

SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN LESOTHO: SECOND QUARTER 2000

BNP Annual Conference Disrupted by Fighting Between Youth League Factions

The Annual Conference of the **Basotho National Party (BNP)**, which was due to be held on 31 March and 1 April 2000, was disrupted by fighting between two rival Youth League factions, those supporting **Thesele 'Maseribane**, who has been suspended from the party, and those supporting the party leader, **Justin Metsing Lekhanya**.

As reported in *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 16 April 2000, disputes broke out during registration on the first day of the Conference at the BNP Centre. On the second day, the AME Hall, where the meeting was due to take place, was barricaded by the Thesele faction, who stood their ground even when police arrived. The Conference had to be abandoned.

BCP Newspaper *Makatolle* reappears

The newspaper of the Basutoland Congress Party, *Makatolle*, which last came out in December 1999, has made a fitful reappearance, but under sponsorship from the opposite faction of the party to that of Molapo Qhobela, which had previously been its publisher.

This has set the scene for a possible rerun of the early years of 1997, when the title *Makatolle* was used by weekly newspapers of both the then two factions of the BCP, the 'Majelathoko' and the 'Maporesha'. By mid-1997, this situation had resolved itself by the 'Majelathoko' faction of the party becoming the Lesotho Congress for Democracy and renaming its paper *Mololi*. However BCP fissiparity remained rife, with the remaining BCP subsequently splitting into factions led by Molapo Qhobela and Tšelisio Makhakhe. It is the latter group, called *Manyonyoba* by the Qhobela group, which has sponsored the revived newspaper.

The revived newspaper has a print run of 2000 copies, is printed at Mazenod (which thirty years ago could never have countenanced any association with a newspaper they then dubbed as communist), and by mid-April had produced two issues although not with a regular weekly appearance, and indeed this was followed by a gap of two months with no further issues. The *Manyonyoba* do not yet have an office yet in central Maseru. They function from a rented house at 597 Hillsvue to the south of Maseru.

The name *Manyonyoba* seems likely to become established, but is not complimentary to the Makhakhe group. The verb *nyonyoba* means to walk stealthily (like a cat), so the *Manyonyoba* are literally 'those that move in a stealthy manner'.

Lesotho's First Cybercafé Attracts Mainly Overseas Customers

Lesotho's first cybercafé ('internet café shop') was opened by Lesotho Office Equipment (Lesoff) in Maseru in 1999. According to an article by Thabo Motlamelle in the most recent issue of *Business Concerns* (the periodical of the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry), most of the cybercafé's customers are expatriates on short visits or persons from elsewhere in Africa on longer assignments. Basotho customers are, however, approximately 15% to 20% of the clientele, and the café has 100 e-mail boxes for local users. It has five computers and one printer.

Lesoff also has 2500 internet users connected to Lesotho Office Equipment as service provider. It is one of three such service providers in Lesotho (the others are Square One and the National University of Lesotho).

Former Minister of Finance Acquitted of Culpable Homicide

The former Minister of Finance and Planning, **Dr Leketekete Ketso**, was reported on 14 April by Radio Lesotho (and also in *Lentsoe la Basotho* of 20 April 2000) to have been acquitted of culpable

homicide by the Maseru magistrate. The case had arisen from a collision on Kingsway, Maseru, in the early hours of 4 July 1999 between a vehicle driven by Dr Ketso and another vehicle. The magistrate found that the Crown's case had significant weaknesses, and he also took into consideration that fact that the driver of the second vehicle was driving without a licence.

Ruling LCD Preserves its Unity

Persistent rumours of splits in the ruling **Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD)** came to nothing at its annual conference on 15 April, when amendments to the party constitution were shelved until after the next election. Amongst these amendments had been a proposal that the term of the LCD leader should be reduced from 5 to 2 years and that the age limits for membership of the Youth League should be restricted to the range 15 to 35 years. The latter proposal had been prompted by at least one person over 60 years having been on the Executive Committee of the LCD Youth League.

Like the BNP, however, the LCD is having trouble with its Youth League. As reported in *Moafrika* of 7 April, there had been trouble at a meeting on 2 April at the Cooperative Hall between two factions of the Youth League. The meeting was called to elect the constituency committee for the Stadium Area Constituency, but it ended up having to be abandoned.

Lesotho Highlands Revenue Fund becomes Lesotho Fund for Community Development

Revenues from the Lesotho Highlands Water Project were initially paid into a fund called the **Lesotho Highlands Revenue Fund (LHRF)**, and this was used to support a range of activities of which possibly the best known was *fato-fato* (from the Sesotho word *fata* 'to dig'), the labour intensive construction of village feeder roads and dams. The administration of these activities was fraught with difficulties because of the absence of appropriate local government structures which could be entrusted with the funds. The method adopted, providing the funds at constituency level for administration by Members of Parliament, also resulted in serious problems, including thefts from the MPs, accusations of unfair allocation of funds, and general headaches for the MPs who often did not have the necessary administrative skills and support structures.

The Government sought through a consultancy to restructure the LHRF, and after two years a new structure, the **Lesotho Fund for Community Development (LFCD)** has been set up under the auspices of the Ministry of Development Planning. 4½ pages of advertisements for posts to administer the LFCD appeared in newspapers early in April 2000. These posts include the Executive Director; Project Manager, 6 Project Coordinators and 2 Assistant Project Coordinators; Finance Manager, Accountant, Assistant Accountant and 6 Sub Accountants; Administration Manager; Public Relations Officer; 7 Secretaries and Senior Secretaries; 7 Drivers; and 6 Office Assistants. All the 41 posts are offered as three year contracts with a 38.5% gratuity at the end of the contract period. It is not clear under the new arrangements what proportion of the funds will be taken up by administration costs, but it will clearly be quite a high one.

The job descriptions of the Project Coordinators make it clear that the LFCD expects to work through project committees which will be accountable to Village Development Councils and communities. It has no doubt been unfortunate that the Community Councils envisaged by the *Local Government Act 1996* are still not in place and that the LFCD has been forced to make use of the obsolescent VDCs, which have had their lives extended as lame ducks beyond the three year period for which their members were elected. Government clearly intends Community Councils to play the major role in rural areas, but it has so far been too preoccupied by other things to get the necessary machinery in place to organize elections.

Police Murder Trial Runs in Parallel with Police Sedition Trial

While 31 police were still on trial (as they had been for well over two years) for High Treason, Sedition and Contravention of the Internal Security Act, a second trial began to run in parallel with effect from Monday 3 April, relating to an earlier event, the shoot-out at the Maseru Central Charge Office between two groups of police who were apparently at odds over a tear-gassing of demonstrating teachers in which some of their close relatives had suffered.

In the Maseru incident, three policemen died and three others were injured. Seven of the 31 police on trial for sedition have now been charged also with murder, more than four years after the original incident on 31 October 1995. The trial is before Mr Justice Gabriel Mofolo, but the prosecutor is the same person hired to act for the Crown in the police sedition trial, Advocate Roland Suhr. Amongst those accused in the murder trial is Second Lieutenant Phakiso Molise, who is also one of the main accused in the police sedition trial.

