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WEDNESDAY April 30-May 06, 2025

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Est. 2017

MAJORO'S CRY FOR INDEPENDENCE

...struggle against a future built on foreign aid

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National News

Majoro's cry for independence

RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

MASERU - Former Prime Minister, Dr Moeketsi Majoro, has decreed the country's leadership for lack of sustainable avenues in a bid to avoid dependency on international aid.

During an event held at the State Library this week on Youth Dialogue on Economic Independence, Dr Majoro was critical of the trajectory of the kingdom.

"What President Donald Trump has done is to tell each country that you are on your own; friendship or partnership doesn't matter.

"Trump has promised tax write-offs, and he's shutting down aid agencies so that all monies should be channelled towards write-offs, he said.

Painfully, Majoro further noted: "We once sold a single diamond for USD \$40 million and only received \$3 million as a country; we are not financially independent and have never been for the last 60 years. We have been living on foreign soil for what? Nothing.

The Trump administration slapped the country with a 50 % tariff rate, which was later halted for 90 days.

For his part, Dr Retšelisitsoe Nko, said corruption was at the forefront, which leads to dependency on foreign aid, and a lack of transparency can lead to misallocation of aid resources, hindering development efforts and reinforcing dependency.

"Inadequate economic policies, such as insufficient tax collection or ineffective resource management, can exacerbate aid dependency by limiting a country's ability to generate its own revenue," Nko said, while adding, "Aid circumvents local institutions, reducing their capacity and weakening accountability, further increasing the need for external assistance."

Meanwhile, there are arguments that the American government has technically scrapped the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which Lesotho's economy is directly impacted by, leaving the country in crunches.

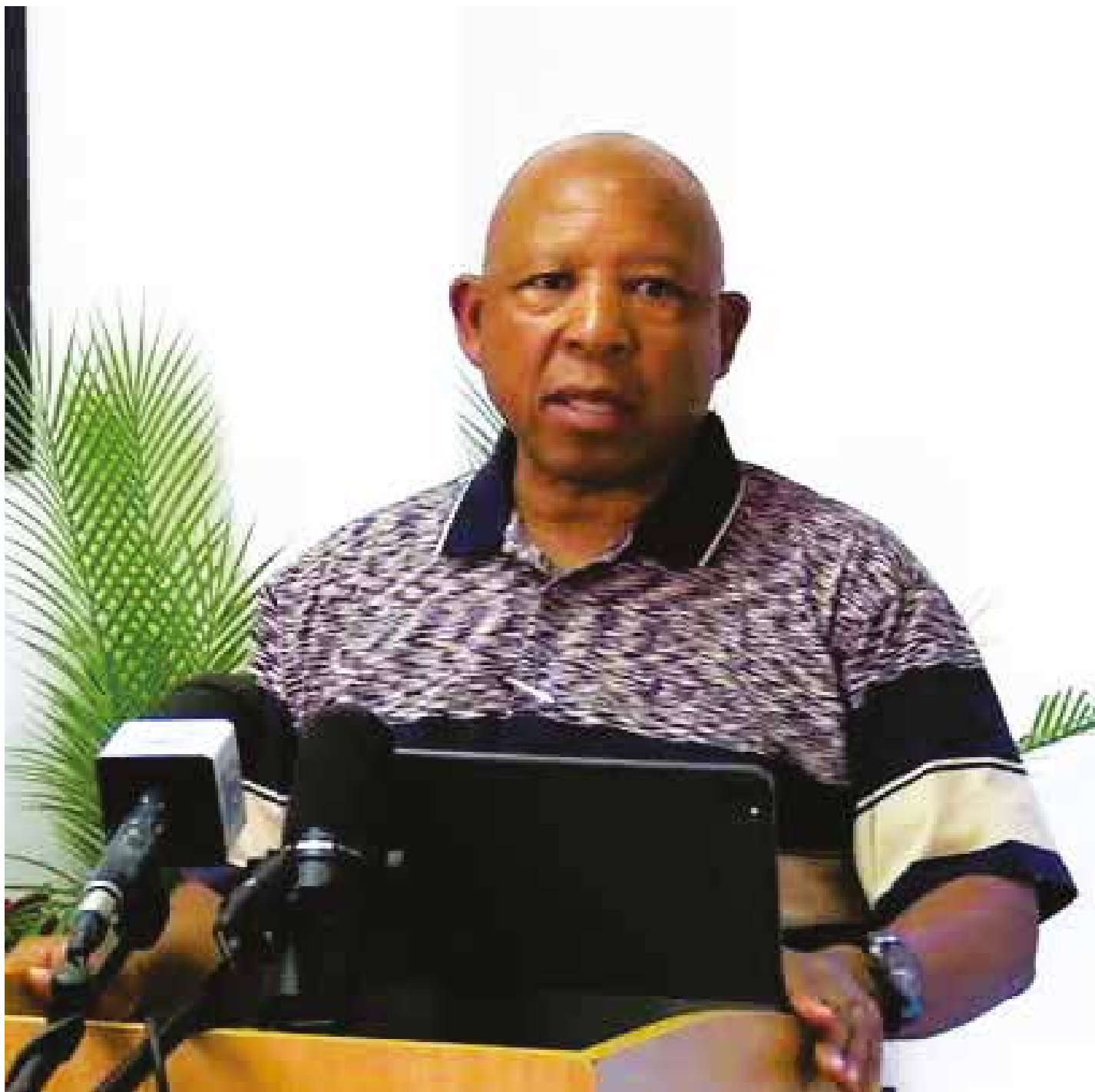
The cut would not just negatively affect South Africa but would also harm Lesotho and be more damaging to regional trade and further deprive other African countries from benefiting from South Africa's more advanced economy, such as its manufacturing sector.

