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THOMAS Thabane

SADC leaders to meet on Thabane's future

story on page 2



NQOSA Mahao

“NO GOING BACK ON ABC-DC DEAL”

● Parties say nothing will prevent Thabane's ouster
story on page 2

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Ntseben Motsoeli

No going back on ABC-DC deal to oust Thabane: Mahao, Letsosa

RULING All Basotho Convention (ABC) deputy leader Professor Nqosa Mahao and his Democratic Congress counterpart, Motlalentoa Letsosa, have accused South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's special envoy to Lesotho, Jeff Radebe, of issuing a communique which does not capture political parties' position that Prime Minister Thomas Thabane should relinquish power within days.

They insisted that the ABC, DC and other parties would forge ahead with their plans to form a new coalition government which excludes Mr Thabane.

The communique, issued on Monday by Mr Radebe following his meetings with Mr Thabane, political parties, churches and civic organisations, states that all stakeholders had agreed that Mr Thabane should be allowed to retire from office with "dignity, grace and security".

It also states that the governing coalition remains fully committed to the current coalition agreement of the four ruling parties, namely the ABC, Alliance of Democrats (AD), Basotho National Party (BNP) and Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL).

Mr Ramaphosa dispatched Mr Radebe to Lesotho in the aftermath of Mr Thabane's Saturday's deployment of heavily armed soldiers to the streets of Maseru to deal with political rivals he accused of destabilising his government.

Although the premier did not mention any names, it is widely believed that this was aimed at members of his own ABC's national executive committee (NEC) and the DC who recently announced that they had signed a deal to form a new government to replace the current governing coalition which consists of the ABC, AD, BNP and RCL.

The ABC-DC enjoys the support of the BNP, RCL and Popular front for Democracy (PFD). It is supported by 34 ABC legislators and taken together with the DC's 26 seats, the BNP's five, the PFD's three and the RCL's one, this would give them 69 seats enabling them to pass the 61-seat threshold required to form a new government.

In a televised speech early this month, Mr Thabane accused his party rivals and the opposition of plotting his ouster and pleaded with the army, police, intelligence and correctional service chiefs to deal decisively with any attempts to topple his government. Last Saturday he deployed soldiers on the streets of Maseru and this ignited fears that the country could slide into instability and anarchy reminiscent of 2014 when the army attempted to overthrow Mr Thabane's first gov-



NQOSA Mahao.



MOTLALENTOA Letsosa.

ernment.

Following the deployment of troops, Mr Ramaphosa dispatched Mr Radebe to Lesotho to try and diffuse the potentially volatile situation.

Mr Radebe met the governing and opposition parties, churches and non-governmental organisations to discuss the unfolding political situation before announcing that all stakeholders had agreed that parliament will work on facilitating Mr Thabane's dignified retirement.

A Monday communique signed by Mr Radebe and Deputy Prime Minister Moleleki states that "the coalition government of the Kingdom of Lesotho commits to effecting the implementation process or modalities for the dignified, graceful and secure retirement of the Honourable Prime Minister (Mr Thabane)."

"The coalition government of Lesotho reaffirms its commitment to the current agreement of the four parties, namely the All Basotho Convention (ABC), Alliance of Democrats (AD), Basotho National Party (BNP) and Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL)," the agreement further states.

The Radebe/Moleleki communique does not give a timeframe for Mr Thabane's departure. But Mr Radebe had said parliamentary pro-

cesses should begin immediately to ensure the smooth transition from Mr Thabane to his successor.

In a recent interview with the *Sunday Express*, Prof Mahao said although they met Mr Radebe and gave their input, the communique did not capture the political parties' position that Mr Thabane should relinquish power within days of their meeting with Mr Radebe last Sunday. Prof Mahao said they also aired their displeasure with Mr Thabane's decision to unleash armed soldiers into the streets of Maseru as well as their opposition to the premier's plans to form a government of national unity with the Lesotho Congress for Democracy and Movement for Economic Change. None of these concerns were captured in the communique issued by Mr Radebe on Monday.

He said the communique merely reflected the South African and Lesotho governments' views and not theirs, adding their deal with the DC to form a new government would go ahead despite the government's stated commitment to the coalition agreement of the current four governing parties.

"That (communique) belongs to Radebe and Moleleki," Prof Mahao said.

"The political parties were not

privity to that communique. We do not know it. We were not consulted about it. As the ABC, we have struck a partnership with DC and other parties that will be joining us and that has not changed.

"We met with Mr Radebe prior to his meeting with the government where we outlined our issues and the way we see things going forward from where we are. Eighty percent of the things we said are not there in the communique and therefore we assume that the deal was between two governments not among political parties."

Mr Letsosa concurred with Prof Mahao saying the DC's deal with the ABC remained intact and it would be brought to parliament when it opens. The senate opened on Tuesday, a day after the communique was issued. This Tuesday, it is expected to deliberate vote on the constitutional amendment bill to clip an unpopular prime minister's powers to cling onto power advising the King to dissolve parliament whenever he loses a no confidence vote in parliament. The national assembly is expected to re-open tomorrow.

Mr Letsosa said "our (DC and ABC) agreement remains strong even if there is talk that the governing coalition partners are reaffirm-

ing their commitment to the current (coalition) agreement. Our deal will play itself out in parliament," Mr Letsosa said.

The re-opening of parliament follows the Constitutional Court's 17 April 2020 judgement nullifying Mr Thabane's prorogation of parliament from 20 March to 19 June 2020. Mr Thabane had prorogued parliament on the grounds that large gatherings of 50 or more people had to be banned to prevent the possible spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The national assembly has 120 members and the senate has 33. However, the Constitutional Court ruled that he had acted irrationally in proroguing parliament as it was needed to pass laws to fight COVID-19. The court also ruled that Mr Thabane had acted without adequately consulting the King as head of state.

Prof Mahao and Mr Letsosa's remarks mean that Mr Thabane remains under pressure to go and he could be ousted in an undignified manner if he does not retire soon.

The defiant premier recently told the *Sunday Express*' sister *Lesotho Times* newspaper that he remained the lawful leader of the ruling ABC and the four-party coalition government. His term of office ends in 2022, not any other time decided by his rivals, he said. The premier said people "that I don't report to" had no right to push him into retirement.

He said he was no pushover and will not allow anyone to stampe him into retiring earlier than his own intended time.

But with the senate set to deliberate on the constitutional amendment bill to clip an unpopular prime minister's powers to cling onto power on Tuesday, Mr Thabane faces the prospect of an unceremonious exit if he does not retire soon.

If the constitutional amendment bill is signed into law, then Mr Thabane would effectively be curtailed from advising King Letsie III to dissolve parliament in the event of a successful no confidence vote against him.

Once it becomes law, the ABC, DC and their new allies have said they would then file a no confidence motion against Mr Thabane in parliament if he would not have stepped down by then.

Pascalinah Kabi

SADC leaders to meet on Thabane's future

SOUTHERN African Development Community (SADC) leaders could meet before the end of the week to deliberate on the fate of embattled Prime Minister Thomas Thabane and the political situation in Lesotho which led to the premier's abortive deployment of troops in Maseru last Saturday.

The venue for the meeting has still not been decided with some sources saying it would be a virtual meeting through teleconferencing because of lockdowns and travel restrictions imposed by the SADC countries as part of measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID19). On 18 March 2020, SADC ministers held a meeting via video conference to deliberate on the implementation of the SADC regional integration programmes.

According to some sources, the planned meeting on Lesotho was communicated to the national executive committee (NEC) of Mr Thabane's All Basotho Convention (ABC) during their meeting with the South African High Commissioner to Lesotho, Sello Moloto, on Tuesday.

The sources said the ABC was called for a meeting at the South African High Commission in Maseru on Tuesday after the party expressed its displeasure over the communique issued by that country's president

Cyril Ramaphosa's special envoy, Jeff Radebe, claiming that the ABC and other parties had agreed that the current four party governing coalition must remain in charge of the country.

The ABC's deputy leader said the party had indicated in its meetings with Mr Radebe that it wanted Mr Thabane to step down without further delay. Prof Mahao said they were forging ahead with their deal with the opposition Democratic Congress (DC) and other parties to form a new government which would exclude Mr Thabane. (See story above).

In an interview with the *Sunday Express* yesterday, ABC chairperson Samuel Rapapa confirmed that the party's NEC met with the South African High Commissioner in Maseru on Tuesday and Wednesday. He however, refused to shed light on the meeting and whether or not they had been informed that SADC leaders would meet to discuss Mr Thabane's fate and the political instability in Lesotho.

"We met with the South African High Commission but that is far as I am willing to tell you," Mr Rapapa said.

"It was agreed that whatever discussed in those meetings should not be made public

and I am not going to go against that decision."

But according to the sources the ABC's NEC was called to the South African High Commission after expressing its anger over the fact Mr Radebe's communique did not categorically state that the ABC and other stakeholders wanted Dr Thabane to step down within days.

"The ABC's NEC was not happy that the communique captured the issue of Dr Thabane's departure in a diplomatic manner. Like other stakeholders, they had impressed to the special envoy that they wanted Dr Thabane gone within days after the consultations.

"The South African High Commissioner (Mr Moloto) pleaded with the ABC's NEC to calm down as the regional leaders would meet sometime this week to deliberate on Mr Thabane's fate," a source said.