The sedition trial had by this time now finally ended, and judgment was due to be given on Friday 28 April. However those relatives and friends of the accused who went to the court to hear the judgment were disappointed. Justice Baptista Molai was still working on it. They were to be disappointed several times further, and at the end of the quarter on 30 June it was announced that the judgment had been postponed to 20 July.

Court Martial Continues

The Court Martial in which 37 soldiers are accused of mutiny continued throughout the second quarter of 2000, and seemed to be rivalling the police trial in its length, having now taken almost 18 months since it was first convened on 4 January 1999. The number of soldiers charged had now dropped by one, following the death of one of those held in custody.

By May 2000, a second Court Martial was being held in parallel to the first one. The Judge Advocate in the second trial is Timothy McNully, a retired judge from Durban, while Major Clifford Polisa is President of the Court Martial. Those standing trial are three soldiers who were arrested later than the others: Private Hosana Sako (whose long detention without trial since 3 February 1999 had been the subject of earlier litigation), Private Lechesa Mohapi and Corporal Tšeliso Seoka.

The Lesotho Constitution, §12(1) states that a person charged with a criminal offence shall be afforded a fair hearing 'within a reasonable time'. Under the Section of the Constitution dealing with Interpretation (§154(1)), 'reasonable' is not one of the words defined.

The second Court Martial has again brought to a head discontent about the discrepancy between the extremely high fees paid to South African attorneys working in Lesotho as compared to local lawyers. In the second court martial, according to *Mopheme* of 23 May 2000, the prosecution lawyers, François van Zyl and Craig Webster, are together 'believed to paid in the region of M230000 a month', while the three Basotho defence lawyers (who include Sekara Mafisa, who until recently headed the Independent Electoral Commission) receive only M350 per day.

Heinemann Opens Lesotho Office

The British publishers, Heinemann, on 7 April 2000, opened a Lesotho office. This brings to three the number of British-based publishers with offices in Maseru, Macmillan and Longman having been represented for a number of years. The lucrative publishing business in Lesotho is school textbooks, and Heinemann already have the *Lesotho Junior Secondary School Science* series amongst approved local textbooks. Heinemann's office is on the 5th floor of Christie House, a building which also houses the Longman office.

Lesotho Defeated in World Cup Qualifying Match

In its encounter with the South African national team, **Bafana Bafana**, the Lesotho team, **Likoena**, was defeated 2-0 before a capacity crowd (despite tickets priced at M30, instead of the more usual M5) at Setsoto Stadium, Maseru on Sunday 9 April. Likoena acquitted itself comparatively well in a match which was expected by many in South Africa to be a walk-over. In the return match, which was played in Bloemfontein on Sunday 23 April, Likoena was defeated 1-0, again depriving the South African team of a goal feast. Although Lesotho is now out of the World Cup, many considered that it would have progressed further had it not had the misfortune to be drawn against one of the strongest African teams in the qualifying round.

Meanwhile, as had also been the case for the past few months, much newspaper space was devoted to a power struggle within the **Lesotho Football Association** (LEFA) between its President, Thabo Makakole, and its Public Relations Officer, Mohau Whitehorse Thakaso. It appears that Thakaso exposed financial irregularities by members of the LEFA executive including Makakole, as a result of which he was suspended for two years for bringing LEFA into disrepute.

LEFA had other troubles too. The cellphone company, VCL, announced it was withdrawing its sponsorship of Likoena after its advertising banners had been taken down from the Setsoto Stadium in Maseru before the Bafana Bafana match. It appears that Bafana Bafana had given exclusive advertising rights to its supporters Transnet, Mercedes Benz and Castle Lager whose banners were put up in the stadium by Global TV in place of those of VCL.

Adults Benefit from Free Standard One Education

The police newspaper, *Leseli ka Sepolesa* of 6 April 2000 and the government newspaper, *Lentsoe la Basotho* of 13 April 2000 both carried reports, with different detail, about the **Zibandayo Catholic Primary School** in the Mjanyane valley. The school is situated some 8km by footpath due south of Moyeni in Quthing District, although by driveable track the distance is some 30km.

Zibandayo School is situated in a Xhosa-speaking area where school attendance and retention is hampered by the obstacle of schools being Sesotho medium, a language little used in everyday activities. This year the school has an enrolment of 390 taught by 5 teachers. Standard One enrolment had gone up from between 45 and 50 in the previous year to 158, of whom 35 are in fact parents of other children in the school, taking advantage of the fact that for the first time for many years Standard One education is free. There are three Standard One classes this year, one for pupils between 6 and 14; one for pupils between 14 and 21; and one for pupils between 21 and 52.

The oldest pupil, Mrs Nofexile Makhetha aged 52 expressed her joy at being able to go to Zibandayo School. She had been deprived of primary education because of her parents' poverty, and throughout her adult life had been embarrassed by having to take any letter from her husband or family to someone else in the village to be read to her. Now at last she had the opportunity to learn to read.

Constitutional Crisis Continues

The problem of implementing the recommendations of the Interim Political Authority continued to dominate the political scene in Lesotho. The *Fourth Amendment to the Constitution Bill* which incorporated the IPA recommendations *amended* by Parliament had a rough ride in Senate, and the amendments were rejected. Moreover, the Government's increase in the budget for forthcoming elections by M122 million got severe criticism by members of the ruling party in the National Assembly itself. The Leader of the House, who is also Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Sefhiri Motanyane (as quoted in *The Mirror* of 14 April 2000) stated that the IPA had requested more than six times as much money to run the elections as had occurred last time and this was too much. At the same time the IPA itself had failed to meet its 18 months deadline.

Meanwhile a two-person team appointed by the Commonwealth Secretariat and SADC undertook in early April a mission to report on a realistic timetable for the next election. The two persons were the Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, **Dr Kwadwo Afari-Gyan**, and **Professor Jorgen Elklit** of Aarhus University in Denmark (representing SADC). The report was made available to the Commonwealth Secretariat, the SADC ‘extended troika’ (Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe), to the IPA and to the Lesotho Government. The new Independent Electoral Commission had not been appointed at the time of their visit, but they were able to talk to IEC staff.

‘People’s Parliament’ Tackles IPA

A new body the **People’s Parliament** (*Paramente ea Sechaba* in Sesotho) in April challenged the Interim Political Authority.

The People’s Parliament (PP) seems to have held a first formal meeting in the Maseru Sun Cabanas on 9 March 2000, when it was addressed by Father T. Manyeli of the National University of Lesotho on the theme of ‘What is the cause of the rampant division in political parties ... and what is its solution?’ According to the report in *The Mirror* of 31 March 2000, amongst those present at the meeting was the suspended youth leader of the BNP, Thesele Maseribane. Amongst recommendations read at the parliament was that aged party leaders should make way for young blood.

A subsequent ‘convocation’ of the PP was held at Sefika Hall on 4 April 2000 at which a ‘petition’ was prepared for the IPA, signed by Seabata Masienyane, Conference Chairman, and Thabo Qhesi, Conference Secretary. This severely criticised the IPA *inter alia* for not preparing for and delivering general elections; for not pronouncing itself on the Commission of Inquiry into the 1998 Political Disturbances; and for keeping its plenary and working committees closed to journalists. Amongst decisions of the PP were that the current government should be dissolved in favour of a government of national unity; that all arrested in the 1998 political turmoil should be released; and that the Commission of Inquiry on the 1998 events should be ‘dismissed’ with immediate effect.

