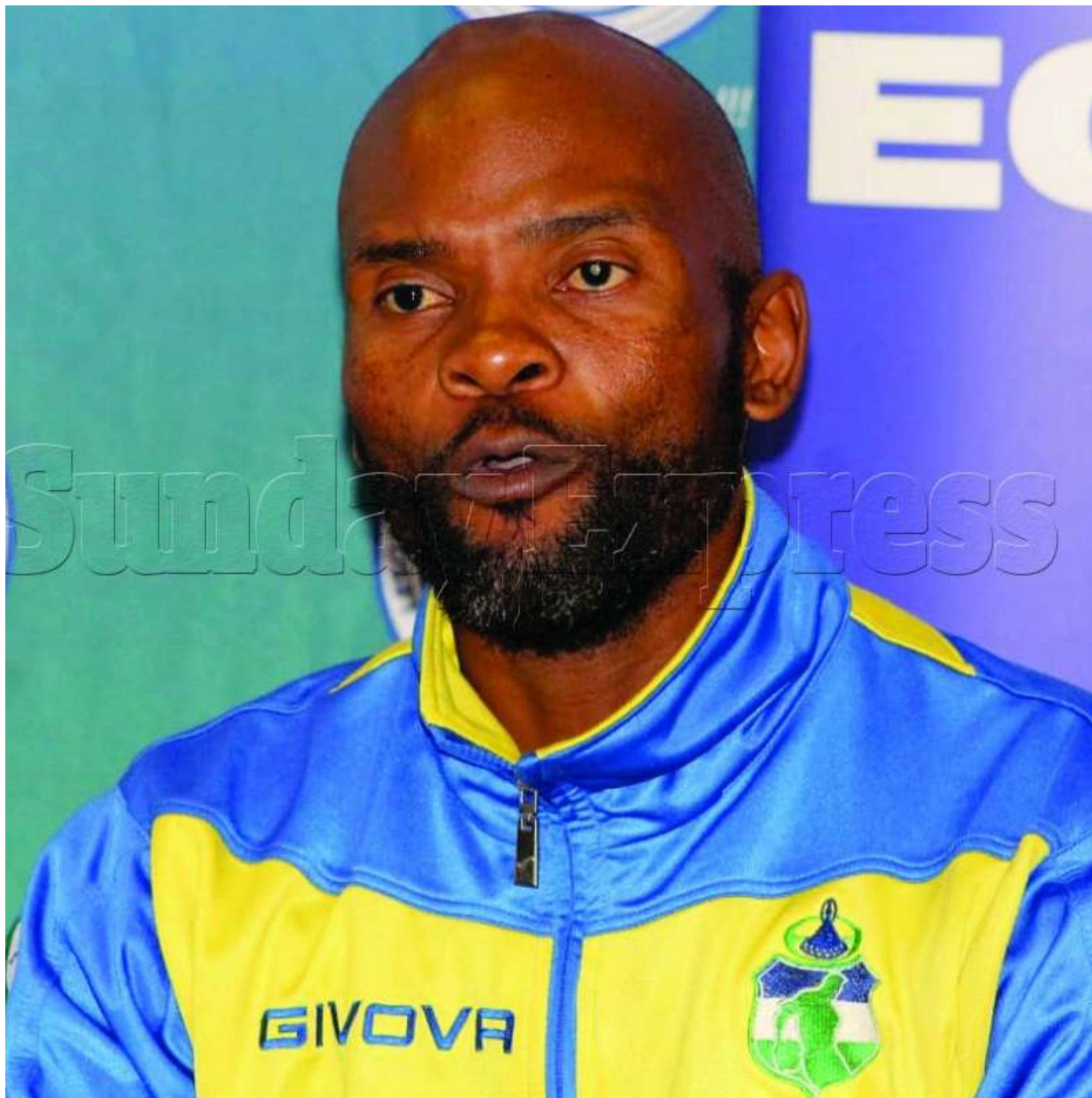
“This is a process with solidarity, unity and leadership at heart. One that sets a potential blueprint for successful collaboration in the future and I would like to thank everyone for their openness, cooperation and global view,” he said.

However, Motšeremeli said Lesotho doesn't qualify for the funds since it is not yet a member of World Rugby but rather a member of Rugby Africa.

“We are aware of the funds but unfortunately, we do not qualify as we are not yet World Rugby members,” Motšeremeli said.

