

**SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN LESOTHO**  
**Volume 12, Number 1 (First Quarter 2005)**

**First Woman Commissioner of Police Appointed**

For the first time, Lesotho's police force is headed by a woman police officer. The new Commissioner of Police is **'Malejaka Evelyn Letoane**, and she took up duties with effect from 1 January 2005.

There were no women police in the colonial period. The first small group of women police were trained in 1970 by Pat Roach, formerly of Hampshire Constabulary in Britain, who at the time was the wife of Lesotho's Commissioner of Police. The *Lesotho Mounted Police Service annual report 2002/2003* (the most recent available) does not give clear statistics showing what proportion of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service is now women. However, of the senior officers, those who get coloured portraits in the annual report's frontispiece, 4 out of 22 are women. A recent (2004) MA dissertation at the National University of Lesotho by Konosoang Masupha analysing directives given by senior female police officers found that 28 out of 118 senior police officers are women, but was unable to discover the total strength of the police force from the Records Division. She estimated it to be about 2000.

The new Commissioner of Police, who is from Leribe District, joined the Lesotho Mounted Police in 1977 winning the prize as the best recruit of her year. She is well qualified academically having obtained a BA (Law) from the National University of Lesotho and an LLB from the University of Natal - Pietermaritzburg. She became an Assistant Commissioner of Police in 1999 and Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police in 2004. She is herself married to a policeman, and they have one child.

The former Acting Commissioner of Police, **Tšokolo Koro**, has now been appointed to a new post as Inspector of Police. He will head a newly created Police Inspectorate designed to improve the public image and performance of the police.

**Journalist Rankolopane Letšoara Retires**

**Rankolopane Letšoara**, a veteran journalist, retired at the end of December 2004. His last job had been to edit *Litsoakotleng*, the newspaper of the Christian Council of Lesotho.

Letšoara was born in Hobhouse in the Free State on Lesotho's western border. He completed high school in Bloemfontein and subsequently enrolled to study law in South Africa, but his studies were interrupted when he left South Africa to join the African National Congress in Botswana.

He finally relocated to Lesotho in 1979 and worked for the newspaper *Moeletsi oa Basotho* rising to become Assistant Editor under the then editor, Father François Mairot. In 1984 he was recruited to the Lesotho News Agency and received formal training in journalism. He acquired a reputation as a versatile reporter, able to report on any subject. In 1988 he received a trophy from the International Olympic Committee for being the best sports reporter in Lesotho for that year.

**Bleak New Year for Many Factory Workers**

As had long been predicted the ending of the Multifibre Agreement on 1 January 2005, coupled with the declining value of the dollar against the loti, was likely to have a serious impact on the Lesotho textile industry. Five factories closed in December with a loss of 5 350 jobs, the biggest losses being at T. W. Garments which employed 2 000 workers and Lesotho Haps which employed 1 300 workers. These closures followed closure of two factories earlier in 2004 when 1 500 jobs had been lost. Some 17 other factories had retrenched workers, and at a press conference on 14 January 2005, the Minister of Trade & Industry, Mpho Malie, announced that in all more than 12 000 textile and clothing workers

had lost their jobs since June 2004. Apart from the losses to workers, Government itself was losing some M17 million per month in revenue as a result of the closures and job losses. Although the impact of the ending of the Multifibre Agreement was being blamed by some for the factory closures, it seems that the main immediate reason had simply been a cashflow problem. The loti/dollar exchange rate was to blame. It was now at about \$1 = M5.80 whereas in December 2001 it had been at the far more profitable level for exports of about \$1 = M12.00.

In a response to the crisis, a high level US-sponsored delegation of 10 persons was formed led by the Minister of Trade & Industry, and including both the US Ambassador to Lesotho, Mrs June Carter Perry and also the Ambassador of Lesotho to the USA, Ms Molelekeng Rapolaki. Significantly, it also included Macaefa Billy leader of the Factory Workers Union (FAWU). It left Lesotho on 29 January to lobby US congressmen so that the entry of Asian giants into the clothing industry would not jeopardize Lesotho's exports. On the return of the mission, the Minister of Trade & Industry gave a press conference on 10 February at which he made a number of points. These included that buyers were satisfied with the cost of Lesotho clothing, but because fashion was not static, there was a dire need for Basotho to show innovation skills. Levi Strauss had promised to increase the number of jeans bought from Lesotho from the 600 000 units in 2004 to 2.4 million units. However, there were time frame problems, buyers mentioning that while it takes 28 days for clothes to reach North America from Durban, they could be obtained from China in 14 days. Moreover, Lesotho also lost time on orders because of the time lag in getting materials which were not produced locally. The Minister urged local factories, instead of dealing with the giant retailers in the USA, to explore potential business opportunities with smaller companies, those with some 100 to 200 retail outlets instead of many thousands.

Relevant to the textile sector was a five-person Indian clothing and textile delegation which visited Lesotho in February. As reported in *Public Eye* of 11 March 2005, it found that inadequate technical skills prevented productivity and hindered quality management in the production of garments and textiles. Concern was expressed about the lack of synergy between the Lerotholi Polytechnic and the textile industry. It was also found that there was a lack of entrepreneurship at top management level. The mission from India had been given a number of terms of reference, including to advise and assist Lesotho in respect of the skills required to establish a fabric knitting mill together with a fabric dyeing and finishing operation in the country.

### **Lesotho Bank and Standard Bank introduce Maestro Card**

A long felt need was met from the beginning of January. Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) cards issued by Lesotho Bank and Standard Bank (which are effectively now a single banking system within Lesotho) could only be used on their own ATMs, and were useless for withdrawing money from ATMs in South Africa. Conversely, people with ATM cards from outside Lesotho, including many migrant workers, could only withdraw money from a single dedicated ATM at Standard Bank in Maseru.

The situation has now been rectified, and Lesotho Bank and Standard Bank customers can now obtain Maestro cards, which not only work on Lesotho ATMs but also in South Africa and indeed overseas. The new cards, however, come at a price. Withdrawals from local ATMs cost M2.25 time, but in South Africa, they cost M15.80 a time from a Standard Bank ATM, and M21.50 at any other bank's Maestro or Cirrus ATM.

### **Libya to Help Redevelop the Sanlam Shopping Centre Site**

As reported in *Lesotho Today*, the Libyan Foreign Minister, Mr Abdulrahman Mohamed Shalgum, visited Lesotho on 5 January 2005. His visit was in accordance with strengthened ties between Lesotho and Libya, Lesotho having had diplomatic representation in Tripoli since 2001, following which Libya

established diplomatic representation in Maseru.

The ties have resulted in economic assistance. Libya has already donated 15 tractors to Lesotho. The site of the former Sanlam Shopping Centre complex has remained empty apart from a few 'container' shops since it was destroyed in the unrest in September 1998. Libya has now promised to build a new shopping complex on the site. The Libyan government has also offered to help equip the Air Wing of the Lesotho Defence Force with additional helicopters.

### **Phakiso Molise back behind Bars**

Second Lieutenant Phakiso Molise, the policeman who led the police mutiny in February 1997, had fled to South Africa, been captured and in 2000 sentenced to 15 years in prison. However, he had escaped from custody in August 2003. In January 2005 he was, however, again in gaol, having been apprehended in South Africa and handed over to the Lesotho authorities.

### **King Appeals for Prayers for Rain; Devastating Rains Ensurue**

According to *Moafrika* of 14 January 2005, **King Letsie III** had appealed for the Churches of Lesotho to pray for rain on the three consecutive Sundays of 16, 23 and 30 January 2005. This was apparently a response to the fact that although December rains had been good, the first ten days of January had been extremely hot and dry in the Lowlands.

However, even before the first day of prayer, very heavy rains fell in the Maloti, and four people were drowned when their vehicle was swept away by the Sehonghong river on 4 January 2005.

On 17 January, the day after the churches' first Sunday appeal for rain, the tarred road between Maseru and Teyateyaneng was washed away at Ha Souru between the Palace Hotel and Lekokoaneng after a violent storm. It was no minor washaway. The tarred road was breached by a gap five metres deep and several metres wide. Traffic on the main north road had to be diverted onto a much longer gravel road. So severe had been the damage that the principal engineer of the Department of Roads, Mr Ralph Makafane, as quoted in *Lesotho Today* of 27 January 2005, estimated that the repair would cost between M600 000 and M1 million, and that the work would take some two to three months. In the event, it seems that financial constraints within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport prevented repairs being undertaken until after the end of the financial year. Travellers to TY were resigning themselves to having to wait at least until the end of April before the road could be reopened.

The road to TY was not the only place where damage was done on 17 January. Heavy rain in Maseru brought rocks tumbling down onto the inner relief road, Mpilo Boulevard, which is cut into the steep side of a hill. Some vehicles were damaged and the road was temporarily closed.

Severe thunderstorms continued throughout the month. According to *Moafrika* of 5 February 2005, a schoolgirl was killed by lightning at Mantšonyane Ha Letuka on 27 January; two women were killed by lightning at 'Mahuu near Rothe in Maseru District on 28 January; and two men and a dog who had sheltered under a tree were killed by lightning at Peka on 31 January. The Mohokare river which flows past Maseru was full and it was reported that as many as four corpses had been seen floating in its floodwaters.

### **Patient Murdered at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital**

A serious lapse of police and prison vigilance occurred on Monday 10 January 2005. As reported by *Public Eye* of 14 January 2005, a gunman masquerading as a hospital visitor shot dead a patient at Maseru's main Queen Elizabeth II Hospital. The incident was a sequel to a feud in Thaba-Tseka where the patient had already been shot and stabbed by the same gunman on 26 December 2004. The patient had survived, but had been transferred to the Maseru Hospital for treatment. Meanwhile the assailant

had been arrested on 28 December, but had subsequently escaped from the Thaba-Tseka prison. Police had not reported that he was again at large, and as a result no special precautions were taken. Having escaped from prison, the assailant pursued his adversary to Maseru where he killed him in the hospital.

It is understood that a person suspected to have been the murderer later gave himself up to the Thaba-Tseka police.

### **Ombudsman's Report on Queen Elizabeth II Hospital Reveals Horrific Conditions**

A report by the Ombudsman, Sekara Mafisa, on Maseru's main hospital, Queen Elizabeth II Hospital became available to the press and public early in January and resulted in much newspaper comment. The report was dated 21 December 2004, although the inspection had apparently taken place in March 2004. There was no explanation for its late release, other perhaps than that the Ombudsman has no formal publishing unit to report his findings.

The report gives a horrific account of the situation at the hospital: 'The basic equipment is just not there.... often times it runs out of drugs and suppliers are not prepared to assist on account of the poor record of the Ministry in settling bills. Almost every section is under-staffed and the current professional personnel is overworked, demoralized, frustrated and demotivated. The buildings are in an indescribable state of disrepair and the general surroundings portray a picture of some place other than a referral health institution situated in the heart of the capital city and entrusted with the provision of a sound health service.'

The report goes on to describe in detail the Pharmacy (drug shortages); Adolescent Health Clinic (only one nurse); Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinic (positions for doctors vacant and just one nurse); and Casualty Section (insufficient nurses and beds, overcrowded, with no working patients' toilet and central heating out of order).

