SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN LESOTHO
Volume 11, Number 4 (Fourth Quarter 2004)

Graduation Speeches Emphasize the Need for Educational Reform

At the Graduation Ceremony in Roma on 25 September 2004, the Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho, King Letsie III, quoted from the recently adopted Vision 2020 document to the effect that Lesotho 'shall have a well-developed human resource base'. He said that the education system was weak in that there was inadequate science and technology research and development, inadequacies in curriculum development and poor management of educational institutions. Direct and indirect funding to the University by Government was over 80% of the total, and NUL should continue to seek ways of reducing costs and devise and implement revenue generating programmes.

In his speech, the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mafa Sejanamane said that the National University of Lesotho was a key part of the recently completed *Lesotho Education Strategic Plan 2005-2015*. 'The key strategies of the Plan are, among others, to invest in infrastructure development and rehabilitation for higher education institutions, review the curriculum, establish national quality assurance mechanisms for the higher education sub-sector and mainstream HIV/AIDS interventions'. He criticized the extent to which current funding discourse was focused on basic education, relegating tertiary education to the background.

The representative of the graduands, Sekonyela Mapetja, was critical of the lack of facilities at NUL including insufficient computers and up-to-date library books. There were important journals the library did not take. The many students forced to live off campus because of lack of accommodation suffered insecurity because of a high rate of robbery. 'In no way can this institution provide innovative solutions to societal needs if it does not thoroughly consult with the society.' He made reference to the high rate of unemployment amongst graduates and appealed to government to address this issue.

The National University of Lesotho has recently gone through considerable upheaval, with a transformation plan which went sadly awry and then had to be aborted, because it was costing too much and resulting in too little positive change. In fact transformation had opened the doors to large numbers of aspirant students with lower than normal entrance requirements. They had been admitted into large classes without the additional staff to meet the needs of weaker students and without regard to national manpower needs. Over 200 students per year, for example, had been recently admitted to law programmes, when the national need was perhaps 10% of this number. This had been done without thought of the possible consequences. African countries with a surplus of lawyers have been plagued with instability, because unemployed lawyers can do little else except become politicians who then vie with each other to seize power. At the same time, Lesotho is suffering from shortages of key manpower in other areas. There is relatively little attention given to the training of technicians, for example, which on average are needed at a ratio of five technicians for every graduate. University staff were perhaps rather ruefully reflecting on this in the months following the graduation ceremony, when the lack of qualified and competent water technicians was a key factor in the repeated failure of its water supply, even though 2004 rainfall was above average.

Decimal Comma Rises from the Dead to Haunt High Schools

When southern Africa metricated in the early 1970s, the Republic of South Africa decided to use a decimal comma instead of a decimal point. This decision was seen by many to have been a political statement to bolster the dominance of Afrikaans as South Africa's major European language. Thus South Africa aligned itself with certain countries on the continent of Europe rather than the English-speaking world, which in the process of metricating retained the decimal point. Despite South Africa's decision, other countries in southern Africa, including Lesotho, aligned themselves with the

Commonwealth and English-speaking world and retained the decimal point in all commercial and educational applications.

That this was a wise decision has been vindicated. Not only does computer software almost invariably use the decimal point, but since the end of apartheid, the decimal comma in South Africa has undergone the reverse political process and is being progressively abandoned.

However, in Lesotho in 2004, a very strange thing has happened. A laudable scheme to provide high school pupils with free access to textbooks was devised, and companies were asked to tender for the supply of these books. The long used Macmillan Project in Secondary Mathematics (PRISM) series lost in the bidding process, and a multiply authored first-year textbook from the rival firm Longman won the tender. There was evidence of haste in preparing the book, and indeed it only became available half way through the academic year for which it was intended. When it did arrive in schools, it had a nasty surprise for teachers and pupils. The decimal comma, which in southern Africa many considered to deserve no more than a historical footnote, had risen from the dead! It appears throughout the new book and is today haunting the mathematics classes of Lesotho's secondary and high schools.

Morija Festival Successful on Reduced Budget

The Sixth **Morija Arts & Cultural Festival** took place from Friday 1 October to Sunday 3 October 2004. As quoted in *Public Eye* of 6 October 2004, the festival organiser said that in order to curb problems which had plagued previous festivals, there was this year a complete ban on alcohol consumption within the festival grounds. Inspector Francis Fobo of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, when interviewed, agreed that incidents of crime were down, but that nevertheless there had been reported one murder (outside the festival grounds), two road accidents, two sexual offences and numerous mobile phone thefts.