AGOA is a preferential trade program that was enacted in the year 2000 to boost and diversify African trade with the US. The act allows duty-free entry for a wide range of African products into the US.

Close to 40 sub-Saharan African countries, including Lesotho and South Africa, are beneficiaries of AGOA. Earlier this month, local chartered accountant Robert Likhang said in an interview with Metro that while Lesotho has trade relations with other countries other than South Africa, the latter's expulsion from AGOA could negatively impact the country.

"We do have trade relations with other countries besides South Africa, but we

...struggle against a future built on foreign aid



can be directly affected because they are our biggest trade partners," Likhang said.

In 2021, Lesotho ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and has been offered duty-free access to the European Union's (EU) Everything but Arms (EBA).

Public Eye reported that Trade Promotion Officer at the Ministry of Trade, Mpeshe Selebalo, stated that the goal is to foster trade among African nations.

"The AfCFTA represents a significant market, encompassing approximately 1.3 billion people, with Africa's collective GDP reaching around three trillion USD, a substantial figure.

"While trading activity is somewhat higher among countries in the southern region of Africa, there are still barriers inhibiting trade with nations in the western and northern regions.

"Lesotho is renowned as a major exporter of wool and mohair, with the majority of its population residing in rural areas. Access to markets significantly

facilitates investment in our businesses.

"Moreover, in terms of standards and development, African nations share similarities, simplifying intra-continental trade.

"However, challenges arise in emerging sectors within Lesotho, where inputs often originate from regions lacking trading agreements, resulting in steep border tariffs," he said.

Selebalo also highlighted the ministry's National Trade Strategy, which prioritizes products outlined in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II), namely agriculture and light manufacturing, particularly textiles and clothing, with active participation from women and youth.

He said easing trade barriers, facilitated by the AfCFTA, plays a crucial role in advancing these sectors.

"Trade agreements alone do not provide all the solutions to our challenges, but they are certainly valuable tools in our arsenal. Therefore, I encourage our colleagues in the private sector to seize

the opportunities presented by trading.

"Additionally, regarding services, we are focused on streamlining trade processes, particularly for young entrepreneurs, leveraging the growing importance of technology, as highlighted by the impact of Covid-19.

"We are actively developing the National Services Strategy to capitalize on existing strengths and forthcoming opportunities. Digital trading is increasingly significant, and its potential is already becoming apparent, sparking excitement in this realm.

"Regarding government efforts to facilitate trade, we have been diligently working on various initiatives. For anyone interested in trading across African countries, the AfCFTA provides a platform to connect with potential partners abroad," Selebalo also noted.

As per the EU's website, as of January 2019, the continental bloc removed tariffs and quotas for all imports (except arms and ammunition) coming into the EU from the least developed countries (LDCs).

Enough is Enough!



RANTAU TLALI MAKHETHA

MASERU - Patients who feel aggrieved by the conduct of medical practitioners have been advised to report such behavior to the Lesotho Medical, Dental, and Pharmacy Council (LMDPC).

This was indicated by LMDPC Public Relations Officer, Dr Mojakisane Ramafikeng, in a fierce press statement released this week where they note with concern “the growing number of complaints from Basotho citizens regarding unsatisfactory or unprofessional treatment received from healthcare professionals across the country.”

“While we empathize with the frustrations expressed by members of the public, it has also come to our attention that many people are unaware of the appropriate channels for reporting such incidents. Instead of formally submitting complaints to the Council, some individuals talk to social media to voice their grievances. Unfortunately, while these platforms may offer a space for emotional expression, they do not facilitate corrective action or accountability.

“In response, LMDPC would like to reaffirm its mandate to protect the public by regulating the

“Our commitment...is unwavering- to enhance public health, define and uphold exemplary standards of professional education and training, and to establish and maintain equitable standards of professional practice across the medical field, dental, and pharmacy professions.

conduct of its registrants in Lesotho. We urge the public to bring forward any cases of misconduct, negligence, or unethical behaviour directly to the Council. This enables us to initiate proper investigations and take action where necessary,” the organisation noted.

It further emphasised the need for the public to engage them when such unscrupulous acts from medical personnel occur.

This comes in light several articles by Lesotho Times in which patients complained about the conduct of Dr Hlalele Mofubelu where’s accused of sexual harassment.

The police have also appealed to members of the public to forth with information regarding the alleged abuses.

“Police act when a case has been reported, so I urge victims to come forward and report the matter to the Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU). That unit is dedicated to handling such cases, and only once a report has been filed can the police take action,” the paper quoted cop’s spokesperson, Senior Superintendent, Mpiti Mopeli last month.

LMDPC was established under the Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Order No. 13 of 1970 thus “operates independently, without reliance on government grants or external subsidies, sustained entirely by contributions of health professional it diligently represents.”

“Our commitment...is unwavering- to enhance public health, define and uphold exemplary standards of professional education and training, and to establish and maintain equitable standards of professional practice across the medical field, dental, and pharmacy professions.

“We are dedicated to ensuring the highest levels of professional integrity and healthcare delivery throughout Lesotho.”

Decolonizing minds, shifting from dependency



LIAPENG RALIENGOANE

MASERU – As the youth gathered this Monday for a dialogue on reducing dependency on foreign aid, one solution kept being stressed, the need to decolonize minds in a means to shift from foreign aid dependency.

During the dialogue, political science researcher Matšilo Nkabane stressed the importance of reforming the educational system.

“Schools are not preparing the students for real world. Our education system is not preparing us for the demands of the 21st century job market particularly in the changing globalized world. Many universities still prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical skills.

