

# Sunday Express

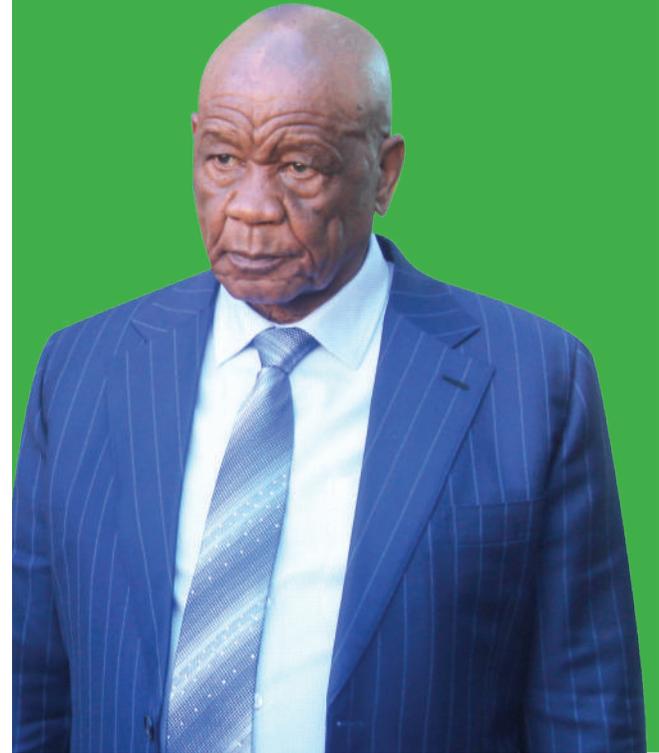
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E-Edition

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MOEKETSI Majoro

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# Why I support the ABC-DC deal: Majoro

Pascalinah Kabi

**F**INANCE Minister Moeketsi Majoro says he supports the ruling All Basotho Convention (ABC) and Democratic Congress (DC)'s deal to form a new coalition government because it presents the best chance of fulfilling the ABC's own election promises of bringing socio-economic development to Lesotho.

Dr Majoro said only those ABC members closest to Prime Minister Thomas Thabane opposed the ABC/DC deal out of selfish considerations of maintaining their own privileges that come with proximity to power.

He said the current scenario where the ABC was beset by power struggles was inimical to national development. He said a change of leadership was necessary to fulfil Mr Thabane's own desire to improve the welfare of Basotho.

He, however, accused some of his fellow ministers of wielding undue influence on Mr Thabane to the extent of recommending the dismissal of a fellow minister.

Dr Majoro spoke in the wake of attempts by some of his colleagues to have him fired for allegedly working with the dominant Professor Nqosa Mahao-led faction of the ABC to "destabilise" the government. He said those pushing for his ouster were enemies of change who had personally benefited from their proximity to Mr Thabane.

ABC ministers Samonyane Ntsekele, Chalane Phori and Lehlohonolo Moramotse are on Wednesday said to have been mandated to ask Mr Thabane to fire Dr Majoro. (See story below). This after a caucus meeting between Alliance of Democrats (AD) MPs and the few still loyal to Mr Thabane recommended the finance minister's ouster.

It is now crystal clear though that even if Mr Thabane bows to the pressure from his cronies to fire Dr Majoro, that will be a very foolish move as the mooted alliance between the DC and the ABC faction that oppose the premier is now unstoppable. The ABC/DC pact enjoy more than two thirds of members of the National Assembly, if support from other parties is factored in. So, the PM will merely be firing a man who is now poised to replace him within a matter of weeks, possibly days.

Reacting to the news of the trio's approach to the prime minister, Dr Majoro last night told the *Sunday Express* that he had survived 15 previous attempts by some of his colleagues to get him fired since Mr Thabane came to power in June 2017.

He said the decision to hire and fire ministers was a prime minister's prerogative. The premier should thus be left to do his job without undue influence.

"The decision to appoint or dis-appoint (dismiss) ministers is purely the prerogative of the prime minister," Dr Majoro said.

"I am surprised that some of my ABC colleagues and peers feel that they have the right to dismiss other ministers. It is



indeed testimony that they feel they have already acquired indirect power and can therefore shuffle cabinet members. I do not know if they will finally succeed; they have tried it more than 15 times in the last three years."

Dr Majoro was last month chosen by the majority of his fellow ABC legislators to succeed Mr Thabane. He is one of 34 ABC legislators who have signed a deal with the DC to form a new government which excludes Mr Thabane and Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki's Alliance of Democrats (AD). The ABC's other two current coalition partners, the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL) also back the deal.

Asked why he supported the ABC-DC deal, Dr Majoro said he was convinced that "a change in the composition and governing style of the four-party coalition could provide better prospects of restoring public trust (in the government) and rescuing the ABC".

He said Mr Thabane was himself in favour of change and only those closest to him, who enjoyed the privileges that came with proximity to power were opposed to change.

"I am convinced that immediate change is required.

"My own leader's decision (to retire) is clear evidence that he desires change for the remainder of his term (which ex-

pires in 2022). But as with any change of government, there are winners and losers.

"The losers would be those 'president's men and women' who enjoyed indirect political power to control the gravy train and patronage system. Their interests are in continuing the sweet *status quo* that they enjoy. They fight with everything they have to maintain their power. Their wild enunciations should be understood in this context.

"I wish to reaffirm that I earnestly support any change that would begin to restore Basotho's trust in their government. Also, as a loyal ABC cadre, I want to be part of any change that would give ABC a fighting chance in the 2022 elections. I wish that all my colleagues in parliament can begin to agree that it is critical we begin a united journey to rebuild the party. We have fought for too long and the current trajectory spells doom for this great movement," Dr Majoro said.

Some of his ABC colleagues have accused Dr Majoro of withdrawing the budget estimates to destabilise the government. However, the Finance minister denied withdrawing the budget estimates from parliament on Wednesday. He said he had merely asked to be allowed to "update the budget estimates", citing the need to relook them in light of lower revenue collection projections by the Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA).

He said the allegations that he connived with "his friends" to request a few days from parliament to update the revenue and grants collections was "mere fantasy".

"These accusations are mere fantasy. My request was to be given the space to consult cabinet and its committees on what I thought were likely to be significant impairments to the February 2020 revenue projections," Dr Majoro said. He initially presented his budget speech on 26 February 2020. It could however, not be passed after Mr Thabane illegally prorogued parliament from 20 March to 19 June 2020, purportedly to prevent the spread of the deadly Coronavirus (Covid-19).

Parliament was, however, re-opened on 21 April 2020 after Mr Thabane's own ABC party and others successfully challenged the prorogation in the Constitutional Court.

Dr Majoro said proposing a flawed budget would have been criminal on his part and that those who made unfounded allegations against him appeared to be unaware of the need to do things right.

"As a journalist, have you ever wondered why people who openly supported the prorogation of parliament and did not want the budget to pass are suddenly eager to see the budget pass even if it is flawed?" he asked.

Dr Majoro had presented the initial budget estimates before the coronavirus ravaged the world economy. South Africa, on whose economy Lesotho is anchored now expects economic contraction of as much as 10 to 20 percent. The LRA now projects much lower revenue collections in the 2020/21 fiscal year.

## AD, ABC faction demand Majoro's ouster

Pascalinah Kabi

**A**JOINT parliamentary caucus of Alliance of Democrats (AD) and some All Basotho Convention (ABC) legislators have called on Prime Minister Thomas Thabane to fire Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro. They want him sacked for allegedly working with the ABC's Professor Nqosa Mahao-led faction to "destabilise" the government.

They cite Dr Majoro's Wednesday decision to allegedly withdraw the budget estimates from parliament as evidence that the Finance minister is working with the Mahao faction to sabotage the government.

Chalane Phori, the small business minister and avowed Thabane loyalist, confirmed the caucus meeting in a leaked audio recording. Mr Phori launches a blistering attack on Dr Majoro in that audio, implying the finance minister was being a Judas Iscariot for allegedly pretending to be serving the premier while bedding the Mahao faction.

ABC legislators last month elected Dr Majoro to succeed Mr Thabane when the latter eventually steps down. He polled 26 votes to beat ABC chairperson Samuel Rapapa who got 18. Up until this year, Dr Majoro was considered a Thabane loyalist as the latter fought a bitter power struggle with his estranged party deputy, Prof Mahao. Last year Mr Thabane even "appointed" him to replace Prof Mahao as ABC deputy leader after he had "fired" the latter. The "appointment" was later nullified by the High Court.

Dr Majoro is among 34 ABC legislators who have signed a deal with the main opposition Democratic Congress (DC) to form a new government which excludes Mr Thabane and Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki's AD. The ABC's other two current coalition partners, the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL), also back the deal. (See story on Page 4). This leaves Mr Thabane with just 19 legislators still in his corner.

Dr Majoro's support for the moves to oust

Mr Thabane have not gone down well with some of his cabinet colleagues and the minority of ABC legislators who remain loyal to Mr Thabane.

The 19 ABC legislators were joined by the AD in calling on Mr Thabane to fire Dr Majoro. They said the minister's decision to allegedly "withdraw" the budget estimates from parliament was evidence that he was working with the premier's rivals to bring down the government.

Parliament was on Wednesday expected to vote on the M21, 9 billion budget speech initially presented to parliament by Dr Majoro on 26 February 2020. However, this did not happen after the Finance minister said he needed to relook the budget estimates, citing the need to factor in lower than expected revenue collections by the Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA).

He promised to return to parliament this week with revised estimates. However, the Finance minister denied withdrawing the budget estimates from parliament on Wednesday. He said he had merely asked to be allowed to "update the budget estimates", citing the need to relook them in light of lower revenue collection projections by the Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA). He also said resources had to be directed to the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Immediately afterwards, ABC legislators loyal to Mr Thabane held a caucus meeting with their AD counterparts to discuss Dr Majoro's decision.

Some ABC sources later told the *Sunday Express* that the joint caucus mandated ministers Samonyane Ntsekele (Water), Lehlohonolo Moramotse (Police and Public Safety) and Chalane Phori (Small Business, Cooperating and Marketing) to advise Mr Thabane to fire Dr Majoro.

"What Majoro did is unheard of," said one source.

"He pulled the carpet from under our feet and we know that he is being used by the Mahao faction and the opposition.

"So, we held joint caucus meeting with the AD and agreed to advise the prime minister to fire Majoro. They (ministers) met the prime minister on Wednesday night and passed on our message. We are yet to establish what is delaying the prime minister because we want Majoro out. He cannot have it both ways - being in government and working with the Mahao faction," the source said.

Mr Ntsekele yesterday confirmed there was a joint ABC-DC caucus but refused to say what was discussed.

"I am reluctant to comment on the matter. A caucus is a closed meeting with its own protocols. Whatever is discussed in caucus meetings is confidential and should remain like that," Mr Ntsekele said.

Messrs Phori and Moramotse's mobile phones rang unanswered yesterday. AD spokesperson Thuso Litjoko denied that the meeting had discussed the sacking of any ministers.

However, Mr Phori confirmed the moves to get Dr Majoro fired in a leaked audio recording.

"What he (Majoro) did yesterday is unheard of. That is tantamount to attempting a coup," Mr Phori is heard saying in the audio, recorded on Thursday.

He said that the caucus was aggrieved that Dr Majoro "withdrew" the budget estimates after he allegedly held secret meetings with Mr Thabane's political rivals. He said they knew beforehand that Dr Majoro would "withdraw" the budget estimates.

"The caucus has made a decision for this person (Majoro) to go and he must go. A person who attempts to overthrow the government after attending secret meetings should not stay or he will topple us.

"The caucus was clear that it will not break bread with a person who is working on toppling the government. Our partners (AD) are also clear on this one. Why is this person still a minister?"

"...I am boldly saying Majoro is no long-part of our government. He is working

against it. I am not embarrassed to say it and I said it to his face that he can't be working to topple the government and still want to be part of it," Mr Phori said.

He said the ABC erred when it elected Dr Majoro to succeed Mr Thabane while the latter remained in office.

"I warned them that they were creating a situation where we will have two prime ministers. Majoro is now acting as though he is a prime minister, making it difficult for us to do our jobs."