In the X-ray Department, it was found that there was no working X-ray. A new machine had been lying on the floor waiting for installation for two years, but the suppliers would not install it because previous bills had not been settled.

In relation to the Operating Theatre, three out of four sterilizers were broken, suction units were not functioning, and while there were items of new equipment, they had not been brought into use because staff had not been trained to use them. There were just two gynaecologists, one Nigerian and one Chinese, and the former was overworked because the latter worked strictly only from 8 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

There are separate reports on the ten wards visited, and serious deficiencies were found in all of them, almost the only positive point mentioned being patients' entertainment, because there was a TV set in each ward. Overcrowding and staffing were the general situation with only one nurse per shift instead of two, and an even worse situation at night because a single nurse had to look after two wards. In the Maternity Ward, there was a shortage of beds and linen, and the resuscitator had been out of order for 4 years. The operating theatre in the ward was closed because of lack of staff. It is stated about the mortuary that the 'building and equipment need a complete demolition and replacement'.

Recommendations are made in no uncertain terms relating to the supply of equipment, adequate staffing and management. It is recommended that the long standing proposal for a new referral hospital be speeded up. 'In a democratic society like Lesotho, a Minister is individually accountable for the administration of the Ministry he/she is entrusted with.... If he does not rise to the occasion he will undoubtedly be judged as having betrayed the trust that the public has entrusted in him.'

There was no indication of any response to the report from the Minister of Health, Dr Motloheloa Phooko. In an interview in October in response to a similarly critical report of the Ombudsman on district hospitals he had stated that the Ministry worked under severe financial constraints. On shortages of staff, he had admitted that nurses were leaving Lesotho for better

conditions elsewhere. Moreover, while it was possible to recruit Cuban doctors who would work on local salaries, foreign nurses could not be attracted in the same way.

### Health Sector in Crisis

On the same page of *Public Eye* of 14 January 2005 which reported on the Ombudsman's report on the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, there was an advertisement headed 'Medical Positions Available in the United Kingdom'. It was from a recruiting agency seeking amongst others general nurses, theatre nurses and geriatric care nurses. 'We offer assistance with registration, obtaining of work permit, organizing of flights, sourcing of accommodation, meet & greet at airport, and continuous support once in UK'.

According to the BBC programme Newshour on 15 March 2005, there are altogether 12 500 doctors and 16 000 nurses from Africa working in the United Kingdom, a situation described by the British Medical Association as 'immoral'. The same programme mentioned that some 2 000 doctors from South Africa are working in the UK and 4 000 are working in Canada. Although not mentioned by the programme it is known that while some Basotho nurses and doctors work in the U. K., far more have moved to South Africa. In fact the vacancies left by many South African doctors and nurses who have moved to U. K. have been filled by Basotho doctors and nurses.

Although precise statistics are not available, informed sources estimate that out of some 300 Basotho doctors trained over the past half century, some 50 have either retired or died. Of the remaining 250, there are only about 15 working directly for the Ministry of Health in Lesotho. Of these, despite Queen Elizabeth II Hospital having an establishment of 42 posts for medical officers, less than 10 are Basotho. Just one or two Basotho doctors work in each of the government hospitals in Hlotse, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek, despite each hospital needing at least four doctors to be fully staffed. In the other district hospitals at Butha-Buthe, Teyateyaneng, Moyeni, Qacha's Nek and Mokhotlong there are no Basotho doctors at all. The balance of some 70 posts has in recent years been made up mainly by some 15 Chinese doctors sent as technical aid, and since about four years ago, a group of 45 Cuban doctors, whose passages and salaries were paid for by the Lesotho Government. Both groups have serious language problems which often means assigning scarce nursing staff to act as translators. Few of the foreign doctors stay long, creating problems of continuity. The last of the Cuban doctors left in August 2004, but a newly recruited batch of 22 Cuban doctors arrived in March 2005.

Apart from Basotho doctors in government service, there are those who are in private practice in Lesotho. A head count suggests that there are some 16 such doctors in Maseru, and either one or two in each of the other district headquarters (and also Maputsoe), the one exception being Thaba-Tseka. The total number of Basotho doctors in private practice is approximately 30 doctors in all. The eight mission hospitals also require from 2 to 4 doctors each, but at the present time there is just one Mosotho working in a mission hospital (at Scott Hospital in Morija). The balance of staff in mission hospitals is mainly made up of Nigerian or Congolese doctors who often work a few months in Lesotho while they apply for more lucrative positions in South Africa. There are also in the mission hospitals some devoted staff who stay much longer, either provided by church organizations or subsidized by foreign governments, such as Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland, although the numbers of such doctors has diminished in recent years.

Simple arithmetic leads to the conclusion that there are some 205 Basotho doctors somewhere else other than Lesotho. A few (probably less than 20 in total) are working in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. The remaining 185 or so are working in South Africa. Thus, **over 80% of Basotho qualified doctors have left Lesotho, and some 75% of Basotho qualified doctors are working in South Africa.**

The situation in the nursing profession is no better. Because of the scourge of AIDS, never has there been a greater need for nurses, but the reality is that also never have there been so many vacant

positions, particularly for experienced nurses and nurse practitioners. Thus many rural clinics are without qualified nursing staff. It is estimated that **over 70% of qualified Basotho nurses are working outside Lesotho**. Some work in countries such as the United Kingdom and United States, countries for which recruiting agencies advertise in local newspapers, but the majority of nurses working outside Lesotho are working in South Africa.

Thus although the Minister of Health is taking much flak from the Ombudsman and the press for the deplorable conditions which have developed in Lesotho's health services, it can be seen that he does not have any simple solutions to some of his problems. Certainly the deplorable financial management of government health services needs to be addressed, but the **unavailability of adequate numbers of qualified staff is a national emergency**. What might be done?

It has become evident for some time that the brain drain from Lesotho is the modern form of migrant labour. It cannot be stopped, as long as other countries are wealthier and have more resources to pay professional medical staff. The only appropriate strategy is to train very many more staff, and to try to get the beneficiary countries to contribute to this training. If South Africa has taken 185 doctors trained at Lesotho's expense, then it should offer to train a further 185 at its own expense, or indeed rather more, because it would be doing so with the full knowledge that many of these additional trained doctors would be likely also to work in South Africa.

Finding enough students qualified to enter medical school would be another problem. The National University of Lesotho and the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) have in recent years between them done very little to ensure that students are registered for courses leading to employment opportunities. This has led to large numbers of students registering in subjects such as Law (several hundred per year) and Urban & Regional Planning (an annual output comparable to *all* the available posts); while key areas such as Science Education and pre-medical science subjects probably amount to only 10% of the manpower needs. Students qualified to take science often take other subjects because they regard science as too difficult and with a high failure rate. However, if the NMDS is to really do its job, it should tie the majority of its loan bursaries to areas of manpower need, and if there are insufficient entrants, then it should support the University's Institute of Extra-Mural Studies so that it reorients itself into a College of Further Education bridging school and university, for those who need it, with an extra year enabling them to enter science at the university. Clearly NUL and NMDS between them can help to address the problem, although given the length of medical training, even immediate action is unlikely to have much impact until some 8 years time. The total length of time can be shortened, however, by reverting to the practice of the past when the University negotiated with medical schools so that students could transfer directly after two years and thereby save two years of government money and at the same time add two years to their working lives.

Potential nurses are a rather different problem. Between 200 and 300 new students have enrolled annually in the Faculty of Law at NUL in recent years, and many of these have the entrance qualifications for Colleges of Nursing. The number of places in Colleges of Nursing needs to be doubled or perhaps even quadrupled. However, this requires careful planning. Nurse educators in many cases have left to work overseas (one of the most experienced Nurse Educators at the Roma College of Nursing for example has gone to work in the UK), and the Colleges of Nursing, while in many cases maintaining high standards, have real problems if they are attached to hospitals short of doctors. For example, many hospitals are equipped with operating theatres, but they have no surgeons. Thus student nurses can hardly gain experience with post-operative patients. To expand the Colleges of Nursing (the majority of which are attached to mission hospitals) would require a massive injection of capital and additional human resources. The beneficiary countries who are now employing Lesotho nurses ought to be approached and shamed into providing such resources.

The United Kingdom which is closing its High Commission in Lesotho and thereby saving a relatively paltry sum might be found, if the calculations are done, to be actually a net recipient of aid

from Lesotho. Not only are some highly qualified Lesotho nurses and nurse educators working there, but a significant part of the large number of South African doctors and nurses employed in UK have been replaced in their home country at Lesotho's expense, so that Lesotho is indirectly supporting the British health services with a significant proportion of its some hundreds of expensively trained personnel working in South Africa. The UK is not the only guilty party. Even more South African doctors work in Canada. Many of those have also been replaced by Lesotho medical personnel.

HIV/AIDS is a disaster to Lesotho so terrible that almost every family has already had the experience of one or more of its younger members dying a painful and lingering death, leaving behind orphans, some of whom die similarly, whilst others have to be cared for by grandparents often without financial resources. Between 30% and 40% of persons between the ages of 20 and 50 are now believed to be infected. Never before have qualified medical personnel been so essential to help control the pandemic and to organize the antiretrovirals so that 300 000 people who are otherwise terminally ill might be persuaded that their condition is in fact a manageable disease and that with appropriate treatment they can live virtually normal lives. Out of the 300 000 who are infected, those receiving antiretrovirals are still only a few hundred. The other 299 000 will die. When the British Medical Association recently described the movement of medical personnel from Africa to UK as 'immoral', this may have seemed a strong denunciation. In fact it is relatively mild considering the enormity of the injustice and consequent human suffering that the wealthy countries are meting out upon poorer countries.