Graduates do not possess the technical, digital, entrepreneurial or other soft skills required in today’s globalized economy. In this 4th industrial revolution, we need data analysts, coders, renewable energy technicians and digital marketers while our universities still produce graduates that are ill equipped for this market.”

She suggested harnessing indigenous knowledge to advance development, that Lesotho’s education should reflect its traditions, culture and ethos.

“We need to upgrade research infrastructures, technology and innovation should be key sectors of our economic development. Collaborate with best universities and research institutions in Africa.”

A qualified Development Financer Mokholoane Ramainoane said that

what this country needs is finance to equip youth run businesses.

“The problem is that there’s no funding for businesses, what we need is money not a development bank as being touted by others,” Ramainoane indicated.

On how the Constitution can guide Lesotho’s path to self-sufficiency, human rights lawyer Advocate Mokitimi Tšosane stressed that Constitution is not a self-executing document and there is need for concerted efforts to defend it so that it will defend the nation against abuse, both internal and external.

Advocate Tšosane defined sovereignty as “the state itself,” it denotes independence and self-determination, political and economic.

“Any exercise of power should reflect independence and self-determination in line with the values espoused in the Constitution, for example, treaty and agreements negotiation, signing and ratification and law-making power.”

He concluded by saying that the Constitution has put in place a framework to guarantee independence and self-determination which allow no undermining of Lesotho’s sovereignty by the political elites pursuing political interests intended to purge the nation further into economic dependency.

While addressing the gathering, governance and development finance specialist, Dr Retšelisitsoe Nko, mentioned that aid dependency can overload institutions of a country, lead to capacity issues and reduced ownership of developmental projects.

That external funding can erode accountability and undermine democratic decision-making processes.

“Aid can sometimes contribute to a country’s debt burden, as some aid is used to service existing debts rather than to address underlying development issues,” Dr Nko stated.

Among solutions proposed he mentioned: increasing revenue generation through tax reforms and strengthening tax collection mechanisms, investing in sustainable development practices and building capacity for long term, self-reliant growth.

Strengthening local investor institutions and building local human capacity. Reducing reliance on a single source of funding such as aid and diversifying revenue streams.

This youth dialogue on economic independence was facilitated by International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) alumni Kananelo Boloetse, Tumelo Moteuli and Tefetso Kele who is a Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumnus.

It was a lead up to the public dialogue on May 23 and the public is urged to join as this is a movement towards self-sufficient Lesotho.



Lesotho to freeze VAT hike

...As South African court blocks rise



STAFF REPORTER

MASERU - Basotho, relax. This is the message being relayed by the National Assembly head honchos after South Africa's High Court Western Division in essence declared 0.5 percent on Value Added Tax (VAT) in that country invalid.

The judgment, which was delivered on April 27 by Justices Mabindla-Boqwana, Le Grange, and Savage, dealt a blow to finance minister, Enoch Godongwana, that was supposed to be imposed on May 1 after the March 12 fiscal policy presentation.

The Democratic Alliance (DA), which was subsequently joined by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), had filed a case against Godongwana, Commissioner of South African Revenue Services, Speaker of the National Assembly Thoko Didiza, and Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces seeking relief.

"The Minister of Finance's announcement on 12 March 2025 made under Section 7 (4) of the Value Added Tax Act of 1991, whereby the Value Added Tax (VAT) rate was adjusted as follows: 'The first 0.5 percentage point increase in the VAT increase will take effect on 1 April 2025,' is suspended pending the passing of legislation regulating the VAT rate or the final determination of Part B, whichever occurs first," the justices declared.

The net effect would have been for Lesotho to also increase its VAT by the same margin after finance minister, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, made a similar proposal.

However, Economic and Development Cluster chairperson, Sello Hakane, told Metro this week that they had foreseen such a predicament, thus appealing for calmness.

"We made a decision in Parliament that the 0.5 percent increase, as long as South Africa was done with theirs...it would not be beneficial for us to discuss it.

It was evident that it was going to affect us; thus, we are forced to align ourselves with SA," Hakane said.

He further highlighted that since eSwatini and Namibia were also part of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), they too will toe the line in VAT increment.

"If we don't follow suit, there'll be catastrophic consequences since our currency is pegged against the (South African) Rand," he noted, adding that they made the decision during the presentation where Matlanyane asked for an amendment in case SA changed the tax rate.

"As long as the 0.5 percent is not added on that side (SA), Lesotho will also do the same," he noted.

On the same note, Chair of Chairpersons, Mokhothu Makhalanyane, revealed that he spoke to African National Congress (ANC) Members of Parliament who informed him that the VAT wouldn't be approved.

"It says that we need to amend the appropriation bill since we are opening on Friday," Makhalanyane said.

He also said finance will revert in terms of amending the bill, but they'll wait.

On the same day of the ruling, Didiza wrote a memorandum to chief whips and party representatives indicating that "the resolutions of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, adopted on April 2, to accept the report of the Standing Committee

on Finance and the Select Committee on Finance on the 2025 Fiscal Framework, are set aside."

EFF supremo Julius Malema has since called for President Cyril Ramaphosa to axe Godongwana.



National News

How Pope Francis approached climate action



LIAPENG RALIENGOANE

MASERU - Last Saturday Pope Francis was laid to rest at St Mary Major Basilica following the funeral service at St Peter's Square – King Letsie III was in attendance.

Pope Francis, touted the greatest climate champion died on Easter Monday, April, at age 88. He had chosen his papal name, Francis, to honour St Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of those who promote ecology.

An interview with Laudato Si' Movement-Lesotho Chapter leader, Sr Albertina Nkunyane of the Holy Cross Sisters, revealed that the movement in Lesotho will keep raising awareness and taking care of creation even after the Pope's passing.

That the Catholic Church established Laudato Si' Movement for the Catholic community, Lesotho included, to tackle environmental issues.