Another source said the ABC's NEC was also informed that President Ramaphosa had dispatched Mr Radebe to Zimbabwe and Botswana to brief presidents Emmerson Mnangagwa and Mokgweetsi Masisi respectively on the political situation in Lesotho and the outcome of Mr Radebe's recent visit to Le-

sotho. The source said the briefings were in preparation for the planned SADC meeting on Lesotho this week.

The source said the ABC's NEC was happy that Mr Radebe had been dispatched to Botswana and Zimbabwe, adding that there was now a general feeling in the party that SADC would help them to expedite the processes leading up to Mr Thabane's retirement.

Mr Mnangagwa is the chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. Soon after meeting Mr Mnangagwa, Mr Radebe said he had fully briefed the Zimbabwean leader and the processes Basotho had agreed on to ensure that Mr Thabane's retirement was implemented in a manner that allowed for a peaceful transition.

Meanwhile, the Government Secretary Mophahlo Mphaka said he was not aware of the meeting as the government had not received any official communication, informing it of the SADC meeting.

"Lesotho is a SADC member and it is a standard practice for any country, even if it's on the agenda, to be invited for a meeting. We have not received any formal communication to that effect," Mr Mphaka said yesterday.

COVID-19: Court of Appeal to conduct digital hearings

Mohalenyane Phakela

THE Court of Appeal will conduct remote sessions via teleconferencing and the internet when it opens for its first session for 2020 on 12 to 29 May 2020.

Court of Appeal president, Justice Kananelo Mosito (pictured), recently said the novel session is being implemented to ensure compliance with World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines which encourage physical distancing to minimise the risk of spreading the highly infectious and deadly Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The apex court was initially scheduled to hold its first sitting from 14 April to 1 May 2020 but it had to postpone due to the nationwide lockdown aimed at fighting the spread of COVID-19. The lockdown has since been extended to 5 May 2020.

Under the lockdown regulations, people are expected to stay at home and only venture out in exceptional circumstances to access medical services and purchase food and fuel.

Most businesses and organisations are expected to remain closed except for those classified by the government as offering essential services like hospitals, pharmacies, grocery shops, transport, fuel service stations, media and the courts of law.

In the aftermath of the imposition of the lockdown, the courts announced that they would significantly reduce operations by suspending proceedings for most cases except for urgent applications.

Having delayed the opening of the first session of the apex court of 2020, Justice Mosito recently said they would finally open on 12 May but use video teleconferencing to enable judges to deliberate on cases from wherever they will be based without all of them physically coming to the court in Maseru.

The apex court judges are drawn from different African countries, namely, Petrus Damaseb (Namibia), Phillip Musonda (Zambia), and Moses Chinhengo and Tafuma Mshiya both from Zimbabwe. While Lesotho and Comoros remain the only two African countries free of COVID-19, the rest of the continent has recorded infections. Given that the foreign judges all come from countries with COVID-19 infections and borders have been closed in most countries as a result of the lockdowns, holding court sessions via video teleconferencing is a viable option.

"The current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic necessitates the use of remote hearings wherever possible and this applies to hearings of all kinds, including applications and appeals," Justice Mosito states in his recent statement on the apex court's first session of 2020.

"While the Court of Appeal building currently remains open, the objective is to undertake as many hearings as possible remotely so as to minimise the risk of transmission of Covid-19. Notwithstanding that in terms section 3(3) of the Court of Appeal Act, the sitting of the court is in Maseru, the court may nonetheless, also sit at such place as the president may appoint. Thus, for the purposes of this practice direction, while the judges may sit at different places when hearing any appeals or applications presented before them, the operational situs for such hearings shall be at Maseru..."

"The hearings can be made open to the public, if technically possible, either by the registrar logging into the hearing audible in that courtroom, or by other methods. But in the exceptional circumstances presented by the current Covid-19 pandemic, the impossibility of public access should not normally prevent a remote hearing taking place..."

"It is inevitable that undertaking numerous hearings remotely will cause teething troubles. All parties are urged to be sympathetic to the technological and other difficulties experienced by others," Justice Mosito states.

He said lawyers should file correctly indexed and paginated electronic documents to enable the remote hearings to be conducted without any problems.

Some of the cases expected to be heard during May 2020 session include Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's grandson Thomas Thabane Jr and others' appeal against the grant-

ing of bail to the murder-accused First Lady, 'Maesaiah Thabane.

'Maesaiah stands accused of murdering Mr Thabane's ex-wife, Lipolelo, on 14 June 2017. She appeared in the magistrates' court on 5 February 2020 and was granted M1000 bail by Acting Chief Justice 'Maseforo Mahase. This was despite that Justice Mahase was not the judge on call for granting bail and hearing urgent matters that week.

That judge on call that week was Justice Keketso Moahloli and not Justice Mahase. But the acting chief justice took charge of proceedings and hurriedly freed 'Maesaiah. On 12 February 2020, Thabane Jr teamed up with Khauhelo Molapo, Thuto Makhooane and Thato Sibolla to file an application in the apex

court for an order to set aside Justice Mahase's controversial decision to grant Ms Thabane bail. Thabane Jr is the son of Dr Thabane's second son, Potlako while Messrs Molapo and Makhooane are Dr Thabane's nephews. Ms Sibolla is a survivor of the shooting incident which claimed Lipolelo's life. They want the bail application to be set aside on the grounds that it was granted unprocedurally.

Another application that is before the apex court is that of the 10 soldiers who have appealed against Zimbabwean Judge Justice Charles Hungwe's refusal to recuse himself from presiding over their murder trials. The soldiers who include former army commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli stand accused of murdering former army commander



Lt-Gen Maaparankoe Mahao on 25 June 2015. They want Justice Hungwe to recuse himself on the grounds that he is biased against them and is unlikely to give them a fair trial.



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Govt relaxes lockdown, allows mines to re-open



Bereng Mpaki

THE government has relaxed the Public Health (COVID-19) Regulations 2020 by expanding the list of what it calls essential businesses that are allowed to operate during the on-going lockdown.

According to a gazette published on Wednesday by Health Minister Nkaku Kabi, the list now includes mines, shearing sheds, street vendors selling essential goods, baby clothing shops, hardware, motor spares and service shops, small scale building and construction, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), cleaning and other services rendered to the executive and the judiciary.

This adds to banks, general cafes, supermarkets, farm feeds, wholesalers, meat wholesalers, domestic fuel dealers, bakeries, butcheries, green grocers and dairy shops that were already operational. Funeral homes, pharmacies, food and medicine manufacturing companies and garages will continue to operate for 24 hours daily.

Lesotho embarked on a nationwide lockdown on 31 March 2020. The lockdown was supposed to have ended on 21 April but was last week extended to 5 May 2020 to enable the government to allow the country to begin mass testing for COVID-19.

Although the country is yet to record any cases, the authorities are on high alert as neighbouring South Africa, Lesotho's biggest trading partner, has now recorded over 4200 cases and 79 deaths. Global infections are nearing 3 million while the virus has killed close to 200 000 people.

Following the publication of the Wednesday gazette, the Ministry of Trade and Industry issued a statement on Thursday saying the relaxation was meant to "keep economic activities going".

"With the purpose to keep the economic activities going during the lockdown, the new schedule of Public Health (COVID -19) (Amendment) Regu-

lations 2020 include:

"Hardware, vehicles spares, tyres, repairs and service shops, baby and toddlers clothing shops, small scale building and construction, street vendors for essential goods and services, shearing sheds and diamond mines.

"The businesses/enterprises listed above will operate from 8am to 2pm as stipulated on the schedule except for small scale building and construction and shearing sheds which will operate from 8am to 5pm and 7am to 5pm respectively."

This comes as a relief to the mining sector after the Lesotho Chamber of Mines (LCM) recently wrote to the government requesting to be allowed to re-open to avoid job losses.

In the letter to the National Emergency Command Centre (NECC) set up by the government to spearhead the fight against COVID-19, LCM chairperson Mohale Ralihariki said the mines were likely to retrench if they were not allowed to reopen immediately.

"If the suspension of the operations is prolonged, then mines will be forced to retrench and maintain skeletal staff until 2021 or beyond," Mr Ralihariki said in the 16 April 2020 letter.

Although Mr Ralihariki was unavailable for comment yesterday, the letter said, four of the diamond mines namely, Letseng, Liphobong, Kao and Mothae had contributed M891 million to the government through taxes and levies in 2019.

This was excluding the contributions made to the economy by the contractors, service providers and suppliers contracted by the mining companies.

All this would be lost if the mines were to remain closed.

"To survive these debilitating national and international events, the already embattled diamond mines of Lesotho request that consideration be given to allow production to resume at those mines that can still afford to do so.

"Failure to re-commence production timeously, before the already stretched and limited financial resources are exhausted, will lead to either extended care and maintenance programmes (a state where only essential services will remain operational) ... or full mine closures being implemented, both scenarios have detrimental impact on the gross domestic product (GDP) and employment situation," Mr Ralihariki states.

Senators to debate, vote on bill to clip PM's powers

'Marafaele Mohloboli

THE senate is on Tuesday expected to deliberate and vote on the constitutional amendment bill which seeks to clip a prime minister's powers to advise the King to dissolve parliament whenever he loses a no confidence vote.