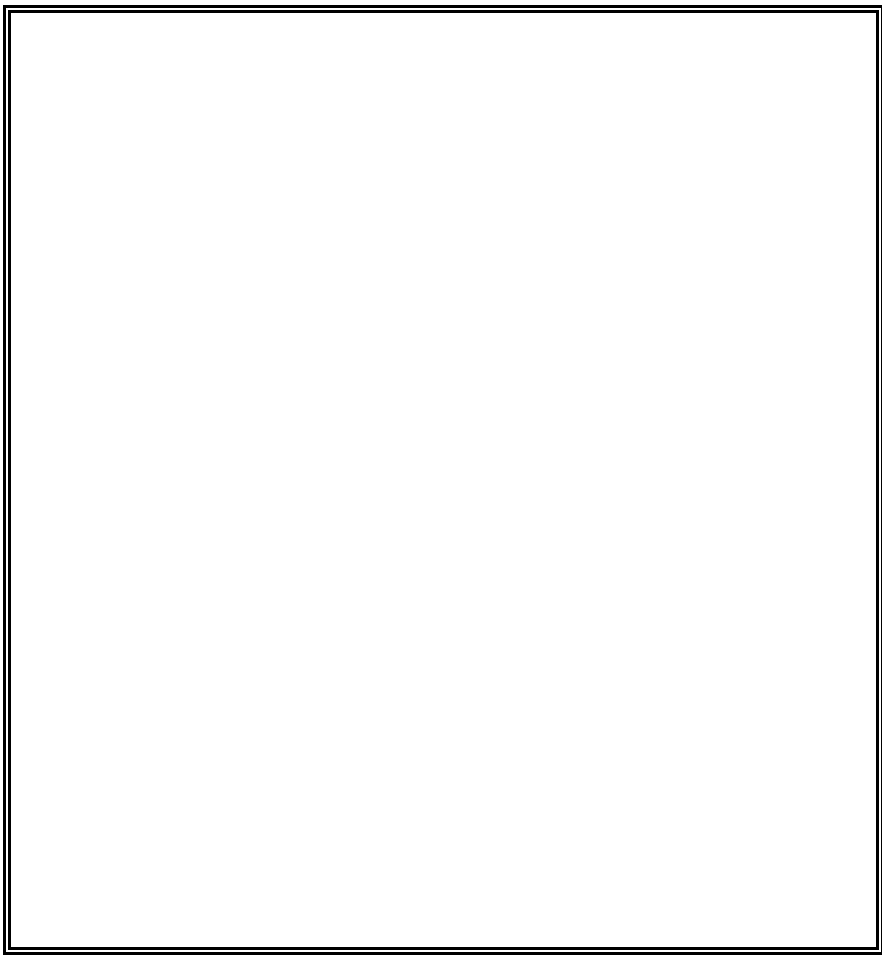
### **Kao Mine Proposals Discussed at Stakeholders' Workshop**

The proposal to establish a major mine at Kao has proceeded to the point where a massive 3-volume Environmental Impact Statement was submitted in December 2004 to the National Environment Secretariat as an application for the required Environmental Impact Assessment Licence. Although the *Environment Act 2001* is not yet operational, environmental licensing under Section 29(2) of the Act has become an understood procedural route to government approval for a major project of this kind. The Environmental Impact Statement was presented to a widely representative Stakeholders' Workshop on Tuesday 18 January 2005.

The applicant for the Environmental Licence is Seriousview Trading whose directors are Chief David Masupha Seeiso and Mr Gerhard A. Potgieter. Together with Orbit Trading (Pty) Ltd, it falls under the holding company Lesotho Diamonds Mauritius Ltd, Orbit Trading having secured a Lesotho Government undertaking that it will obtain a lease for the remaining area of the Kao Pipe, currently leased to Tumo Tlelai. The whole Kao mining operation will then be combined under Seriousview (which is currently applying to change its name to Kao Diamond Mine (Pty) Ltd). The holding company Lesotho Diamonds Mauritius in turn falls under the Gibraltar-registered Lesotho Diamond Corporation plc, which is the ultimate holding company.

Kao is located in a remote part of Butha-Buthe District, but is accessible from Lejone on the tarred road to Katse Dam by a 30 km gravel track, the upgrading of which will be necessary to establish the mine. Electricity will also have to be drawn from the grid at Lejone.

Kao Mine, situated at 2550 metres above sea level, will extract ore from a large kimberlite pipe as shown on the map, creating during the estimated lifetime of the mine an open pit or 'big hole' some 500 metres deep and about 800 metres across. Kimberlite, the ore which bears diamonds, will be brought from the pit by huge trucks carrying the ore up a spiral ramp system to the processing plant located on the north-east of the hole. In order to gain access to the kimberlite, which is situated within a funnel of roughly cylindrical to conical shape, even more of the surrounding basalt rock will have to be removed. This rock will be used to start a tailings facility dam in the adjoining Mabunyaneng valley to the south-east of the processing facility.



The development, as proposed, envisages a 1400 tons per hour processing plant, where kimberlite will be subjected to primary, secondary and tertiary crushing, using a wet process from which fine tailings (less than 2 mm diameter) will be pumped as a slurry to the upstream side of the tailings facility, while diamond bearing gravel will go to the Dense Media Separation (DMS) plant for concentration. From there, coarse tailings up to 15 mm size will be transported by conveyors to coarse tailings sites on the wall of the tailings facility, while the rest will be passed to the diamond recovery plant for final recovery and sorting, the last stage of which uses X-ray and, to ensure the necessary security, glove box sorting. The mining operation is planned to continue 24-hours a day, 7 days a week for 25 years.

Development of the plant is envisaged in three stages, with Stage 3 being reached after some 3 years by which time the production rate will be some 9 million tons of kimberlite a year, providing direct employment to some 402 persons, although a larger number will be employed in the construction phase. Over a 25-year project life, the estimated revenue from the Kao Diamond Project is M28.5 billion, of which operating and capital costs will be about M14.3 billion (both figures at current prices).

Provision is made for a Rehabilitation Fund, funded by setting aside 70s per ton of kimberlite mined, and to be administered by the National Environment Secretariat, the Commissioner of Mines and Seriousview. Up to 10% of this fund will be spent annually, with the balance used for rehabilitation when the mine closes. Rehabilitation measures proposed include vegetation of exposed areas including the wall of the tailings dam.

The Environmental Impact Statement identifies three primary environmental issues, of which the first is the social impact of resettlement and appropriate compensation for the 79 people (30 households) who live in the Mabunyaneng valley in the village of Tiping. Their village will be completely buried by the tailings facility. Consultations have been held with them, as a result of which

proposals have been made to relocate them to a new village site in the Kao valley at Sekiring, 2 km upstream from the present Kao village. This site also has the possibility of developing new fields to replace those being lost as a result of the tailings facility.

A second issue is water use, which is a major component of the project, some 220 000 m<sup>3</sup> per month being required. A major water supply dam will be built on the Kao river, with a concrete 35 metre high dam wall, designed to be overtopped in flood conditions. Water is extensively used in the diamond recovery process, even though much of it is designed to be recycled. For example, although the fine tailings slurry will be pumped to the upstream side of the tailings dam, as the tailings settle leaving purer water near the surface, water will be pumped back to the processing plant via floating pumps on the tailings dam. As far as downstream water is concerned (the Katse Reservoir is a short distance downstream from Kao), it is considered that the quality will be improved (the water is at present contaminated by the former digging activities), except that there will be an unavoidable deterioration for the initial construction period. The mine will however reduce the total water flowing into the Katse Reservoir by some 1.6%, a matter which has implications for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

The tailings dam itself will grow over 25 years to become an enormous feature, of volume some 250 million cubic metres and standing over 300 metres high (more than 50% higher than the Katse Dam) as measured from the downstream side of the Mabunyaneng stream. The stability of the tailings dam depends on the relative quantity of fine and coarse tailings and basalt 'country' rock and how they are distributed within or in relation to the dam wall. Ultimately the dam wall, with final crest at about 2785 metres, will dominate the scene, towering above and with its wall closely adjoining the 'big hole'. The matter of the stability of such a structure was raised at the Stakeholders' Workshop, but engineers assured those present that stability was guaranteed by the angle of the rock fill, and that there was experience internationally with such dams in mining undertakings in countries such as Chile. A Toe Dam, will be built at an early stage as an additional precautionary measure against downstream pollution on the Mabunyaneng. Eventually it will form a part of the main dam.

The whole project depends of course on the marketability of the diamonds and the world diamond price. Since this is denominated in dollars, the viability of the project is sensitive to the dollar/loti exchange rate which has fluctuated from about \$1 = M12.00 in January 2002 to \$1 = M6.00 in January 2005. The project is considered profitable down to about \$1 = M5.50, but thereafter would apparently be marginal unless the De Beers cartel, which controls diamond prices, deems it wise to allow them to rise.

Some comparative figures may be of interest. The Kao development is expected when fully on stream to produce some 900 000 to 1 million carats per year, with a target annual production of a million carats. 1 carat = 200 mg, so 5 carats = 1 gram, and 1 million carats is 200 kg of diamonds, about 1% of annual world production. The world's biggest producer of diamonds by value is currently Botswana's Debswana with 30.4 million carats in 2003 valued at \$2.4 billion. Botswana produces about a third of the world's gem quality diamonds.

In terms of the ultimate size of the 'big hole', the well known Big Hole at Kimberley is 473 metres in diameter, rather less than the anticipated 800 metres for Kao. However, the Kimberley Big Hole has nearly vertical sides, because it was excavated before the days of trucks and spiral ramps. The Kimberley Big Hole finally reached a depth of 1097 metres before being abandoned in 1914, and by that date 14.5 million carats or about 3 tons of diamonds had been extracted. It is expected that the total recovery of diamonds from Kao will exceed this. After abandonment, the Kimberley Big Hole filled up to much of its depth with water. The same is likely to happen with the Kao 'big hole', although it is not expected that water will reach a level where it will spill out of the pit.

#### **Four Letseng Diamonds Raise \$8 million; Lihobong about to become Operational**

As if to provide encouragement for the Kao development, there was an announcement from the Letšeng mine in January that four large flawless diamonds (weighing 76 carats, 112 carats, 106 carats and 72 carats) had been found there in the space of just six days. They were sent to the world's most important diamond market in Antwerp and in February it was announced that they had been sold for \$8 million.

Meanwhile, as reported in *Lesotho Today* of 17 February 2005, the new diamond mine at Liqhobong, a few kilometres north of Kao, will start operating at the end of March. According to the Chief Executive, Mr Roy Spencer, it will have 75 Basotho employees and is estimated to produce about 200 000 carats per year.

### **Lesotho PostBank becomes Operational**

The first banking facilities available in Lesotho were those of the Post Office Savings Bank, which opened branches at post offices in the then seven Lowlands district headquarters towns in September 1891. The Post Office Savings Bank survived, providing a useful service particularly in relatively remote areas, until 80 years later it was merged with Lesotho Bank in 1971. At first the passbook system continued, but as time went on, Lesotho Bank became less accommodating to its poorer customers, raising the minimum deposit successively until it stood at M500. Shortly after that, it abandoned passbooks altogether, requiring customers to use electronic banking and an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) card, a difficult requirement for older customers who were not used to using keyboards. In the meantime, the number of Lesotho Bank branches was reduced so that even quite important centres such as Morija and Pitseng were without banking facilities altogether.

Responding to these problems, the old Post Office Savings Bank has now been revived, and with assistance from the NethPost Consultancy from the Netherlands, the first branches of PostBank became operational in Maseru and Pitseng in January. A third branch was opened at Semonkong on 9 March 2005. According to the Director of Finance of PostBank, Mr Mpho Vumbulani, a total of 5 branches will be open by the end of April, and 11 more branches towards the end of the year. The service will be fully operational when it is installed in some 47 post offices around the country. In order to open a PostBank account, a sum of just M45 is needed.

### ***Public Eye* produces Monday edition**

Lesotho's best selling newspaper, *Public Eye*, normally appears dated Friday of each week, although copies are in fact already on sale the previous day. As from 31 January 2005, there are now two issues of *Public Eye* per week, a 16-page *Public Eye on Monday* costing M2.00 and the regular 32-page Friday edition costing M3.50, although street vendors sell it for a higher price. Until the end of 2004, there had been one 48-page issue of *Public Eye* weekly. Another change is that *Public Eye*'s Sesotho companion newspaper, *Mosotho*, no longer appears weekly, and is produced just once a month.

*Public Eye on Monday* and *Mosotho* are now apparently produced on the new web offset press that *Public Eye* has installed in Mohalalitoe, Maseru. It has had teething problems and as at March 2005, the Friday edition of *Public Eye* was still being published in South Africa.