High Levels of Lead in Maseru Water Supply Confirmed

Earlier reports that the Maseru drinking water supply was seriously contaminated with lead were confirmed in a statement issued by the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) printed in many of the national papers in mid-April. It was announced that ‘the **indicative results** from the raw water samples are beyond the maximum permissible limits of the World Health Organization **guidelines**, while the samples from the treated water are above the **objective limits**; but below the **maximum permissible limits** of the drinking water **standards**’. The announcement states that WASA is implementing additional measures in the water treatment process in order to reduce the amount of lead in the treated water. Implications or risks for industries in Maseru which are dependent on safe water supplies, such as the Maluti Mountain Brewery and Marotholi Beverages, were not spelled out.

Journalists seem not to have known how to react to the announcement, and some newspapers simply printed it in their newspapers without comment. The newspaper *Mopheme*, however, in its 11 April issue, quoted a WHO standard of 0.01 mg of lead per litre of water (0.01 parts per million). Maseru water sampled at the National University of Lesotho had indicated a concentration 60% as high as this at 0.006 parts per million. Various symptoms of plumbism or lead poisoning were described.

The ordinary member of the public was left uncertain as to whether the inhabitants of the capital city might be suffering from lead poisoning *en masse* or whether there was only a minor risk. Chronic lead poisoning, resulting from small amounts of lead being taken into the body over a long time may

not cause physical effects but can cause mental impairment, particularly in children¹. Sources of lead poisoning other than the water supply include use of leaded petrol (the only kind normally available in Lesotho, but banned altogether in some countries); lead-based house paints (which when sandblasted release lead dust particles into the atmosphere); and the burning of discarded car battery casings (likely to occur at the main dump at Ha Tšosane, which is frequently set alight). Soil-lead concentration is particularly hazardous to children who play on the soils of polluted inner cities, particularly bare soils near busy roads². Although rumours were circulating about the contamination caused by the blowing up of military debris at the Makoanyane Barracks, lead pollution of Maseru's water sources (possibly by old car batteries) is known to have been occurring for a long time, although not much seems to have been done about it. Mpooa³ reported in 1989 that 0.6 parts per million had been found in the Sebaboleng Dam (which overflows into the Maqalika Dam, the main Maseru reservoir). He compared this with a quoted WHO recommended *maximum* allowable concentration of 0.1 parts per million. There seems to have been at the time no action taken as a result of his findings.

It seems however, that on this occasion the problem was likely to be tackled on a larger scale, although effective solutions might prove to be expensive. For the drinking water supply, the long term but costly project to provide a new water supply dam for Maseru (on the Phuthiatsana river at Metolong Ha Makotoko) would certainly improve the present situation.

Compensation for Damages Suffered in the 1998 Riots

As reported in *Moafrika* of 14 April 2000, the Lesotho Government has announced the amounts of compensation being paid to ministers, parliamentarians and others who suffered damage during the September 1998 unrest. These had been arrived at after expert estimates had been made of the damage suffered. At the head of the list was Dr W. M. Phooko, who received M582000, followed by Dr L. V. Ketso, then the Minister of Finance, who received M571 189. These were followed by Tom Thabane, then Foreign Minister (M450610); Thabiso Melato MP (M455000); Kelebone Maope, Deputy Prime Minister (M354331), and 13 others including the Prime Minister, himself, who received M147921.

¹ *British Medical Association complete family health encyclopaedia*, 2nd ed. (1995), p. 629.

² H. W. Mielke, 'Lead in the inner cities', *American Scientist*, vol. 87, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 1999), pp. 62-73.

³ M. Mpooa, 'Water pollution'. In: *The application of science and technology for the development of Lesotho* (1989), pp. 43-59.

Cycle Race from Maseru to Mohale

What was apparently the first formal cycle race to be held in Lesotho took place on Saturday 15 April. Approximately 50 cyclists competed over a route to Mohale along the newly reconstructed Mountain Road in a 80km race sponsored by four Lesotho businesses. The race was won by the South African, Michael Lange in a time of 2:48:40.

Membership of new IEC Formally Announced

Rumours about the membership of the new **Independent Electoral Commission** had been reported in the press as long ago as 28 January 2000 by the newspaper *Moafrika*.

The names were publicly announced on 15 April 2000, and two out of the three were the same as those which had been given by *Moafrika* nearly three months earlier.

Heading the Commission is **Abel Leshele Thoahlane** (56), who has been a diplomat and was also a Minister of Finance during the period of Military Rule. Amongst his many work experiences are as a postal clerk (1965-7), a bookkeeper in the Treasury (1967-71), Third Secretary in the Lesotho High Commission in Nairobi (1971-73), and Labour Commissioner in Johannesburg (1973-5). He returned to studies in the period 1975-80 obtaining both a Diploma in Labour Studies from Ruskin College, Oxford and qualifying as a lawyer in Britain. Subsequently he worked as Labour Commissioner, Lesotho's Ambassador to the EEC, Lesotho's Ambassador to the USA, Principal Secretary for Finance and Minister of Finance (1991-3), after which he worked for the African Building Capacity Foundation.

Also on the Commission is **Mokhele Rantsie Likate** (48), a former Registrar of the National University of Lesotho, who holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Los Angeles. He is currently in business as Chairman and Director of Moradi Stone Crushers near Morija.

The third member is a new name, not tipped in the earlier *Moafrika* article. He is **Mafole Sematlane** (46), a science graduate whose varied career has included teaching, the police force, being a management consultant, and also being a football coach.

The new members were sworn in by Chief Justice Julius Lebona Kheola on Thursday 20 April 2000.

The elections should have been held by May 2000 but according to a statement by the Deputy Prime Minister, Kelebone Maope, as quoted in *Lentsoe la Basotho* of 4 May 2000, expert advice has been that they should be held in March 2001.

Container Shops Increasingly Part of the Lesotho Urban Scene

By late 1999, many of the commercial properties in Maseru burnt during the 1998 riots had been demolished and the sites flattened. Since capital and confidence to rebuild on more than a few of them is lacking, it has provided an opportunity for small enterprises to flourish in place of the larger ones. Many of these were housed in 'container shops', lockable standard size containers of the kind used for road, rail, and sea transport. These containers have no services and little shelter for customers being served, but seem likely to become a semi-permanent feature of the Maseru shopping scene. They have for example occupied the road frontage on Kingsway of the vast flattened area which had once been the Sanlam Centre. Goods for sale range from clothes to ready-cooked food. It is a minor mystery how so much food is on offer on the streets of Maseru from enterprises which seem to have no access to a water supply, so that minimum standards of hygiene must be difficult to maintain.

Even outside Maseru, container shops have come into being. At Roma, on the National University of Lesotho campus, the Pius XII College House in late 1999 rented part of its frontage to 'Hlalele's Container Shop'. The site is on the walking route between the student hostels and the main university teaching area and does a flourishing trade in soft drinks, fresh bread and other foodstuffs.