This after a report on the bill presented by the chairperson of the Legislation Committee Chief Ramoqai Lesaoana Peete was adopted and the bill read for the second time in the upper house on Thursday. Having been read for a second time last Thursday, the bill will this Tuesday proceed to the committee stage where its individual clauses will be read before the senate's Legislation Committee and amendments made if necessary.

This will be followed by voting and if approved by a two thirds majority, it will be sent back to the national assembly and if there are no further amendments the speaker of the national assembly will take to His Majesty King Letsie III for his assent before it is passed as law.

The bill to stop any unpopular prime minister from unilaterally advising the King to dissolve parliament whenever his power is threatened, is seen as a crucial first step towards current spirited moves to oust current Prime Minister Thomas Thabane.

His All Basotho Convention (ABC) party has signed a deal with the opposition Democratic Congress (DC) and other smaller parties to form a new government to replace the current four party coalition which comprises of the ABC, Basotho National Party (BNP), Alliance of Democrats (AD) and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho

(RCL).

The parties have said they will soon present their agreement to parliament and if Mr Thabane does not relinquish power voluntarily as he has promised to do before the end of July 2020, they will have to file a no confidence motion against him.

If passed into law, then Mr Thabane would be effectively curtailed from advising King Letsie III to dissolve parliament in the event of a successful no confidence vote against him. In terms of the bill, he can only advise the King to dissolve parliament and call for fresh polls if he has the support of two thirds of the legislators. Without such support, he would have to resign within three days of a no confidence vote.

Several senators including outspoken Chief Khoabane Theko have expressed their support for the bill, saying this would save the country from going for costly elections whenever governments collapsed due to no confidence votes.

"I commit and plead with you honourable members that you vote for this bill as this shall save Lesotho M300 million to M400 million it usually spends on elections even though it is among the least developed countries. This is not for anyone's personal benefit but for the sake of the nation," Chief Theko said on Thursday.

Another senator, Chief Seeiso Bereng Seeiso said the bill did not target a specific prime minister but "we are preparing for good governance which will benefit all Basotho".

"We are taking on a recurring issue (of fresh elections whenever a prime minister loses a no confidence vote) that has impacted negatively on the economy.

"We are a wounded society, with a wound oozing blood and pus at all times. We are divided. A society guided by gossip and not principle and we have a great deficit of a patriotic leadership and Basotho deserve better. The politics of the belly have corrupted us. Let it be written and let it be done," said Chief Seeiso, a younger brother to King Letsie III.

On Wednesday, Chief Seeiso who, sits on the senate's legislative committee, told the *Sunday Express* sister *Lesotho Times* newspaper that the constitutional amendment bill "could not have come at a more opportune time because we can't always afford to go to elections each time government is troubled and loses a no confidence vote".

"Our economy cannot afford that (fresh elections whenever a government is toppled through a no confidence vote). It is high time that the King is protected from politicians who always run to him whenever anything goes wrong in the administration," he said.

On his part, Chief Lesaoana Peete said he supported the bill to prevent politicians from draining the nation's meagre financial resources through fresh elections whenever governments lost no confidence votes.

The bill was also supported by chiefs Joel Molapo (Leribe), Chief Thato Mako Mohale (Tajane), Chief Nthathi Bereng (Phamong) and chief Gabasheane Masupha (Mamathe). It was also supported ABC Senator Kemiso Mosenene.

Several chiefs did not attend Thursday's senate proceedings with some sources saying this was a tactic to buy time to make up their minds as to whether or not to support the bill.



RAMOQAI Lesaoana Peete.

Porous borders pose coronavirus risk: Minister

Limpho Sello

LESOTHO is at risk of the coronavirus (COVID-19) infections imported from South Africa by people who take advantage of porous borders to illegally enter the country, the Deputy Minister of Health, 'Manthabiseng Phohleli, has said.

Comoros and Lesotho are the only two countries in Africa yet to record any cases of the deadly COVID-19 which had infected more than 2, 8 million people and killed over 200 000 worldwide by yesterday.

Hemmed in all sides by South Africa which had recorded just over 4200 infections and about 80 deaths by yesterday, Ms Phohleli recently told the *Sunday Express* that Lesotho was at risk of infections brought into the country by people illegally crossing into Lesotho from its more populous and virus-hit neighbour. She said the government had identified the Quthing, Qacha's Nek and Mokhotlong districts as the hotspots for illegal crossings into the country.

She said more security forces had been deployed to the borders and they were working with community leaders to ensure all illegal immigrants were sent to the nearest health facilities for screening for COVID-19.

"We have received reports that many people especially Basotho living and working in South Africa are continuously entering the country through porous borders," Ms Phohleli said, adding, "It is a big challenge for us and we are threatened by the high number of people who cross into the country using illegal routes".

"We have also identified the routes which

people are using to illegally enter the country and the Dele-Dele route in Quthing has recorded the highest number of illegal crossings. This is a real challenge. Quthing has many porous borders and this is a clear example of the challenge at hand. Residents opt to run their daily errands in South Africa arguing that travelling and purchasing goods in South Africa is cheaper compared to Quthing.

"Other routes are in the Qacha's Nek and Mokhotlong districts. Army personnel deployed there are given non-contact thermometers for them to screen people right away.

She said while border-jumping was serious crime, this was not the time to be sanctioning offenders but rather it was more important to ensure that when caught, the suspects had to be sent to the nearest health facilities for screening for COVID-19. She said the government had even instructed the army not to harass or ill-treat suspects but take them for screening.

"This is not the time for us to sanction such people for their criminal behaviour but we must ensure that they are taken to the nearest health facilities and screened for COVID-19 immediately after they enter the country."

On his part, Health Minister Nkaku Kabi said his ministry was prepared to screen every person entering the country legally or illegally.

"Although we do not condone any illegal movements between the two countries, we are ready to screen even illegal immigrants to minimise the spread of the virus in the country," Mr Kabi said.



'MANTHABISENG Phohleli

Prisoners released to prevent COVID-19 infections



MASERU Central Prison.

Nthatuoa Koeshe

THE Lesotho Correctional Service (LCS) says it recently released more than 100 prisoners from its Maseru facility as part of measures to decongest prisons to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In a recent interview with the *Sunday Express*, LCS spokesperson Superintendent Neo Mopeli, said the release of the prisoners follows the LCS' recent appeal to the magistrates' courts to release some of the prisoners to ease congestion especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic which had infected more than 2, 8 million people worldwide and caused about 200 000 deaths by yesterday.

Although Lesotho is yet to record a single infection, the country is never-the-less observing the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines to prevent the potential spread of the virus. This includes physical distancing and ensuring that prisons are not congested.

Supt Mopeli said those released were mostly prisoners

who were jailed for relatively less serious offences as well as those who had failed to pay fines or bail. He said although only inmates at the Maseru facility had been released more prisoners could be released in other districts if the correctional facilities were also found to be overcrowded. He said LCS was also looking into the possibility of releasing some prisoners under a general amnesty.

"Some prisoners have been released from the Maseru correctional facility and if it is found that other districts are facing the same challenge of overcrowding then some prisoners in those districts will have to be released," Supt Mopeli said.

"The prisoners were released after a decision was made by the courts. The LCS is also looking into releasing other prisoners under a general amnesty but we have not yet started the process."

The release of the prisoners comes against the background of recent complaints by some of their relatives that they were no longer allowed to visit them and bring them food - a situation which was exposing some of the inmates to hunger

as it was said the LCS could not afford to give them decent meals.

Some sources recently told the *Sunday Express* that inmates often complained of hunger, adding that on some days they were fed maize meal porridge (popularly known as pap) and beans or peas once a day. Supt Mopeli denied the allegations, saying the inmates were fed breakfast, lunch and supper every day.

He however, would not say what the diet consisted of.

"These allegations are not true. Inmates are not getting one meal per day as your sources suggest. In fact, inmates are provided with breakfast, lunch and supper every day. It must also be understood that this is a correctional service and food menus will not be the same as those offered at different family settings. People may have their preferences and they may ask their families to bring them those kinds of foods during visits. But for now, visits are temporarily banned as part of the fight against COVID-19," he said adding that inmates would have to eat whatever was on the prison menu.

'Marafaele Mohloboli

THE senate on Thursday adopted a report on the Security Interest in Immovable Property Bill presented by its legislation committee.

This means that the upper house of parliament will now debate before possibly approving the bill aimed at allowing people and businesses especially Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) to use their immovable property as collateral when applying for bank loans.

According to the presentation by

Senate adopts Immovable Property Bill

the chairperson of the Legislation Committee Chief Ramoqai Lesaona Peete, once passed into law, the bill will also enable all those who are not formally employed and do not have pay slips to use their immovable property to secure loans from banks.

"The Bill proposes the establishment of a Collateral Registry for the purposes of publicising existing security interest and liens in immovable property and perfecting secu-

riety interests in collateral against third parties," the senate's legislation committee states in its report. A lien is a right to hold in one's possession the property belonging to another person until a debt owed by that person is paid up.

"The introduction of the Bill will also make it easier for borrowers and lenders to use personal property as collateral and hence increase the level of credit while on the other hand decreasing the

cost of credit. It will also enable borrowers to pledge their rights in personal property to lenders as security for loans more easily and less expensively. Ultimately, the Bill will result in improving access to credit, particularly for Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs)."