"As members in Lesotho, we take animator course online, where we learn about care for creation. We encourage and teach people to take care of the environment everywhere we are. It maybe at church, community gatherings or in public transport.

We furthermore influence people to stop littering, we all have to take care of our environment and do away with the littering culture."

Sr Nkunyane HCS explained that this movement is a community of Catholics, responding to the Pope's call to action in the Laudato Si' encyclical.

It is a movement of lay people, priests, religious, bishops and a global network of member organizations working together on the climate change crisis: to raise awareness within the Church about the urgency of climate action in light of Catholic social and environmental teachings, advocating for the world's policy makers and all Catholics to act

in ways appropriate to their spheres of influence to protect the common good through mitigation and adaptation policies which promote social and environmental resilience to climate change.

According to a Laudato Si' press release released on April 21 Pope Francis's passing comes during the 10th anniversary of the publication of his ground-breaking encyclical Laudato Si' which examined his long-standing Catholic environmental teaching in the light of today's planetary crisis.

Laudato Si' Movement Executive Director Lorna Gold said: "As the spiritual leader who guided our church for 12 years, Pope Francis breathed new life into centuries of catholic teaching. As the man who inspired me and our movement, his warmth, humility and commitment to the common good showed us a new way forward.

He sparked a sense of new hope and beginnings for many, so it's fitting that Pope Francis passed into eternal rest during Easter, when we celebrate the renewal of all life. We pray thanks for the gift of Pope Francis and for sharing in his precious few moments on Earth."

The words "Laudato Si'" come from a poem in Italian by St. Francis of Assisi where he praises God by praising God's creation and they mean "Praise be to you."

Laudato Si' Movement, founded as Global Catholic Climate Movement was launched on January 15, 2015, inspired by the Holy Spirit. That was the day Pope Francis arrived in the Philippines for a highly symbolic trip that would feature a visit to Tacloban, the epicentre of the Super Typhoon Haiyan.

Laudato Si' Movement is the fruit of a Kairos. The Kairos of 2015 was the combination of two transformative events that would shape how the Church and humanity responded to the ecological crisis: The Laudato Si' encyclical release and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Pope Francis's environment encyclicals draw from the deep well of Catholic teaching on care for creation.

On April 22, 2021 in a video address to world leaders during the Earth Day Summit, Pope Francis issued this grave warning: "We are at the edge... with climate change, and the time to take action is now. The Earth is suffering wounds due to a predatory attitude."

In a letter read on November 2, 2021, to the Conference of Parties (COP26) climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, Pope Francis implored leaders to act, coupling urgency: "Time is running out; this occasion must not be wasted, lest we have to face God's judgment for our failure to be faithful stewards of the world he has entrusted to our care."

In a catechesis marking Earth Day 50th Anniversary on 22 April 2020, Pope Francis stressed humanity's dependence on a healthy environment: "We have no future if we destroy the very environment that sustains us."

In his historic speech to the United Nations General Assembly, September 2015, Pope Francis crystallized the principle that caring for people and caring for the planet are inseparable: "Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity."

In his Encyclical letter, given in Rome at Saint Peter's on May 24, 2015, the Solemnity of Pentecost, the third of his Pontificate, Pope Francis in Laudato Si' 13 said "particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded."

In his historic speech to the United Nations General Assembly, September 2015, Pope Francis crystallized the

principle that caring for people and caring for the planet are inseparable: "Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity."

Laudato Si' says "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.

The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges."

The late Pope further wrote in the encyclical that "...regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest."

"It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter, which is now added to the body of the Church's social teaching, can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face.

I will begin by briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis, with the aim of drawing on the results of the best scientific research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows," Pope Francis further said in Laudato Si' 15.

Pope Francis delivered this warning to the public audience on May 21, 2014: "Safeguard Creation because if we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us. Never forget this."

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Pope Francis was from Argentina. Following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI on February 28, 2013, a papal conclave elected Pope Francis as his successor on March 13, 2013.

Experts call for better Prison oversight to combat diseases, protect rights



MOSES MAGADZA

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - Experts this week called for better prison oversight to combat communicable diseases and protect the rights of everyone.

They also welcomed plans to develop a SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight by the SADC Parliamentary Forum with support from Sweden.

Michaela Clayton, the interim Director for Aids and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA) expressed her organisation's support for the envisaged model law. She noted that stark health inequalities and systemic neglect were fuelling the spread of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), HIV, hepatitis B and C in prisons.

Clayton was one of two resource persons when the Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) of the SADC Parliamentary Forum met in Johannesburg, South Africa on Wednesday under the theme, "Towards developing a SADC Model Law on Prison oversight."

Addressing the committee, whose members are from all over the SADC region, Clayton decried the disproportionately high burden of disease

in prisons compared to the general population. "How we treat people in prisons is a reflection of the health and justice in our society," she stated.

"Studies in Malawi, Zambia and Botswana show that TB prevalence in prisons is ten times higher than in the general population," she said and advocated for mandatory TB screening upon admission and regular case finding as essential tools for disease control.

She decried the reliance on symptomatic TB diagnosis alone, saying it allows asymptomatic carriers to go undetected.

"This enables TB to spread unchecked in already overcrowded and poorly ventilated facilities," Clayton noted.

She argued that the grim prison conditions characterised by inadequate hygiene, poor nutrition, lack of ventilation, and disrupted power supply compound the problem.

"TB testing needs a stable electricity supply, and even food shortages affect treatment because TB medicine taken on an empty stomach can cause severe side effects," she explained.

"Good prison health is good public health. When prisoners return to society untreated, they do not just bring their personal baggage. They bring the burden of disease too," she said.

on gender, HIV status, and criminalised identities must be addressed if we are serious about justice and public health," Clayton contended.