James Motlatsi Steps Down from the Presidency of the NUM

One of the best known Basotho in South Africa, **James Motlatsi**, stepped down from the presidency of the **National Union of Mineworkers** in April 2000. Motlatsi, who comes from Mohale's Hoek, is a popular veteran trade unionist who was one of the founders of the NUM in 1982, and had consistently fought for the rights of the 250 000 members of the union. In a statesmanlike speech, Motlatsi said that his departure would pave the way for a new leader with fresh ideas. He also emphasized the need for high productivity which should result in higher wages and higher tax returns for the South African government which would thereby have resources for development and delivery of services.

Thieves Kill Watchman for Soccer Outfit

As reported in *Southern Star* of 28 April, thieves broke into the Ntloanatšoana High School at Khanyane in Leribe District on the night of Saturday 22 April 2000. They killed the night watchman and stole the school soccer team's outfit. Police have failed to make any arrest.

BNP Leader Fails to Comply with Court Order

The leader of the Basotho National Party, **Major-General Justin Metsing Lekhanya**, has had an action filed against him by Lesotho Bank for contempt of court. This was reported in a new Maseru newspaper, *Age*, in its issue of 28 April 2000. The action follows Lekhanya's borrowing M341 727.12 to buy two vehicles and only repaying M5 206.50, less than 2% of the sum borrowed. The High Court Order issued on 8 April 1997 had required Lekhanya to surrender the two vehicles in default of payment and he had not done so.

Lesotho Bank's serious financial problems apparently derive in part from a series of similar unpaid loans made to important persons in Lesotho. The consequent losses have hit the poorest customers of Lesotho Bank hard. The Bank raised the minimum deposit required to keep a savings account open to M500 some months back. This forced many to close their accounts, because they could not afford to tie up such a sum of money. It is well known that Ladybrand banks require only a R50 minimum deposit in a savings account. Although some Maseru residents have taken advantage of this, the additional cost and inconvenience of travelling to Ladybrand is beyond the means of most Basotho.

14 Vehicles in Single Accident at Maseru

What is believed to have been the biggest multiple collision in Lesotho occurred on Saturday 29 April near the Thabong Traffic Circle (now in the process of reconstruction as a result of the widening of the road through Lekhaloaneng). The brakes of a Lesotho Freight Service Bus bound for Semonkong failed on the down slope and it hit 13 other vehicles which concertinaed into each other. There was considerable damage but fortunately no serious injuries.

Bishop and Primary School Headmistress Defy Court Orders

A long running dispute between Jehovah's Witnesses and school authorities came to a climax in April 2000. The background is provided in an article in *The Mirror* of 1 May 2000. Children of Jehovah's Witnesses attending both Lesotho Evangelical Church and Roman Catholic Primary Schools had been expelled from their schools in 1998 for not participating in certain activities including prayers. The matter was decided by the High Court in favour of the Jehovah's Witnesses, taking into consideration §13(3) of the Constitution that '... no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if that

instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own'. The churches pursued the matter to the Court of Appeal, which dismissed the appeal.

Subsequent to this the churches readmitted the pupils except for the Catholic Church which failed to comply with the court order to readmit the pupil Khotsofalang to the Most Holy Redeemer Primary School at Qacha's Nek. As a result of this, Evaristus Bitsoane, Bishop of Qacha's Nek, and Mrs 'Mathabang Moorosi, Headmistress of the Most Holy Redeemer School were ordered by the High Court to appear on 27 April 2000 to show cause, if any, as to why they should not be committed to prison for contempt of court. They also failed to comply with this order. There were no reports in the press as to what happened as a result of this further contempt of court.

University Academic Reprimanded by Wife after Star Stinkhorn Found at Roma

A **Star Stinkhorn**, *Aseroë rubra*, was found growing in thick grass close to pines on the Roma campus of the National University of Lesotho on 4 May 2000. This is an extraordinary fungus with a membranous white sac, at the top of which are blackish slimy pores. However, its most striking feature is the radiating red arms forking into pairs so as to resemble the claws of a crab, there being six pairs in the case of the specimen found at the campus. Apparently flies settle on the slimy mass in the centre (which smells like rotten fish) and distribute the spores by taking them away on their feet.

The person who found the fungus, David Ambrose, had been collecting fungi throughout the wet summer, and over 80 species had been identified on the campus. He normally took them home for identification by his botanist wife, Sumitra Talukdar. However, on this occasion he did not recognise the significance of the find, and should have left the fungus to be photographed *in situ*.

The Star Stinkhorn is so rare in southern Africa, that when Averil Bottomley published her survey of the Gasteromycetes for the National Botanical Institute in South Africa in 1948, there had only been one recorded specimen in the region (from near Cape Town), and she thought that even this one might have been a misidentification, it being quite extraordinary that no others had ever been found. As it happens, others did turn up in Natal in 1957 and at Swellendam in the Western Cape in 1958, and more recently on wood shavings in a tree nursery near Johannesburg. However it remains a rare and exciting find, and the Star Stinkhorn had never before been recorded for Lesotho. Attempts to find another specimen growing at Roma were fruitless despite a careful search of the favoured spots. All that is left of the collected specimen are a few withered red claws in a box.

Phomolong Flats Finally Demolished

The three-storey **Phomolong Flats**, a complex situated in Maseru on United Nations Road (former Lagden Road) facing the Maseru Club sports field, was finally demolished early in May.

The flats had been constructed in the late 1970s, but without sufficient care given to meeting necessary building specifications. By the mid-1990s, they had been condemned as unsafe and had been evacuated, but had subsequently stood for several years as a modern ruin.

Paray Hospital Suffers Grievous Loss in Road Accident

A vehicle returning to Paray Hospital at Thaba-Tseka on the night of Friday 5 May was involved in an accident near the Thaba-Bosiu turn off at Ha Makhalanyane. The accident took the life of the religious sister who was the hospital accountant. She had been in Maseru on a computer course and had taken all the hospital records with her to incorporate into the new computerised system. Unfortunately, the computer and the records were stolen from the wreck of the vehicle, a further serious loss to the hospital.

Well-Known Hotel Manager Leaves Lesotho

The manager of the Lesotho Sun Hotel, **Rahman Murtuza**, who hails from Mauritius, left after 21 years in Lesotho in May 2000. Rahman Murtuza had originally come to the Maseru Holiday Inn as a chef in 1979, and had been successively promoted to Food and Beverage Manager and General Manager at the same hotel (later known as the Maseru Sun), before moving ‘up the hill’ to the Lesotho Sun. A familiar sight at formal occasions, he ensured a high standard of food preparation at Lesotho’s two best known hotels, and he was also often to be seen when his hotel secured contracts for catering elsewhere, whether at a wedding, graduation ceremony or funeral. Rahman Murtuza leaves Lesotho to become Operations Manager of Grandwest Casino and Entertainment World in Cape Town.

10 May Stayaway Only Partially Observed

A call through anonymous leaflets for a stayaway, because elections had not been held within 18 months of the agreement to set up the Interim Political Authority, was only partially observed on Wednesday 10 May. A number of shops were closed as a precautionary measure by owners fearful of a repeat of the riots of September 1998. Most customers also stayed away. However, a press release several days earlier from the leaders of the Setlamo Democratic Alliance (a grouping which included the main opposition parties) had made it clear that they were not in favour of the stayaway. The press release was signed by J. M. Lekhanya of the BNP, Molapo Qhobela of the BCP, V. Malebo of the MFP, T. Litšoane of the LEP, M. Tyhali of the LLP, C. D. Mofeli of the UDP and A. M. Sekautu of the UP. The UP (United Party) is apparently a new party on the scene and is not represented on the Interim Political Authority.