The bill grants the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) the powers to appoint a Registrar of Security Interests whose job shall be to register immovable property, maintain the

collateral registry system and settle issues arising out of the registration of the immovable property.

"The role of the Registrar shall be to secure the moveable property and make it have value before the law thus making it easier to get credit. This means that a person who registered immovable property will have a right to secure an existing or future debt. Thus once an individual has been granted a loan, no one else can do anything on the property as long as it is still registered as collateral in the registry," the committee further states in its report.

Comment

Approve the constitutional amendment bill for the national good

ON Tuesday, the senate has the huge task of debating and voting on the constitutional amendment bill aimed at clipping an unpopular prime minister's power to remain in office by advising the King to dissolve parliament and call fresh elections whenever he loses a no confidence vote.

In the event that the bill is approved, a prime minister will no longer be able to advise for the dissolution of parliament without the approval of two thirds of all legislators. He would have to resign within three days of the no confidence vote.

This would save the country the huge costs of going for elections whenever an unpopular government prematurely collapses. We therefore hope the senators will approve the bill to facilitate the smooth and swift transfer of power in parliament.

As we report elsewhere in this edition, one of the senators, Chief Seeiso Bereng Seeiso, says the bill is not targeted at a specific prime minister but its approval is necessary to lay the foundations for good governance "which will benefit all Basotho".

Chief Seeiso said that the bill "could not have come at a more opportune time because we can't always afford to go to elections each time government is troubled and loses a no confidence vote".

"Our economy cannot afford that (fresh elections whenever a government is toppled through a no confidence vote). It is high time that the King is protected from politicians who always run to him whenever anything goes wrong in the administration," he added.

We agree with him that the King must be protected from unpopular politicians who are more interested in retaining power even when this entails costly elections which require at least M400 million to conduct.

And he can only be protected through the passing of the bill which will stop unpopular leaders from running to him whenever they lose no confidence votes.

Ours is a poor nation with so many developmental challenges to address and we cannot afford to be in perpetual election mode due to politicians' petty squabbles and selfish designs.

The M400 million plus spent on elections whenever a government prematurely collapses could be put to better use in improving service delivery or anything else which benefits the nation. In any event, we are not wealthy enough to have that kind of money in reserve for the day a government prematurely collapses.

In 2017 when the then Pakalitha Mosisili-led government collapsed, money for student loans and grants had to be diverted to fund elections.

We do not know where the money will come from in the event of the Thomas Thabane administration collapsing before its time through a no confidence motion.

It is even possible that the money could be taken from funds which could have been used to fight the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic or money that could have been used to cushion the private sector against the effects of the closure of most companies in response to COVID-19.

We do not want to find out where the money will come from because by the time we do so, the nation would have certainly lost out to politicians bent on clinging to power despite their unpopularity.

This is why the senate has a historic task ahead of it this week. We hope they will approve the bill for the sake of the nation. The national assembly has already shown its willingness to side with the electorate by approving the bill. This is the time for the senate to right a wrong in our constitution that has caused the nation untold suffering in times past.



Covid-19 is colour blind but world isn't

JOHANNESBURG — The term "colour line", originally used by Frederick Douglass in his essay published in North American Review three years before the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, captured vividly the racial segregation in US. It was, however, WEB Du Bois who widened the scope of the term in international relations.

As a leading pan-African scholar and activist who settled in the first independent African country, Ghana, in 1957, Du Bois stated in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk* that, "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the colour line".

No doubt, the prevailing Covid-19 will profoundly redefine and reshape global politics.

Despite tangible political and economic achievements made in Africa and many parts of the world to roll back racism, Covid-19 has a potential to reinforce colour lines of the 19th and 20th centuries, as defined by Douglass and Du Bois.

There is no scientific proof that Covid-19 as a disease targets black people. The overwhelming evidence clearly shows that it is indeed colour blind. It targets all people from all races.

However, early signals in the US, Europe and Latin America show that people of African descent are disproportionately affected more than others by the disease.

An article, *Black Plague*, by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, in *The New Yorker* stated: "Thousands of white Americans have also died from the virus, but the pace at which African-Americans are dying has trans-

Sabine Lehmann

formed this public-health crisis into an object lesson in racial and class inequality." At face value, it appears as if this is an American story. It is definitely not.

Globally, Covid-19 will equally have its own colour line. As the poorest and least developed continent, Africa, stands to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic whether it spreads on the continent as expected or not.

The Covid-19 broke out in China late last year when Ghana was granting 126 African-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans citizenship.

To mark the occasion, Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo said: "We recognise our unique position as the location for 75 percent of the slave dungeons built on the west coast of Africa through which the slaves were transported. That is why we had a responsibility to extend the hand of welcome, back home to Africans in the diaspora."

The post-Covid-19 world order will adversely affect Africa. It is therefore imperative for Africans to be vigilant and active in the reshaping of the rules of engagement after the time of corona.

The starting point should be to double

their efforts limiting the spread of the pandemic. This should be done concurrently with improvements of the public health, safeguarding food security and ensuring that Africa and Africans in the diaspora are at the forefront of the research in finding vaccines for Covid-19.

As it stands, Africa is too fragmented to allow individual countries to marshal effective Covid-19 measures and participate meaningfully in the remaking of the post-Covid-19 global order.

The AU should devise a multiprolonged strategy to re-engage partners in the global North and South. The most important item in such discussions would be finding ways of handling Africa's debts owed to multilateral institutions and countries.

The biggest challenge is to ensure that debt is either rescheduled or forgiven. This could allow debt payments be redirected to the war on Covid-19.

If Africa fails to devise strategies to mitigate the Covid-19 impact, the continent may come out of the pandemic weaker than other continents.

The only way of overcoming the colour line for Africa and Africans in the diaspora can be ascertained if their social and economic conditions drastically improve. The colour line that began on the plantations in the US appears here to stay.

● David Monyae is director of the Centre for Africa-China Studies at the University of Johannesburg.



Words of Wisdom



If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one. — Mother Teresa

Sunday Express

A220 Lower Thetsane,
Maseru 100, Lesotho
Tel: +266 2231 5356
editor@lestimes.co.ls
marketing@lestimes.co.ls

Vodacom supports govt in COVID-19 fight

Bataung Moeketsi

TELECOMMUNICATIONS giant Vodacom Lesotho on Friday pledged 1000 mobile phones to be used by Ministry of Health staff across the country to fight the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The pledge was made by Vodacom Lesotho managing director Philip Amoateng at 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre in Maseru.

Mr Amoateng made the pledge to the chairperson of the Cabinet Sub Committee of the National Emergency Command Centre (NECC), Chief Thesele 'Maseribane.

Mr Amoateng said their support for the NECC would come in three thematic areas namely education, digital financial services and health.

"These are the times we have to come together as individuals, corporate entities and the government to find solutions and work together to fight the common enemy," Mr Amoateng said.

"We pledge to use our technological infrastructure to do anything within our power to fight this pandemic."

He said the support they were offering would benefit both the government and the general public.

For a period of three months, Vodacom will zero-rate all educational platforms from primary schools up to university level ensuring that students continue with their studies.

Additionally, all M-PESA transactions under M100 and purchases at supermarkets under M50 have been zero-rated. Vodacom customers can now also purchase airtime using M-PESA at no extra cost.

The 1000 mobile phones are meant to ease the communication among health workers while approximately 6000 nurses will receive 120 calling minutes and five gigabytes of data monthly.

Mr Amoateng said Vodacom was also working coming up with a facility where its subscribers can fill in a questionnaire to determine whether or not they should visit a hospital judging by their symptoms.

The company is also working on a chat-bot (chat robot) that will interface with the ministry's database and will answer questions users may have concerning COVID-19.



PHILIP Amoateng (right) hands over a cellphone to Chief Thesele 'Maseribane at 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre on Friday.

Mr Amoateng said they have also offered the Ministry of Health a four-seater toll-free call centre where customers can ask for information on the virus. He urged Basotho to adhere to the government's regulations "to ensure that at the end, we come out of this pandemic than before".

For his part, Chief 'Maseribane expressed gratitude to Vodacom for its quick response to the request made during recent meetings between his ministry and the country's two telecommunications companies.

"It (Vodacom's response) didn't take much time and I know it is going to affect your balance sheet but it's not time to make money; it's time to contribute towards sup-

porting the country in the fight against COVID-19.

"I am aware that there is a gap in the COVID-19 communications. Basotho need more education regarding measures of COVID-19 prevention and to understand that we are not even at level one (on the infections scale)," Chief 'Maseribane said.

There are five Coronavirus levels with the fifth involving drastic measures and to date, Lesotho is yet to record any cases. Chief 'Maseribane commended the government for declaring a lockdown although the country does not have any cases but said it was important for the country to prepare for eventualities.

NECC deputy chief coordinator Thabo Ntoi told the *Sunday Express* on the sidelines of the press conference that the centre that the centre was tasked with the responsibility of supporting the sub-committee. He said the NECC coordinates measures to ensure Basotho's protection from infection with virus and also that resources, facilities and equipment are available to carry out the task.