She urged parliamentarians to see the proposed model law not as a bureaucratic exercise but as a transformative instrument.

"Prison oversight is not a luxury. It is a necessity for health, for dignity, and for justice."

Renowned Zambian health expert, Dr George Magwende, spoke on the topic, "The Importance of Prison Oversight (to Protect Prisoners' Right to Health)."

He traced the evolution of prison systems from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt to modern correctional institutions and highlighted the persistence of systemic challenges which directly compromise inmates' health and well-being.

He explained that oversight is not merely an administrative function but a critical pillar of justice that protects human rights, exposes unconstitutional practices, promotes transparency, and ultimately restores public trust in the criminal justice system.

He outlined numerous health-related challenges prevalent in prisons across the SADC region, including overcrowding, poor nutrition, inadequate sanitation, exposure to communicable diseases like TB, and limited access to essential medical services.

According to Dr Magwende, these conditions violate basic human rights and increase the burden on public health systems.

He warned that without consistent and empowered oversight, conditions in prisons are likely to deteriorate further, with overcrowding and neglect leading to full-blown humanitarian and health crises.

He identified major limitations undermining current oversight mechanisms. These include a lack of continuity among oversight teams, limited knowledge of international human rights frameworks, inadequate legal authority, and weak collaboration between parliaments and other stakeholders.

He also cautioned against political bias and indifference among oversight personnel, calling for a culture of empathy and non-partisan commitment to justice.

A particularly urgent issue raised was the plight of incarcerated women, especially those over the age of 45, who are often held in facilities designed for men and stripped of access to gender-sensitive services.

Dr Magwende outlined a rights-based approach to prison health, advocating for access to preventive care, appropriate medical screening, psychological services, and parenting support for women behind bars.

He also supported the development of a comprehensive SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight, which would serve as a uniform tool to guide member states in aligning prison oversight practices with international human rights and public health standards.

The Model Law, once adopted, is expected to set regional standards for prison health, human rights protection, and post-release continuity of care.

Moses Magadza is the Media and Communications Manager at the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

Clayton drew attention to the unique vulnerabilities faced by women, transgender people, and other key populations in prison.

"In 2023, HIV prevalence in closed settings was twice as high as in the general population. Transgender individuals, in particular, face both a higher risk of infection and a disturbing lack of access to treatment."

She warned that women in prisons often suffer from sexual violence and exploitation.

"They may be forced into sex to obtain basic goods or services," she said, adding that this, coupled with poor access to maternal care and antiretrovirals, threatens the health of both mothers and children.

She called for a "survivor-centred, multisectoral response to sexual violence in prisons," with guaranteed access to medical care, psychosocial support, and reproductive health services.

"The intersecting inequalities based



Why President Salva Kiir will never relieve Dr Teny of his position as FVP



authority on development (IGAD) through reconstituted joint monitoring and evaluation commission.

Many people in South Sudan keep wondering why for the past 35 days since Dr Machar was arrested in Juba on March 26. All government activities and programs have stopped.

No cabinet meetings across the country, the regional and international community is stepping on the neck of South Sudanese elites demanding for the release of Dr Machar along with all his senior political and military officials in detention, and the country has returned into full scale confrontation.

Kiir promised citizens and international community President Salva Kiir in 2019, promised the region and the international community that: "I will never take this country back to war."

In front of late Pope Francis in Rome when his feet alone with Dr Machar, Rebecca Nyadeeng, Taban Deng Gai and others, president Kiir also promised IGAD and the international community that he will go implement peace in Juba with Dr Riek Machar under his protection.

Now that he has broken most of the promises that peace implementation has retarded, the same IGAD has warned Kiir and Machar groups never to say the peace deal has collapsed. It's no longer a secret that the peace deal has collapsed but no one is allowed by the guarantors, partners and sponsors of the 2018 peace accord to recognize that its collapse.

Kiir groups have been warned not to relieve Machar and if they do, the region will not recognize their legitimacy which risks the country to be given a status of a protectorate under the United Nations.

Last night at around 4 am Juba time, I was hearing a scary sound of a plane possibly going to Yei and Morobo to carry out airstrikes on people deemed to be hostile to the government.

Why Kiir will never relieve Dr Machar from his position as the FVP

Many South Sudanese believe that current conflicts are a succession plan to install, little known incompetence, tribal kleptocrat into the top seat of presidency in South Sudan.

So, no one should expect President Salva Kiir Mayardit with his uncontrollable decree to relieve Dr Machar from his position as the FVP because that will mean the end of the legitimacy of his entire government.

Ruot George is a freelance journalist and human rights activist based in Juba South Sudan, and writes for the Metro in that capacity

RUOT GEORGE W MUT

JUBA, South Sudan - After declaration of South Sudan's independence from Sudan in July 2011, President Salva Kiir government was unanimously endorsed to prepared election for the world's youngest nation after gaining independence later in July 2015.

Kiir who automatically became president of the new republic also endorsed all the previous cabinets of the autonomous government of Southern Sudan to maintain their position. Dr Riek Machar automatically became the new vice president of the new country called South Sudan.

Kiir sacked the entire cabinet on 23rd July 2013 including Dr Machar

In July 2013, President Salva Kiir sacked the entire cabinet including Dr Riek Machar.

A convention of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation movement (SPLM) to choose the next chairman who will then face the candidate of the other opposition parties was organized on December 14, 2013. The convention ended prematurely in the afternoon hours of December 15,

2013. The same day fighting broke up in the military barrack that led to war on December 15, 2013.

Signing of the first peace agreement in 2015

The war ended with the signing of the compromised Agreement of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCISS), a peace agreement first in August 2015 bringing back President Salva Kiir and Dr Riek Machar back on table on top positions of the presidency as the president and the First Vice President respectively.