Mr Phori said he had been singled out by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's special envoy, Jeff Radebe, alongside Messrs Ntsekele, Moramotse and Government Secretary Moahloli Mphaka as the people who were influencing Mr Thabane to cling to power despite spirited moves by the ABC's national executive committee (NEC) and others to oust him.

He however, said he was only opposing moves to push out the premier illegally. The veteran leader should be allowed a dignified departure at his own volition, Mr Phori said.

Mr Phori warned Dr Majoro against dividing the ABC and sidelining him and Messrs Ntsekele and Moramotse.

He also suggested that Mr Thabane's rivals were working with the police to oust the government.

"Thabane's allies are called in for questioning by the police. *Ntate* (Majoro) and his allies are behind this. They are pretending as though we are in the same camp."

Messrs Phori and Ntsekele among Mr Thabane's allies who have been called in for questioning by the police in connection with the 14 June 2017 murder of the premier's ex-wife, Lipolelo Thabane. The First Lady, 'Maesaiah Thabane, has already been charged with the murder and Mr Thabane has a pending Constitutional Court application to stop the courts from trying him for the murder while he is in office.

He has also demanded immunity for himself and his wife as a precondition for giving up power. But the ABC's NEC has rejected the demand saying it would set a precedent for other leaders to engage in human rights violations knowing they will not be prosecuted.



## FNB Media Release

### FNBL provides relief to customers and SMEs impacted by COVID-19

**Maseru, 07 May 2020** – Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, First National Bank of Lesotho (FNBL), has been closely monitoring developments, with view of provisionally restructuring its operations and solutions to meet the changing demands and prevent the contraction of the pandemic.

We would like to assure our customers that in addition to putting in place the necessary precautionary measures to ensure the health and safety of our customers, staff and vendors during this time, we continue to reinforce our capacity to provide uninterrupted essential banking services which allows our customers to do their everyday banking through our innovative digital channels and branches.

We also believe that our responsibility is to help support our Retail (individual) and Commercial customers whose finances have been impacted during this challenging period. We are therefore pleased to announce the following relief measures:

#### **Cashflow Relief**

Our Cashflow relief intervention will be available to eligible customers with a good track record of honouring their payments prior to 1 March 2020. The cashflow relief measures will be applied to both Retail and Commercial customers for a period of three (3) months and will include the following:

- Instalment relief for the following product classes:
  - **Retail customers:** home loans, personal loans and WesBank loans;
  - **Commercial and SME customers:** commercial property finance, vehicle and asset finance and term loans
- Interest and fees will continue to accumulate on outstanding balances.
- Our individual customers will be able to choose between two options where they will enjoy a payment holiday from paying their loans and either:
  - Choose to pay over an extended loan repayment term with the same instalment after the holiday or;
  - Choose to increase their instalment slightly after the holiday to maintain the same loan repayment term;

The Bank will continue to offer free swiping on our speed points for our customers on bundled pricing. We also offer zero rated App usage for our customers using The Vodacom network. Cash deposits on Cashplus remain free as well as airtime and electricity purchases on Cashplus.

FNBL remains committed to helping its wider Commercial and Corporate Banking client base with a range of innovative cashflow relief solutions and urge our clients to contact their relationship managers in this regard.

For Cashflow Relief applications customers can log on to their FNB Banking app or call on 22241000; and Commercial and Corporate Banking clients can contact their relationship managers. FNB remains committed to helping the nation address some of the prevalent economic difficulties during this time and beyond.

**ENDS**

# More parties join pact to oust Thabane

Ntseben Motsoeli | Pascalinah Kabi

PRIME Minister Thomas Thabane has reached a dead end in his quest to delay his departure from power after more parties joined the All Basotho Convention (ABC) and main opposition Democratic Congress (DC) in demanding his immediate resignation. This is despite Mr Thabane's promise to go by end of July 2020 if the processes to facilitate his retirement are expedited.

Tomorrow the ABC will present to parliament an amended copy of its letter confirming its recent agreement with the DC to form a new government to replace the current Thabane coalition which comprises of the ABC, the Alliance of Democrats (AD), the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL). This after the speaker of the National Assembly, Sephiri Motanyane, rejected the initial letter on Friday. Mr Motanyane said he could not allow parliament to debate and vote on the issue until after the ABC had submitted a new letter explaining whether or not the ruling party's withdrawal automatically terminated the current four-party coalition agreement.

Mr Motanyane ordered the ABC to rewrite its letter to specifically state whether or not its withdrawal from the current government automatically ended its tenure. He also wanted to know what would happen to the ABC's current coalition partners after the latter's pull-out of government.

The ABC and the DC subsequently told the media on Friday that they would submit an amended letter as per Mr Motanyane's request. The parties said they expected the speaker to begin processes culminating in the formation of a new government. A no confidence vote would be the last option if Mr Thabane doggedly refused to step down, they said.

More significantly and ominously for the premier, more parties including the Selibe Mochoboroane-led Movement for Economic Change (MEC) have now thrown their weight behind the ABC-DC deal. This brings to 78 the number of legislators backing the deal. They can easily oust Mr Thabane in a no confidence vote should he insist on clinging on to power under the pretext that he is waiting modalities of his exit to be finalized.

The MEC's decision to join the proposed new coalition also puts paid to any hopes by Mr Thabane and his allies of cobbling a GNU comprising of his remaining 18 loyalist MPs, the AD, MEC, and the Lesotho Congress of Democracy (LCD), among other parties.

Two months ago, Mr Thabane revealed he was in talks with the LCD and MEC over a GNU. However, a deal never materialised and the MEC has now swelled the ranks of parties pushing for the premier's departure.

Initially the ABC deal with the DC was supported by 34 of the ruling party's 52 MPs. Combined with the DC's 26 seats, the BNP's five, the RCL one and the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD)'s three, it totaled 69 seats, enabling them to comfortably meet the 61-seat threshold required to form a new government. These other smaller parties were original supporters of the deal.

It has now been boosted by the MEC which brings in six seats, the National Independent Party (NIP), Basotho Congress Party (BCP) and Democratic Party of Lesotho (DPL) who all bring a seat each. This brings the grand total of legislators in support of the ABC-DC deal to 78. They could easily defeat Mr Thabane in a no confidence vote if he does not quit forthwith. This is now much easier after King Letsie III assented to a constitutional amendment bill effectively clipping a prime minister's power to dodge ouster after losing a no confidence vote. The amendment was gazetted on Friday. (See boxed story).

Mr Thabane has been at the helm of the four-party coalition since June 2017. He has been under immense pressure from his own ABC party to step down after he was earlier this year implicated in the 14 June 2017 murder of his ex-wife, Lipolele. The pressure has not eased despite his promises to step down by 31 July 2020 if processes to facilitate his retirement are completed by then.

In a televised address to the nation on Thursday, the embattled Mr Thabane promised to go as early as end of May 2020 if processes to facilitate his retirement are expedited. However, his spokesmen have since said the premier's remarks "were a slip of the tongue". The premier meant to say he would go end of July 2020 or earlier if processes to facilitate his retirement are completed. The May date was mentioned in error, they said.

But the ABC and its newly found DC ally are having none of that. They insist the premier must go now. A day after his speech, the ABC presented Mr Motanyane with a letter claim-



## Confusion over Thabane's departure date

CONFUSION surrounds Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's exact date of departure. In his televised address to the nation on Thursday, the premier said he was willing to step down on 29 or 31 May 2020.

"You will recall that I have always been consistent that it is my wish to retire from office by the 31st of May 2020, or the earlier date of the 29th May 2020, if all the necessary conditions for my retirement are put in place," Mr Thabane said.

However, Mr Thabane's office said he had erroneously stated that he was leaving in May. Shortly after Mr Thabane's speech, his spokesperson Relebohile Moyeye sent an audio clip to different WhatsApp groups of journalists informing them that "the honourable Prime Minister made a mistake (in saying he will leave in May), it was a slip of the tongue".

"As you can see from his written statement, he is leaving office on 31 July 2020 as he had earlier indicated in January 2020," Mr Moyeye said.

ing the party had pulled out of the four-party coalition deal with effect from 2 May 2020. The two parties want parliament to replace the current coalition government with the one led by them.

"This letter serves to inform you (Mr Motanyane) of the ABC's national executive committee's decision to withdraw the party from the current coalition government with effect from 2 May 2020," the ABC states in its letter read out in parliament by Mr Motanyane on Friday.

The ABC called on the speaker to initiate processes leading to the formation of a new governing coalition comprising of the ABC and DC as the lead partners. The new government would also be supported by a host of smaller parties including the ABC's current coalition partners, the BNP and the RCL.

In the proposed new coalition, Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro will succeed Mr Thabane as prime minister. He will be deputised by DC leader Mathibeli Mokhothu.

Mr Motanyane said he could not allow parliament to debate and vote on the matter until after the ABC had submitted a new letter explaining whether or not the ruling party's withdrawal automatically terminated the current four-party coalition agreement.

He said he had a responsibility to guide parliamentarians to act lawfully to avoid being sued. Hence his refusal to accept the ABC letter.

"Please listen closely to my comments," Mr

The Government Secretary, Moahloli Mphaka, echoed similar sentiments last night.

"The prime minister's speech clearly states that he is leaving office on or before 31 July 2020," Mr Mphaka told the *Sunday Express*.

ABC deputy leader Professor Nqosa Mahao said it was important for Mr Thabane to clear the confusion by writing to the King stating his exact departure date.

"He needs to clear the confusion. As it is, there is one version of his speech which speaks of 29 May as the date of his departure and another version which speaks of 31 July.

"So, his letter to His Majesty should clear the confusion between 29 May and 31 July 2020," Prof Mahao said in an interview with this publication.

Mr Thabane's opponents see the confusion over his departure date as a deliberate ploy to prolong his tenure. They want him to quit now or face a no confidence vote (see main story).

Motanyane said after reading out the ABC letter.

"I am here to guide you to execute your plans procedurally otherwise there will be lots of litigation. I have no problem with your letter, only that I have one comment. The current four-party government is led by the ABC and there is a coalition agreement that binds all coalition partners."

Mr Motanyane said the ABC did not specify how its decision to withdraw from the current government would affect its three current coalition partners — the AD, BNP and RCL.

"When one party withdraws from the coalition, it repudiates its agreement with the rest of its current partners. Is that what you (ABC) are saying you have done?"

"I see nothing is being said in your letter about the (current four-party) agreement—whether it is terminated or what exactly this (ABC's) withdrawal means.

"Naturally, there must be a termination of the existing coalition to make way for a new coalition agreement. The biggest question is, what about the existing coalition? This letter (advising of the ABC-DC deal) will be responded to when clarity has been advanced (on the fate of the current four-party coalition). It will be too premature to discuss this letter before then.

"We will make a decision when these questions have been responded to...Go and make corrections so that we can deal with this issue

procedurally," Mr Motanyane said.

Immediately after the speaker's ruling, the ABC and its new allies addressed a joint press conference saying there was no going back on their deal to form a new government.

"The speaker has advised us to amend the letter and we will do as advised. We have enough seats to form government," ABC chairperson Samuel Rapapa said.

DC deputy leader Motlaletoa Letsosa later told the *Sunday Express* that they expected Mr Motanyane to make a final ruling on the matter tomorrow.

"The amended letter should reach the office of the speaker by 8am on Monday (tomorrow). We expect the speaker to make a final ruling on the formation of a new government," Mr Letsosa said.

He said even if Mr Motanyane did not rule in their favour, they still had an option of ousting Mr Thabane through a no confidence vote in parliament.

ABC deputy leader Prof Mahao yesterday told the *Sunday Express* that they wrote to Mr Motanyane to show Mr Thabane that he no longer enjoyed any support. Prof Mahao said the premier's options had run out therefore he had no choice but to step down without further delay.

He said although they had the numbers, they would not rush into a no confidence vote against Mr Thabane. This was to give him a chance to voluntarily step down in line with the party's undertaking to South African special envoy, Jeff Radebe, that he would be allowed to go with "dignity, grace and security".

"The idea behind presenting the letter to parliament was to show the prime minister that the numbers are heavily stacked against him and he has to indicate when he will step down. And that must be done as quickly as possible," Prof Mahao.

"It is to say that if he doesn't cooperate then he will face a no confidence vote. We had already committed in our discussions with the international community (SADC) to ensuring that the prime minister is given a dignified exit.