Mr Ntoi said the centre's logistics team, headed by the Ministry of Health, is responsible for the reception and distribution of all donations.

Govt in M17 million Maseru roads rehabilitation

Nthatuoa Koeshe

THE Ministry of Public Works is taking advantage of the reduced traffic during the ongoing lockdown to repair several roads in Maseru.

In a recent interview with the *Sunday Express*, the ministry's principal secretary, Mothabathe Hlalele, said they had set aside M17 Million to repair major roads in the capital including Moshoeshoe Road, Kingsway, Kofi Annan Road up to Masianokeng, Main South 1 Road to Masianokeng, Main North 1 Road to Ha-Foso and Old Maseru one from Mookoli to Naleli.

Mr Hlalele said they were working with three construction companies, namely, Thadleson Construction Company, Condo Construction Company and Rudicon Construction Company to fix the roads. He said all three companies were owned by locals and had been chosen through a system of balloting.

"Since the country is on lockdown, we thought this would be an ideal time to start fixing our roads which have potholes and faded road markings," Mr Hlalele said.

"We have already started work and we hope to complete the task during the two-week extension of the lockdown." The lockdown is aimed at preventing the possible spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). It began on 30 March 2020 and was initially supposed to end on 21 April before it was extended to 5 May 2020 by Prime Minister Thomas Thabane.

Mr Hlalele said they also intended to resume work on tarring the Marakabei-Monontša road which had been suspended during the lockdown. He said it was necessary to complete the project because suspending it only meant the government would incur additional costs paying contractors even though they were idle during the lockdown.

He also said the contractors were observing World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on physical distancing of construction workers to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19.



MOTHABATHE Hlalele.

Israeli hospital testing effect of cannabis extract on coronavirus patients

A NEW Israeli study at Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv will examine the impact of cannabis on Coronavirus (COVID-19) patients.

The new study is investigating whether one of the active substances in cannabis, cannabidiol, can slow down the inflammatory process that accompanies the deterioration of severe Coronavirus patients and alleviate the symptoms of the disease.

The study is being conducted in collaboration with a number of the wards in the hospital and is expected to involve dozens of moderately ill patients.

Dr Barak Cohen, a senior anaesthesiologist and head of the Corona management at Ichilov and the research's initiators, stressed that "this is a novel approach to treating some of the symptoms, using a component of the cannabis plant that is considered safe and non-addictive."

The study is initiated by the hospital and is currently not related to any company.

Cannabidiol (CBD), which accounts for up to 40% of the plant's extract, has been researched for the treatment of anxiety, cognition, movement disorders, and pain.

The cannabidiol drug Epidiolex was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in 2018 for the treatment of two epilepsy disorders.

— Jewish Press

Ministry, Tšepong deny reports of COVID-19 cases in Lesotho

Limpho Sello

THE Ministry of Health and the Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital yesterday denied allegations that there were coronavirus (COVID-19) cases which had been recorded in Lesotho.

Over the weekend there were rumours that three samples of suspected cases of COVID-19 had tested positive for the virus when they were sent for testing in South Africa. It was also said that Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital, popularly known as Tšepong, had admitted patient who had tested positive for the virus.

However, the Health ministry's Incidence Manager for COVID-19, Dr Llang Maama, said the reports were untrue and she would have been the first to know if any of the samples were positive.

She said the information would be communicated through the proper government channels.

"As the person entrusted with the job, I have not received any positive samples," Dr Maama said yesterday.

"I am the one who receives all the tested samples and therefore I would be in a position to communicate all the results sent to me. So, there are no suspected cases who have tested positive."

On her part, Tšepong's Public Relations Officer Mothepane Thahane denied that there was a patient at the institution who had tested positive for COVID-19.

"If I do not come to you and report about any cases of COVID-19 then you should just know there is nothing at all to that effect," Ms Thahane said yesterday.

"We have suspected cases of COVID-19 everyday, for example, these days even when a patient comes to the hospital with influenza, we suspect them and conduct several screening procedures that include an interview to ascertain the suspect's travel history and people they have been in contact with.

"After these procedures, we then engage the Ministry of Health where the patients are swabbed and the samples sent for testing. We then wait for the results," she said, adding they were still waiting for the results for one suspected case as all other tests came back negative.

She said contrary to reports that they had admitted the suspect, the suspect left the hospital on Friday and was either in self-quarantine at home or at one of the quarantine facilities set up by the Health ministry.



QUEEN Mamohato Memorial Hospital.

Jonsson Manufacturing pays "short time" workers

Staff Reporter

TEXTILE giant Jonsson Manufacturing on Friday started processing once-off payments for its 4024 workers from its eight Maputsoe and Ha-NyeNye factories who have all been placed on a temporary lay-off.

Also referred to as short time, temporary lay-offs are often used by companies that are undergoing financial distress to manage their resources and stay afloat.

The workers have been off work since 25 March 2020 when the company stopped operations ahead of the country's lockdown which started on 30 March.

"As of 25 March 2020, Jonsson Manufacturing had no alternative but to close its eight factories in Maputsoe and Ha-NyeNye as countries around the world went into immediate lockdown, the impact of which sadly resulted in its employees going on short time until further notice," a statement from the company reads.

"... The company, however, remains concerned that many of its employees may experience financial difficulties during May 2020 as a result of no work and no pay during April."

The company said, like others, it was "facing unique chal-

lenges in this time of uncertainty" but was also "focusing its efforts on tackling some key areas of concern".

It added that it was concerned that its staff may suffer financial challenges during May when they will not have worked.

The company has therefore given its 3721 workers who have served for more than six months a once-off M1000 payment. The 303 staffers who have served for less than six months each received a M500 once-off payment.

Jonsson Manufacturing managing director Anton Barker said, "All the 4024 Jonsson employees in Lesotho will be notified this evening (Friday) of this payment, by SMS, and they will have the opportunity to either accept this payment or opt out by return SMS should they not require this payment."

"The funds will be transferred directly into their respective bank accounts by Thursday 30 April. Should any member of staff need more information, they will be given the opportunity to contact someone in our organisation who will guide them through this."

The statement said while Jonsson Manufacturing was "facing unique challenges in this time of uncertainty", it was also "focusing its efforts on tackling

some key areas of concern".

"Among the primary concerns are the health and well-being of our employees, financial stability of the business and maintaining job security for the local community."

The company's chairperson, Nick Jonsson, said they have done their best since 2002, when the company started with just 70 workers, to prioritise their staff.

"We have always tried to do the best we can for our people, giving them support especially in extraordinary times like these is a priority to us. The local community has played an integral part in growing our business into the sustainable and successful business it has become."

"The strong values that have always guided us are more important now than ever and we will continue to do the right thing as always," Mr Jonsson said.

The company will also keep its onsite clinic open, fully staffed and operating normal hours during lockdown to encourage the staff to look after their health.

This is meant to ensure that the staff has access to their standard medical care for non-coronavirus related ailments during the lockdown and remain fit until work resumes.



WORKERS in one of Jonsson Manufacturing's factories in Maputsoe.

Expectations high for Love Letter 2



TOXIQUE.



NINE24



Search underway for face of Lesotho Fashion Week

Page 10

Bataung Moeketsi

EXPECTATIONS are high tonight after the Facebook broadcast of the debut edition of *The Love Letter* show last Sunday.

The show, which was streamed on the *Mosotho oa Lesotho* page from 7 to 10pm, was shot from an undisclosed location. The second edition is on today from 5pm to midnight.

Online shows have become a hit, especially in developed countries where both entertainers and consumers of their content are trying to deal with the boredom inflicted by the Coronavirus induced lockdowns.

Like several other countries across the world, Lesotho has been on lockdown since last month. Lesotho is in a peculiar situation since it has not recorded any cases of the virus. However, the country remains in a precarious situation since it is completely surrounded by the neighbouring South Africa which has recorded nearly 4 000 cases and 75 deaths.

Lesotho went into the lockdown allowing only essential services to continue working since 30 March 2020.

Clubs and restaurants, which are non-essential have thus been closed, limiting recreational activities to indoors.

And to move with the trends, AfroDJ, PabloDJ, Nine24, Toxique, Let's Chill and Thizozo streamed their show much to the amusement of their followers.

Bigger numbers expected tonight. Jeremiah Skaftin Lebea will host while DJs Thizozo, Nelo, TenOver10, Kopper Alotsi, Gama, Veenushka, Trybs and Ebonics will be on the turntables while saxophonist Marcx Brass and rapper Unkle Krack will take to the stage.