### **Archival Materials Destroyed**

The circumstances which led to large quantities of Lesotho's National Archives being abandoned in the floor wells of a house in Maseru were described in the previous issue of *Summary of Events*. A small quantity had been rescued in December by some friends of the archives, one of whom on 3 January 2005 spoke to the Assistant Government Archivist. He was told that archives staff of the Ministry of Culture had appraised the materials remaining in the house and found them to be of no value and that they should therefore be destroyed. Following this, he alerted both the History Department of the

National University of Lesotho and the Morija Archives to see whether they could not mount a rescue bid before actual destruction took place.

Two staff of the history department did in fact visit the Department of Culture asking for directions to the house, and when they arrived there on a Thursday in February, they found that the destruction was in progress. The floor wells were being systematically emptied by three staff and being taken by bakkie to the Municipal Dump, and the historians were assured there was no point in following the bakkie, because the material was being set fire to on arrival at the dump. A senior member of the department inspected the bakkie being loaded at the time and discovered that many materials on it were of considerable archival value. He removed them and said that they must not be destroyed, and got an assurance that these ones would not be destroyed but could be taken to the Department of Culture. It was not clear whether this actually happened.

Faced with a crisis, the four members of the history department returned to the house with a vehicle on the Saturday, when there would be no civil servants at work. They filled the vehicle with valuable materials, but made little impression on the total amount remaining, even though several bakkie loads had apparently already been removed. The materials taken were placed in safe keeping at a room on the Roma campus of NUL, and it was planned to return the following week with Second Year students to mount a larger rescue bid. Unfortunately lack of funds for transport and other commitments made this impracticable. At the end of the February, when the house was visited, the whole floor well area had been cleared and its previous contents presumably destroyed.

The tragedy of the National Archives is that there is statutory provision for an Archives Commission with responsibility to advise on archival matters. The Commission existed for over 20 years after Independence and was then active in drafting archival regulations and trying to seek funds for better archival services. Members of the Commission, who included academics, mission archivists and other interested persons were appointed by the Minister of Culture, and served for five years, after which their periods of office lapsed. No new appointments have been made since the restoration of democracy in 1993, so the Commission has *de facto* ceased to exist. It was the one body which could have looked after the interests of the archives, and it could have been revived at any time, but this did not happen. It could still be revived in terms of the existing legislation at any time.

### **Lesedi FM Broadcasts from Lesotho Soil**

As reported in *Public Eye* of 4 February 2005, the South African Sesotho station **Lesedi FM**, is now broadcasting from a Lesotho transmitter. The new arrangement is apparently with the blessing of the new Minister of Communications, Tom Thabane. Lesedi FM has a reputation for professionalism which at times gathers it a greater Lesotho listenership than Radio Lesotho. It is understood that local radio staff protested at the move. However, the manager of Lesedi FM, Pula-Pula Mothibi was quoted as looking forward to a new era of co-operation replacing the past when Radio Lesotho had ‘vilified’ Lesedi FM.

### **Pension Payouts Proceed More Smoothly**

The first Lesotho old age pensions for persons over 70 were paid out at post offices throughout Lesotho in the first week of December 2004. In some cases the process took a week, creating great hardship for elderly people who had to spend some days awaiting their turn to receive the M150 to which they were entitled. Many had to travel very long distances, because only post offices and not postal agencies could pay out pensions. For an elderly person, the nearest post office is often more than a day’s walk, but so scarce are financial resources that they nevertheless found ways to undertake the journey. By February, the pension payout process had been smoothed out, and most people could arrive at a post office and collect their pensions on the same day. The legal side of pensions was also sorted out by the *Old Age*

*Pensions Act 2005* which although not published in a *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* until 16 March 2005 was deemed to have come into operation on 1 November 2004.

One problem that has arisen with the payment of pensions is that large sums of money have to be transferred to post offices for the payments. Despite security measures, M88 000 of money intended to be paid out to pensioners on 1 February 2005, was in fact stolen from the Motsekuoa Post Office in Mafeteng District by six armed robbers.

It is believed that the Lesotho Government is now trying to find ways of bringing down the qualifying age and increasing the amount of the payout. It must be aware that in neighbouring South Africa the monthly pension is now R780, and pensions are payable to persons over the age of 63. Certainly many Lesotho residents are aware of the substantial difference, and a significant number have left Lesotho for South Africa, where they have been able to find ways of obtaining the necessary South African ID which entitles them to a South African pension. In a recent survey, some 18% of Lesotho citizens admitted that they also had South African identity documents, this despite the fact that Lesotho law does not allow dual nationality. It is possible, indeed likely, that some people have been able to claim pensions from both sides of the border.

### **LCD Wins Koro-Koro By-Election**

At the by-election in the Koro-Koro constituency on 12 February 2005 resulting from the death of the previous MP, Mofelehetsi Moerane, the LCD candidate, **Ntsaila Ezekiel Ntsaila** won easily with 2168 votes. There were only two other candidates, representing the National Independent Party and the Patriotic Front for Democracy. They received respectively 244 and 92 votes.

### **Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus* Performed by NUL Students**

Saartjie (Sarah) Baartman, a Khoesan woman with an exceptionally large posterior was lured to London where she was put on display in 1810 in a freak show as the 'Hottentot Venus'. In 1814 she was taken to Paris and exhibited by an animal trainer, dying there 15 months later, after which her remains including her genitals were preserved and displayed at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until the mid-1970s. This sordid exploitation and humiliation only ended when Saartjie Baartman's remains were returned by France to South Africa and given a decent celebrity burial there on International Women's Day in 2002.

The English Department of the National University of Lesotho is currently hosting a Fulbright Visiting Professor, Katt Lissard, from the State University of New York and one of her first activities has been to work with a colleague Rethabile Malibo to direct an edited version of a recent play by the Afro-American playwright, Suzan-Lori Parks, based on the life of Saartjie Baartman. 14 students from NUL, about half of them majoring in Theatre and Drama, formed the cast, and the performances on 23-24 February 2005 were held in the University's Moot Court, appropriate because at the time of Baartman's London appearance an action was taken to determine whether her exhibitor should be sentenced under England's anti-slavery law.

In the performance, Saartjie Baartman was played by 'Matumahole Phafane, suitably padded to reproduce a hint of Baartman's steatopygia. The play with its Greek chorus-like presentation brought out the emotions of a woman bewildered by unfamiliar surroundings, and by spectators who ranged from voyeurs to those sympathizing with her plight.

The performance co-hosted by the English Department and the United States Embassy in celebration of African-American history month, provided the audience with a thought-provoking glimpse of a squalid episode in the past history of race relations.

### **One Third of Local Government Electoral Divisions Reserved for Women**

One of the puzzling requirements in the *Local Government (Amendment) Act 2004* was a new provision that not less than a third of seats in any council shall be reserved for women. This was further elaborated in the *Local Government Elections (Amendment) Act 2004* which stated that every third electoral division was to be reserved for women. The proposed mechanism became clearer in the *Local Government Election (Declaration of Electoral Divisions) Notice 2005* published as a *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* on 14 February 2005. The *Notice* issued by the Independent Electoral Commission lists the 128 different Councils and for each lists (with numbers not names) 9, 10 or 11 electoral division, the one exception being for the Maseru City Council for which there are 13 electoral divisions. In each case, the third, sixth, and ninth (and in the case of Maseru, also the twelfth) electoral divisions are marked 'Reserved for Women'.

The implication of this is that only women candidates can be nominated for these reserved electoral divisions, although for the remainder, it appears that both men and women can stand. In the reserved divisions, a man cannot stand for election, and consequently a voter cannot elect anyone other than a woman candidate.

The *Local Government Elections (Amendment) Act 2004* created some awkward situations. Whereas in Community Council areas with 9 electoral divisions, clearly not less than a third of those elected will be women, in those with 10 or 11 electoral divisions only 3/10 or 3/11 of those elected must be women, each fraction being clearly less than a third. The same is true of Maseru where 4/13 is also less than 1/3. Even in the Council areas with 9 electoral divisions, it does not seem that the requirement of the *Local Government (Amendment) Act 2004* that 'not less than one third of the seats in a council shall be reserved for women' will be met, because each Community Council also has 'not exceeding 2 gazetted chiefs who shall be nominated by other Chiefs within a Community Council area'. Quite apart from the problems of this process, the end result would most likely tip the balance so that the then 11 member Council (another clause requires Councils to have odd numbers of members) would have less than one-third women. The Act seems fraught with internal inconsistencies.

The provision for one-third of seats to be reserved for women has belatedly attracted the attention of politicians. The veteran politician, Molapo Qhobela, who after several splits now leads just a faction of the Basutoland African Congress, denounced the setting aside of electoral divisions for women as 'sexual apartheid'. As quoted in *Mopheme* of 1 February 2005 he regarded the procedure as inconsistent with the constitution, and disclosed that his party would nominate male candidates in divisions reserved for women. He challenged the Minister of Local Government, Pontšo Sekatle to cite any country in the world where some electoral divisions or constituencies were reserved for one sex to the exclusion of the other.

As reported in *Mopheme* of 22 February 2005, the Lesotho Council of NGOs was also critical of the discrimination against men in certain wards. It proposed some alternative solutions to the requirement that one third of seats should be held by women, although almost every solution requires a form of discrimination possibly at variance with the Lesotho Constitution. By the time of its 8 March issue, *Mopheme* in its lead story was reporting that most opposition parties were now criticizing the election procedures. Some criticized the 'first past the post' system, but most were concerned at the discriminatory provisions relating to the 'women-only' electoral divisions, which in the words of Chief Peete Peete, leader of the National Progressive Party were 'totally unacceptable'.

Also joining in the criticism was the Catholic newspaper, *Moeletsi oa Basotho*. In its lead story as early as its 16 January issue, it reported that the Independent Electoral Commission had called a meeting on 5 January 2005 explaining that there would be electoral divisions where only women could be elected and that political parties were opposing this. Returning to the matter in its issue of 20 February 2005, in a strongly worded editorial it derided the Government (*Hona ha se likhetho, ke mantloane* - These are not elections, they're just a children's game) and accused Parliament of having made a law which, by forcing people to vote for women in certain areas, contravened the Constitution.

This led to Radio Lesotho on 22 February 2005, as reported in *The Mirror* of 2 March 2005, broadcasting extensive criticism of the editor of *Moeletsi*: ‘The government says what the editor has done is seen as “The peak of irresponsibility”. *Moeletsi* is an old respected newspaper. We ask its editor to cool down, look at both sides of the story.’ *Moeletsi*’s editor was not deterred and in its issue of 27 February 2005 stated on the front page under a heading *Li qalile liqaqiso* (The explanations have begun) *Polelo ena ea ’muso ha e hanyetse ’nete e phatlalalitsoeng ke Moeletsi, e mpa e le poboli e etsoang feela ka khopolo ea hore ho lumaela ka matla le ho tjolomaka ho ka felisa mahlaba* (The government statement does not deny the truth of what has been published by *Moeletsi*, but is just a groaning in the belief that massive grumbling and tossing and turning might ease the pain). It elaborated on its statement in an editorial in its issue of 8 March 2005: ‘When *Moeletsi* prints the truth in the interests of its readers, some people don’t like it. They fight us....’