"We do not yet intend to pass a no confidence vote against him. To avoid that the prime minister must make a formal commitment to retiring and this should be in the form of a letter addressed to His Majesty the King. That letter must clear the confusion regarding the exact date of his departure.

"His letter to King Letsie III should be a legally binding commitment to stepping down and it must stipulate an exact date for his departure," said Prof Mahao.

ABC chairperson Mr Rapapa also said yesterday that there was no going back on the ABC-DC deal to form a new government. He said their revised letter to be presented to Mr Motanyane tomorrow would state clearly that the current coalition deal was dead in the water and a new government had to be formed.

He said they wanted the speaker to advise the Council of State of the ABC-DC deal and the council in turn advises the King so that a new government could be immediately formed to replace the current one.

He said it was up to Mr Thabane to assume temporary leadership of the new government before Dr Majoro takes over.

"We are saying the current four party government should immediately be replaced by a new ABC-DC led coalition. The AD must now leave government and join the LCD in the opposition.

"Our agreement states that the prime minister should be from the ABC with the DC providing the deputy prime minister. If he accepts, Ntate Thabane can lead the new government until his retirement on 29 May 2020. After that date, he will be succeeded by Dr Majoro. But if Ntate Thabane doesn't accept we will still go ahead to form a new government with Dr Majoro leading it. The no confidence vote will be the last resort if (Mr Thabane) refuses to step down by the 29<sup>th</sup> of May," Mr Rapapa said.

The premier's representatives have nonetheless clarified the May date was mentioned in error.

# Courts resumes hearings

Mohalenyane Phakela

**T**HE High Court and the magistrates' courts will this week resume hearing ordinary cases, says the spokesperson for the judiciary, 'Mabohlokoa Mapikitla.

The move follows the lifting of the national lockdown by Prime Minister Thomas Thabane on Tuesday.

The courts had suspended hearings for ordinary cases last month in line with the nationwide lockdown to fight the coronavirus pandemic. They only attended to urgent matters with skeletal staff.

The lockdown began on 30 March and ended on 5 May 2020. Ms Mapikitla said the courts will resume ordinary sessions from tomorrow.

"However, we will maintain social distancing and other health precautions including providing sanitisers for everyone who enters the courts. To ensure social distancing, only litigants, lawyers and the media will be allowed to attend cases while the general public remains excluded until the Covid-19 crisis is resolved," she said.

One of the cases to be heard this week is that of two soldiers, Corporal Tjekane Sebolai and Private Selone Ratšiu, accused of the murder of Lisebo Tang and the attempted murder of her companion, Tšepo Jane, on 9 May 2014 near the Ha Legele home of former army commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli.

The trial will run from Monday to Friday before Botswana judge Kabelo Lebotse.

Meanwhile, the Court of Appeal will also open its first session for 2020 via video link on Tuesday.

The apex court was initially scheduled to hold its first sitting from 14 April to 1 May 2020. It was postponed due to the lockdown.

Court of Appeal President Justice Kananelo Mosito recently said judges would work from wherever they are without physically coming to Maseru because of the threat posed by Covid-19.

The apex court judges are Petrus Damaseb (Namibia), Phillip Musonda (Zambia), and Moses Chinhengo and Tafuma Mtshiya from Zimbabwe.



'MABOHLOKOA Mapikitla.

## Lesotho to benefit from M6, 6 billion British funded immunisation programme

Nthatuoa Koeshe

**L**ESOTHO is one of the countries that are set to benefit from a M6, 6 billion fund provided by the British government for the vaccination of 75 million children against deadly diseases in the world's poorest countries.

The funds will be administered by a vaccine alliance called Gavi.

The British High Commission in Lesotho last week said British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's (pictured) administration had committed to paying M6, 6 billion annually for the next five years towards the cause.

Gavi is an international organisation tasked with improving access to new and underused vaccines for children living in underdeveloped countries. The commission said Lesotho was one of the countries that would benefit from the programme. The M6, 6 billion pledge is also be used to support Gavi's efforts in ensuring that developing countries recover from the impact of the COVID-19.

Although it is unclear how much will be spent on Lesotho, the initiative is also meant to tackle diseases like measles, polio and typhoid that "still kill hundreds of thousands of people each year".

The commission said "by vaccinating millions of children against deadly diseases, we are supporting healthcare systems in the world's poorest countries so they can cope with rising coronavirus cases".

"The UK has confirmed that it will



be the largest supporter of the international alliance to vaccinate children against deadly diseases, saving millions of lives," the statement from the British High Commission said.

"Speaking to members of parliament,

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan announced a funding pledge equivalent of £330-million (about M6, 6 billion) a year over the next five years to Gavi."

The United Kingdom's Interna-

tional Development minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said the Covid-19 pandemic had proven how critical vaccines are.

"The coronavirus pandemic shows us now more than ever the vital role vaccines play in protecting

us all. By supporting Gavi, the vaccine alliance, we are also helping stop the spread of infectious diseases, saving millions of lives.

"As coronavirus vaccine trials begin, we need to make sure any successful vaccine will be available to everyone. Gavi will be integral to achieving this," Ms Trevelyan said.

The commission said the UK was a longstanding donor to Gavi since its formation in 2000. To date, Gavi has vaccinated 760 million children in Africa; saving more than 13 million lives which could have been lost had it not been of the programme.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the board chair of Gavi said their work was increasingly important as they were playing a vital role by keeping immunisation programmes going across the world thereby reducing the chances of more global disease outbreaks. Dr Okonjo-Iweala said Gavi's work was helping developing countries respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"This pledge will make a huge difference to these efforts and I'd like to thank the UK, as Gavi's biggest donor since its inception, for their leadership over the past two decades," Dr Okonjo-Iweala said.

Gavi chief executive officer, Seth Berkley said the funding would protect hundreds of millions of children against deadly diseases and also help health systems to repair and rebuild when the enormous impact of Covid-19 subsides.

"I'd like to thank the UK public for this pledge, an investment in Gavi is an investment in a safer, healthier world.

"It means we can continue our work leading international efforts to ensure universal access to a Covid-19 vaccine, as well as to maintain the infrastructure needed to deploy it at scale around the world, which offers our best means of ending this crisis," Dr Berkley said.

# Comment

## What a damp squib!!!

**T**HOMAS Thabane's Thursday speech will go down in history as a wasted opportunity to set a prime minister's record straight. Instead of providing a clear date for his departure and in the process claim some measure of control over his fate, Mr Thabane huffed and puffed. Now the premier has given his ever-increasing band of opponents all the ammunition to humiliate him out of office.

Mr Thabane has said on several occasions that he intends to retire due to old age after more than 50 years in active politics. But the premier has been imprecise about the dates of his intended departure. He has previously said he could step down on 31 July 2020 or earlier if all the processes for his retirement are finalised. On other occasions, he has also hinted he could even stay beyond that date. His legal term of office expires in 2022 and he won't be stampeded into retiring, he has reminded us. For him to go on national television on Thursday and repeat the confusion is not helpful to himself or anyone else. In his address he said he could step down by the 31st of May "or by the earlier date of the 29th of May 2020, if all the necessary conditions for my retirement are put in place". Needless to try and even comprehend the difference between quitting on 29 or 31 May.

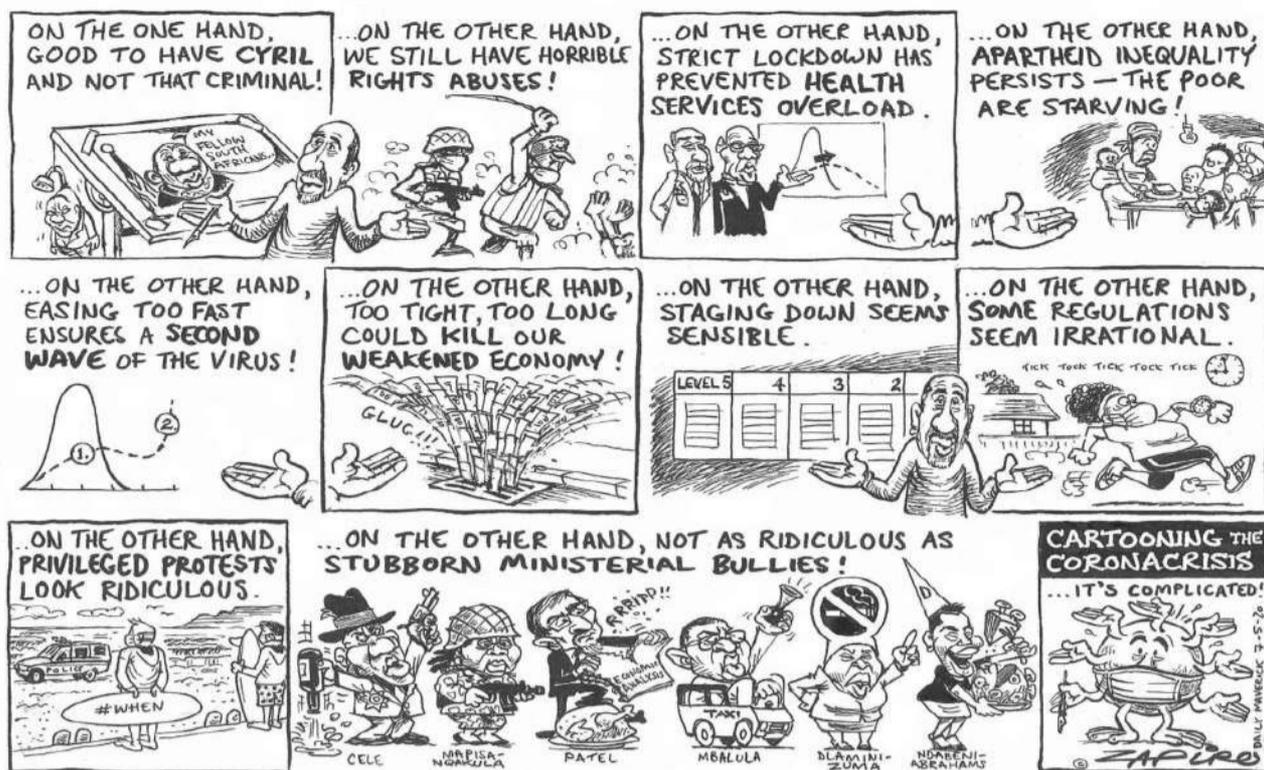
No sooner had he said this than his spokesperson, Relebohile Moyeye, flooded different WhatsApp groups of journalists informing them that "the honourable Prime Minister made a mistake (in saying he will leave in May), it was a slip of the tongue". "As you can see from his written statement, he is leaving office on 31 July 2020 as he had earlier indicated in January 2020," Mr Moyeye said in an audio recording. At the earliest, the premier could leave mid-June 2020.

So, it's back to 31 July 2020. After all the anticipation that he would provide a firm date for his departure, in light of the pressure for him to go soon, and even after South African special envoy Jeff Radebe's hint that Mr Thabane was on the verge of quitting, we are essentially back to square one. What a disgrace? The reality is that the ground has shifted under Mr Thabane's feet. For him not to acknowledge this fact speaks to the premier's prosaic mindlessness. As we report elsewhere in this edition, two huge developments happened soon after the premier's inane delivery on Thursday. First, His Majesty King Letsie III assented to the constitutional amendment bill which clips his powers to remain in office by advising the King to dissolve parliament and call for fresh elections in the event of a successful no confidence vote against him. This means that for all his stubborn refusal to leave now, he is now just a sitting duck, now starring the ignominy of a no confidence vote. The second important development, closely connected with the first, is that of more parties joining his own ABC's pact with the main opposition Democratic Congress (DC) to form a new government which excludes him and Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki's Alliance of Democrats (AD). About 78 legislators are now confirmed as wanting to see Mr Thabane's back. There is now nothing left to save Mr Thabane from an ignominious exit via a no confidence motion unless he does the honourable thing and quits now.