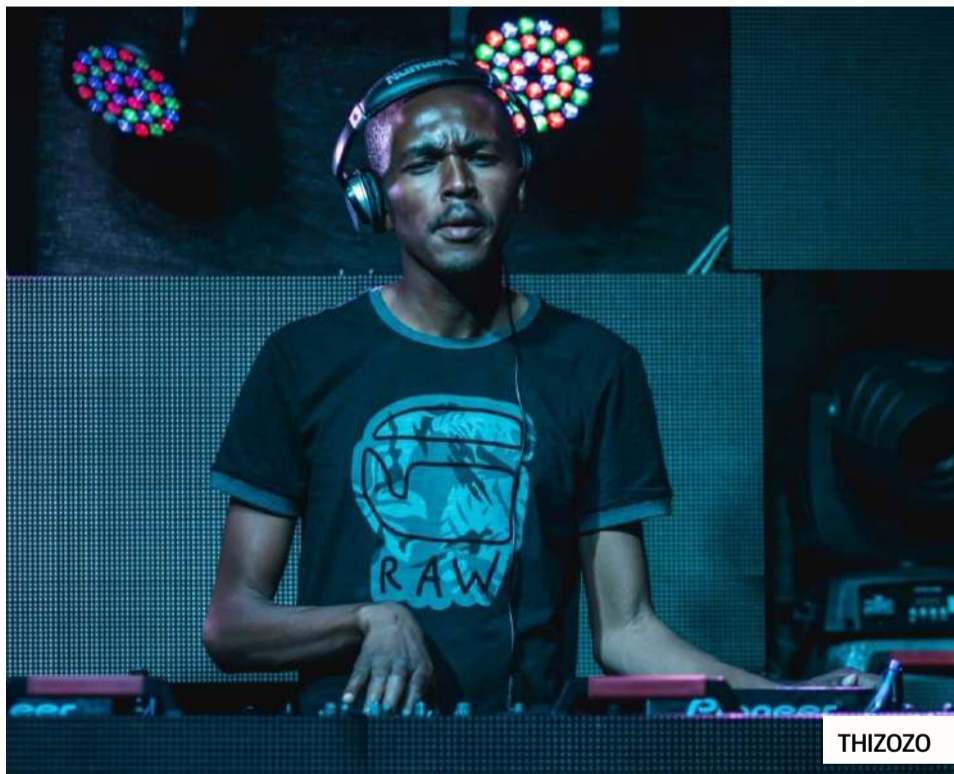
In the first instalment, DJ Trybs introduced each act and kept the party alive as the show host.

Jams Session Sounds provided stage, sound, DJ equipment and lighting for the concert while Nkopane Mojakisane and Thepa Moilola shot the footage.

Viewers are still raving about the performances and the entire production.

Tichere Pule Fleet Services was the event's main sponsor while Jam Session Sounds provided stage, sound and lighting for the concert.

Nkoanyane provided animation and graphic design services, Mosotho oa Lesotho was



THIZOZO

the executive producer of the show and Thabo Thizozo Tau handled the sound engineering.

One of the organisers, Bokang Khoarai told the *Xpress People* that although the show was inspired by mere boredom, the failed attempt at pulling a similar show on Lesotho's national broadcaster was a factor.

"The show was inspired by boredom mostly as we realised that we were all just sitting around with the skills and needed to pull it off and all the equipment required was at our disposal," Khoarai said.

"It also came from us learning that there had been an attempt to execute a similar idea with our national broadcaster but it failed at the last minute. Therefore, we thought this would be a good lesson to those involved in the failed Lesotho Television (LTV) broadcast. The lesson here is that the young people, the future of this nation, must not seek permission to do great things."

Last week's broadcast attracted 3 500 viewers from over 10 countries and the numbers continue to rise since the video is still available online. Viewers have been raving about the performances and the "impressive overall production".

Thizozo told this publication that he had been streaming his own performances on his page prior to *The Love Letter* and that the move has garnered positive feedback.

He however, said the disadvantage of performing online was the difficulty of gauging the audience's reactions.

"In a club you get immediate feedback from the crowd. You will know if the audience is happy or not and you react accordingly," Thizozo said.

Let's Chill said he was excited having anticipated such a gig for a long time.

He said although their show was a success, more could have watched if they afforded data.



LSFW ambassadors.



Search underway for face of Lesotho Fashion Week

Bataung Moeketsi

THE search is underway for a model to become the Lesotho Fashion Week (LSFW) for the next one year.

The LSFW told the *Xpress People* recently that the competition is open to Basotho who are 18 years and above. The applicants are expected to submit a one-minute introductory video of themselves stating why they deserve to be selected.

The videos will be accompanied by the model's Z-card (a marketing portfolio for models). These, and a bust shot of the applicant, must be sent to the LSFW's head of production Thato Fonya by 30 April 2020.

Public voting will be done online on 1 May while the winner will be announced on 1 June.

The winner will get a paid for photo and video shoot, placement for campaigns and on the LSFW runway and fully paid for look book. The winner will also get the services of a public relations manager for the one year that they will be contracted.

Fonya said the face of the LSFW is integral to the planning of the event and its publicity.

"The face of the LSFW will take part in all our local and international campaigns including television adverts, magazine photoshoots, working with our sponsors and shooting various videos for our social media platforms as part of our 2020 promotions," Fonya said.

"In addition, the winner will secure a place on our model casting judging panel, which takes place twice a year. They

will also earn a spot in two seasons of the LSFW."

Apart from the search for the inaugural face of the fashion week, the LSFW is involved in two initiatives including a wool and mohair design contest aimed at ensuring that the fabric is processed locally.

The contest will also give two young creatives an opportunity to partake in the next season LSFW. The second initiative involves the launch of *The Fashion Business*, a weekly audio podcast starting on 1 May 2020.

LSFW is a business to business marketing platform for fashion, footwear, accessories and jewellery in Lesotho which also hosts bi-annual presentations of its women's and men's collections. Designers are also afforded the opportunity to wholesale their pieces to local and international boutiques and online stores at a trade show which runs concurrently with the presentations.

This year's LSFW was initially set to run from 17 to 19 April at The Anne Guesthouse in Maseru but was last month suspended indefinitely due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Founder of the fashion week, Mahadi Granier, said they were expecting both local and international guests and fashion designers at the event hence it was prudent to suspend the event as a precaution.

"With an expected large attendance of international guests, we believe we have a responsibility to take the necessary precautions that prioritise the health and safety of our designers, our guests and nation as whole," Granier said last month.



**Weekend
Girl**

KARABELO Mosito (22) resides in Ha-Thetsane in Maseru. She is studying for an Industrial-Organisational Psychologist Honours Degree at Rhodes University. She hopes to inspire younger generations and bring forth the best version of everyone that she may come across. Her motto is: "Impact".

Yourstars

Aries - March 21 - April 20

YOU can make new friends by taking part in social events involving colleagues. This is a great day for a trip. You can bet officials will be waiting for you when you do. Don't evade issues or twist the truth around. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

Taurus - April 21 - May 20

Your lack of responsibility and attention has been a key issue in your relationship. Do not let others exhaust you financially. Your mate is going to want and need some attention. Your attitude could be up and down like a yo-yo. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

Gemini - May 21 - June 21

You can make money if you are wise in your choices. Your moneymaking opportunities will flourish. Your concern with older family members and those less fortunate than yourself will only add to your attractiveness. Include friends and family members in your redecorating plans. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

Cancer - June 22 - July 22

Children may be difficult to handle. Turn things around, make sure that they do their share. Your interest in religion and philosophy may lead you to specific destinations. You are best to sit back and think it through, rather than add to the ranting and raving. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

Leo - July 23 - August 22

Focus on forming business partnerships. Your social activity should be conducive to finding love. Bring work home if it will help you get caught up. You can have quite the romantic adventure if you take time to get to know your mate all over again. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

Virgo - August 23 - September 22

You can mesmerize anyone you meet with your cultured attitude and outlook. Uncertainty about your relationship is prevalent. A series of misunderstandings may be at fault. Travel may be confusing. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

Libra - September 23 - October 22

You can gain approval, get kudos, and ask for help if you put a little heart into your speech or request. Social activities will be satisfying. Be sure to pay attention to your bank account. You need to clear up some important personal documents before the end of the year. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

Scorpio - October 23 - November 21

Your mind is on moneymaking ventures. Stress coupled with diet will add to stomach problems. Try to be reasonable. Travel will promote romantic connections. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

Sagittarius - November 22 - December 20

It might be best to work on your own; if possible, do your job out of your home this week. Seminars will provide you with knowledge and amusement. Make sure that you have covered yourself legally and try not to let your temper get out of hand. Communicate with relatives who may need advice in order to find solutions to their existing problems. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

Capricorn - December 21 - January 19

Draw up contracts regarding your personal situation. Your communication skills will bring you popularity and increased self esteem. Your involvement in interest groups may bring you popularity. Be sure to sidestep those who are eccentric or unpredictable. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

Aquarius - January 20 - February 18

Make changes to your home that will be pleasing to everyone involved. Get involved in jobs that require creative input. You can win points with both peers and superiors. You can discuss your intentions and ideas with your colleagues or friends this week. Put your efforts into being creative. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

Pisces - February 19 - March 20

Get busy putting your place in order. Your talent will be recognized. You can elaborate on your creative ideas and get involved in groups that relate to the arts. You can expect changes in your living arrangements. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

Hundreds of ancient Roman gold coins discovered in Italy



HUNDREDS of ancient coins were discovered when a soapstone jar was excavated in Italy.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS conducting a dig underneath the Cressoni Theatre in Como, Italy on 5 September were surprised by the astounding discovery of hundreds of gold coins that date back to the late Roman imperial era in the fifth century.

"We do not yet know in detail the historical and cultural significance of this discovery but this area is a real treasure for our archaeology," said Italian Culture Minister Alberto Bonisoli in a Facebook post following the discovery.

The coins were found in a soapstone jug that'd been slightly cracked open to reveal the glittering gold coins inside of it.