Fighting in the presidential palace on the eve of intendant day in July 2016

The peace deal then collapsed after bodyguards of President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Dr Riek Machar fought in July 2016 in the presidential palace, Machar fled to Democratic Republic of Congo after spending 40 days in the bushes.

Machar was arrested in South Africa on the request of South Sudan with the hope that security situation will improve in South Sudan in 2017, the peace deal was resuscitated on the request of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed. A revitalization forum was form to

resuscitate the peace which led to signing yet another agreement on September 12 2018 under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD.)

The 2018 peace deal once against brought the two men into presidency spelling out their roles. This time putting their names on the text of the peace deal in chapter one Article 1.7.2 says the FVP shall be occupied by Dr Riek Machar Teny. Mentioning the names of Salva Kiir Mayardit as the president throughout the transitional period.

The later shall be the deputy to Kiir in the military and security mechanism and if Kiir for any reason leave the country for personal or official duties shall remain the acting president and commander in chief for all the regular forces. The Peace and Government of South Sudan is Dr Riek Machar Teny for now, and president Salva Kiir have no constitutional powers and authority to remove him from office.

Both men according to the peace deal have equal power and none of them is able to undermine or relieve the other. They must both consult for a decision to be effective. If they disagree for any reason they must report to the intergovernmental

Standing with journalists in Lesotho and Zambia



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

On May 3, we commemorate World Press Freedom Day under the theme: “Reporting in the Brave New World – The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media.”

This day serves as a powerful reminder that journalists across the world, including Lesotho and Zambia to be specific, are faced with threats to their profession. This is especially worrying since, with the use of mobile phones and access to the internet, everyone can be a journalist.

Today, artificial intelligence (AI) and deepfake technology are increasingly being used to manipulate narratives and distort information intended for public consumption. This undermines the credibility of journalism worldwide.

Even more troubling is the rise in targeted attacks against journalists reporting on sensitive or public interest issues.

Through maliciously altered videos, images, and audio -

known as deepfakes - these journalists can be discredited or silenced. Female journalists face heightened risks in this digital landscape.

The Coalition for Women in Journalism (CFWIJ) warns that “online threats and intimidation, such as death and rape threats, are a significant form of digital violence against women journalists, leveraging the anonymity and reach of the internet to inflict psychological harm and disrupt their work.”

According to CFWIJ, prolonged exposure to such abuse not only isolates journalists and damages their reputations but also presents serious threats to their physical safety.

In light of these growing challenges, it becomes imperative for media professionals to not only recognise the risks but also explore the opportunities that AI presents. As the world commemorates this day, equal attention must be given to

upholding the ethical standards of journalism, ensuring that technological progress does not come at the cost of professional integrity.

This tension between ethical responsibility and powerful economic or technological forces is not new. As BR Ambedkar once observed, “History shows that where ethics and economics come into conflict, victory is always economics. Vested interests have never willingly divested themselves unless there was sufficient force to compel them.”

Thus we need to ask: does AI pose a threat or opportunity to the profession? Will capital render journalism an impractical source of information since machines are doing the job?

All the aforesaid need to be interrogated; therefore, we remember the history where, in 1993, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared May 3 as World Press Freedom Day, subsequent to a recommendation adopted at the 26th Session of the

United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference in 1991. This came after African journalists converged in Namibia to produce the Windhoek Declaration.

Thus we will never tire of holding the ethics card in an age of AI. As we honour the heroes who paved the way for press freedom, we stand in solidarity with our colleagues in the media fraternity in Lesotho and Zambia - journalists who are harnessing the power of artificial intelligence to strengthen journalism as a public good.

Whether in newsrooms or out in the field, they continue to uphold the highest standards of ethics and professionalism in an evolving media landscape.

We also call on media allies and human rights defenders to continue championing quality journalism by standing with journalists - especially in these challenging times where AI is being misused by individuals masquerading as credible

reporters.

Additionally, we urge news consumers to be vigilant and critical in their consumption of information. Before sharing news from unverified sources, we encourage the public to pause and ask important questions: Has this story been reported by a reputable media outlet? Is the source of the information clearly identified and credible?

Taking these simple yet vital steps helps prevent the spread of misinformation and strengthens the collective fight for a more informed and responsible media environment. It limits the negative impact of artificial intelligence on journalism.

#WPFD2025 #Ethics #AI For media related issues:
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BUSINESS

"There's nothing wrong with staying small. You can do big things with a small team."
-Jason Fried

"Great things in business are never done by one person."
-Steve Jobs

Vodacom commits to zero tolerance for bribery, corruption



NEO SENOKO

MASERU - Telecommunication giants, Vodacom Lesotho, has committed to continuously uphold the highest ethical standards through zero tolerance for bribery and corruption in a move to protect customer privacy and data in its operations.

The company revealed recently during a forum on ethical business practices on compliance, which brought

together key stakeholders from both the public and private sectors to address critical issues surrounding business ethics, compliance and the collective fight against corruption.

The event served as a vital platform for peer to peer learning and knowledge sharing on implementing successful strategies for ethical conduct and robust compliance frameworks. "Our firm commitment to the highest ethical standards is the bedrock of our operations

and the foundation of trust with our stakeholders. It's not simply about compliance; it's a strategic imperative that governs how we do business, ensuring every transaction is conducted with integrity," Vodacom Lesotho Chief Executive Officer, Mohale Ralebitso, emphasized during the forum.

This commitment, according to him, is demonstrated through concrete actions, zero tolerance for bribery or corruption and rigorously protecting customer privacy and data as well as assets critical to maintaining that trust.