Although opposition parties were having a field day with the Act, the reality is that all parties of significance in Lesotho are represented in Parliament and the opportunity to attack the original *Local Government (Amendment) Bill* had been there during its long passage through Parliament. The Second Reading debate had commenced on Thursday 11 September 2003, but had been interrupted by other business. It was only on Thursday 19 February 2004, when the Bill was being discussed at the Committee Stage that the Minister of Local Government, Pontšo Sekatle, had introduced the controversial Clause 4, subclause 3 that ‘Notwithstanding anything in this Act, not less than a third of the seats in council shall be reserved for women’. At this point, as reported in the National Assembly *Hansard*, some of the opposition party leaders such as Dr K. D. Raditapole, Mr K. A. Maope, Mr H. Tsakatsi and Mr A. C. Manyeli raised concerns, although interestingly enough no-one then made the point that the provision might be in conflict with anti-discrimination clauses in the Constitution. The debate on the clause was deferred until the next day, before it was finally passed, and the Second and Third Readings of the Bill were completed on the same day. In the Upper House, the Senate, the Second Reading of the Bill began on Tuesday 9 March 2004, and the Third Reading was completed and the Bill passed on 18 March, without (according to the Senate *Hansard*) any objections being raised at the Committee stage about the clause reserving seats for women. The problem with the ensuing Act, and a defect of its original drafting, was that whereas individual clauses made sense and were passed one after another in the Committee Stage, overall there were internal inconsistencies which apparently no-one at the time noticed. The requirements that Councils had odd numbers of members, not less than one-third women, and at least two gazetted chiefs, and at the same time (apart from the chiefs) were to be elected created a difficult conundrum which was only partly solved by the later *Lesotho Government Elections (Amendment) Act 2004*.

### **Date for Local Elections Set**

A notice published on 15 February 2005 sets the election date for local government councils to be 30 April 2005 and the nomination days for the election to be from 29 March 2005 to 1 April 2005. A second notice published on 21 February 2005 provides a detailed election timetable, and provides for the publication of the results and statement of the poll to be on 9 May 2005.

### ***Motjoli’s Review makes its Debut***

A new quarterly review of ‘considered opinion and debate about our society and how it is governed’ appeared in February 2005. Setting a new standard of informed writing, the new periodical in tabloid newspaper format takes its title from *motjoli*, the individual amongst herdboys who exhibits the most leadership talent.

In the first issue there are articles by David Ambrose on the National Archives (taken from the previous issue of *Summary of Events*); by Motlatsi Thabane on the veil of secrecy still maintained by those who were with Clement Leepa when he was killed and his rebellion was crushed on 3 March

1970; an account by the veteran BCP MP, Ntsukunyane Mphanya, on his escape to Botswana in 1974; and an interview with Lekhetho Rakuoane, Chairman of the Parliamentary Reform Committee, on the process of parliamentary reform.

### **Minister of Finance Presents Budget for the 2005/06 Fiscal Year**

The annual budget speech was made in Parliament by the Minister of Finance & Development Planning, the **Honourable Timothy T. Thahane** on 16 February 2005. It related to the financial year which runs from 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006.

In his introduction the Minister was generally upbeat about achievements which included economic growth estimated at 3.4% for 2004, higher than the average for the southern African region. There had however been a downturn in the second half of the year driven by uncertainty in the textile industry. Amongst achievements were free schooling for the first six years of primary school and the introduction of pensions for the elderly, many of whom have to take care of the more than 90 000 AIDS orphans. Financial reform was under way, fraudsters and corrupt officials were being prosecuted, and the backlog in the production of annual public accounts was being tackled. Amongst major investments in Lesotho was the \$100 million Nien Hsing mill for the production of denim fabric.

Four challenges were highlighted. The first was the need to make the private sector a real engine for rapid acceleration of growth, creation of jobs and reduction of poverty. In relation to this, views were being exchanged with Irish authorities on how they transformed Ireland from a rural economy to a 'High-Tec Celtic Tiger' in some 40 years. The Minister noted that Ireland was now Lesotho's largest provider of assistance.

A second challenge was HIV and AIDS and the fight against the disease was being scaled up with international assistance.

The third challenge was education, which was absorbing a high percentage of the budget but failing to yield the social and scientific skills needed. The pass rate in science and mathematics was very low, yet competence in these subjects was necessary to form the base of a productive economy.

The final challenge was the public service and service delivery, where there was need for improvements in productivity, efficient service delivery, good relations with the public and the elimination of corruption.

Amongst topics discussed in a wide-ranging speech was the work of the Commission for Africa, established by Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The aim of the Commission to mobilize additional resources for poverty eradication in Africa was endorsed, and it was noted that amongst initiatives was one to cancel international debts in poor countries. It was noted that **Lesotho has never defaulted on its debt** and that low-income countries, such as Lesotho, which had managed their finances well, had been overlooked.

The proposed budget was for M3 739 million recurrent expenditure and M1 043 million capital expenditure with an estimated deficit of M249.5 million equivalent to 2.6% of the Gross Domestic Product.

Amongst major expenditures announced were an allocation of M702.4 million for infrastructure and related expenditures in relation to the Metolong Dam on the Phuthiatsana river, a project needed to provide water for the domestic and industrial needs of Maseru, Roma and other communities nearby. A roundtable conference of potential financiers for the dam itself would be held shortly.

An allocation of M373 million was being made to the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare for improving the quality and availability of health care and the campaign to reduce HIV prevalence.

An additional M50 million was being allocated to the Ministry of Local Government to meet the core costs of the new Community and District Councils as well as the Maseru Municipal Council, all of which were shortly to be elected. The Lesotho Fund for Community Development, funded by revenues from the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, would be transferred to the Ministry of Local Government.

It was announced that civil servants would receive a 5% across the board salary increase, more or less equivalent to inflation. [However, because of the tax structure, their take-home pay would in fact increase by less than 5%.] The only announced tax concession was that the threshold at which incomes were taxable would rise from M880 to M924 per month.

In relation to recurrent ministerial expenditure, the total in the budget amounts to M3167 million, of which the Ministry of Education & Training is allocated the highest share at M842 million (26.6%), followed by the Ministry of Finance & Development Planning with M490 million (15.5%), the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare with M321 million (10.1%) and the Ministry of Defence & National Security with M218 million (6.9%).

The Prime Minister was not in Parliament to hear the budget speech. He was in fact visiting the 'High-Tec Celtic Tiger', where he opened the new Lesotho Embassy in Dublin.

### **Anglican Clergy in Bitter Dispute with their Bishop**

A bitter dispute within the Anglican Church was reported in the Catholic newspaper *Moeletsi oa Basotho* in its issue of 30 January 2005. Under the front page headline *Baruti ba Chache ba re Mobishopo a itokolle* (Anglican priests say their Bishop should resign) it was reported that a number of priests had met on 13 January 2005 and come to the conclusion that **Bishop Joseph Mahapu Tsubella** had mismanaged the diocese. They had written him a letter which gave him seven days in which to resign and to leave Lesotho. It was evident that a copy of this letter had found its way to the newspaper.

Bishop Tsubella had been chosen as Bishop of Lesotho by the House of Bishops of the Church of the Province of South Africa in 1999, after an earlier electoral assembly in Maseru had failed to choose a bishop from the five local candidates. Born at Marquard in the Free State in 1943, Joseph Tsubella, who is Sesotho-speaking, had previously served as parish priest in several different parts of South Africa, but not in Lesotho. He had been enthroned as Bishop of Lesotho by the Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, on 19 December 1999.

The report in *Moeletsi* indicated that the dissident clergymen had copied their letter to Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane in Cape Town, and went on to say that amongst their complaints about the Bishop were his use of improper financial practices; failure to have the accounts audited; conducting of weddings when he was not a legally approved marriage officer; failure to officiate at important church festivals such as Christmas and Easter; and failure to represent the church on important national occasions.

*Moeletsi* managed to secure a telephone interview with the Bishop on 25 January who indicated that he had gone to the police and asked for protection after he had been given 7 days to leave the country. The letter to him had apparently been written using strong language and according to *Moeletsi*, *Baruti ba tlalehoa ba sa lakatse ho thetela Mobishopo majoe a tle a tsamaee* (The priests were reported to have said that they did not want to have resort to rolling stones down onto the Bishop to ensure that he left). After the Bishop had met with the police, a meeting was arranged with the dissident priests and the outcome was that they assured the bishop that he could go home without fear.

In the telephone interview Bishop Tsubella made it clear that he disputed the allegations and that no-one but himself had the power to publish church matters in the press. Despite this, *Moeletsi* published the story and also indicated that the Bishop had agreed to be interviewed on Tuesday 1 February. There was, however, no follow-up story in *Moeletsi*, and it appears that although the newspaper had published the initial story, it respected the Bishop's request to publish nothing further.

The matter might have remained there except that another newspaper, *Public Eye* of 18 February 2005, picked up the story and provided further details. According to the *Public Eye* account,<sup>10</sup> Anglican clergy in Lesotho had written a letter to the Archbishop of Cape Town accusing the Bishop of maladministration, mismanagement and abuse of authority. The newspaper quoted Rev. Lebohang Kheekhe of the National University of Lesotho who said that 'the clergy wanted him shown the door because he had wreaked havoc with the church's administration'. According to the *Public Eye*

account, the clergy demanded the bishop's resignation within ten (not seven) days of the receipt of the letter.

The ten clergy did not however get much sympathy from the Archbishop. In a reply addressed to Rev. Lebohang Kheekhe and quoted in the 25 February 2005 issue of *Public Eye*, the Archbishop pointed out that the clergy had acted in contravention of the canons of the church. There was a procedure for making charges which required them to be made by at least two priests and three churchwardens in any matter other than one of faith or doctrine. Despite this, the priests had not involved the laity.

In a sequel, the Bishop took his dispute with the 10 clergy to the Lesotho High Court. According to *Public Eye* of 18 March 2005, in the ensuing hearing, Mr Justice Semapo Peete ordered the counsels for the two parties to ask their clients to go back and solve their 'tribulations' within church structures and then to report back to the High Court on 18 April 2005. Prospects for an internal settlement did not seem high, however. The following week the newspaper quoted the Anglican Dean, the Rev. Tebello Duma as saying he did not see any possibility of the squabbles subsiding. 'The bishop was blackmailing the clergy and misinforming the laity.' According to Father Duma, the finances of the church were being mismanaged by the bishop and calls for auditing were being disregarded.

### **Roma Chief has Stamp Confiscated**

A suspected cattle thief who was arrested on 18 February at Boinyatso was found to be in possession of a bewys with the stamp of Chief Maama Mafefoane of Roma. Investigations later showed that the bewys (a kind of passport issued to cattle to enable them to be legally transferred from one place to another) had apparently been issued irregularly by the chief's secretary without his knowledge, and apparently so that the secretary could profit from the sale of the beasts. According to a report in *Public Eye* of 25 February 2005, the police arrested the suspected cattle thief and the chief's secretary and confiscated the chief's stamp. The suspected thief, Mafotholeng Mafereka, was also charged with having an illegal firearm.