At a 10 September press conference on the discovery, Bonisoli described the discovery as "epochal" as he shared new details that his team discovered upon their first examinations of the artifacts.

Bonisoli stated: "More than exceptional it's epochal, one of those discoveries that marks the course of history."

A total of about 300 coins were found inside the jar, and Bonisoli's team be-

lieves that the exact year they date back to is 474 B.C.

Furthermore, the magnificent find has some mystery surrounding it. Bonisoli explained that it's unusual to find ancient coins from this era in a jar like the ones recently discovered.

Another unknown is how much the coins might be worth, although Italian media have reported that they very may well be worth millions of euros.

The historic 18th-century Cressoni

Theatre was first built in 1870 before it turned into a cinema, which ultimately shut its doors in 1997.

The building was scheduled to be demolished in order to make way for a new apartment complex, but construction has been temporarily suspended following this latest discovery in order to give archaeologists time to conduct more excavations at the site.

Indeed, researchers are anxious to see what else they can uncover. According to local archaeology superintendent Luca Rinaldi, "this finding demonstrates the effectiveness of the protection, knowledge and enhancement action carried out by the Ministry through the Superintendencies and encourages an even more concrete commitment to extending the practice of preventive archaeology even in the context of private initiative."

Rinaldi also added that this discovery is "practically an entire collection, unlike anything else ever found in northern Italy."

—ati

**Stranger
than
Fiction**



VCL Managing Director Philip Amoateng greets the chairperson of the sub-committee of cabinet ministers on COVID-19 Chief Thesele 'Maserinane on Friday at 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre.



A SECURITY officer sanitises Chief 'Maseribane's hands at Avani Lesotho on Monday.



A SECURITY officer takes a temperature reading of one of the officials at Avani Lesotho during COVID-19 lockdown on Monday.



PART of the road that is being repaired at the Pioneer circle in Maseru.



SHOPPERS who queued to buy groceries in Maseru this past week disregarded World Health Organisation (WHO) social distancing protocols aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19.

CORONAVIRUS has been detected on particles of air pollution by scientists investigating whether this could enable it to be carried over longer distances and increase the number of people infected.

The work is preliminary and it is not yet known if the virus remains viable on pollution particles and in sufficient quantity to cause disease.

The Italian scientists used standard techniques to collect outdoor air pollution samples at one urban and one industrial site in Bergamo province and identified a gene highly specific to Covid-19 in multiple samples. The detection was confirmed by blind testing at an independent laboratory.

Leonardo Setti at the University of Bologna in Italy, who led the work, said it was important to investigate if the virus could be carried more widely by air pollution.

"I am a scientist and I am worried when I don't know," he said. "If we know, we can find a solution. But if we don't know, we can only suffer the consequences."

Two other research groups have suggested air pollution particles could help coronavirus travel further in the air.

A statistical analysis by Setti's team suggests higher levels of particle pollution could explain higher rates of infection in parts of northern Italy before a lockdown was imposed, an idea supported by another preliminary analysis. The region is one of the most polluted in Europe.

Neither of the studies by Setti's team have been peer-reviewed and therefore have not been endorsed by independent scientists. But experts agree their proposal is plausible and requires investigation.

Previous studies have shown that air pollution particles do harbour microbes and that pollution is likely to have carried the viruses causing bird flu, measles and foot-and-mouth disease over considerable distances.

The potential role of air pollution particles is linked to the broader question of how the coronavirus is transmitted. Large virus-laden droplets from infected people's coughs and sneezes fall to the ground within a metre or two. But much smaller droplets, less than 5 microns in diameter, can remain in the air for minutes to hours and travel further.

Experts are not sure whether these tiny airborne droplets can cause coronavirus infections, though they know the 2003 Sars coronavirus was spread in the air and that the new virus can remain viable for hours in tiny droplets.

But researchers say the importance of potential airborne transmission, and the possible boosting role of pollution particles, mean it

Coronavirus detected on particles of air pollution



LARGE virus-laden droplets from infected people's coughs and sneezes fall to the ground within 1-2 metres.

must not be ruled out without evidence.

Prof Jonathan Reid at Bristol University in the UK is researching airborne transmission of coronavirus. "It is perhaps not surprising that while suspended in air, the small droplets could combine with background urban particles and be carried around."

He said the virus had been detected in tiny droplets collected indoors in China.

Setti said tiny droplets between

0.1 and 1 micron may travel further when coalesced with pollution particles up to 10 microns than on their own. This is because the combined particle is larger and less dense than the droplet and can remain buoyed by the air for longer.

"The pollution particle is like a micro-airplane and the passengers are the droplets," said Setti. Reid is more cautious: "I think the very small change in the size of the (combined) particles is unlikely to play much of a role."

Prof Frank Kelly at Imperial College London said the idea of pollution particles carrying the virus further afield was an interesting one. "It is possible, but I would like to see this work repeated by two or three groups."

Another expert, Prof John Sodeau at University College Cork, in the Republic of Ireland, said: "The work seems plausible. But that is the bottom line at the moment, and plausible (particle) interactions are not always biologically viable and may

have no effect in the atmosphere." He said the normal course of scientific research might take two or three years to confirm such findings.

Other research has indicated correlations between increased Covid-19 deaths and higher levels of air pollution before the pandemic. Long-term exposure to dirty air is known to damage lung health, which could make people more vulnerable to Covid-19.

— The Guardian

Coronavirus: six key factors poor countries should focus on

Olawale Emmanuel Olayide

SINCE the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic late last year in Wuhan, China, the global community has witnessed unprecedented policy responses to curtail, contain and control the disease. Many have proven to be successful. But others required critical context consideration.

For instance, the lockdown in Nigeria risks threatening the livelihoods of millions of people who are dependent on the informal market for their survival. Another example is the fact that the security measures being imposed are extracting a heavy price from ordinary citizens.

The situation is a learning curve for all countries.

The responses at national level have included policy measures consistent with recommended social and hygienic practices.

These have ranged from staying at home and regular washing of hands or use of sanitiser to social and physical distancing, wearing of protective masks and kits, limiting the number of people in public gatherings, restriction of human and vehicular movement or curfews or travel bans, and total or partial lockdown.

There have also been broad policy responses to help economies manage their way through the crisis.

Some policy responses have proven to be

effective in some cases. But what's become clear is that policy responses cannot be a one-size-fits-all. That is, the local realities of each country in terms of financial, social, cultural and environmental contexts should be considered.

Based on my academic work on public policy and sustainable development, I think it is imperative that poor countries do not simply cut-and-paste interventions being imposed in rich countries. The specific differences between rich and poor countries should be taken on board.

I have therefore identified six areas that countries in Africa would do well to focus on. The list comes from my experience of working with administrations seeking to meet development goals ranging from social inclusion to economic sustainability.

Six key areas to focus on

The first need is for proper data and information management. These play a critical role, right from the identification of the first case to tracing contacts, provision of medical care infrastructure and caring for infected and affected populations. Countries that have data about their residents, like the United Kingdom, are able to target the measures they put in place. Countries that don't have data about their populations, like many in Africa, are unable to focus their responses.

Secondly, developing countries must avoid

simply copying the policy responses of rich countries. Countries have different resources. It would be unrealistic to contain and control the COVID-19 pandemic in a uniform way. There is a need to reconsider and rejig the current policy responses by countries to suit their local contexts.

Home-grown initiatives — like support for households and livelihoods — would offer sufficient conditions for effective disease control and management. For example, Ghana and Rwanda have home-grown school feeding and health insurance programmes that have worked. These could be used to ensure national coverage of social inclusion and social protection during this period.

Thirdly, local resources should be used while soliciting greater partnership. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the strength and weaknesses of both rich and poor countries. It has also shown opportunity for partnership for sustainable development. This includes monetary and material support from rich countries to help manage the disease.

The socio-economic foundations of most countries have been shaken, while resilience-building capacity — the ability to rebound and recover — has become the defining character for the survival of countries. For instance, the fall in the price of crude oil has affected the annual budget of many oil-producing countries, including Nigeria. Such countries will need to re-strategise on economic diversifica-

tion of the revenue base.

The fourth need is to strengthen institutions and build human capacity for disaster and risk management. Having the right institutions in place — such as a national disaster and risk management commission, inter-ministerial capability and the right skill-sets — have also been effective in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Poor countries have a lot to learn on this front.

Fifthly, citizens are at the mercy of government when there is an emergency like this pandemic. Trust can only be assured when the right leadership is in place. The important factors are respect for human life, and responsive and responsible institutions.

Lastly, all countries need a recovery and sustainability plan. COVID-19 is not the first pandemic to happen in the world. Each century has witnessed different pandemics, often resulting in global economic recessions. What is important, therefore, is to plan for recovery. Countries will emerge from the current pandemic in different economic conditions. Those that have robust economic recovery plans will recover faster and rebuild better. — The Conversation

Olawale Emmanuel Olayide is a Research Fellow and Coordinator, Centre for Sustainable Development, University of Ibadan, University of Ibadan. This article was first published by The Conversation

High-Altitude winners lament prizes' delay

Leemisa Thuseho

THE winners of the 2019 edition of the Lesotho High-Altitude Summer Marathon say they are unhappy with the delays in giving them their prizes.