Lesotho failed to qualify into the World Rugby family after going for two years without any action in 15-a-side in the last two years. Instead, the country has only participated in Rugby Sevens.

“For the past two years, we haven't been active in the 15-a-side category... in the last two years, the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation didn't have money to fund our participation in the test competitions and we missed the 2018 Rwanda competition and the last one which was in Uganda,” Motšeremeli said.



LITŠITSO Motšeremeli.

## Premier League could return by mid-June in 'best-case scenario'



LIVERPOOL'S pursuit of the Premier League title could resume in June if all goes well.

**P**REMIER League clubs have discussed resuming the season on the weekend of 13-14 June after UEFA wrote to domestic associations stating a desire, they should finish their competitions by 31 July to leave August clear for the completion of the Champions League and Europa League.

The letter from European football's governing body formed the basis of a two-hour conference call on Friday that explored how the Premier League may be concluded.

While any resumption is being modelled on matches occurring behind closed doors, guiding the decision-making is the overriding principle that the National Health Service's ability to treat those with Covid-19 should not be compromised and that it has to be at ease with the top-flight restarting. This means the Premier League wants the NHS to give the go-ahead and so the health service has power of veto.

In the best-case scenario clubs would have a “pre-season” from 10 or 14 May, giving players four weeks to regain fitness, with the minimum they would need set at two weeks. If training began three or four weeks before the weekend of 13 and 14 June, the opening days may feature players training individually or in small groups to ensure the best protection before squads worked together as normal.

Protocols devised by the Premier League and club doctors and signed off by the requisite bodies would have testing at the forefront and would be in place to try to ensure a safe return to games. Those at matches — players, club staff, officials, security and media — would all have to be tested and there would have to be procedures to address the prospect of large groups of fans gathering outside stadiums.

UEFA's wish is that the Champions League and Europa League should each recommence from the week of Monday 3 August with the final of the former being staged on Saturday 29 August and that of the latter to be played a few days before.

If the Premier League was to restart on 13 June — a Saturday — it would allow seven weeks to finish the season. As 16 clubs have nine matches left and Manchester City, Sheffield United, Aston Villa and Arsenal have 10, the timeframe would appear to be long enough for the campaign to be finished comfortably.

It is understood the Premier League is conscious of a worst-case scenario given the unpredictability of coronavirus and how long it may take to tackle it. The pessimistic view is that no football can resume until October, seven months after the last round of matches.

— *The Guardian*

# Nkhasi strives to regain form

Leemisa Thuseho

**M**IDDLE distance runner Namakoe Nkhasi (pictured) is confident that he is on the right track towards regaining his top form after a slump last year.

The 2016 Olympian revealed to the *Sunday Express* that he suffered a lot from family problems last year but is now back in full force targeting top honours in any race that he participates in after the global Coronavirus (COVID-19) induced break.

“Last year was a tough year due to family issues that I was going through but now all is well and I am fit,” Nkhasi said.

Last year Nkhasi finished ninth in the Two Oceans Half Marathon and came third in the Soweto Half Marathon.

He also won a bronze medal at the Tembisa Street Mile and 10 km Run/Walk. Nkhasi has failed to win the FNB Joburg 10km CityRun having last won it in 2016. Last year he finished sixth, his worst performance in the race.

And the marathoner says all these performances were below par.

Before the break, Nkhasi was preparing for the 2020 edition of the 21 km Two Oceans Marathon that was scheduled for 11 April. However, it has now been cancelled due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Nkhasi won the race back to back in 2016 and 2017 and he said he was ready to reclaim top honours.

“I wasn’t aiming for any other position but a win. I was fully prepared because the results from that race were to tell whether or not I had regained my form,” Nkhasi said.

As part of his preparations, he ran and won the 10 km Township Championship in Soweto in February.

Had it not been for the Coronavirus outbreak, he had hoped to run at least three races; a 10km, a 21km and a 42km race.

“That is how I prepare every year. I run three different races but I am planning to change and prioritise half marathons,” Nkhasi said.

Nkhasi was last called for the national team in 2016 ahead of the Rio Olympics and he is hopeful for another chance.

“I still want to represent my country at the international level and I am hoping for the best in the near future.”

Although he is based in neighbouring South Africa, he is currently in Lesotho due to the Coronavirus outbreak.