Chief Maama Mafefoane presides over an area in the Roma valley officially known as Qhobosheaneng. It includes both the University campus and St Joseph's Hospital. His stamp is needed for a wide range of certificates including death certificates and land transfers.

### **Lesotho Postal Administration Releases Stamps Depicting Basotho Houses**

Four stamps were released by the Lesotho Postal Administration on 21 February 2005. Unlikely many stamps produced by a US firm for Lesotho, these have a relevant theme and relevant denominations: 70s, M1, M1.50 and M2.10, except that on the 70s stamp is written 70L instead of 70s. The designer is Makhabane C. Moshoeshe. The descriptions of the houses only appear in Sesotho, but these seem to reflect that Maseru-based officials no longer know what traditional houses look like. For example the M2.10 stamp is captioned 'mohlongoa-fatše', when it clearly depicts a style of rondavel known as *mathule*, from the porch at its entrance. The true *mohlongoafatše*, as its name suggests in Sesotho, is built on a frame of saplings springing from the ground in a circle, to which afterwards a low wall might be added to protect the perimeter. Such houses are not often seen today except in remote rural areas.



### **LHDA Releases Controlled Floods from Dams**

An extremely detailed study of 'instream flow requirement' completed in 2000 resulted in LHDA bringing itself into line with other dam schemes worldwide and becoming more sensitive to the needs of people living beside the rivers downstream of dams. A dam can in effect turn a former living river

into a long winding narrow desert, and to prevent this, modest compensation water was allowed for, even in the earliest designs. More recently, however, it has been recognized that not only is more water required to keep the river alive, but that releases of water resembling natural floods are also required. Fish, for example, wait for such rushes of water before they swim upstream to spawn.

LHDA announced that it would be releasing two such floods in February and March to maintain the river ecosystem. 26 cumecs (cubic metres per second), were released from the Katse Dam for 48 hours from 26 to 28 February 2005 and 22.5 cumecs from the Mohale Dam from 2 to 4 March 2005. The two floods were timed so that they united downstream, creating a significant rise in water in the Senqu at Seaka about 7 March 2005.

### **New UNDP Resident Coordinator Arrives**

A new Resident Coordinator for the United Nations Development Programme arrived in Lesotho in February. She is **Mrs Hodan Haji-Mahamud** and replaces Scholastica Kimaryo from Tanzania, who left Lesotho in December and is now working in Pretoria.

Mrs Haji-Mahamud, aged 49, was born in Somalia and undertook her higher education in the USA. Her previous overseas experience has included stints with the UNDP in Lusaka and Yemen. More recently she has been Deputy Chief for Africa and Senior Portfolio Manager with the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) in New York. Her responsibilities there included the management of implementation for over 40 country and regional projects, mainly in SADC countries.

### **Prime Minister Backtracks on Compulsory Retirement of Soldiers at 45**

The *Lesotho Defence Force Amendment Act 2002* had required soldiers below the rank of officer to retire at the age of 45. Amazingly, the then Commander of the Defence Force claimed that he had only first heard about the legislation in 2004, and as a result he was having to retire some 300 of his soldiers. It now transpires that the necessary financial allocation to provide for these soldiers to retire is not in place, and there have also been second thoughts about the need for Lesotho to have adequate soldiers on standby for possible peacekeeping duties. It now appears that the 300 soldiers who were to have been retired will be constituted into an 'afforestation battalion' and used for forestry activities.

In the reversal of previous policy, it is likely that consideration was given to the problems caused by retrenched as well as current Lesotho Defence Force soldiers, who have often been implicated in armed robberies and similar criminal activities.

### **High Profile Legal Case Postponed to April**

The case in which the President of the Law Society, **Zwelakhe Mda**, together with **Limakatso Ralithhare**, are charged with obstruction of justice by allegedly interfering with crown witnesses began as a trial within a trial, when Mda was defending persons charged with the murder on 11 February 2001 of Maile Mosisili, son of the Prime Minister.

It was alleged that Mda and Limakatso Ralithhare had enticed crown witnesses to sign false statements or affidavits to give false testimony at the trial, conduct aimed at weakening the Crown's case and detrimentally affecting its prospects for conviction. Mda and Ralithhare were charged in the Maseru Magistrate's Court, but acquitted by the magistrate, 'Matankiso Nthunya.

Government then appealed against this acquittal, resulting in a High Court hearing in June 2004 before Mr Justice Brendan Cullinan. This resulted in a finding that there was in fact a *prima facie* case against the two accused and that a new trial should be held.

After the High Court case, the Law Society's Council issued a memorandum saying that the appointment of Mr Justice Cullinan as an Acting Judge violated the independence of the judiciary, and from 11 June lawyers would not appear before him. The matter went to the Court of Appeal, which supported the High Court and ordered that the case should restart from the beginning.

The Lesotho Government, perhaps anxious that members of the Lesotho judiciary might recuse themselves from the case on grounds of knowing personally at least one of the defendants, engaged a Namibian judge, Justice Simpson Victor Ntambanengwe to hear the case. However, by February 2005 another obstacle had been encountered. The defence maintained that the Court of Appeal's requirement that the case should restart from the beginning meant that it should go back to the Magistrate's Court. There had therefore arisen a trial within a trial within a trial. As reported by the Lesotho News Agency, Mr Justice Ntambanengwe ruled that the case to decide whether the case in which the defendants are charged with obstruction of justice should be held in the Magistrate's Court or the High Court should itself be postponed until 18 April 2005.

### **Images of Lesotho Exhibition Staged by Transformation Resource Centre**

An art exhibition featuring the work of four Lesotho artists was hosted at the new premises of the Transformation Resource Centre near the Maseru Sun Hotel from 5 to 24 March 2005.

Amongst these artists, **Kabelo Maja**, acknowledges inspiration from the work of the late Leetsang Ncheke, Like Ncheke he specializes in landscapes and works in oils on board or canvas.

Another artist, **Vincent Seatile Nkhomo**, is perhaps better known, if only because his many postage stamp designs have been acknowledged by having his name printed on the stamp. Seatile works mainly in water colours, and apart from landscapes he undertakes portraits.

Less representational is the work of **Steve Mashoabathe**. Inspired by Salvador Dali, his pictures, while of obviously local inspiration, include a disturbing surrealistic element.

The fourth artist, **Thakane Lerotholi**, has art which is still at a developmental stage, consonant with her own academic career in which she is studying Fine Arts at the University of KwaZulu in Pietermaritzburg.

### **COSC Results Marred by Scandal over Leaked Papers**

Although the **Cambridge Overseas School Certificate** results were released on Thursday 10 March, many pupils found that their results were still pending.

It was common knowledge that Mathematics Paper II had been circulated widely before the time when it was to be written. According to information which spread amongst Maseru residents, the leak had occurred when an invigilator had inadvertently distributed the wrong paper at an examination at the Khubetsoana Examination Hall. Although she had subsequently collected it in, at least one candidate had not returned the paper, had photocopied it, and had been selling it at M50 per copy. The incident had resulted in a Commission of Inquiry being set up by the Minister of Education and Training.

Altogether 19 schools found that results for some of their candidates had not been released. Of the other schools, only one school, St Catherine's High School in Maseru, managed to have 100% of its pupils pass the School Certificate. It was closely followed by Leribe English Medium School in Hlotse (99%); St Mary's High School in Roma (also 99%); Khethisa High School in Mahobong (98%); Morija Girls High School (97%); St James High School at Ha Rafolatsane, Mokhotlong (97%); Holy Family High School at St Monica (95%); Mount Tabor High School near Thabana-Morena (94%); Holy Names High School in Bela-Bela (93%); St Stephen's High School (93%); and Tša-Kholo High School (91%). At the other end of the scale, there were schools where less than 14% passed. Notable amongst these were Bethesda High School at Maphutseng where no-one passed; John XXII High School at Sekake (12%); 'Mantšase High School at Qhalasi (12%); and the long-established and once financially well-supported school, Moshoeshoe II High School at Matsieng (13%, a decline from 41% the previous year).

### **St James High School, Mokhotlong, Celebrates 50 Years**

One of Lesotho's remotest high schools, which is also one of its most successful, celebrated its 50th Anniversary on Friday 18 March 2005. **St James High School** at Ha Rafolatsane in Mokhotlong

District began as a primary school in 1938, but first offered secondary education in 1955, the first school in Mokhotlong District to do so. A boarding school for boys and girls, it became a high school in 1983 and has progressed to the point where it offers a full range of high school courses including Agriculture which was introduced in 1998. The school has its own pigsty, built with Irish Aid, and it also raises chickens, cattle and rabbits. Electricity was finally laid on to the school in 2003, and the latest development in 2005 has been the acquisition of computers so that computer literacy can be taught.

The school's origin and development has been almost entirely through the efforts of one religious order, the Sisters of St Joseph who first arrived in Ha Rafolatsane in 1938 from the city of St Hyacinthe, east of Montreal in Quebec. The first principal of the secondary school was Sister Mabel Shannon who served from 1955 to 1971. Her successors were French Canadian sisters until the 1990s when Basotho sisters took over. The present principal is Sister Anna Lereko. When St James began as a secondary school in 1955, it had 20 pupils, no buildings and only one full-time teacher. Today the school has three streams, thirteen classes and no less than 603 pupils.

The 50th anniversary celebrations were attended by the Prime Minister and by the Ministers of Education and Foreign Affairs, and also by the Principal Chief of Mokhotlong, Chief Mathealira Seeiso. A coloured commemorative booklet with a history of the school was published for the occasion.

### **Prime Minister Turns 60**

The Prime Minister, **Pakalitha Mosisili**, celebrated his 60th birthday by throwing a large party at his residence at Thoteng, Roma, on Saturday 19 March 2005. The narrow gravel road leading through the village to his house was put to a major test as Maseru guests and villagers converged on his house for the party. Mosisili originally acquired the site at Thoteng, adjoining the western boundary donga of the university campus, when he was a lecturer at the National University of Lesotho. His original house has been added to by an adjoining more substantial red brick building, but he has retained his country links by keeping a herd of dairy cows.

On the day of the party, the weather was fortunately dry, and music and dancing continued until the early hours of the following day.

### **Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase 2 Feasibility Study to Proceed**

A feasibility study to look in detail at Phase 2 of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project has been agreed between Lesotho and South Africa. Agreement that such a study should go ahead was apparently one of the outcomes of discussions initiated by the Lesotho Prime Minister with the South African President at the time of the official opening of the Mohale Dam in 2004. The feasibility study, expected to begin in April 2005, is expected to last about two years, and contractors to undertake the study will shortly be appointed.

As earlier conceived, Phase 2 of the LHWP envisaged a dam on the Senqu at Mashai (or possibly a few kilometres upstream at Taung), thereby capturing the flow of the Senqu, which is similar to that of the already beheaded Malibamatšo river. Water would be pumped into the Katse Reservoir, but much of the energy required to do this would be recovered by expanding the 'Muela Hydropower Station at the end of the Transfer Tunnel (which would apparently need to be increased in capacity by building a parallel tunnel). Other options could include a direct and very long tunnel through which water could run under gravity and emerge in Qwaqwa, although at earlier study stages this was reckoned to involve prohibitively high costs.