Mr Thabane has made a lot of noise about leaving only when processes for his departure are finalised. We don't know what exactly the PM has in mind insofar as these processes are concerned. The fact is that everything that needs to be done for his departure has been done. His party has chosen a successor in finance minister Moeketsi Majoro. The main opposition party, the DC, has thrown its weight behind Dr Majoro. As we have said before. And as we repeat now, the ABC/DC deal is the best option to save this country from the tragic precipice that Lesotho is starring into. The sooner Mr Thabane goes to give life to this deal the better. There can be no better scenario than having the two biggest parties in the country work for its common good. The Prime Minister is only bidding time because he is opposed to this deal. He also believes that somehow, he can achieve an immunity arrangement that will save him and his wife from standing trial for Lipolelo's murder. That is not going to happen. The sooner Mr Thabane vacates office the better for this country. He made his bed by making a lot of bad decisions, chiefly among them letting his unhinged wife hold sway over the affairs of state. He must now lie in it.

It is vitally important that Minister Majoro has spoken out on the ABC/DC deal as reported elsewhere in this edition. This must be very bewildering for a premier who seems at ease with sycophants and charlatans like Chalane Phori who are obviously not driven by the national interest. Dr Majoro, like the educated man he is, chose his words very carefully. His remarks though must be yet another clear signal to Mr Thabane that the game is up. One doesn't need to be a rocket scientist or expert semiotician to sift through Dr Majoro's words to understand his very clear and loud message: The current coalition government, or Mr Thabane in particular, is now an unaffordable liability for this country. He must go now. But we should not hold our collective breaths. Let's not be surprised if Dr Thabane does the unthinkable and in fact proceeds to fire Dr Majoro as his charlatan cronies are exhorting him to do. Witness how he has doggedly continued to try and fire Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli despite losing every court case that has arisen from his futile efforts. Firing Dr Majoro is the most stupid thing that Mr Thabane can do now.

He however can still do himself a lot of good by penning his resignation letter and heading straight to His Majesty's palace. That is the thing we expected to hear him say on Thursday. Not the damp squib he gave us. He can still say it now failing which he now faces the spectre of being bulldozed out of office.



## The misguided war on global value chains

**T**HE Covid-19 pandemic has brought the global economy to an abrupt halt and highlighted the fragility of existing global value chains. Demolishing these key drivers of international trade and investment would only make a bad situation worse and hurt developing economies disproportionately. The answer to the problem of global value chains is not to break them up, but to make them more diverse and inclusive.

Most international trade and investment occur in networks which divide production into discrete steps that can be carried out in different countries. Firms exchange inputs and outputs in cross-border value chains, some of great complexity. These value chains — whether intra-firm or inter-firm, regional or global — accounted for more than two thirds of world trade in 2017 and an astonishing 80 percent in some manufacturing industries.

But, as a result of Covid-19, global merchandise trade is set to plummet by an estimated 13 percent-32 percent in 2020. Worse yet, the pandemic has paralysed manufacturing networks and supply chains — especially in China, which accounts for 28 percent of global manufacturing output. That has delayed the delivery of essential services and food, pharmaceuticals, basic medical products (including surgical gowns and masks), electronics and automotive components, metals, and other manufactured goods.

In the aftermath of the damage and economic disruption wrought by Covid-19, business leaders are reassessing the extent of their firms' dependency on single foreign suppliers and examining how to mitigate strategic vulnerabilities. And there are growing calls from rich-country political leaders for radical shifts in production structures and trade policy.

Some Western governments have announced plans to encourage more domestic production of basic necessities. But these countries' high average wage and productivity levels will make labour-intensive goods, basic manufacturing, and some services expensive to produce, while protective measures such as tariffs will hurt domestic consumers.

Some advanced economies are also increasing their scrutiny of foreign investments related to the supply of critical goods and services. Such policies, which are intentionally left vague, apply to almost all products and are largely intended to discourage takeovers of domestic firms by Chinese investors during the pandemic. And some developing countries, such as India, have started to impose similar curbs.

But dismantling global value chains (GVCs) and erecting barriers to foreign direct investment (FDI) are bad ideas. Implementing them would augur the return of the worst forms of protectionism and economic micro-nationalism, with potentially devastating consequences for global prosperity, stability, and peace.

Such policies could amount to a death sentence for many low-income economies and would worsen inequalities between countries, thus exacerbating the current

### Célestin Monga

weakness of global aggregate demand. After all, global growth has benefited enormously from the emergence of large new markets in once-poor countries such as Japan, China, or South Korea, all of which have become reliable sources of consumer demand and investment financing.

By and large, rich countries benefit from GVCs. Lower transport costs and innovations in packaging mean that many goods can now be produced far away from their eventual markets. As a result, high-value goods are often manufactured in low-cost regions of the world. And by adopting a global sourcing model based on cross-border supply chains, many firms in advanced economies can take advantage of these reduced costs.

Companies that participate in GVCs thus become more efficient and productive. As they move into higher-value (often capital-intensive) industries that are able to pay their employees higher wages and upgrade their activities toward the technological frontier. GVCs also create opportunities to subcontract the production of goods with increasingly sophisticated components, manage manufacturing processes requiring several layers of expertise, and tailor production to demand.

Developing countries, whose share in global value-added trade has increased from 20 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2000 to over 40 percent today, also benefit from GVCs, with even the poorest increasingly participating in them. This has resulted in positive spill overs for the domestic economy, especially in countries that upgrade their industries in a manner consistent with their comparative advantages.

Participation in GVCs also tends to be correlated with optimal sources of external financing — primarily FDI. Unlike portfolio investment, FDI reflects foreigners' commitment to long-term business relationships in industries that capitalise on comparative advantage. Besides providing developing countries with much-needed stable non-debt finance, FDI inflows are associated with higher employment, transfers of technology and managerial know-how, and learning opportunities for workers within and across firms.

In the unfavourable business environments typical of many developing countries, GVCs can stimulate the emergence of well-functioning clusters of private firms in competitive industries. They also provide small and medium-size domestic firms opportunities to join strong international networks of partners, suppliers, and clients, which can bring access to finance, higher standards, and expanded markets.

Crippling GVCs in response to the pandemic will therefore be self-defeating. To be sure, rich economies may have legitimate concerns about relying too heavily or solely on China or any other single country for key parts and materials. But the answer is not

to dismantle GVCs or roll back global trade, but rather to revamp supply, identify the vulnerabilities, and mitigate the risks.

For starters, multi-sourcing, or having suppliers in different regions of the world, would build in redundancy in case of disruptions. Second, we must ensure that governments' Covid-19 rescue packages account for long-term effects on climate change, promote economic sustainability, and strengthen supplier codes of conduct regarding labour and environmental practices. New technologies and organisational systems such as 4D printing could render supply chains more efficient and sustainable, by making it possible to create objects that not only anticipate but also respond to changes in environmental conditions, thereby enabling self-assembly and creating opportunities for on-demand, customised production.

Third, large firms receiving state bailouts should commit to rebalancing the distribution of activities and benefits within GVCs to ensure that poor countries are not stuck in lower-value-added production. Finally, providing working-capital loans to small businesses — the main source of employment in many economies — would help to improve their position in GVCs and break the current core-periphery pattern of "good" jobs in the Global North and "bad" jobs in the Global South.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the global economy to an abrupt halt and highlighted the fragility of existing GVCs. Demolishing these key drivers of international trade and investment would only make a bad situation worse and hurt developing economies disproportionately. The answer to the problem of GVCs is not to break them up, but to make them more diverse and inclusive. — BM

● Célestin Monga is the former Vice President and Chief Economist of the African Development Group and former Managing Director at the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, is Senior Economic Adviser at the World Bank.

### Words of Wisdom



*THE best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others — Mahatma Gandhi*

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# Constitutional amendment bill gazetted

Ntseheng Motsoeli

**A** CRUCIAL constitutional amendment bill clipping a prime minister's power to dodge ouster via a no confidence motion was on Friday gazetted into law.

This after King Letsie III appended his signature to the bill which had been presented to him on Wednesday.

Attorney General Advocate Haae Phoofolo had submitted an accompanying report advising the King to assent to the bill, saying the proposed amendments not only curtailed a prime ministers' powers to dodge a no confidence vote but also introduced new provisions for the appointment of a new prime minister if the incumbent dies or resigns.

Section 90 A (1) of the amended constitution states that if a prime minister dies or resigns, the King shall, on the advice of the speaker of the National Assembly, appoint as the new premier a member of the National Assembly who appears to be leader of the political party or coalition of political parties that commands the majority seats in the National Assembly.

The previous constitution was silent on what should happen in the event of the death or resignation of the prime minister.

Therefore, Adv Phoofolo advised that "in my opinion His Majesty may properly assent to the bill" to address such issues.

Now that the amendment bill has become law, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane or any other future premier will no longer be able to cling to power by dissolving parliament after a successful no confidence vote against them. A sitting prime minister will only be able to avoid ouster in a no confidence vote if he has the backing of a two thirds majority of the 120 members of the National Assembly.

Mr Thabane will be the immediate victim of the new law. His opponents will likely use the King's approval of the bill to oust him unless the premier quits soon on his own volition.

The premier on Thursday said he would step down by 31 July 2020 or the earlier date of 12 June "if all the necessary conditions for my retirement are put in place".



HAAE Phoofolo.

# Minister and senator grilled over Machakela's killing



KEMISO Mosenene.

'Marafaele Mohloboli

**A** MINISTER and an All Basotho Convention (ABC) senator were on Thursday grilled by the police in connection with the March 2012 murder of former ABC deputy leader Sello Machakela.

Police spokesperson Superintendent Mpti Mopeli on Friday told the *Sunday Express* that the Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Leshoboro Mohlajoa, and Senator Kemiso Mosenene were questioned in connection with the murder.

He, however, refused to give details, only saying the duo was called in "to help shed light in connection with the murder of Mr Machakela".

However, a source who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the police called in Messrs Mohlajoa and Mosenene after being tipped off that Mr Machakela could have been killed because he was eyeing the same constituency which Mr Mohlajoa was interested in.

"The police are following leads that the motive (for the murder) could have been the fight over the right to represent the ABC in the 2012 elections. The deceased (Mr Machakela) had threatened his fellow party colleagues that after winning, he would defect to then then newly formed Democratic Congress (DC) which was led by then Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili.

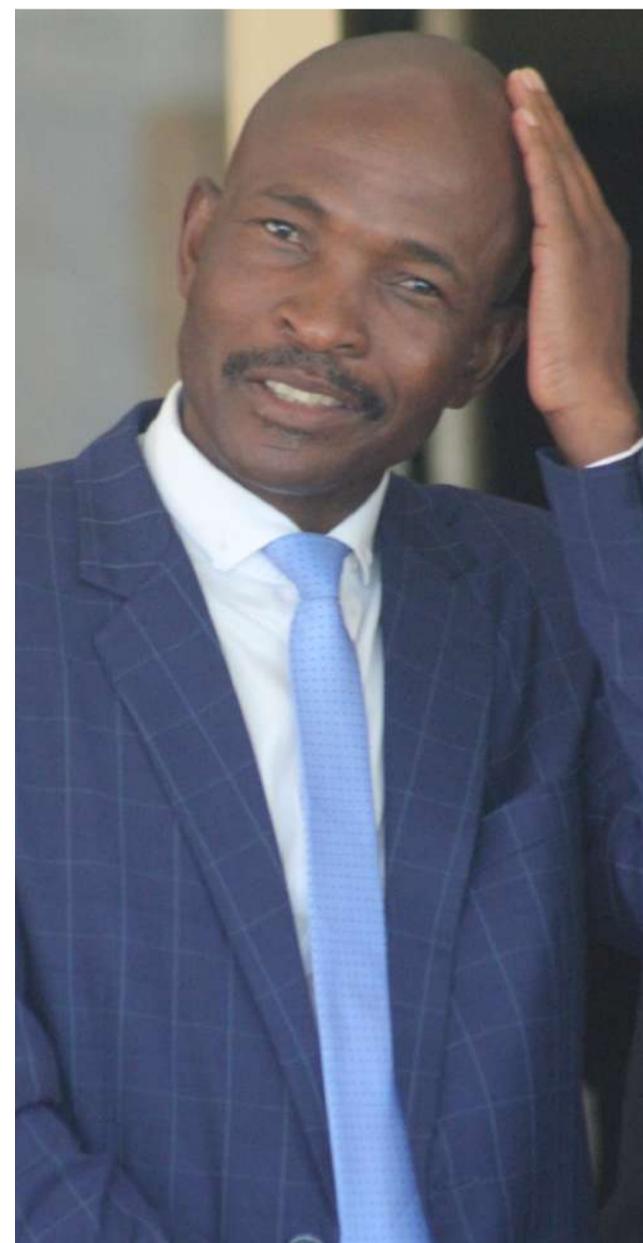
"The police have done their work and anytime from this week onwards, they will hand over the docket to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for a decision on whether or not to prosecute," the source said.