The stayaway called for had originally been supposed to last until 16 May, but by Thursday 11 May, Maseru and other centres were back to normal.

Because the anonymous leaflets had been written in intemperate and racist tones and had amongst other things urged Basotho to burn farms across the border, the South African Defence Force had mobilised troops along the border, and for a few days there were roadblocks and searches of vehicles both in Lesotho and in South Africa.

Attempts by the press to discover which group was behind the pamphlets were in general not successful. However, *Radio Moafrika* (as quoted by *Public Eye* of 12 May 2000) carried an interview with one ‘Lelimo’ who claimed that the stayaway had been organized by elements from the youth leagues of the three main parties in the Setlamo Democratic Alliance, the BNP, BCP and MFP. ‘Lelimo’, which means ‘cannibal’ in Sesotho, is also an acronym said to be derived from the Lesotho Liberation Movement, the group without identifiable leaders said to be behind the leaflets and the stayaway call.

Government announced that on 10 May, all civil servants should be working as normal. This was not entirely possible, because many minibus taxis were not running. The Prime Minister himself used the occasion to open the rebuilt **Basotho Hat** tourist shop and adjoining thatched restaurant on Wednesday 10 May. The new buildings, costing M5.2 million, replace those which were burnt during the riots of September 1998.

One sequel to the ‘stayaway’ was that the editor of *Mohahlaula*, Pofane Afrika Molungoa was arrested and appeared in court on 15 May, charged under the Internal Security Act with forcing the manager of Maseru’s biggest shop, Shoprite Chequers (formerly OK Bazaars) to close his shop on 10 May. Molungoa, a staunch supporter of the BCP, was released on bail of M200, and the case is continuing.

Death of L. L. B. Monyako

The death was announced in May of **L. L. B. Monyako**, who had been a reporter for the newspaper *Moeletsi oa Basotho* for nearly half a century. Rather curiously the newspaper itself reported little except the fact of his death (even that without a date) and a photograph. Slightly more detail, but without dates, was contributed by his daughter in the issue of 11 June.

Monyako was known as ‘LLB’ from his initials, and sometimes as ‘*Li sa tla*’ (‘to be continued’) words which appeared in lieu of a signature at the bottom of his many contributions to *Moeletsi* under the heading *Ba re’ng batho?* (‘What are people saying?’). He apparently joined the Mazenod Institute, publishers of *Moeletsi*, in the 1940s, and was for a long time the newspaper’s parliamentary and court reporter. Amongst his many articles is an account *Ho hola ha Motse oa Maseru* (‘The growth of Maseru Town’) which appeared in *Moeletsi* of 7 May 1951, one of the few accounts of past Maseru by a Mosotho. It provides a verbal description of a tour around Maseru, which was then sharply divided into black and white areas. It was used (with translation) in the book by David Ambrose, *Maseru: an illustrated history* (1993).

Death of Alan Hutcheon, Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at NUL

A resident of Lesotho for 34 years, and a member of the university teaching staff from 1966 to 1988, **Alan Hutcheon**, a Canadian national, died in Bloemfontein on 12 May 2000 at the age of 81. Although one of a family of eight children, he remained single throughout his life.

While most expatriate staff leave Lesotho on retirement, and their accumulated savings therefore mainly benefits other countries, Alan Hutcheon devised an ingenious method to remain in Lesotho. The land law prevents purchase of property by expatriates, but Alan Hutcheon entered into agreement with the Superior of the Pius XII College House in Roma and built his house on their land, which is enclosed by the University Campus at Roma.

In his retirement, Alan Hutcheon devoted himself to promoting renewable energy devices such as biogas generators and solar cookers. He also almost single-handedly ran the Thusanang organization at the National University of Lesotho, which at the time of his death was paying school fees for large numbers of primary school children and was also providing monthly food parcels to 103 indigent persons. These parcels were delivered in a 26-year old vehicle, kept alive eventually by the substitution of many ingenious home-made parts. His activities also included the building of solar-efficient houses for poor villagers. Amongst innovations which he employed in their construction was the use of discarded beer and soft drink cans, which were bound into bundles and placed in the space between ceiling and roof. Although a teetotaler, Alan Hutcheon was not above frequenting the sites of parties the following morning to pick up cans for his building projects.

In his personal life, Alan Hutcheon was both a vegetarian and a pacifist, but he did not lack pugnacity in argument and is remembered by many as having been a formidable consumer of time in meetings, particularly when others had contrary views. Throughout his life, he was devoutly religious, but had no time for ritual. Although close to the Society of Friends, he never formally joined, feeling that the Society today was at variance with the teachings of the founder, George Fox. His position might have been described as that of a Quaker Fundamentalist.

He also practised extreme asceticism, believing in the efficacy of fasting and prayer to solve problems. When he collapsed he was found to be suffering from malnutrition, a consequence of repeated fasting to solve a particularly intractable problem. He was in fact apparently eating far less than he was providing in the monthly food parcels for needy villagers.

Alan Hutcheon disapproved of elaborate funerals and was determined that the disposal of his own earthly remains should set an example. He was therefore cremated without ceremony, as he had requested, immediately after his death. A memorial meeting was held at the National University of Lesotho on Tuesday 23 May.

Five Basotho Die in Mine Accident

Seven miners died (five from Lesotho and two from Mozambique) when what appears to have been a methane gas explosion occurred at the Anglo Gold Beatrix Mine in Welkom in the Free State Goldfields on Monday 15 May. Two of those who died were from Mafeteng District and the others from Butha-Buthe, Mokhotlong and Quthing Districts.

Lesotho Prime Minister Supports Zimbabwe's President Mugabe

A speech by Lesotho's Prime Minister, **Pakalitha Mosisili**, in support of President **Robert Mugabe's** approach to land reform in Zimbabwe, was quoted by the newspaper *Public Eye* on 26 May 2000. The speech was made in Harare on Monday 22 May as the Lesotho Prime Minister arrived for a visit which was stated both to enable Mosisili to obtain a briefing on the land question and the forthcoming Zimbabwean elections and also to have the purpose of strengthening relations between ZANU(PF), Mugabe's party, and Mosisili's LCD. Mosisili wished President Mugabe and ZANU(PF) success in the forthcoming elections, scheduled for 24-25 June. President Mugabe, in reply expressed his thanks for the support he was receiving from his neighbours, especially SADC members.

Former Head of Government Remanded on Bail

According to a report in *Age* of 26 May 2000, **Major-General Phisoana Ramaema**, was remanded on bail during May to appear in court on 10 July 2000 on charges that he and six others killed an Irish national, Patrick Kennedy, on 22 June 1999 at Florida, Maseru, and robbed him of his motor vehicle and cellphone. Three of the others charged were remanded in custody, while two others, the son and daughter-in-law of Ramaema, Sechaba and Kekeletso Ramaema were still being sought by the police, both locally and internationally.