The race was held last December in Mokhotlong but the athletes are yet to be paid.

Bronze medallist in the 21km, Jobo Khatoane, confirmed to the *Sunday Express* that they were still waiting for their winnings.

He said they were worried that there has not been any communication from the race organisers regarding the prizes.

"We are still waiting and there has not been any explanation on the delay by the organisers," Khatoane said.

Khatoane added that most

of the athletes earn their living from running, therefore the payment delays are complicate their daily lives.

He also lamented that payment delays were now seemingly the trend for local race organisers when in neighbouring South Africa athletes are paid within three weeks.

Khatoane said the majority of athletes end up wallowing in debt in the hope that their winnings would be paid in time.

Khatoane is expecting M8 000 for finishing behind Letsekang Sekonyela (first) and Tello Ramakoangoana (second). Sekonyela is expecting M20 000 while Ramakoangoana is expecting M18 000.

For her part, ladies 21km winner 'Neheng Khatala said they had hoped to receive the funds

by March this year.

"In previous years we got our money latest in March," Khatala said.

Khatala is expecting M20 000. The 42km men's race was won by Lebenya Nkoka, who is expecting M120 000.

Kenyan Minicah Jeprkorir Mengich won the ladies' category.

Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission (LSRC) acting CEO Teboho Malataliana said the delay has been caused by the delayed doping test results. He said it was risky to release the funds prior to the results.

Malataliana said they were working closely with the national anti-doping officers to speed up the release of the doping test results.

"Our anti-doping team prom-

ised to follow-up on the results and as soon as they are available, we will start paying the athletes," Malataliana said.

The athletes samples were taken to South African's Doping Control Laboratory in Bloemfontein of which Malataliana believes their operations were affected by the on-going coronavirus lockdown.

He said once they receive the results, they would immediately start paying the athletes.

He poured cold water on suspicions that the delays could be resulting from the LSRC's financial challenges.

"We know they need the money for survival, especially during this time of the lockdown where there are no other races and we promise to speed up the processes," Malataliana said.



Ranthimo hopes for top-eight finish

Moorosi Tsiane

LIPHAKOE midfielder Tseole Ranthimo (pictured) says a top eight finish is still achievable for his side despite its poor start to the 2019/20 Econet Premier League season.

The Quthing outfit made its first ever top eight finish last season but a slow start this season is making it seem impossible to replicate the feat.

The side spent the most part of the current season stuck in the relegation zone. When the league headed into the Coronavirus (COVID-19) break last month, Liphakoe were 11th in the table with 17 points from 18 matches.

The poor start saw former coach Thabo Tsutšulupa being shown the door in January to be replaced by Teele Ntšonyana. Ntšonyana is in his second stint with the team having left in January 2017.

Ranthimo attributed the poor start to injuries on some of the side's key players adding that he hopes for better fortunes when league action resumes.

"We started the season without several players among them Tšepang Makapa, last season's top scorer at the club with seven goals but due to an injury, he could have helped us a lot," Ranthimo said.

"The available players blew hot and cold and that cost us. However, things have changed under the new coach; he has helped some of our players who were struggling in front of goals and they are now performing well."

The break has given ample recovery time to the injured players and Ranthimo hopes they will make a positive impact on their return to action. He said if team performs well when the season reopens, then it easily achieve its top eight finish.

"The team that is eight at the moment, LDF, has 26 points and that is an 11-points' gap. We can still close that gap."

Ranthimo, who has been out with a knee injury sustained in their league match against Swallows in February, said he has now fully recovered and would be available for selection once the league resumes.

"I had just started training when the league went into the current break but now I am fully recovered."

The former Lioli and Rovers midfielder also admitted that breaking into the Liphakoe first 11 would be tough as there is serious competition for his position.

"It is not going to be easy; there are players who took the opportunity with both hands and have been doing well while I was out injured. However, I have worked hard to remain fit. I believe I have a lot to offer the team and I will be ready when the chance comes," Ranthimo said.

Boxers must use lockdown to prove discipline — Tšenoli

Leemisa Thuseho

LESOTHO Boxing Association (LeBA) president Katiso Tšenoli says the on-going Coronavirus (COVID-19) break is a self-discipline test for boxers.

Tšenoli told the *Sunday Express* on Friday that this is an opportunity for athletes to prove their discipline by maintaining their best fitness levels without being pushed by their respective trainers who are unavailable during the lockdown.

Lesotho went into a nationwide lockdown on 30 March 2020. The lockdown was initially supposed to end on 21 April but it has now been extended to 5 May.

The lockdown was imposed by the government to avoid the possible spread of the coronavirus.

Lesotho is yet to record any cases although neighbouring South Africa has now surpassed 4 000 cases and recorded 79 deaths. Globally, the virus has killed nearly 200 000

people while infections are nearing 3 million.

All sporting activities have been suspended since last month and Tšenoli said this is the opportunity for boxers to show discipline.

As an individual and indoor sport, he said it would be easy for boxers to maintain their fitness at home.

"The break is going to affect our athletes in many areas but in terms of fitness, it must not be a challenge as they can train at home," Tšenoli said.

He however bemoaned the lack of the requisite equipment for the boxers.

He said the lockdown came at a time when they were training for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and he said they would proceed once the new dates are set.

"The break came at very busy time when we were preparing for the Olympics and looking forward, we hope to stage domestic tournaments so that we can attract sponsors.

"I urge the boxers to stay fit where ever they are because once the lockdown is lifted, we are going to continue with our activities."

He urged parents and guardians of boxers to help the boxers, especially the juniors to continue training and be vigilant against possible COVID-19 infections.

He said while they would want to assist boxers financially, they are yet to receive any funding for the international bodies that they are affiliated to hence they would not make any promises.

"There is nothing for now, even our international mother bodies haven't yet promised us anything," Tšenoli said.

He said as the new president, his immediate target is to ensure LeBA's financial stability by securing sponsors.

"We need sponsors and our plan is to invite potential sponsors for our upcoming events so that they can come and understand the sport. We hope to convince them to invest into the sport," Tšenoli said.

Mohau speaks on joining Lioli



MOHAU Rammoneng.

Moorosi Tsiane

LIOLI'S new acquisition Mohau Rammoneng says he is settling well in his new team since joining them on the last day of the January transfer window.

The former Liphakoe skipper ended his long stay at the Quthing outfit to join *Tse Nala* early this year.

Rammoneng has appeared five times for Lioli and says he is still trying to know his teammates.

"I think I am not too far from where I want to be but I am still trying to get to know and understand my teammates; their strengths, weaknesses because I believe we must complement each other," Rammoneng said.

"It's a bit challenging to understand each other at the moment because the league is inactive but by the time the league ends, everything should be in place.

"Unlike my previous team (Liphakoe), there are so many senior players with lots of experience and when I moved, I knew that it would not be easy.

"However, ultimately, settling in well would be determined by

one's desire to achieve their goals. That is the reason for which I am here. To settle in, I had to change my way of doing things and fit into this new level of professionalism."

He however, said he is not yet happy with his performance and is working hard to improve.

"In my position, if I am not scoring, then I must assist but I haven't done that since arriving here. This is one of the most important aspects of my game that I must improve."

Asked whether or not he still hopes to be recalled into the senior national team after being dropped from the squad that is preparing for the Africa Cup of Nations Qualifiers against Benin and Nigeria, Rammoneng said his focus was on improving his game at Lioli.

"At the moment, my focus is at Lioli to ensure that the team performs well but if my performance improves and the coach sees the need to call me, I would be happy to do so."

Rammoneng also encouraged Basotho to abide by government regulations to ensure that the Coronavirus is kept at bay.



High-Altitude
winners
lament
prizes' delay
P23



LSRC rescues LeFA, LAAA

Moorosi Tsiane

THE LESOTHO Sport and Recreation Commission (LSRC) will for the next three months supplement the income of athletes who fall under the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) and the Lesotho Athletics Amateur Association (LAAA).

The funds are outside the monthly subventions that the associations receive from the LSRC and are meant to sustain the athletes during the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown where all sporting activities are on hold.

LSRC acting chief executive officer Teboho Malataliana confirmed developments to the *Sunday Express* on Friday saying they felt it was prudent to assist the associations with the knowledge that the majority of the athletes are semi-professional.

"The lockdown has presented a difficult situation as there are no sporting activities that are being allowed, so we find the need to try and help athletes whom we know survive on sport," Malataliana said.

"We know that apart from soccer players, there are other athletes who survive on sports and that is how we reached the decision to assist LeFA and LAAA."

Malataliana said they have already submitted their budget to the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation although they are yet to receive the funds.

"We haven't received the money yet but we have already discussed the matter with the ministry and submitted our budget which is for three months.

"It should be clear that this budget is different from the monthly subventions that associations receive. This is specifically meant for the lockdown relief."

Malataliana said the disbursement of the funds would be determined by the associations.

"For instance, in athletics there are athletes who compete in races where they win money on which they survive.

"However, now that the races are not being run, we have asked the LAAA to compile a list based on each athlete's track record so that they can see how to help them.

"Similarly, LeFA will take the responsibility because we know most of our teams are paying their players.

"However, there are other associations whose coaches and administrators we have been paying and these will not be affected as their salaries will continue to be paid as usual," Malataliana said.



TEBOHO Malataliana.