Mr Machakela was shot dead by unknown gunmen at his Berea home on 19 March 2012. He was killed at a time when the ABC was conducting primary elections in the run-up to the May 2012 elections. He had openly voiced his unhappiness with the ABC for barring him from contesting in the Malimong constituency and had even taken the party to court to nullify the move.

Although he died officially an ABC member, there were widespread reports at the time that he had defected to the DC.

In the 1990s, Mr Machakela joined the then Pakalitha Mosisili-led Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and in 2001, he was appointed Labour and Employment minister.

He was one of LCD legislators who defected with then Communications minister Thomas Thabane to form the ABC in 2006.



LESHOBORO Mohlajoa

# “First Lady is not forming new party”

**'Marafaele Mohloboli**

**A**LLIANCE of Democrats (AD) loyalist Joseph Ntakha has denied rumours that he could be on the verge of forming a new party with First Lady 'Maesaiah Thabane.

Mr Ntakha and Ms Thabane's pictures clad in yellow and black t-shirts and caps this week went viral on social media fuelling speculation that they could be forming a new party.

In the pictures, Mr Ntakha and Ms Thabane appear with a few other people purportedly celebrating the formation of a new political outfit dubbed the People's Convention (PC).

To add to the speculation, the pictures started circulating just a day after the release of an audio clip of a telephone conversation between radio personality Lebohlang Maketa and Ms Thabane wherein the former is heard urging the First Lady to “leave the troubled All Basotho Convention (ABC) as it was dirty and in the hands of political novices”.

In the clip, Ms Maketa also urges Ms Thabane to advise her husband, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane, to form a new party as he still commands a strong following.

“He (Mr Thabane) will just convince them that he was impeded from serving them effectively by

those in coalition with him,” Ms Maketa is heard saying in the clip.

Mr Ntakha's AD and Mr Thabane's faction of the ABC are not party to a new coalition involving Prof Mahao's faction of the ruling party and the opposition Democratic Congress (DC). **(See story on Page 4).**

However, Mr Ntakha told the *Sunday Express* yesterday that they took the pictures with the First Lady for fun.

“We did it for fun and also to test people's reaction otherwise there is no new party,” Mr Ntakha said.

“We just bought the merchandise and exchanged it among a few people.

“However, I can't speak for the First Lady as I don't know of her future plans; whether or not she wants to form a new party. Nevertheless, this was just a joke and there is nothing to write home about.”

For her part, Ms Thabane said: “I don't want to be asked on issues from the social media and never call me again”.

Information officer in the Prime Minister's office, Relebohile Moyeye, also denied knowledge of any plans for a new party involving the first family.

IEC spokesperson Tuoe Hantši said “there is no such party that has been registered with the IEC”.

There is nevertheless another

party claiming to be called the People's Convention (PC) which is yet to register with the IEC. Its national public coordinator, Mohoaloalo Jane, said the party had nothing to do with the First Lady.

Mr Jane's PC was formed in January this year by disgruntled members of the ABC who had previously ditched the leader, Mr Thabane, to support a faction loyal to his deputy Nqosa Mahao.

They went on to form the PC saying they had realised that Mr Thabane would not allow Prof Mahao to assume control of the party's national executive committee (NEC) despite being declared the rightful NEC by the High Court.

Mr Jane yesterday said there was no way another party could be formed with a name similar to his party's.

“That is not real. It is non-existent and even if it were anything to go by, there is no way two different parties could share a name. We are the People's Convention and have registered with the law office awaiting to register with the IEC once it is opened for registrations.

“Our colours are blue, yellow and green and our logo is a wheel and not a star as is seen in the circulating pictures. We have nothing to do with that formation if it indeed exists,” Mr Jane said.



**'MAESAIAH Thabane.**



**LESEGO Makgothi.**

## SA deports 94 Basotho

### ... as govt monitors 13 suspected Covid-19 cases

**Limpho Sello/Bereng Mpaki**

**S**OUTH Africa on Thursday deported 94 Basotho from its Lindela Repatriation Centre in Krugersdorp, Johannesburg.

The government is now closely monitoring 13 suspected coronavirus (Covid-19) cases among the deportees.

The head of family health in the Ministry of Health, Makhoase Ranyali Otubanjo, told the *Sunday Express* yesterday that the 13 had been tested and they were now awaiting the results due on Wednesday.

The deportations were effected after migrants rioted at the facility last week. About 37 Basotho escaped from the centre.

The 94 deportees bring the number of returnees from South Africa in the last few days to over 1000, according to the government.

The government's official *Twitter* account said some of the returnees had crossed from South Africa through illegal borders. Another 500 came from South African prisons after President Cyril Ramaphosa granted parole to almost 19 000

prisoners.

Some of the returnees were farm labourers while others had travelled to the neighbouring country for different reasons prior to the commencement of its lockdown on 27 March 2020.

South Africa has become the epicentre of the virus in Africa with over 9400 cases and 186 deaths. Although the economic giant surrounds Lesotho on all sides, the mountain kingdom is yet to record any cases.

Authorities are on high alert to avoid the possible spread of the virus but the efforts could soon come to naught as hundreds of Basotho are now using illegal borders to cross into the country.

Dr Ranyali Otubanjo said the migrants were screened before they were taken to different shelter facilities where their samples were taken.

“More than 1000 Basotho arrived from South Africa over the past few days,” Dr Ranyali Otubanjo said adding: “Six hundred and sixty-four came through porous borders from 3 to 7 May 2020; 500 came from South African prisons and 97

were held back by the lockdown in that country”.

“Upon their arrival, the people were screened and the 13, who showed signs of Covid-19, have been taken to isolation facilities.

“On Friday we took swabs of the deportees from Lindela for testing for Covid-19. Thirteen of them showed signs of Covid-19.

“The rest have since been released to go home but are expected to self-quarantine for 14 days at home.”

For his part, Foreign Affairs and International Relations minister Lesego Makgothi said the deportees were subjected to rigorous Covid-19 tests before they were transported to the country.

“The information we have is that there were ethnic riots at Lindela which eventually led to 37 Basotho nationals who were held at the centre breaking out.

“Upon these developments, the South African government then decided to speed up its plans to deport the Lesotho nationals and arranged rapid tests for Covid-19 for them before they left,” Mr Makgothi said. He said the 37 were still at large.

Xpress

# People

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# Malome Vector in SA breakthrough



SirNic on  
career  
rebound  
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## Bataung Moeketsi

**A**MBITIOUS Records' DJ Miss Pru (South Africa) on Friday released her brand-new single *Price to Pay* featuring her label mates Blaq Diamond and Lesotho's most recent export to that country, Malome Vector (pictured).

The Afro-Pop duo, Blaq Diamond (Spelele Dunywa and Ndumiso Mdletshe), is heard in the first and third verses in isiZulu while Ndumiso takes charge of the lead vocals backed by Spelele.

Meanwhile, Malome Vector interchanges between Sesotho and English on the second verse on the Ndumiso-produced track.

The song is an outpouring of emotions by the singers who attest that music has a negative influence on artistes' relationships. The track explores whether or not it is worth it for an artiste to pursue their career dreams at the expense of the love life.

Malome Vector kicks off his verse by singing

about his arrival in Gauteng through the support of his followers and pleads with *tsa Mo-shoeshoe* (Basotho) to pray for him through his journey. He goes on to assure his partner that he would soon return home to her as success prospects were better in 2020.

Speaking to the *Xpress People* on Friday, Malome Vector said he was happy with his debut release under the Ambitious Records stable adding that his efforts to market Sesotho outside the country were paying off.

"I have been working hard to get Sesotho out there and I think it's finally happening," Malome Vector said.

"I sang bits of my verse in Sesotho to ensure that those who are not conversant with the language can catch up."

He said the track's "reception has been amazing" given that it debuted in first place on *iTunes* in South Africa.

News of Malome Vector signing with the South African label broke last November and his Lesotho audience has been eager for new

releases from the *Ichu* singer.

After officially moving to Johannesburg to focus on his career this year, Malome Vector said he was planning to shoot music videos and would possibly release some work soon while also embarking onto radio tours after the lockdown.

As a result of the global spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19), many governments have resorted to nationwide lockdowns to contain the pandemic. South Africa started its ongoing lockdown on 27 March 2020, but has gradually started easing confinement measures since last week. Lesotho also followed suit last week ending the lockdown on 5 May having started on 30 March 2020.

"I can't confirm a date for my new release as yet but the fans will have something from me soon."

I'm at the studio daily to ensure that I deliver quality music for those who have been following my journey and those who are yet to know me," Malome Vector said.

# SirNic on career rebound

Bataung Moeketsi

**R**APPER SirNic is on his way back to music having taken a break as a newlywed in 2017.

Before his hiatus, SirNic was on course to building a reputable name in the local entertainment scene with his unique melodic style of rap and impressive beats.

Born Mahao Nicholas Tšoaeli in Durban, South Africa, SirNic moved to Upper Thamae, Lesotho when he was only months old with his parents and older brother. The Tšoaeli's were later blessed with a third son and the only daughter before SirNic's parents divorced when he was just 14.

SirNic was forced to drop out of his second year at College Campus in Parktown, Johannesburg where he was studying Graphics Design due to lack of funds after his father's death in 2014.

In an interview with the *Xpress People*, SirNic unpacked the inspiration behind his music and how being a husband and father reminded him why started making music.

The rapper said having family members strip everything that his father had built from him and his siblings pushed him to take music seriously as it was all he had.

"I was exposed to music at a young age and the first record I loved was *California Love* by Tupac which was introduced to me by my cousin Phathuli Moruthoane," SirNic said.

"I took part in the poetry club in primary school (Maseru Preparatory School and Montessori) but my musical path began when I was in Grade 9 at Navalsig High School in Bloemfontein, South Africa."

As a sensitive person, music was his mode of self-expression.

"From Grade 6, my poetry had a lot to do with love and this is why in my music, I sing about receiving love and the love that I could give. That is the foundation of my music."

He added that he started making music so that he could convey a message, teach and inspire people.

SirNic released his first single *Thoughts in June* in 2014. Among a slew of singles, he also released extended plays; *88 Trips* (2016) and *New Trip* (2017). He was also part of the joint project *The Format EP* (2016) along with Aura Griffiths, Black Steel and Melly M.

In 2017 SirNic tied the knot with the love of his life who was pregnant at the time and immediately took a sabbatical from music to focus on his family at his Khubetsoana home.

He said he took a break from the entertainment industry to deal with and reflect on the loss of his father and other personal matters that he had ignored which all caught up with him around the time he got married.

"I did not realise that I was hurting from my past experiences until I had to sit down and be a father and a husband which forced me reflect on my life. I was forced to look differently because now I was married and needed to figure out the kind of example I needed to set for my daughter."

The hiatus was also influenced by his fallout with friend and long-time producer, Tšeliso Makhakhe aka Black Steel due to miscommunication. Although they have mended relations, his music is now produced by Taks Beats.

Much to the liking of his fans, the rapper, singer, songwriter and producer ended his hiatus with two singles on 13 March 2020, *Move* and a remix of Taks Beats' *I Had to Do It* alongside Piigh.

Although he plans to keep things under wraps, SirNic says he has a lot in store and promises his fans new music which will be accompanied by visuals and clothing merchandise.

"I want to do a lot and give back as much as I can to those who have been supporting me," SirNic said.

## 'Isibaya' actress Asavela Mngqithi is going to be a mom

**I**sibaya's Asavela Mngqithi has joined the list of actresses who have announced they are expecting.

Asavela, who plays Ntwenhle on the much-loved telenovela, shared the good news on *Instagram*, describing it as "the best thing she's ever done".

In a heartfelt message to her unborn baby, she wrote: "I can't wait to meet you. Taking you to set was kinda scary, but with all the risk assessments the team Bomb Productions put in place, I feel confident and happy to introduce you to the world."

Asavela joked that she may name her baby *Umfihlo*, which means "a secret", because of the level of secrecy she shares with her unborn baby.