Major-General Ramaema had been the Head of Lesotho's Military Government from 1991 to 1993. It was not immediately clear what relationship the case had to another incident in 1999. On that occasion another Irish national, 75-year old **Ken Hickey**, had been stabbed to death and his vehicle stolen as he returned to his home close to Hoohlo Primary School (very close to Florida) on Thursday 21 January 1999. It had then been reported that shortly after Ken Hickey's death, his vehicle was discovered at Ha Mabote at the residence of Major-General Phisoana Ramaema, who had then been arrested and charged with murder and armed robbery along with seven other suspects, who included his son, Sechaba, and daughter-in-law. It had even then been recalled by many that Ramaema's son had long been suspected of being implicated in car theft during the period of Military Government, but had escaped arrest because of his father's privileged position.

BCP Representation on IPA Changes Once Again

Dr Khauhelo Raditapole, who was representing the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) in the Interim Political Authority was replaced by Mr Sekoala Toloane, who was sworn in on 30 May 2000. This was the third time that she had lost her seat on the IPA as a result of divisions within the BCP. On the first occasion she had been replaced by Lebenya Chakela and on the second time by Sekoala Toloane who had now again taken her seat.

Architectural Firms Invited to Compete for Design of Lesotho National Museum

An advertisement was placed in newspapers during May inviting architectural firms in the SADC region to enter a competition for the design of the proposed **Lesotho National Museum**, which was to

be situated on the site of two former colonial houses along United Nations Road (the former Lagden Road) facing northwards just before the bend in the road beyond the Maseru Club.

The Lesotho National Museum has had a long and chequered history. Funds for its erection were raised at Independence, and a building was eventually constructed on one of the two hills which give Maseru its name (the other hill has the statue of King Moshoeshoe I). However, this museum, an attractive hexagonal design by the architect Peter Hancock, was pulled down to give way to a government office complex, and no replacement building was provided. Sites were later allocated for the museum close to the Palace (this site was lost to the Lesotho Dairy Board) and on the old Agricultural Show Grounds (this site was lost to the National Convention Centre). Museum buildings had been designed for at least one of these later sites with the help of UNESCO architectural expertise.

A sum of M1 million allocated for the Museum appeared in the 1999/2000 Fiscal Year Estimates, but had been apparently unspent. It appears however that there were now serious plans to use it. The Lesotho National Museum has had a Director and other staff for over 20 years, but they have not much to occupy themselves with, other than to represent the Lesotho National Museum at conferences overseas.

Lesotho is believed to be one of only three African countries without a national museum. The other countries are Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

National Convention Centre Seeks Staff

Meanwhile, the massive building which had occupied the most recent National Museum site, the **National Convention Centre**, had been standing unused for the past two years for over 95% of the time. An attempt to privatise it had failed, and it seems that the only significant uses to which it had been put were to play host to a signing ceremony and also to play host to the annual conference of the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy. There were strong rumours that during the long period in which it had stood empty, much of the electronic equipment of the NCC had been stolen.

That there was an attempt to make more use of the NCC became apparent when advertisements appeared in June 2000 newspapers for a Senior Technical Officer, Exhibition & Stage Manager, Information & Productions Manager and a number of Technical Officer and Technician posts, the various staff appointed to undergo technical training for a minimum period of six months. This presumably means that there is no likelihood of the National Convention Centre becoming fully operational until a date in 2001. Even then, it seems rather unlikely that there are enough large events to keep it busy for more than a fraction of the time, the two international hotels in Maseru already having underutilised convention facilities even though they have the added advantage of a fully developed catering service on site.

The government ministry advertising for these additional staff (an exceptional increase in establishment at a time of austerity) is the Ministry of Tourism, Sports & Culture. This is the same Ministry which is responsible for the National Museum, a project which had appeared in repeated national development plans since Independence, whereas the National Cultural Centre had been only recently discovered as a national need. Indeed the public had only first become aware of it when signs appeared in Chinese and English on the site which had previously been dedicated to the National Museum and National Archives. The contract to build the NCC had been given to the Chinese State Construction Company and it had been financed with a loan from China.

Russian Plane Remains Grounded at Moshoeshoe I

Moeletsi oa Basotho, whose editorial offices are at Mazenod, close to the Moshoeshoe I International Airport, often covers stories about the airport. On 28 May 2000, it followed up earlier stories, with a further report on the Antonov 12 cargo aircraft, registration RA 11916, which seemed to have become a permanent feature of the airport scene. Indeed it had become a nuisance, occupying a part of the apron near the terminal, and it had had to be towed to a more appropriate and distant spot to make room for other aircraft during the Royal Wedding, one of the rare occasions when the airport had been busy. The leading story was headlined *Mok'hoba o teng Lesotho*, 'There is a *mok'hoba* in Lesotho', *mok'hoba* being an item hidden to test the finding skill of an apprentice traditional doctor. In this case it seems what was hidden was to test the skills of a newspaper reporter appointed to find out why it was there.

Moeletsi covered the story in detail, and essentially it seemed that the plane belonged to 'Emorlino' Air Line of Russia, and had been leased to Central Air Cargo to transport goods out of South Africa for international organisations providing aid to countries such as Mozambique. Subsequently it had apparently been used for transporting arms to countries in Africa where there was rebel activity. This latter activity had brought Air Cargo into conflict with the South African authorities and the aircraft had been seized at Lanseria Airport. When it had finally been released it had been expected to fly northwards to a further contract relating to the Democratic Republic of Congo. A flight plan had been filed for Harare, Zimbabwe as a staging post, but apparently the aircraft abandoned the flight plan and came to Lesotho, where it was given permission to land by someone who no longer works for Lesotho's Department of Civil Aviation. Currently it is grounded pending a Lesotho High Court case, the details of which were not given by *Moeletsi*.

SADC Troops Finally Leave Lesotho

Botswana and South African troops had entered Lesotho on 22 September 1998 under what was known as **Operation Boleas** to restore order and to support the democratically elected government. After the main military targets had been accomplished, Operation Boleas was succeeded by **Operation Maluti**, designed to train and restructure the Lesotho Defence Force. Troops from Zimbabwe as well as Botswana and South Africa participated in Operation Maluti.

The final departure of troops from these three SADC countries took place at the end of May 2000, and was announced in a speech by the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili to Parliament on Thursday 25 May 2000.

Serious Brain Drain of Doctors from Lesotho

At the Annual General Meeting of the **Lesotho Medical Association** on 27 May 2000, the President, Dr Makase Nyaphisi, stated that 95% of Basotho doctors who had been trained in the Republic of South Africa in the previous 15 years had remained there and did not come back to Lesotho. Amongst other concerns of the LMA at the meeting were HIV/AIDS and abortion, which remains illegal in Lesotho.

Lesotho Bank Restructuring Hits Customers

Lesotho Bank, now known as **Lesotho Bank (1999)**, was throughout May involved in 'implementing changes in its operational systems'. This led to closure of its branches and automatic teller machines (ATMs) for days at a time, culminating in its requiring all of its customers to report individually to receive new bank account numbers and new ATM cards over the weekend of 3 to 5 June. Long queues of customers formed, even on the Sunday, and indeed for more than two weeks afterwards, so that they could continue to use their bank accounts. There was considerable dissatisfaction, because it had been less than two years earlier that there had been a similar exercise when bank account numbers and ATM cards had also been changed.