"In an environment where reputation and trust are paramount, our ethical framework is our strongest defence against risk and a key enabler of sustainable, long term growth, ensuring our future success in serving Lesotho," Ralebitso said.

The strong emphasis on compliance comes just a few weeks after the telecommunications company had raised concerns regarding the manner in which the satellite internet services company Starlink, is being introduced to operate in the country. Vodacom has since joined growing concerns that the Lesotho Communication Authority (LCA) should reject Starlink application to operate in the country pending the fulfilment of all the required paperwork.

Argument was that Starlink should not be given special treatment and should comply with similar regulatory framework to that of Vodacom Lesotho and Econet Telecom Lesotho.

Among other things, Starlink should be mandated to have a physical office in Lesotho as well as have local shareholding to boost local economy just like the two local entities. Despite these and other concerns however, Starlink has been awarded a 10-year license to operate in the country. Civil society organizations such as Section 2, has since vowed to challenge the LCA decision tooth and nail and have it be reversed.

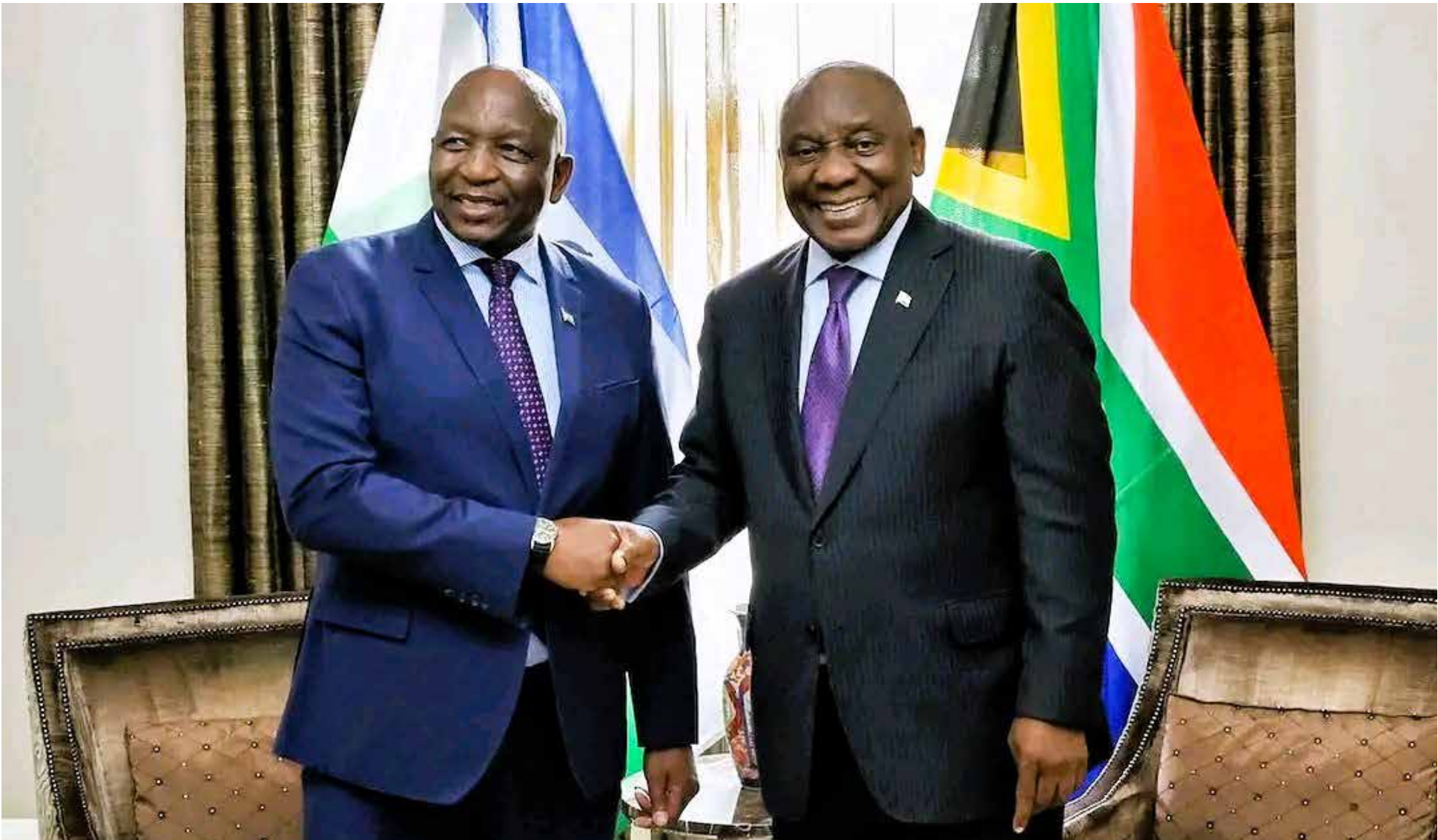
During the forum last week, Vodacom Lesotho Executive Head of Legal and Compliance, Rethabile Hoohlo, underscored the indispensable role of compliance in sustainable business operations.

"At Vodacom, we understand that a strong compliance culture represents more than fulfilment of regulatory requirements. It is a core strategic asset, vital for underpinning our organizational integrity and preserving the value of our brand and reputation.

Through concerted effort and the effective sharing of knowledge and resources, we can proactively advance a compliance environment that not only adheres to but elevates beyond mandated standards," Hoohlo shared.

The forum successfully underscored the shared responsibility across both public and private sectors in building a resilient and ethical business environment in Lesotho.