The actress ended her post with a message to all new and expectant mothers, urging them to be safe and healthy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Thank you Desiree Markgraaff for the continuous support you have given us. To all the mothers (new and pregnant) out there, stay safe, healthy and strong in these difficult times."

Asavela this week shone a light on life on the set of the show during the pandemic, explaining that she was social distancing and wearing masks

to protect herself and others.

"They have very strict rules on set. It is weird working with masks and social distancing, but it feels good to be back at work."

"We all have to learn to work safely and protect each other during this time. I am grateful to MultiChoice that we are able to work, and for their continued support during lockdown," she said in a statement to *TshisaLIVE*.

Earlier this year, actresses Zola Nombona and Gabisile Tshabalala shared the good news that they are also pregnant.

Although Zola did not reveal the sex of her baby, she expressed the miracle of carrying a child in heartfelt love letters on her *Instagram*.

Gabisile announced that she was expecting her second baby through a campaign titled *#SoWhatImPregnant*.

Speaking to *TshisaLIVE*, Gabisile said, "This time was very different from the first time. I think I grew some courage over the years and I was just like, 'yes, I love my job and I would love to keep my job but if my pregnancy is an issue, I will be fine without this job'."

"Luckily, it was easier to talk to my bosses. I've been in the industry for 11 years so I can compare the treatment," she said.

— TshisaLIVE



ASAVELA Mngqithi.

SIRNIC.

**Weekend Girl**



**KATLEHO** Makhate (22) resides in Mohale's Hoek. She is a Media Studies student at the University of Namibia in Windhoek. Apart from media, she also aspires to become a make-up artist, a published author and photographer/videographer. Her motto is: "Art does not conform, it is everywhere, in anything and anyone".

# Yourstars

## Aries - March 21 - April 20

YOU will have to help family members sort out unfortunate difficulties. Try to deal with the problems of those less fortunate; however, don't allow them to make unreasonable demands. Avoid being intimately involved with clients or colleagues. Self-deception about relationships is a problem.

Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

## Taurus - April 21 - May 20

Be sure to pay attention to your financial status. Real estate investments will be profitable. You can make financial gains if you are prepared to take a risk. Be careful while traveling.

Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

## Gemini - May 21 - June 21

Don't let any money slip through your fingers this week. Take time to listen to children and help them with projects that seem impossible to them. You may find yourself in an uncomfortable situation if you have overloaded your plate unintentionally. Don't believe everything you hear.

Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

## Cancer - June 22 - July 22

Don't blow situations out of proportion. Pleasure trips should be on your agenda. You can get ahead if you present your ideas to superiors. Put your emotional energy into passion not anxiety.

Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

## Leo - July 23 - August 22

You will find that joint ventures could easily turn out to be dead end projects. Large organizations may try to talk you out of your hard-earned cash. You can meet a new romantic partner or secure the love connection you already have by going out and entertaining yourself. Physical work or exercise should be part of your schedule.

Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

## Virgo - August 23 - September 22

Sports, physical fitness programs, exercise in general will make you feel better and show some pretty quick results. Time to deal with institutional environments, government agencies, and matters of a private nature this week. Chances are they are jealous. Difficulties with older females in your family may turn out to be quite trivial after all.

Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

## Libra - September 23 - October 22

Be sure to take time for old friends or relatives you don't get to see that often. Your hard work and dedication will pay off, so stick to your guns and do your job well. You need time to rejuvenate. Your partner could also use some time alone with you.

Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

## Scorpio - October 23 - November 21

You will meet a person who may turn out to be more than just a friend. You can win points with children if you take the time to show interest in their accomplishments. If you are in the midst of a financial deal, this is your lucky day. Don't start a dispute unless you're prepared to accept irreversible results.

Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

## Sagittarius - November 22 - December 20

Deception may cause disputes you can do without. Put your efforts into moneymaking ventures. You can continue to make gains if you call a few people who can help you close an important deal. Your suggestions for fund raising events will be well received.

Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

## Capricorn - December 21 - January 19

You can learn valuable information if you listen and observe what others are doing and saying. You may find acquaintances being deceptive. Arguing won't help. You can expect to have problems with your mate if you've been spending too much time away from home.

Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

## Aquarius - January 20 - February 18

Avoid scandals of any sort. You mustn't be so trusting. You need time to rejuvenate. Look after financial transactions this week.

Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

## Pisces - February 19 - March 20

Peers may not be on your side. You will have the getup and go to contribute a great deal to groups of interest. Try not to use emotional blackmail; it will only make matters worse. You could have a tendency to spend too much on your home or entertainment.

Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

# The story of Marvin Heemeyer's revenge and his killdozer



CAPTAIN Gary Torgerson of the Colorado State Patrol and James Holahan examine the fortified bulldozer driven by Marvin Heemeyer where it came to rest at in Granby, Colorado.

**A**FTER his zoning petition was dismissed, Marvin Heemeyer decided to modify his bulldozer and get revenge on the town that wronged him.

When Marvin Heemeyer of Granby, Colorado, reached a dead end in his fight with the zoning commission, the logical response would have been to petition them again and await a future response. After all, Marvin Heemeyer was said to be a logical man, so it makes sense that he would take a logical approach.

Instead, Marvin Heemeyer went home, outfitted his Komatsu D355A bulldozer with armoured plates, and drove it through the town knocking down 13 buildings and causing \$7 million worth of damage with his makeshift "killdozer."

Marvin Heemeyer's fight with the city had begun three years before his killdozer rampage.

Heemeyer owned a small welding shop in town, where he made his living repairing mufflers. He'd purchased the land on which his shop was built in 1992, and over the years had agreed to sell the land to a concrete company to build a plant. The negotiations hadn't been easy, and he'd been having trouble agreeing with the company on a suitable price.

In 2001, the city approved construction of a concrete plant, zoning the land next to Heemeyer's for the use. Heemeyer was furious, as he'd used the land for the past nine years as a shortcut between his home and his muffler shop. He petitioned the city to have the property rezoned to prevent the construction of the plant, but was rejected on multiple occasions.

So, in early 2003, Marvin Heemeyer decided he had enough. A few years earlier, he purchased a bulldozer with the intent to use it to create an alternative route to his muffler shop. Now, however, it would serve a new purpose as his weapon of mass destruction, the killdozer.

He began outfitting his bulldozer with armoured plates, covering the cabin, en-

## Stranger than Fiction

gine, and parts of the tracks. He'd created the armour himself, using a concrete mix poured between sheets of steel, sometimes creating plates over a foot thick. In the end, the killdozer was resistant to small arms fire and resistant to explosives — and indeed, the rounds fired at it during the rampage had no ill effect.

As the armour covered much of the cabin, a video camera was mounted on the exterior for visibility, covered by 3-inch bulletproof plastic. Inside the makeshift cockpit were two monitors on which Heemeyer could observe his destruction.

There were also fans and an air conditioner to keep him cool while he pumelled the town.

Finally, he fashioned three-gun ports and outfitted them with a .50 calibre rifle, a .308 semi-automatic, and a .22 long rifle. According to authorities, once he'd sealed himself inside the cockpit, it would be impossible to get out — and they don't believe he ever wanted to.

When his killdozer was finished almost a year and a half after Heemeyer began assembling it, he readied himself for his attack. On June 4, 2004, he sealed himself inside of his killdozer's cockpit and set out for the town.

He drove the machine out of his shop through the wall, then plowed through the concrete plant, the Town Hall, a

newspaper office, a former judge's widow's home, a hardware store, and other homes. Authorities realized that every business or home that had been bulldozed had some connection to Heemeyer and his plight against the zoning committee.

For two hours and seven minutes, Marvin Heemeyer and his killdozer rampaged through the town, damaging 13 buildings and knocking out gas services to City Hall. Such a panic was caused that the governor considered authorizing the National Guard to attack with Apache helicopters and an anti-tank missile. The attacks were even in place and had Heemeyer not wedged himself in the basement of a hardware store on his own, they would have been carried out.

As he attempted to bulldoze Gambles hardware store, he got the killdozer stuck in the foundation. With the end in sight, Heemeyer killed himself with a gunshot to the head in his cockpit, determined to leave the world on his own terms.

Despite the nearly \$7 million in property damage done to the town of Granby, not a single human besides Heemeyer was killed. A reverse 911 system was used to notify residents of the killdozer so that they could get out of the way in time.

After the rampage, authorities searched Heemeyer's home and found multiple notes and audio tapes that outlined Heemeyer's motivations. They also found that several men who had visited Heemeyer's shop where he was building the killdozer had never noticed it, a fact which encouraged Heemeyer.

As for Marvin Heemeyer's killdozer itself, state officials decided to take it apart and sell it for scrap. They sent the pieces to dozens of scrap yards to stop admirers of Heemeyer from snatching a piece, as it soon became clear that the killdozer was going to be the subject of amateur builders for years to come.

— ati



DC leader Mathibeli Mokhothu addresses the media at Puma House in Maseru on Friday.



HEALTH Minister Nkaku Kabi (left) chats with Foreign Affairs Minister Lesego Makgothi at a meeting on the Covid-19 response at the Post Office building in Maseru on Friday.



SOME of the 78 parliamentarians who support the proposed ABC-DC coalition follow proceedings at a press briefing at Puma House.



CONSUMERS leave a wholesale shop in Maseru's industrial area after purchasing alcohol on Wednesday.

# Coronavirus could 'smoulder' in Africa for several years, WHO warns

**T**HE Covid-19 pandemic could "smoulder" in Africa for several years after killing as many as 190 000 people in the coming 12 months, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said.

The WHO warned last month that there could be 10m infections on the continent within six months, though experts said the pandemic's impact would depend on governments' actions.

A study released by the organisation this week predicts that between 29 million to 44 million people could become infected in the first year of the pandemic if containment measures fail. This "would overwhelm the available medical capacity in much of Africa" where there are only nine intensive care unit beds per million people.

"While Covid-19 likely won't spread as exponentially in Africa as it has elsewhere in the world, it likely will smoulder in transmission hotspots," said the director of the World Health Organisation's Africa region, Dr Matshidiso Moeti. "Covid-19 could become a fixture in our lives for the next several years unless a proactive approach is taken by many governments in the region. We need to test, trace, isolate and treat."

The research looked at 47 countries in the WHO African Region with a total population of one billion.

More than 51 000 people in Africa have been infected and 2 012 have died. The total number of cases has risen sharply in the past week.

"Overall ... we are looking at community spread in some countries... We are estimating that this will peak in four to six weeks if nothing is done," Moeti told reporters on Thursday.

Most countries have imposed lockdowns of varying severity that appear to have slowed the spread of the virus.

"We have to recognise that African governments are doing a lot," said Stephen Karingi, a director at the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa. "Projections were that we would be in a war situation by now, but because of the measures taken by governments and communities, transmission rates are lower than we've seen elsewhere."

It is unclear, however, how effective the measures have been in some places and there are concerns about the level of testing carried out on the continent.



A POLICE officer has his temperature taken as part of a mass screening campaign in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Africa has carried out a fraction of the number of tests in other regions, at around 685 per million people, and there are fears that the official statistics do not reflect true extent of the pandemic in Africa.

Somalia was forced to dramatically revise official statistics after it became clear that the deaths of hundreds of people from the virus in the unstable East African country had gone unrecorded.

Authorities in Nigeria also initially denied that a major outbreak in the northern city of Kano was Covid-19, and there are widespread concerns that Tanzania is conceal-

ing the severity of its outbreak to protect the president, John Magufuli, who has refused to ban religious services and large gatherings.

Tanzania has declared at least 480 confirmed cases and 18 deaths, the fourth highest total in eastern Africa. The data is from Sunday, the most recent day the government has released figures for.

Magufuli has said the imported coronavirus test kits were faulty after they returned positive results on a goat and a pawpaw fruit.

Dr John Nkengasong, the head of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, said on

Thursday that the tests were working very well and that African states were not testing enough.

"If we test, we will find ... we cannot be complacent. This is a very dangerous and treacherous virus. The low case numbers should not deceive us," Nkengasong told reporters.

Testing in many African countries has been limited by difficulties in getting enough kits, which are the subject of fierce international competition. Some countries such as Nigeria have tested poorly because they are unable to produce some of the key chemical reagents needed

locally. Health officials have called for international coordination in the procurement and distribution of test kits to avoid the most vulnerable countries losing out.