In augmenting the water supply to Gauteng and neighbouring areas, Phase 2 of the LHWP is in direct competition with other and possibly cheaper schemes, the principal one of which involves beheading the middle reaches of the Tugela (Thukela) river in KwaZulu-Natal with a series of dams and pumping the water over the Drakensberg. This scheme, if implemented, would parallel the

existing scheme in which water from the Woodstock Dam, higher up on the Tugela, is diverted via the Driel and Kilburn Dams to the large high altitude Sterkfontein Dam. Sterkfontein Dam provides both storage for Gauteng and also through a segregated compartment of the reservoir known as the Driekloof Dam, the headpond for a massive energy storage scheme. The scheme at the time of its construction was the fifth largest of its kind in the world, and it enables water to be run back down the Drakensberg through four 250 MW generators at periods of high electricity demand, and to be pumped back by reversing the generators to act as pumps at times when electrical generation from thermal power stations in Mpumalanga is in excess of consumer demand. The Drakensberg Power station, central to the energy storage scheme, is situated a kilometre inside a mountain and is in a hollowed out chamber some 13 storeys high.

It is not known whether any additional Tugela transfer project would include a similar energy storage scheme, but it seems likely that the Feasibility Study for Phase 2 of the LHWP might be paralleled by a similar study for a second Tugela transfer scheme. Ultimately the relative costs, including environmental costs, would be crucial in the final decision as to which is the next scheme to be implemented. If the second Tugela scheme gets the go-ahead, Phase 2 of the LHWP might well be 30 years down the line instead of a mere 10 years or so.

There is, however, a strong viewpoint which has developed in recent years, that neither big scheme is necessary in the near future, because there is the potential for massive savings of water simply by reducing the level of leakages, particularly in the reticulations serving the peripheral townships of Gauteng. Initial water saving projects, including pressure reduction in the mains at night when most water is lost, have already paid for themselves many times over. The original idea that additional water schemes to serve Gauteng might be needed to come onstream at 10 year intervals also made assumptions about population growth which, as is now apparent, is not going to happen because of the demographic impact of HIV/AIDS.

### **Leseli Mokhele publishes *Home-grown Short Stories***

For some years, the newspapers *Public Eye* and *The Mirror* have serialized short stories by an enterprising and ambitious Maseru writer, Leseli Mokhele. A collection of ten of the stories has now appeared, published by the author himself under the title *Home-grown short stories*.

The stories are largely set in Maseru and its suburbs, some of which have acquired curiously gentrified names such as Tšiu Ville [= Ha Tšiu] and Six pound-Ville [from the old name Six Pounds (the required payment to the chief for a site) of Lower Thamae].

Most stories present a relentless and frequently implausible sequence of episodes of promiscuity, drunkenness, crime and violent death, while the writing exhibits an uncontrolled exuberance which takes liberties with the English language and exhibits implausible utterances such as (p. 30) 'Reiterate your question if you want to die'. Characters frequently 'hyperventilate' and 'blench' and sleep in 'malodorous blankets', while trees have turned into 'boles', attractive girls inevitably 'sashay' rather than walk, and drunks are 'redolent of *hopose*'. Moreover, although there are endless bloody encounters, no-one bleeds. They all haemorrhage.

The plots are not for the squeamish, and for examples here we take just the first and the last in the book.

*Phauphau's death* is a grisly story of an unsuccessful shopkeeper with an unfaithful wife, who also becomes an object of ridicule when he cannot even commit suicide successfully. When he seeks assistance from a traditional healer, a medicine murder is commissioned to strengthen his business. He comes back from the healer with powerful medicine, the genitals of a child. However, when he arrives home, he discovers his only child, his son, is missing. Phauphau kills the healer, but is then killed by one of the healer's snakes.

*Farewell* is a mother's lament for a daughter, who against advice elopes with a wealthy lover.

The mother pursues her daughter throughout Maseru, finally having a knife fight with the lover, when she finds him with her daughter *in flagrante delicto* on the 10th floor of the Lesotho Bank Tower. It is to no avail. Her daughter dies a miserable death from AIDS.

There are no happy endings in this book, which provides a harrowing (but fortunately not typical) picture of life in Lesotho's capital. A striking and appropriate feature of the book is the cover showing in striking light and shade a sweaty male hand on a naked female breast.

### **Street Lights Come to Hlotse**

As reported in *Public Eye* of 18 March 2005, some 7 km of roads in and near Hlotse are to receive street lighting. Hlotse will be the fourth town to have street lights, after Maseru, Mafeteng and Teyateyaneng.

### **New Publication Documents Changes in Lesotho Bird Species**

A second edition of *Birds including annotated species checklist* compiled by David Ambrose was published by House 9 Publications in the Lesotho Annotated Bibliography series at the National University of Lesotho in March 2005. The literature on birds has expanded so much that the publication documenting the literature has grown from 102 pages to 246 pages in the space of just over 6 years since the first edition in November 1998. Amongst the features of the new edition are adoption of the new standardized bird names of the International Ornithological Committee. They take some getting used to, and some are quite different to the names formerly commonly used in southern Africa. The Steelblue Widowfinch, for example, is now the Village Indigobird, while the Sharpbilled Honeyguide is now the Brown-backed Honeybird. Even the familiar Blacksmith Plover has undergone a change and is now the Blacksmith Lapwing. The Purple Gallinule is now the African Purple Swamphen.

Eleven new species of Lesotho birds have been added to the checklist, namely the Dwarf Bittern, Booted Eagle, African Fish Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Arnott's Chat, Chorister Robin-Chat, Namaqualand Warbler, Short-tailed Pipit, Pale-winged Starling and Greater Double-collared Sunbird. Ten of these additions are from recent records, but one is very ancient indeed. The zoologist and explorer, Sir Andrew Smith, while travelling between the northern Phuthiatsana and Hlotse rivers on 15 November 1834 recorded a '*Saxicola* with white head and shoulders'. Only one bird in southern Africa answers this description and that is Arnott's Chat. It has now been added as an historical species. Its present day distribution does not come south of the Vaal river.

The new publication, apart from documenting newly recorded species, notes other species such as the Fork-tailed Drongo which had not been seen in Lesotho since the early 20th century. It has now been recorded in Masitise, Moyeni, Maseru and Roma. Several other species have shown significant increases including the Glossy Ibis, Natal Spurfowl, Crested Barbet and also the Redbilled Firefinch, together with the Village Indigobird which parasitises the Firefinch. An unwelcome bird which has now spread widely, particularly in urban areas, is the Common Myna. Additional water bodies and particularly extended tree-cover seem to have played a significant part in the spread of these species.

On the other hand, certain species have diminished in population. These include the Lesser Kestrel whose numbers have crashed so dramatically that while thousands of birds could be seen in Lesotho some 10 to 15 years ago, in the summer of 2004-5, there was not a single reported record. This bird migrates from its breeding grounds in Europe and Asia, and it seems that changing agricultural practices including use of insecticides have largely eliminated it in countries such as Spain, where it was formerly common. Another bird which has declined is the White-necked Raven, which is resident in Lesotho, but seems to have been poisoned locally as a result of carcasses put out as bait laced with sheep-dip. The reasons for the decline in two other migrant birds is less obvious. These are Abdim's Stork and the Yellow-billed Kite whose breeding grounds are far to the north of Lesotho, and in the

case of Abdim's Stork in countries of West Africa such as Burkina Faso.

The 1998 publication recorded a total of 240 bird species for Lesotho, including historical species. There are 20 birds in this category for which there have been no records since 1950. 240 + 11 new species should be 251, but in fact the new total is 249 species, because two species previously recorded have been dropped from the list because the evidence for their past or present occurrence in Lesotho has been judged inadequate for their retention on the list.

The book *Biological diversity in Lesotho*, edited by Ambrose, Pomela & Talukdar, and published in 2000, summarized the then available knowledge of Lesotho's vertebrate species as follows:

Species (2000)	FISH	AMPHIBIANS	REPTILES	BIRDS	MAMMALS	TOTALS
Endemic	1	6	3	30	3	43
Common	8	2	11	86	10	117
Uncommon	5	4	1	81	15	106
Single Record	-	5	16	80	27	128
Historical	-	2	9	41	8	60
Extinct	-	-	3	22	19	44
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>498</b>

More recent information which is now available from the new birds checklist and other similar publications (for example a new *Amphibians* checklist published in November 2004) enables the table to be revised as follows:

Species (2005)	FISH	AMPHIBIANS	REPTILES	BIRDS	MAMMALS	TOTALS
Endemic	1	6	3	20	3	33
Common	8	2	11	87	10	118
Uncommon	5	5	1	93	16	120
Single Record	-	6	16	80	28	130
Historical	-	4	10	49	6	69
Extinct	-	-	2	20	20	42
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>512</b>

As can be seen, there are now for the first time records for over 500 different vertebrate species in Lesotho, 68% of them birds. The fact that 42 of the total of 512 vertebrate species are historical (meaning no records more recent than 1950) indicates a serious decline in biodiversity, particularly in the mammalian and avian fauna. The 69 single records are animals, most of them birds, which have mainly come to Lesotho as vagrants. This leaves some 401 species which might reasonably be expected to be encountered in Lesotho today, although a third of these are considered rare, which is more precisely defined as either less than 10 known reliable records or a known resident population of less than 10 of the animals. The reasons for Lesotho's depauperate vertebrate fauna are familiar: the loss of former grasslands which supported plains game, and the hunting of large animals (mainly large mammals but also the Rock Python) to extinction. However, as Lesotho becomes more forested and acquires new water bodies the trend is no longer completely downwards and new species, particularly of birds, are finding suitable habitat to establish themselves.

### Lesotho Appoints its New Ambassador to Ireland on St Patrick's Day

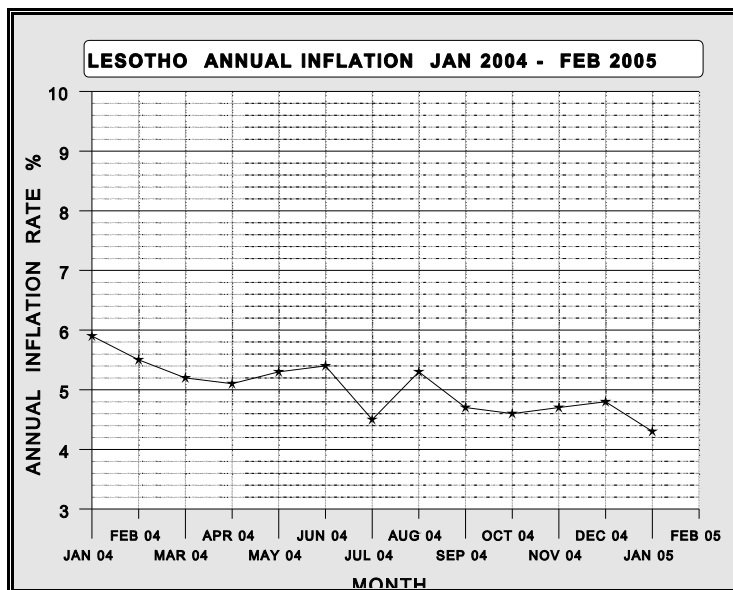
On St Patrick's Day, 17 March 2005, Lesotho's new Ambassador to Ireland,. **Mrs 'Mannete 'Malethole Ramaili** was commissioned by His Majesty King Letsie III as Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Ireland. Later in the day at the traditional St Patrick's Day garden party hosted by the Irish Consul-General to Lesotho, Mr Bill Nolan, Mrs Ramaili was introduced to invited guests who included members of the Diplomatic Corps, Ministers, senior civil servants and members of Lesotho's Irish community.