Re-imagined SACU critical towards economic sustainability



NEO SENOKO

MASERU - In recognition of the current economic challenges facing global trade, Lesotho and South Africa have acknowledged the need to prioritize the Re-imagined Southern African Customs Union (SACU) to put it on a sustainable development trajectory. This was revealed during the second session of the Bi-national Commission (BNC) between the two countries that was staged in Maseru recently. The BNC was co-chaired by the Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane and South African president, Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa. The second session followed the inaugural session that was held in Pretoria in September 2023. The summit agreed that both countries, together with other SACU member states, shall prioritize the development of regional value-chains

and engage in the Re-imagined SACU discussions with a view to advance industrialization and infrastructure development as well as identify mechanisms that can facilitate joint funding of projects in the context of the customs union. "Trade between the two countries is the cornerstone of the increased economic cooperation between the two countries as envisaged by the BNC agreement. Therefore, with the uncertain and rapidly changing international trade landscape, we need to reinforce our trade integration. "We need to explore more and eradicate non-tariff barriers to trade within the SACU, SADC and African Continental Free Trade Area to increase bilateral and intra-African trade to expand the market. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on economic cooperation during the BNC will be a significant step towards enhancing trade and economic

cooperation between the two countries and will pave the way to a complete free trade between us," Prime Minister Matekane said during the session. The commission noted that both countries are deeply concerned about the impact of the tariff measures announced by the United States of America (USA) on April 2, which shocked the markets across the world. Both countries are affected by the new tariffs on goods destined for US set at 30 percent rate for South Africa and 50 percent for Lesotho. Although currently put on hold for 90 days, the sweeping reciprocal tariff measures will affect several sectors of both countries, including agriculture, textile and industry with implications for job and growth. The reciprocal tariffs present seismic shift in global trade, with significant implications for the multilateral trading system (MTS) rules and the principles

that underpin the MTS such as special and differential treatment and the most favored nation treatment. As a result, the commission has called for countries to take a long-term view and safeguard the regional industrial capabilities and regional market which is more predictable and stable market. The commission further emphasized the need for regional partners to coordinate positions and ensure greater cohesion in the manner the countries respond to the US tariffs to safeguard the regional market and economy. It is also important for the region to be vigilant about the risk of trade diversion as many countries that are affected by the reciprocal tariffs will be looking for alternative markets. "As we think globally, we must act locally in earnest and urgency in order to build economic resilience, and withstand the forces of uncertainty in a fast changing global environment," Matekane added.



Business

Cannabis industry set to reach potential

expertise on certification of the products, capacity building and share expertise on the registration of the products, capacity building and share expertise on the registration of geographic indications which can unlock the development of value-chains and unlock access into the European Union (EU) market under the SADC-EU Economic Partnership Agreement.

"I wish to state that the NBC remains the critical platform and viable vehicle to further strengthen bilateral relations, and increase economic cooperation between the two countries.

We must all work to continue the momentum gained in the first session of the BNC and lead our peoples to a better life and shared prosperity," Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane said in his remarks during the deliberations.

South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, emphasized the need for partnership, particularly at the time of new global challenges. He said that working together, the two countries should identify opportunities for progress in this rapidly changing environment.

"Our countries are both endowed with mineral resources and we need to benefitiate these minerals locally. We should develop within our jurisdictions strategies for critical and rare minerals, which continue to attract global interest. At the same time, we must diversify the products we produce and the services we provide," Ramaphosa said.

Lesotho has become a leading producer of medical cannabis in Africa, and the industry is expected to continue to grow due to the country's rich cannabis culture and favorable climatic conditions for the product.

NEO SENOKO

MASERU - The cannabis industry in the country is set to reach new heights following a partnership agreement between Lesotho and neighbouring South Africa to promote the industry.

Lesotho, being the first country to license the cultivation, processing and export of medical cannabis in 2017, has this sector as one of its strategic sectors for agro-processing.

The sector has been producing cannabis mainly for export and has a potential for cross-border collaboration in investments. South Africa, on the other hand, is also a producer of cannabis and there is potential for cooperation to boost production of cosmetics and essential oils.

During the Bi-national Commission between the two countries last week, an agreement was reached that both should establish clear cooperation lines in a move to expand the product into other markets across the world.

The parties agreed to promote cooperation to enable trade, share





Fresh FIFA transfer ban for top 8 PSL club



The world's football governing body – FIFA – has added another player registration prohibition blanket in the direction of the PSL.

Royal AM have already suffocated under FIFA transfer bans since 2023 after losing their cases against Samir Nurkovic and Ricardo Nascimento.

Thwihli Thwahla have since been expunged from the league due to a catalogue of issues that have befallen the club.

Struggling Motsepe Foundation

Championship club Pretoria Callies have a three-window transfer ban, which came into effect in November last year.

The consequence of that ban was that they have not been able to make any reinforcements to their squad and now find themselves in the relegation zone.

Cape Town All Stars, whose professional status is now defunct, have had a ban classified under the 'until lifted' category since April 14, thus joining Royal Eagles, Witbank Spurs, and BTM Sports.

Now, the latest information from FIFA

is that TS Galaxy have been handed a third transfer ban.

This sanction will remain in place until it is lifted.

According to FIFA, this transfer ban came into effect on Tuesday, April 29.

This website is yet to gather full details of the matter at hand which has led to this ban on Galaxy – who have become regulars at the FIFA DC.

The Mpumalanga-based outfit recently lost a case against Ivorian striker Bernard Yao Kouassi and were forced to pay him

his dues.

Liberian midfielder Jegbay Morris Konneh has also taken his breach of contract and unfair dismissal case to FIFA.

Besides the latest ban which came into effect on Tuesday, Galaxy have another two three-window transfer bans which came into effect on December 9, 2024, and December 19, 2024.

As it stands, they run the risk of not being able to make new signings in the next transfer window should all these three cases not be solved by then.