A sharp rise in figures from Ghana, showing a 42.5 percent increase in confirmed Covid-19 cases in the past five days, has prompted concern.

"It is a reminder that there are not enough tests being carried out in Africa because governments are constrained by the lack of testing capacity, particularly adequate supplies of testing and extractor kits, as global competition has left them in scarce supply," said Kate Dooley, the regional director for West Africa at the Tony Blair Institute in London.

There has been community transmission in South Africa for several weeks, but experts expect the pandemic to peak between July and early September.

The effort to contain the disease in South Africa, where there have been 7 808 cases and 150 deaths, has been lauded as one of the most successful in the world.

Professor Salim Abdool Karim, the South African government's chief adviser, said the country had been on a similar trajectory to the UK for three weeks before its outbreak took a different turn.

"We put 30 000 community health workers on the ground and decided to actively go out and look for outbreaks, and stem the tide before cases reached hospitals," Karim said.

South Africa has since eased its strict lockdown, allowing some exercise and the return of about a million people to work. Rwanda, Mauritius and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have also lifted some of the restrictions imposed to slow the spread of Covid-19.

The lockdowns inflicted significant hardship on hundreds of millions of people across the continent living in crowded and often unsanitary conditions.

Many depend on earnings during the day to be able to eat and there are widespread reports of hunger.

— The Guardian

## Kenyans protest house demolitions amid virus restrictions



A POLICE officer holds a pistol during clashes with protesters near a burning tyre barricade in the Kariobangi slum of Nairobi, Kenya.

**N**AIROBI, Kenya — Hundreds of protesters in Kenya blocked one of Nairobi's major highways with burning tires to protest government demolitions of the homes of more than 7 000 people and the closure of an adjacent food market.

Police used teargas and water cannons on the protesters, who then looted shops and parked cars.

"Police responded to a rowdy group that was destroying property on the road," said Nairobi police chief Philip Ndolo. "If they have grievances, they should express them through the right channels. We will not tolerate destruction of property," Ndolo said.

The government had on Thursday closed Korogocho market which served an estimated 100,000 people who depend on it for their livelihoods and fresh vegetable produce, said Patrick Maina, the market's chairman. He said the market serves several informal settlements.

Residents of Kariobangi, a poor informal settlement, woke up Monday to the sound of bulldozers crushing their rickety structures made of metal sheeting, said resident and human rights activist Habib Omar.

The demolitions continued through the week and displaced thousands of residents, who are sleeping out in the rain and cold because Nairobi has restrictions on movement due to the coronavirus.

The government claims that it owns the land where the demolitions took place and it ignored a court order that barred it from evicting the slum residents until their case arguing for their right to live on the land is determined. Some of the residents had official allotment letters dating to 2008 which give them permission to live there, said Omar.

"It is so inhuman for the government to evict us from our houses at a time like this. Where should we go. Where will I take my children because now, I don't have a house and there's the curfew at night," said Mary Njeri, a mother of three who also sells vegetables in the market.

For mechanic Kennedy Achoki, the demolition happened as they awaited another court decision.

"It is a violation of our rights because we have been living here for long," said Achoki. "They should have waited for the court outcome because there's an injunction in

court. At least they could have waited for it and not destroy our houses during the pandemic."

The government says it want the land for expansion of the capital's sewerage system.

In a letter to President Uhuru Kenyatta, the Housing Coalition, an alliance of non-governmental organizations, asked the leader to allow the residents to rebuild their homes until alternatives are found and the court decides on the matter.

"It is unbelievable that this action should be taken by your administration at this time ... For the last three nights thousands of displaced have slept out in the open during curfew."

The stay at home and cessation of movement guidelines and economic hardships have made it even more difficult to stay with relatives or leave Nairobi at this time," the coalition's letter said.

The coalition said the government has done nothing to alleviate the suffering of those who are now homeless and instead arrested activists who presented a petition to the Nairobi Water and Sewerage Company that is seeking to repossess the land.

— AP

# Coronavirus strikes White House staffers

**W**ASHINGTON — Vice President Mike Pence's press secretary has the coronavirus, the White House said, making her the second person who works at the White House complex known to test positive for the virus this week.

President Donald Trump, who publicly identified the affected Pence aide, said he was "not worried" about the virus spreading in the White House. Nonetheless, officials said they were stepping up safety protocols for the complex.

Pence spokeswoman Katie Miller, who tested positive Friday, had been in recent contact with Pence but not with the president. She is married to Stephen Miller, a top Trump adviser.

The White House had no immediate comment on whether Stephen Miller had been tested or if he was still working in the White House.

Katie Miller had tested negative Thursday, a day before her positive result.

"This is why the whole concept of tests aren't necessarily great," Trump said. "The tests are perfect but something can happen between a test where it's good and then something happens."

The positive test for the senior Pence aide came one day after White House officials confirmed that a member of the military serving as one of Trump's valets had tested positive for COVID-19.

Six people who had been in contact with Miller were scheduled to fly with Pence on Friday to Des Moines, Iowa, on Air Force Two. They were removed from the flight just before it took off, according to a senior administration official.

None of those people were exhibiting symptoms, but were asked to deplane so they could be tested "out of an abundance of caution," a senior administration official told reporters traveling with Pence. All six later tested negative, the White House said.

The official said staff in the West Wing are tested regularly but much of Pence's staff — which works next door in the Executive Office Building — are tested less frequently. Katie Miller was not on the plane and had not been scheduled to be on the trip.



STEPHEN Miller and Katie Miller.

Pence, who is tested on a regular basis, was tested Friday. Miller tweeted she was "doing well" and looked forward to getting back to work.

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said the administration was stepping up mitigation efforts already recommended by public health experts and taking other un-

specified precautions to ensure the safety of the president.

Meadows said the White House was "probably the safest place that you can come," but he was reviewing further steps to keep Trump and Pence safe.

The White House requires daily temperature checks of anyone who enters the White House complex and has encouraged social distancing among those working in the building.

The administration has also directed regular deep cleaning of all work spaces. Anyone who comes in close proximity to the president and vice president is tested daily for COVID-19.

"We've already put in a few protocols that we're looking at, obviously, to make sure that the president and his immediate staff stay safe. But it's not just the president, it's all the workers that are here ... on a daily basis," Meadows said.

Trump's valet's case marked the first known instance where a person who has come in close proximity to the president has tested positive since several people present at his private Florida club were diagnosed with COVID-19 in early March. The valet tested positive Wednesday.

The White House was moving to shore up its protection protocols to protect the nation's political leaders.

Trump said some staffers who interact with him closely would now be tested daily. Pence told reporters Thursday that both he and Trump would now be tested daily as well.

— AP

## South Korea reports more virus cases, Pakistan eases curbs

**S**EOUL, South Korea — South Korea reported 18 new coronavirus cases Saturday after bars and nightclubs were urged to close following a spate of infections, while Pakistan bowed to economic pressure and allowed some businesses to reopen despite a surge in case numbers.

The United States, Brazil and Italy also were wrestling with how to ease curbs on business and public activity. Others imposed new restrictions: Kuwait in the Middle East announced a lockdown from Sunday through 30 May.

Worldwide, the virus has infected at least 3.9 million people and killed more than 270 000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University based on data reported by governments.

On Friday, South Korea urged nightclubs to close for a month after new cases jumped above 10 for the first time in five days. A decline in new infections had prompted the government to ease social distancing guidelines and announce plans to reopen schools Wednesday.

Most of the new cases are linked to the Itaewon leisure district of the capital, Seoul, where a 29-year-old man visited three nightclubs before testing positive.

Also Saturday, Pakistan allowed shops, factories, construction sites and some other businesses to reopen, while 1 637 new cases and 24 deaths were reported. That was close to Thursday's one-day peak of 1 764 new infections and raised Pakistan's total to 27 474.

Prime Minister Imran Khan said his government is rolling back curbs because it can't support millions of families that depend on daily wages. The government warned controls will be reimposed if the public fails to follow social distancing guidelines.



CEMETERY worker Bruno Avelino walks among graves as he waits for the arrival of a coffin that contains the remains of one-year-old Vitoria, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government reported Friday unemployment surged to its highest level since the Great Depression of the 1930s, likely adding to conflict over when to allow businesses to reopen.

The Labour Department reported unemployment stood at 14.7 percent after some 20.5 million jobs vanished in April. The department, citing miscounting of some workers by its survey-takers, said the true rate probably was closer to 20 percent. Some economists said the total might be even higher at 23.6 percent, not far from the 1939 peak of 25 percent.

President Donald Trump is pushing state governors to allow factories, restaurants and shops to reopen despite warnings that might lead to a deadly spike in infections.

Some states including Texas and South Carolina have allowed some businesses to reopen. Others such as New York, the hardest-hit U.S. state, and Illinois want to see more progress in containing the disease before relaxing controls.

The Trump re-election campaign planned to hammer its opponent with negative ads while touting a strong economy. But Trump's team is increasingly worried about key

states such as Michigan, Wisconsin and Florida.

Also Friday, Vice President Mike Pence's press secretary became the second person at the White House to test positive for the virus. The first was a member of the military who works as Trump's valet.

China, where the pandemic began in December, announced plans to reopen more schools in its capital, Beijing.

More than 84 200 junior high school students and 13 200 teachers will return to class Monday, the city government announced. Nearly 50 000 high school students went back

to class 27 April.

Controls including checks for the virus's tell-tale fever still are in place at apartment complexes and public buildings in the Chinese capital.

China's ceremonial legislature is due to hold its annual session 22 May, postponed from March. The government has yet to say how some 3 000 delegates will conduct meetings.

In Europe, Britain's environment minister said there will be no "dramatic overnight change" announced when Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a national address on Sunday.

Johnson is expected to explain how Britain, with the second-highest death toll behind the United States at 31 241, can ease the lockdown. Only minor changes such as allowing people to sunbathe in parks are anticipated.

The government will be "very, very cautious," said the minister, George Eustice.

Italy's government said it would take legal action to stop a northern province, Bolzano, from reopening stores this weekend in defiance of a national plan to wait until later this month. Italy has reported more than 217 000 virus cases and 30 200 deaths.

In Brazil, the country's fifth-biggest city, Fortaleza, started a lockdown Friday amid surging infections, even as President Jair Bolsonaro asked the Supreme Court to order states to roll back restrictions on business.

Fortaleza, capital of the state of Ceara in the northeast, will impose roadblocks and allow only essential services. Similar restrictions were imposed this week in the capitals of the states of Maranhao and Para.

Brazil has more than 140 000 cases and 9 600 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins. — AP

## What happens when you go on furlough?

**S**O, your company has announced that there will be furloughs. Don't panic. There are advantages and disadvantages to furloughs. Here's information on what a furlough is and what it means for you—and your financial future.

### What is a furlough?

A furlough is a mandatory temporary unpaid (or reduced pay) leave of absence from a job. In tough economic times, many companies furlough employees instead of eliminating positions or having layoffs. This move is used to help save jobs, protect a company's bottom line, and keep it competitive once the market begins to improve.

Furloughed workers may be eligible for unemployment compensation, and expanded benefits are available due to the coronavirus.

Furloughs are common among manufacturing companies, but government agencies have also begun to consider and use furloughs.

### The difference between a layoff and a furlough

#### Furlough

A furlough is considered a leave of absence from a job. When an employee is furloughed, they have the expectation of returning to their job after the furlough ends.

What happens with employee benefits will vary based on your company's benefit plans. In many cases, your health and life insurance benefits will continue while you are furloughed. Check with your human resources department or manager for information on what coverage you will maintain.

#### Layoff

With a layoff, employment is terminated. The laid-off worker may no longer be eligible for company-provided health insurance or other employee benefits. However, there are options for continuing health insurance coverage.

### Are furloughs legal?

Companies do have the right to adjust your

hours, just as they have the right to terminate your employment.

It can be frustrating to be hit with a furlough, especially if you are living paycheck to paycheck or are having a difficult time making ends meet. However, it is usually better than the alternative, which is possibly losing your job.

### How will a furlough affect me?

One thing to keep in mind: If you are facing the possibility of a furlough, it means you will lose money. Thus, you need to adjust your budget accordingly to plan for the loss of income.

### Furloughs can take different forms:

- Your employer may simply have you take an unpaid day off once a week, or they may have you take one or two or more unpaid weeks off at one time.
- The furlough may be applied to everyone in your company at the same time, or the company may rotate it through different employees at different times.