The new Lesotho Bank account numbers have 13 digits, just like the old ones, but all begin with the same 01400 sequence of digits as Standard Bank accounts (Standard Bank now has a 70% share in Lesotho Bank). No satisfactory reason has yet been given why 13 digits are needed for bank accounts in Lesotho when countries with a more developed banking system manage with far less digits.

As of June, new cheque books were not available, and the new numbers had to be written by hand. Even at the main Standard Bank branch, which had changed customer numbers two years earlier, cheque books with the new numbers were not available. This was resulting in considerable inefficiency in the automatic processing system, and was putting customers' commercial relations with South Africa in jeopardy because businesses there were reluctant to accept cheques with handwritten account numbers.

Death of Ganie Surtie

Ganie Tayob Surtie, often known as 'GT', died in hospital in Bloemfontein on 31 May 2000.

Ganie Surtie's father, Tayob Surtie had come to Butha-Buthe from Pietermaritzburg as a trader as long ago as 1896. He had been born in Gujarat, India. After a divorce from his first wife Ishah who returned to Pietermaritzburg, he married a Mosotho, and Ganie, one of a large family from the second wife, was born at Pitsi's Nek, Leribe District in 1922.

Ganie Surtie was educated at the Madressa School at Soofia Mosque, Butha-Buthe, at the Hindu Tamil Institute in Durban and at Lovedale College in the Eastern Cape. When his father died in 1940 he had to interrupt his studies to take over the family business at Pitsi's Nek. He later owned stores at Hlotse and Ha Senekane where his business prospered until it was destroyed in the riots of 1991.

Apart from being active in business, GT was well known for his involvement in both politics and Moslem affairs. His interest in politics had begun at Lovedale, and for a number of years in the late 1960s, he was Treasurer of the ruling Basotho National Party. From 1944, GT was General Secretary of the Basuto Mohammedan Society (later known as the Lesotho Muslim Congregation), which looked after the affairs of what was then Lesotho's only mosque at Butha-Buthe. He was also Secretary of the Basutoland Indian Committee, which was more concerned with political matters as they affected the Lesotho Indian community.

After the destruction of his business in the 1991 riots which targeted particularly Indian and Chinese traders, Ganie Surtie retired to Ficksburg in South Africa. He leaves a wife, Raheema, whom he married in 1948; three daughters, Feroza (public relations officer of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in Australia), Fazila (a lawyer in Cape Town), and Fawzia (widow of the well-known Maseru Italian businessman 'Pino' Florio); and two sons, Faizel (a medical doctor, in Canada) and Rafiq (a medical doctor, in Aliwal North).

Alleged Killers of Deputy Prime Minister Baholo Arrested and Charged

According to a report in *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 4 June 2000, a total of 18 soldiers have now been charged with the murder of the Deputy Prime Minister, Selometsi Baholo on 14 April 1994. When he was murdered he was Minister of Finance, and the Government had recently refused a demand by soldiers for a massive pay increase.

The 18 soldiers had apparently been arrested in three batches between 27 May and 2 September 1999, although this seems to have escaped media attention. They are now out on bail of M1000 each and amongst the bail conditions they have to report at Ratjomose Barracks every weekday morning.

International Companies Accused in Bribery Scandal

A court case with major international ramifications opened in Maseru before Justice Peter Cullinan on 6 June. In the case, some 15 international companies and consortia as well as three individuals (one French and two South African nationals) are facing charges that they paid bribes to the former Chief Executive of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, Mr Masupha Sole, who is also charged with fraud and perjury. If found guilty the firms face being blacklisted by the World Bank, so that they would be unable to operate in any future projects with World Bank funding.

Commission of Inquiry into the 1998 Political Disturbances Resumes Hearings

The three South African judges who head the Commission of Inquiry into the 1998 disturbances resumed hearings on 7 June after a five week adjournment. This was despite the fact that the original announcement had stated that should submit their report before the end of May.

At the resumed hearings, to which the press was invited, and which were also broadcast live over Radio Lesotho, several senior government figures gave evidence including the Deputy Prime Minister, Kelebone Maope, who is also Minister of Finance; the Foreign Minister, Tom Thabane; and the Minister of Law & Constitutional Affairs, Shakhane Mokhehle. Also giving evidence was Meshu Mokitimi, Political Adviser to the Prime Minister.

Evidence was given on the events leading up to the SADC intervention, and at times these were critical of the role played by the King and by certain priests of the Catholic Church.

Shakhane Mokhehle, as reported in *The Mirror*, in particular spoke about the King's role in the 1994 coup, which had led to his own sudden kidnapping by soldiers, when as Minister of Trade & Industry he was in the middle of a meeting with his Principal Secretary. Maope, as reported in *Mopheme* of 13 June particularly claimed that 'King Letsie III was the one who commanded the Palace protest staged by the three main opposition parties'. Moreover on one occasion a speech which had been drafted with help from the Government Secretary to be read by the King to the protesters had never been read.

Evidence given by Brigadier Sebajoe, as reported in *Mopheme* of 20 June, implicated a

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16 Die in Multiple Minibus Taxi Accident in Mafeteng District

A total of 16 people died and a number of others were seriously injured in the evening of Saturday 10 June near Ha Ramokoatsi, 14 km from Mafeteng on the main road from Maseru. The accident occurred when a minibus taxi travelling towards Mafeteng overtook another vehicle and hit a van coming from the other direction head on. A second taxi travelling in the same direction towards Mafeteng then ploughed into the wreckage. Most of those who died were members of the Universal Church of Christ who were returning to their homes in Mafeteng from church services in Berea.

Lesotho National Soccer Team Beats Zambia in COSAFA Cup

In a match decided by penalty shootouts Lesotho's soccer team, Likoena beat Zambia by 3 goals to 1 in the quarter final match of the COSAFA Castle Cup, played at Setsoto Stadium on Sunday 11 June. The cup is contested by national teams from southern African countries, and Lesotho was nearly knocked out of the competition in the first round when it was beaten 2-1 by Zimbabwe. It qualified for the next round only by being the best losers in the first round.

Lesotho has now been drawn to meet Angola in the semi-finals of the cup, likely to be played at Setsoto Stadium, Maseru. If they win against Angola, they will meet either Zimbabwe or South Africa in the final.

Basotho Pony Project Robbed

As reported in *Mohahlaula* of 14 June 2000, the Basotho Pony Project at Ha Chalalisa near Molimo-Nthuse was robbed of a large amount of equipment including 15 saddles on 11 June. The thieves had escaped in their vehicle in the early afternoon and the police had made no arrests.

***Moafrika* Editor loses Lawsuit and has Assets Seized**

The editor of *Moafrika*, **Candi Ramainoane**, had equipment seized from the *Moafrika* office by the court sheriff on Thursday 15 June after he lost his a libel case and M90000 damages were awarded by the High Court to the Member of Parliament for Nokong, Moeketsi Sello. By the time the sheriff came to attach movable goods, the sum required had risen as a result of costs to M139288.