His Majesty also commissioned **Dr Shabbir Peerbhai** as Lesotho's new High Commissioner to India. Dr Peerbhai, a dentist by profession is a Lesotho citizen of Indian descent and was born at Hleoheng in Leribe District. He trained as a dentist in India where he met his wife, who is also a dentist.

### **Inflation Rate Lowest Since 1969**

Lesotho's **Annual Inflation Rate** which closely tracks the rate in South Africa has now remained below 5% since September 2004. In January 2005 it fell to 4.3%, the lowest since 1969. Normally the Consumer Price Index, on which the monthly inflation rate is based, is published by the Bureau of Statistics for each month towards the end of the following month. However, enquiries at the Bureau of Statistics on 1 April 2005 revealed that the February 2005 CPI was not yet available owing to staff shortages. The comparable South African inflation rate is based on the CPIX (the Consumer Price Index excluding interest on mortgage bonds). In December 2004, this showed an annual inflation rate of 4.3%, but it dropped to 3.6% in January 2005, and had dropped to 3.1% in February, suggesting that Lesotho's inflation rate in February might also drop.

Guesses on longer term trends in the inflation rate are notoriously hazardous. Much depends on the rand/dollar (and hence the loti/dollar) exchange rate, which has recently been hovering around \$1 = M6.00. Recent surges in oil prices are also an obviously inflationary factor. The most recent Lesotho petrol price rise was on 21 March 2005, when the pump price for petrol in Maseru rose modestly from M3.90 to M4.06 per litre. Meanwhile in neighbouring South Africa, petrol went up by 42 cents in March and a further 38 cents increase was due to be implemented on 6 April, bringing petrol for the first time ever to over R5.00 a litre in Gauteng. Similar increases in Lesotho seem inevitable, although the bureaucratic procedures needed to effect a Lesotho price rise normally result in a delay of at least a month, providing opportunities for South African motorists, and particularly minibus taxis on the route to the border, to sneak into Lesotho and buy cheaper petrol.



### **Transformation Resource Centre Publishes *The Irony of the "White Gold"***

The Transformation Resource Centre in Maseru has published a new book, *The Irony of the "White Gold"*, an expanded edition in English of the earlier book, *Sehou mehloling ea Lesotho* ('Voices from Lesotho's water sources').

Both books have a cover photograph of the Mohale Reservoir depicting an area where former villages have now been submerged. The Sesotho book is based on seven interviews and the English book on eleven interviews undertaken in 2000 and 2001 with individuals impacted in one way or another by Phase 1B of the Lesotho Highlands Water project.

Amongst those interviewed is **'Makuena Mohlomi**, a woman of 35, who was moved from the inundated village of Molikaliko Ha Tsapane to the Ha Matala area in the suburbs of Maseru. She had completed high school and was given a liaison job by LHDA to smooth the relations with neighbours of the new settlers. This has not been particularly easy, with the newcomers made to feel so unwelcome that they were even refused permission to bury their dead in the village graveyard.

**Kanono Thabane**, aged 57, is a male resident in the area in the same suburb of Maseru to which 'Makuena and others were moved. Some of the new houses for those resettled from the Mohale Dam area were built by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority on his field. He complained that the people from Mohale 'have been imposed on us', and that improvements to village facilities promised by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority had not been made.

Another interviewee, **'Mamookho Tota**, aged 53, was living at Ha Koporale overlooking the Mohale Reservoir, and had not then been moved. She was receiving compensation money and food for fields which she had lost as a result of the inundation. Nevertheless she did not think that the project had brought benefits to her, and with six children, four still at school, she was struggling to survive.

**Nkhono 'Maseipati**, according to her own words was between 7 and 9 years old when Paramount Chief Letsie II died. This would make her about 95 in the year 2000. At the time of the interview, it was 3 years since she had been moved from Molikaliko to nearby Likalaneng. She had lost three fields as a result of the inundation by the Mohale Reservoir, and as compensation she was to have received both money and food. Money had come but the food had not been arriving regularly. Her grandson who was present at the interview was particularly angry. He was now without fields and jobless, even though the project had been giving jobs to many people from elsewhere.

**'Malisema Maliehe**, aged 81, was moved from Molikaliko Ha Tsapane to Ha Ramakabatane between Sefikeng and Thaba-Bosiu. She chose this area because she had a daughter who had settled nearby after marriage. On the whole she had been better received than those who had been resettled in Ha Matala. Some of the compensation money had been used to buy a taxi, but although there were willing drivers, it did not run because currently it had no tyres. Amongst problems encountered in the new village was lack of medicinal plants growing nearby. Medicines had to be bought at a dispensary and this cost money. She was not really happy in her new village and still dreamed of Molikaliko.

**Malea Tsapane**, aged 16, moved with his family from Molikaliko to Nazareth in 1998. He was one of the few interviewed who did not have complaints. In fact in the new environment he was able to attend school regularly whereas at Molikaliko he had had to alternate between attending school and herding animals. Nevertheless he missed his old home.

**Lipholo Bosielo**, an old man aged 71, was moved from Molikaliko to Nazareth Ha Nkhema. He and his wife were the only ones to have been moved there, and although they were in poor health the village gave them a warm welcome. He was receiving compensation money and there was also local support from World Vision.

Amongst general comments, there was general satisfaction amongst those resettled locally in the Mohale area with the way that LHDA had made arrangements for moving their ancestors' graves. It paid for the appropriate traditional feast to mark the occasion. On the other hand, the loss of the profitable (although illegal) cultivation and sale of dagga (marijuana) was a source of regret. A bag of dagga could be sold to Zulus trading in the commodity for M700 a time, and such income-generating opportunities were absent after resettlement.

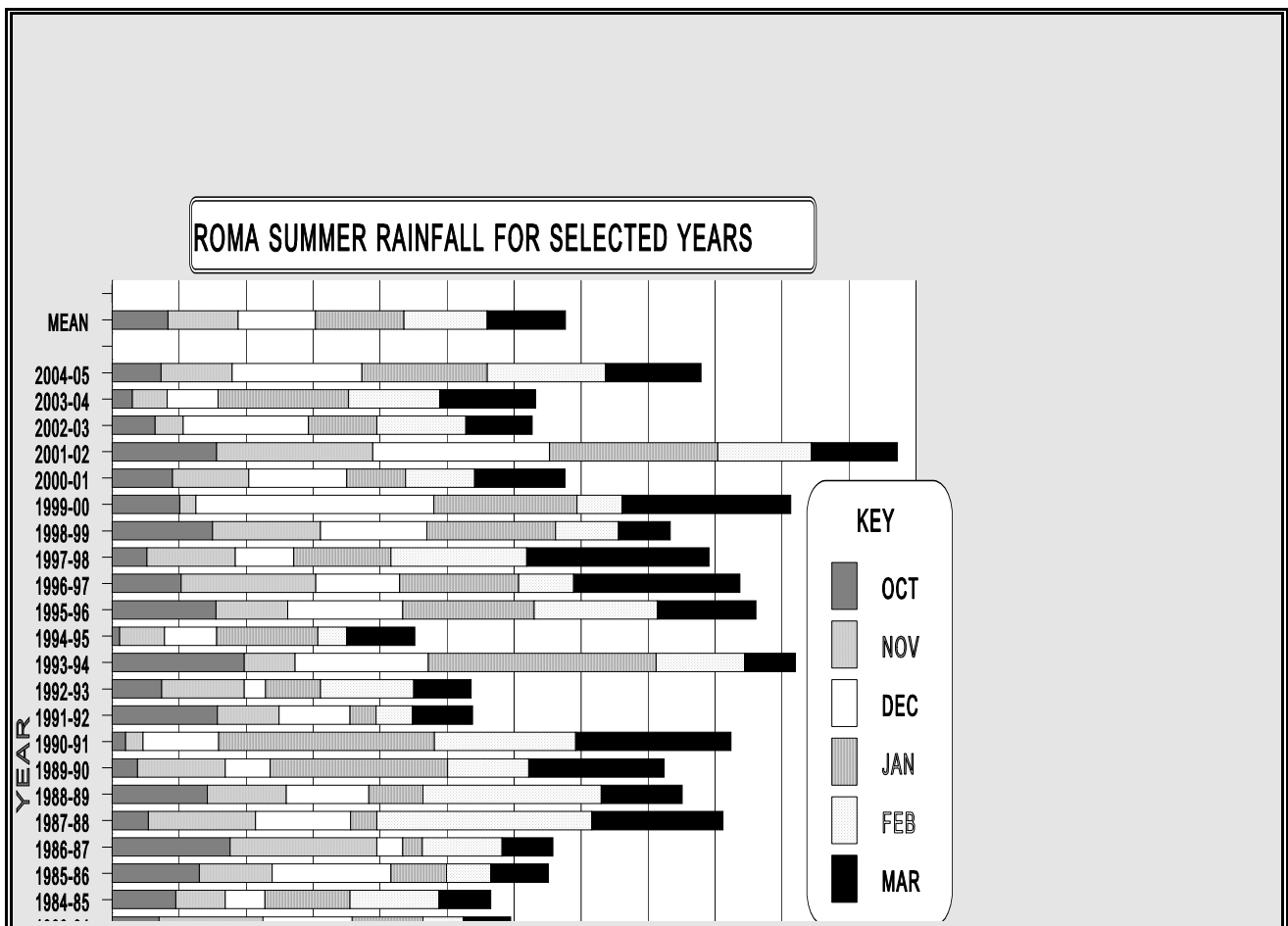
### **Summer Rainfall Above Mean**

The rainfall for the six summer months (October to December) throughout Lesotho was generally above average, and most parts of the country received good rains, particularly from December to March. Summer crops by March seemed to be doing relatively well in the Maloti and central and northern Lowlands. In the southern Lowlands, rainfall seems to have been less regular at the key times for

maize, namely the stages of germination, tasselling and the filling of the cobs. Some areas also had devastating hail. The overall harvest from Lowlands areas will be also affected by the large amount of land which was left fallow and not cultivated at all, owing to lack of the necessary financial resources.

The chart shows rainfall for Roma where overall summer rainfall totalled 879 mm, 200 mm or 29% above the mean summer rainfall for Roma of 679 mm. As the chart shows, it was the wettest summer for three years, in fact the wettest since the extraordinarily wet summer of 2001-2, when no less than 1172 mm fell, making it the wettest summer of the past 100 years, and one in which there was widespread crop failure because there was too much rain. The driest summer in the past 100 years at Roma was 1932-33, with only 351 mm, and this is also shown on the chart. This was a summer of almost total crop failure.

Summary of events in Lesotho is a quarterly publication compiled and published by



David Ambrose at the National University of Lesotho, P. O. Roma 180, Lesotho.