Depending on your situation, you will need to prepare for the loss of income. If your furlough is spread out over time, you may need to look for a long-term additional income source, such as a part-time job. If it is just a week or two, you can begin saving now to cover it and consider picking up temporary work during your time off.

However, if you are covered by an employment agreement that precludes you from taking another job you'll won't be able to work at a temporary job.

Check with your state unemployment office for information on collecting unemployment while you are furloughed.

### How can I prepare for a furlough?

It is important to be sure that you are living within your means, regardless of the possibility of a furlough. But if you are hearing whispers of a furlough at your company, it's a good idea to put money in savings. This can help cover the time that you are on furlough.

If you are not already living on a budget, now is the time to create one you can follow. You may want to consider cutting your expenses so that a furlough will not cause you to fall behind on your payments or make you run short on grocery money. Also, be sure to have your emergency fund fully in place so that if you are put on furlough, you will be prepared financially.

### How will a furlough affect my goals?

If you are trying to get out of debt and are applying extra money toward your debt payments, you may have to put this goal on hold in order to save up to help you through any furlough or layoffs.

Depending on the amount of debt you have, you may want to put off making payments until you know whether you will be furloughed or, worse, lose your job. It's also extremely important to have a three-month emergency fund in place to cover you during this difficult time.

### What does a furlough say about the stability of my job?

Furloughs can be stressful, and if your company is considering putting employees on furlough, you may want to begin looking at other jobs in case the company decides to make further cuts in the future.

You do not necessarily need to jump ship at the first sign of trouble, but a furlough does indicate that your company may not be doing well. Remember, the best time to be looking for a new job is while you are still employed.

### Can I use my emergency fund to cover my furlough?

If you have a sufficient emergency fund, you may be able to look at the furlough as an opportunity to relax at home for an extra week or for one day a week.

However, if you are facing a furlough, you should still be responsible about how you spend and save. If things do not improve over the next year, you may still face the possibility of layoffs.

—Thebalancecareers

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# Linare players cry foul over salaries



LINARE players. — file pic

Linare communications and marketing manager Lebeso Molati instead accused some of the players of fomenting chaos.

Molati denied claims that they did not communicate with the players about their salaries.

“We are aware that a certain player (name withheld) is trying to cause confusion. We are a big team, so we can’t just wake up and decide not to pay players without their consent.

“We informed the players when we were told by our sponsors that they would not afford paying us for April. We explained everything to the players,” Molati said.

He said they even explained to the players that only expatriates and a few others who survive solely on their salaries would get assistance to get through the period of the lockdown.

“We have made it clear that we are not paying any player during this period but we are only helping our foreign players from our pockets as management. We have four foreign players from Durban, Gabon, Cameroon and Uganda and some who rely solely on salaries from the team and these are the only players whom we are assisting.

“These are difficult times and all these decisions were made in order to save this team. In essence, we made these decisions for the players and it’s just unfortunate that some decisions are unpopular,” Molati said.



TšEPANG Mantutle.

## CUCSA games moved to 2021

Leemisa Thuseho

**T**HE Confederation of University and Colleges Sports Associations (CUCSA) has finally postponed the 2020 CUCSA Games to next year due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The games were scheduled for 27 July to 2 August 2020 in Lesotho but the association had delayed its decision saying it was monitoring the situation.

The decision was made during a virtual CUCSA executive committee meeting on 5 May.

“CUCSA executive committee had a virtual meeting on 5 May 2020 and decided to postpone the 2020 games to 2021,” CUCSA revealed in a statement on Thursday.

The confederation together with Lesotho University and College Sports Association (LUCSA) has been monitoring the developments of the Covid-19 pandemic for the past few months before taking the decision.

CUCSA said the decision was made to ensure the safety and wellbeing of athletes.

“As it stands, there is no clarity as to when the pandemic will end and it is unlikely that any normal sport competitions will take place in the next six months in our environment.”

The association said no changes would be made on the venue of the games while the new dates will be announced after careful considerations of other activities among them the Olympics. The Olympics were scheduled for July and August this year in Tokyo, Japan but they have now been moved to next year in the same country.

“This was not an easy decision but we truly believe that it is the best given the circumstances that we are facing. The safety and wellbeing of our athletes, delegates and communities is our absolute priority.”

Lesotho University and Colleges Sports Association (LUCSA) president Tšepang Mantutle told the *Sunday Express* that they also want to use the games as qualifiers for the Summer World University Games set for China in August 2021.

“Now that the games are moved to next year, this scenario means that LUCSA will host two events in one year unless we decide otherwise,” Mantutle said.

Mantutle welcomed CUCSA’s decision citing that this would give them more time to prepare.

“It’s a blessing in disguise since at that time we would have already hosted the African Union Sports Council (AUSC) Region 5 games in December 2020 and most of the facilities will still be in good shape,” Mantutle said.

This will be Lesotho’s first time to host the biennial games. In 2018 the games were held in Gaborone, Botswana while they will be held in Malawi in 2022.

Moorosi Tsiane

**L**INARE players are up in arms with the team’s management for failing to pay their April 2020 salaries. They said they had not received any explanation from management.

Linare, like all local teams, has been inactive ever since the premier league was suspended in mid-March to stop the possible spread of Covid-19.

Some players who spoke to the *Sunday Express* on condition of anonymity on Friday said they were still waiting for their April salaries.

The players said the management had initially sought to suspend their contracts for three months. However, the decision was fiercely opposed by some players who felt it would be better to cut their salaries.

“The management told the players in a WhatsApp group that they did not have funds to pay us during the lockdown since they were not getting funds from their sponsors, so they would suspend our contracts for three months,” said one player.

“However, some of the players were against the move and it was suggested that we negotiate

salary cuts. Our reasoning was that if contracts were suspended for three months, it would cause problems if the league resumed earlier.”

The players said they also refused to have their contracts suspended because they survive on the salaries from the team.

When the matter was last discussed, the two parties agreed that the management would report back to the players on Friday. However, nothing had been said by end of day Friday.

“They were supposed to come back to us with final decision today... so we are still waiting.”

# ACE Maseru donates to Tšenola residents

Leemisa Thuseho

**L**ESOTHO PostBank A Division side, ACE Maseru FC on Friday donated food parcels to 100 Maseru families in Tšenola, Maseru.

The handover was done at the team’s home ground, Lepereng.

The team’s general manager, Motlalepula Majoro, who also coaches the side, said the donation was motivated by the knowledge that the recently ended national lockdown had left many families without any food.

Lesotho was on lockdown from 30 March until 5 April 2020. Although Lesotho is yet to record any cases, the lockdown was imposed by the government to prevent the possible spread of Covid-19.

“We are aware of the food crisis resulting from the lockdown and we know that some people are badly affected therefore, we de-

cidated the little we can to help such people with food,” Majoro said.

Majoro said they chose Tšenola because that is where most of their supporters come from.

“Our supporters are our number one sponsor. They always rally behind us during our games, so we want them to also benefit from us.”

He said the groceries were worth M9 800 and were donated by the club’s biggest sponsor African Clean Energy.

According to Majoro, the team collaborated with the Tšenola area chief to identify the needy families.

Tšenola Chieftainess ‘Matšepo Mothobi urged the villagers to keep on supporting the team in future.

“This was a good initiative by the team and I hope they will continue doing the good job. I call on Tšenola residents to continue support-

ing the team,” Mothobi said.

On behalf of the beneficiaries, ‘Mahlaoli Motsamai said the donations were a relief to the families.

“Since the commencement of the lockdown, some people have gone for days without food, thus, the food parcels came at the right time,” Motsamai said.

ACE Maseru are third on the log in the A Division’s Southern Stream.

This is the team’s first season in the A Division following their promotion from the B Division last season.

Majoro said they are currently on a learning curve and they hope to get promoted into the premier league next year.

“We are no longer in the race to earn promotion this season, the race is now between Machokha and Manonyane and we hope next year we will be a better team,” Majoro said.



BENEFICIARIES collect food parcels home on Friday.



Linare  
players cry  
foul P17



# PLMC slaps Bantu with "show cause" letter



LEUTA John Leuta.

## Moorosi Tsiane

**B**ANTU FC was on Thursday slapped with a "show cause" letter by the Premier League Management Committee (PLMC) for defying the committee's directive to stop a fundraising programme that it is running.

The PLMC wants Bantu to "show cause why it cannot be charged" for misconduct for contravening Section 50.6.11 of the Premier League and A Division rules and regulations.

This after the two parties clashed a fortnight ago over a fundraising campaign that is being conducted by Bantu supporters to assist their players and staff during the ongoing Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The campaign is being run on microblogging site *Facebook*.

The Mafeteng outfit, like the rest of local teams, have not made any income since mid-March 2020 when the league took a break in the wake of the pandemic. Teams normally generate income from gate takings at their games while some money comes from sponsors. However, no games have been played since mid-March, so teams have not made money and are struggling to pay players' and staff salaries.

Bantu is one of the few clubs that have managed to pay their players and staff and it has only managed half salaries for April.

The club is asking its fans and well-wishers to donate by depositing fund to its PostBank account or send to its Ecocash or M-PESA accounts. The PLMC wrote to Bantu accusing the club of sabotaging its efforts to raise funds. Two weeks ago, the PLMC said Bantu must immediately stop the initiative as the committee was already running a similar programme for the entire footballing fraternity.

However, Bantu disregarded the directive forcing the league body to slap the side with a "show cause" letter.

"On the 23 April 2020 the Premier league Management Committee (PIMC) issued out a memo advising teams of a fundraising campaign for premier league teams as a result of the suspension of league games due to the Covid-19 pandemic," the letter reads.

"After issuing the memo, the PLMC immediately came across advertorial from Bantu FC advising their fans to pay cash into their Ecocash account... All in a pursuit to raise funds for the club in difficult times. The PLMC immediately... advised Bantu FC to withdraw it as it ran parallel to the quest and initiative of the PLMC to raise funds on behalf of all teams."

The PLMC lamented that its letter to the Bantu management was later seen on social media and the club's fans spewed vitriol directed at the committee.

"The PLMC has no doubt the letter was deliberately leaked so that the PLMC can be attacked and berated, the

merchant account of Bantu FC remains open and as an act of defiance. Another account, a M-Pesa Merchant with number 205756 was also introduced. The excerpts of the messages are attached and marked PLMCI (*sic*)."

The PLMC said the opening of the M-Pesa merchant was a direct violation of clause 5.2.5 of the contract between the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) and Econet Lesotho as Premier League sponsors.

The clause states that no team shall be sponsored by direct competitors in one way or the other and no team shall wear, display or use visible competitor products, before, during and after games.

"The management of Bantu PC knows fully well that the team cannot be separated from the fans... The management has clearly acquiesced to actions of the fans and by extension authorised the fans to act in the manner they are doing.

"The-leaking of the letter meant only for the management of Bantu FC falls within the pure view of an art or conduct which is ungentlemanly, insulting which thus influenced the fans to behave improperly."

The PLMC said Bantu's actions undermined its efforts and authority to the prejudice of all teams.

"The PLMC views that as an improper behaviour, likely to bring the sponsors and the league into disrepute."

It was against this background that the PLMC called upon Bantu to show cause why it cannot be charged for misconduct for contravening Section 50.6.11 of the Premier League and A Division rules and regulations.

The sections read: "To commit any act or makes a statement, either orally or in writing, or to be responsible for conduct which is ungentlemanly, insulting or improper behaviour, or likely to bring the game, sponsors, any member, the league, LeFA, CAF or FIFA into disrepute".

"Bantu FC is called upon to show cause why it cannot be charged specifically for misconduct for contravening section 50.6.11 and the letter should reach PLMC office three days after receipt of this letter," concludes the letter.

Bantu president Leuta John Leuta confirmed receiving the letter and said they had already responded.

"We have received the letter and our lawyers have already attended to it. This is a sad situation because the PLMC is just coming out now chasing teams that are trying to survive whereas they left us hanging when they suspended the league without even talking to us as management of teams.

"We still haven't got our money from our last two matches, LDF (league) and MGC Top4 but instead of helping teams with getting their money to survive, they are chasing us to ensure that we don't make any money. However, we are dealing with the matter," Leuta said.