# LCS could benefit from long league break



Leemisa Thuseho

**L**CS coach Mpitsa Marai (pictured) says his side is one of the teams that may benefit from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) break since its players have an opportunity to fully recover from injuries of various magnitude.

LCS is one of the Ecomet Premier League teams that were struggling with injuries before the break and Marai concedes they suffered immensely.

Marai said his team has been haunted by injuries and that has been worsened by their small pool of players.

All this, he said, limited their chances of winning trophies while competing against the likes of Matlama, Bantu and Lioli who have larger pools of players.

“Due to financial challenges, we struggle to get quality players and depend on free agents and that also compromises quality,” Marai said.

According to Marai, before the break some of the players were just two weeks from recovery while some were meant to be side-lined for longer. However, the break has afforded most to recover fully.

“Before the break, Lehlohonolo Lenka, Leboneng Mapecho, and Setho Moshoeshe were only a few weeks from recovery,” Marai said.

James Mothotjela and Makara Ntantsane, Keketso Snyders and Mojalefa Ramabusa are among the players who will use the break to recover from injuries.

He said they gave all the players training programmes so that they maintain fitness.

However, Marai said even after their players recover, they would need a few weeks before they can start playing.

“Even though some of the players would have recovered, teams will still need time to prepare their teams before the games start to regain their fitness,” Marai said.

According to Marai, forcing the players to play earlier may lead to injuries.

LCS is currently third in the table with 33 points, just a point behind second-placed Matlama. Marai said their target is to end the season in second place behind runaway leaders, Bantu who currently have 50 points.



**Nkhasi**  
strives to  
regain form  
P23



# Clubs divided on netball league



NETBALL teams in action - file pic.

**Leemisa Thuseho**

**L**OCAL netball teams are split over the fate of the 2019 league which was meant to have ended between August and September with some suggesting that it must be abandoned while others say it must be played till the end.

The league started in March last year but could not be finished according to schedule due to financial challenges. Further delays were caused by the national team's participation in the Spar Challenge International Series in Cape Town last November.

Now the latest impediment is the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) induced lockdown that has stopped all activities that require the gathering of people across the globe.

Therefore, some clubs want the league abandoned while others insist that it must be played till the end.

Before the suspension of sporting activities

due to the coronavirus outbreak, the league was already on hold as the association was running a country wide talent identification tour in preparation for the December African Union Sports Council (AUSC) Region 5 games. The games will be hosted by Lesotho.

There is now a serious likelihood that even after the break, focus will be on the scouting of under-20 players for the AUSC games.

Apart from that, school teams will face challenges as players will be prioritising their studies so that they can recover from the prolonged break.

LCS head coach Neo Orpen opines that the league must be abandoned given the flurry of challenges that it has encountered.

"Considering the multiple breaks that the league has gone through, I think it is prudent to abandon it and start afresh," Orpen said.

"We have several administrative challenges that must be solved."

Munyaradzi Shanduka, the coach of the de-

fending champions, Leqele High School, said while the league is facing mammoth challenges, it would be unfair for top of the table teams to lose what they have worked for.

"It is an extremely difficult situation because there are teams that are at the top of the table because they have been serious from the beginning. Other teams are far behind therefore, I don't know which criteria can be used to determine the champion. However, just abandoning it will be punishing for some teams," Shanduka said.

He said whatever decision is made should ensure that the teams' respective sponsors get the yields that they had expected from their investments.

Shanduka said the netball leadership was responsible for the prevailing challenges hence it must have a solution.

"Our leadership brought us into this mess. I understand that some of the challenges were not their fault but I believe they have a solu-

tion for all the problems," Shanduka said.

Masitise coach Anna Shale is in support of abandoning the league.

Shale is also Lesotho Netball Association (LNA) Secretary General and she thinks it is high time the leadership engages a sponsor.

For his part, Phuthiatsana coach Keketso Mokitimi, said while he supports cancellation of the league, he knows that the issue of relegations and promotions would be difficult to handle.

"I would support restarting the league but the question is how are we going to relegate and promote teams. The other issue is how are we going to compensate teams for their expenses if we cancel the league," Mokitimi said.

LNA public relations officer 'Mamakebe Moshoeshe said the committee will decide the way forward after the Coronavirus break. She however insists that the league must be played till the end.