The case had arisen from an article published in the 13 September 1996 issue of *Moafrika* in the form of a letter to the editor from a person who signed himself with the pseudonym 'Oa Mohlakeng' ('from the reed swamp'). The letter in fact did little other than summarise scurrilous detail about Shakhane Mokhehle and Moeketsi Sello during the BCP's exile in Botswana, this detail being derived from volume 3 of the book by Bernard Leeman, *Lesotho and the struggle for Azania* (1985). Leeman had at one time apparently worked for the BCP in exile, but later became disillusioned and wrote a candid account of the various party personalities including their perceived character defects. According to Leeman (p. 81) as quoted by the *Moafrika* writer, Shakhane Mokhehle and Moeketsi Sello had been involved in illegal diamond dealing in Gaborone early in 1980 and had had to bribe (*fuparisa*) the Botswana police to escape prosecution. It was this passage particularly which seems to have persuaded Moeketsi Sello to take legal action. Candi Ramainoane's defence that what was published had been derived from the Leeman book was not accepted by Justice Mahapela Lehohla. He was apparently at

fault for not having independently verified the detail, something which in practice would have been virtually impossible.

Following the seizure of equipment, *Moafrika* missed its regular issue on 23 June. However, a week later it was back in business again.

Privatisation Results in Sales to Foreign Companies but Few Basotho Investors

As reported in *The Mirror* of 21 June 2000, the Privatisation Unit had been assisting Lesotho Bank to divest itself of a variety of shareholdings which it had had outside the banking field. These had included the car hire firm, Avis Lesotho; the travel agency, American Express; the motor sales and service firm, National Motors (long ceased operating); Loti Brick; and the insurance broker, Minet Kingsway. Most recently 31% of the 51% shareholding of the old Lesotho Bank in Minet Kingsway had been sold to Aon Risk Services of the UK, making its 49% holding up to 80%. The remaining 20% is being held for Basotho shareholders.

However, the Director of the Privatisation Unit, Mr Mothusi Mashologu reported that despite past invitations to Basotho to participate as shareholders, there had been no significant response. Indeed there had been no response at all from local citizens to buy the reserved shares after the recent Lesotho Flour Mills privatisation. Instead there had been local people who ‘will stand on roof-tops to denounce the very foreign investment which brings jobs and generates economic growth in this country’.

Senior Police Officers Die

Superintendent Rampai Mosoeu, who was the policeman in charge of investigations into the murder of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Selometsi Baholo, died of natural causes on 3 July 2000. It had only been in recent months that investigations had been undertaken at all diligently to find those responsible for Baholo’s death, which had occurred as long ago as 14 April 1994. At the time of Mosoeu’s death 18 soldiers had been charged with the crime and had been released on bail pending a court hearing.

A second senior policeman, according to a report in *Mohahlaula* of 4 July, died in hospital after shooting himself at his house in Old Europa in the early hours of 23 June 2000. He was Superintendent Monane, Head of the Counter Crime Unit (CCU)

Driver Dies and Minister of Labour and Employment Injured in Car Accident

In a serious accident at Lekokoaneng (date not recorded by the report in *Moeletsi oa Basotho* of 2 July 2000), the driver of the Minister of Labour and Employment died and the Minister and his security guard were seriously injured. The Minister was transferred to hospital in Bloemfontein while the security guard was left to be treated at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru. This occasioned *Moeletsi* to quote from George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (long a set book in Lesotho high schools) that ‘all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others’ (*liphoofole tsohle lia lekana, empa tse ling lia sekisetsoa*).

Tourist Board Restructured

The **Lesotho Tourist Board** has for many years been under criticism for having more staff than there are tourists in Lesotho at any given time. The lack of tourists has of course been influenced by the perceived security situation in Lesotho, which has often discouraged visitors, even though safety in Lesotho is at most times not significantly different from that in South Africa.

The Tourist Board for a long time occupied offices on the top floor of Christie House, where few tourists were likely to go, and in the past two years it has occupied the heavily fortified building near Parliament which was built to house the Ministry of Defence. The Tourist Board did not publish an accessible annual report, so that its activities are not fully available for scrutiny. Its public image was through the Lesotho National Tourist Office, situated on Kingsway near the base of the Hotel Victoria

tower, where a variety of pamphlets were available. Items often required by tourists, such as guide books and survey maps of Lesotho, were however not available, the LNTO having never implemented an accounting system which allowed items to be sold over the counter.

In June 2000, the LTB was dissolved and most of its staff retrenched or redeployed. Some 10 staff were retained by the Ministry of Tourism, Sports & Culture for a transitional period, it being envisaged that a new **Lesotho Tourist Development Corporation** would come into being to replace the old Board. However, there was to be an interim period because a policy document on which the legislation creating the new LTDC would be based was still to be drawn up. This was being undertaken with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme.

For some reason, changes in the Tourist Board were not the subject of press comment. However, the new posts for the National Convention Centre (advertised widely in the newspapers) would seem possibly to have been created from savings on LTB posts.

Police Give Statistics of Motor Vehicle Thefts

An article in *Mopheme* of 27 June provides background to a bill being discussed by Parliament to increase penalties for convicted car thieves. Police statistics are quoted which show that the Maseru urban area suffered 86 stolen vehicles from January to April 2000. This is more than the rest of the country (including the Maseru rural area) put together in which only 67 vehicle thefts were recorded for the same period. No thefts at all were recorded for Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong Districts and only one vehicle theft in Qacha's Nek District.

***Selemela* Dies in Infancy; *Seinoli* is Born**

The weekly sports newspaper, *Selemela*, disappeared from the scene after just seven issues at the beginning of April. Another newspaper, *Seinoli*, ('the kingfisher') appeared in June 2000. Printed as an illustrated 20-page A4 monthly publication on blue paper, it offers reports in Sesotho on *lipapali le boithabiso* (sport and recreation), covering football, tae-kwondo, athletics, softball, volleyball, darts, tennis and HIV/AIDS.

Publication of Central Bank of Lesotho Annual Report for 1999

The annual report of the **Central Bank of Lesotho** for 1999 became available at the end of June 2000, although it is dated 31 March 2000. Unlike most government departments and parastatals its accounts are audited on a calendar year basis.

Amongst matters noted in the report are that Lesotho had ratified the SADC Trade Protocol in 1999. This paved the way for the implementation of the protocol in 2000. 85% of intra-SADC trade was expected to be at zero tariff by 2008 and all trade by 2012. There had been much less progress in another area, the renegotiation of the Southern African Customs Union agreement.

There had been a sharp decline in 1998 in Gross Domestic Product (-5.0%) and Gross National Product per capita (-8.3%) as a result of the riots. These had been followed in 1999 with a 0.2% rise in GDP (but a negative change if calculated *per capita*) and a 4.4% decline in GNP.

The average number of Basotho mineworkers employed had fallen from 80445 in 1998 to 68 827 in 1999, a 14.4% decline (10 years earlier in 1989 it had been 126733). However, their average earnings had risen by 12.6% (ahead of inflation by some 5%) from M24678 in 1998 to M27785 in 1999.

In a section of the report summarising the main economic and financial developments, most major economic indicators were noted as on a deteriorating trend. '... the Lesotho economy did not fare very well during 1999, although a slight growth was recorded.'

[updated to 30 June 2000]