The 2004 Festival suffered from less sponsorship than had been hoped for. Its final budget was M700 000, considerably less than the M1.2 million to M2.4 million which had been available in previous years. It also suffered from competition with other festivals during the same period. For example it was held at the same time as the Seventh Free State **Macufe** or **Mangaung Cultural Festival** held in Bloemfontein, and the *Moafrika* traditional festival, **Lipapali tsa *Moafrika*** was also held at Qeme Ha Thaabe at the same time. The name *Macufe* makes an equally suitable acronym for the Morija Festival, and is now also in wide use in Lesotho, particularly in the Sesotho press, for the Morija Arts and Cultural Festival.

Prime Minister Raises Appropriateness of National Flag and Anthem

At the 38th Anniversary of Independence celebrations at the National Stadium on 4 October 2004, the Prime Minister, **Pakalitha Mosisili**, raised the matter of the appropriateness of the National Flag and National Anthem of Lesotho. As is well known, the original national flag at Independence, incorporating a conical Basotho hat, was found to be inappropriate by the Military Government because its colours were those of the ruling Basotho National Party. As a result the flag was replaced in 1987 by the present white, blue, green, and brown flag bearing a silhouette of a traditional shield. While the colours white, blue and green symbolize *khotso, pula, nala* (peace, rain, prosperity, the words of the national motto), the shield is in the colour brown, an unusual colour for a national flag. Judging by polls carried out by newspapers following the Prime Minister's speech (in which he favoured restoring the hat to the flag), it seems that many people would also like to see the Basotho hat back on the flag. If a change is made, Lesotho will make vexillological history by becoming the first African country to have had three flags since Independence. (The United States (like the European Union) has of course had far more flags, as it adds additional stars every time it adds a new state.)

The matter of the National Anthem is rather different. It was originally composed by the

missionary François Coillard over 120 years ago. Coillard moved from his Leribe (Maoana-Masooana) Mission to found the French Protestant mission in Barotseland (now in western Zambia), where he composed the Barotseland National Anthem, which has the same Swiss hymn tune and almost identical words to those of the Lesotho National Anthem, save that it has an additional verse asking God to save King Lewanika. [The Barotseland Kingdom had been founded by a group of Bafokeng under Sebetoane, and so its official language at the time was Sesotho, and even today the language, now known as Silozi, is still very close to Sesotho.] Coillard's original hymn, called *Lesotho*, had five verses, but three, which were deemed less appropriate, were dropped at Independence. The two remaining verses have generally been accepted, but the Prime Minister (a former Professor of African Languages) drew attention to the line *ke moo re holileng* and suggested it would be more correct if it became *ke moo re holetseng*. The difference is relatively slight but significant, the first meaning 'this [Lesotho] is where we grew up' and the second 'this is where we were nurtured' which suggests more attachment to Lesotho as a nation.

Local Government Elections Promised within Financial Year

The long delayed Local Government elections, originally promised before the 1998 General Election, and later promised repeatedly to be held within a year, were most recently promised to be held before the end of the calendar year, 2004. In his speech on 4 October 2004, as reported in *Mopheme* of 5 October 2004, the Prime Minister promised the elections would be held before the end of the financial year, i.e. before 31 March 2005. Later indications were that they might be held on 30 April 2005.

The elections have been repeatedly delayed because of the complex and costly electoral system which has been devised top-down, with the Independent Electoral Commission taking responsibility. Formerly, Village Development Councils (which were prematurely abolished, but still often informally exist because they are needed) were elected at locally arranged elections without excessive intervention from central government.

Various indications that the electoral process is at last moving forward include new legislation and legal notices published during 2004. The *Local Government (Amendment) Act 2004* was published in a *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary*, no. 53 of 2004 (17 May 2004), and amends the *Local Government Act 1997* (which confusingly and erroneously was originally printed as the *Local Government Act 1996* even though the royal assent was not given until 1997).

Amongst changes introduced by the amended Act are the renaming of Rural Councils as District Councils, and changing their composition so that the number of members is determined by the Minister of Local Government, but that they include 2, rather than 3 gazetted chiefs 'representing all Community Councils in the District' [the method of choice is not stated]. On the other Councils, chiefs are no longer to be elected but to be nominated by other chiefs in the relevant area, so probably it is also intended that this should apply also to District Councils.

A new provision is that not less than a third of seats in any council shall be reserved for women, but the method of achieving this is not stated. The provision about electoral divisions is deleted, thus simplifying the delimitation procedure. The Boundaries Commission is renamed the Administrative Boundaries Commission.

The *Local Government Elections (Amendment) Act 2004* was published in a *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary*, no. 75 of 2004 (22 July 2004), and amends the *Local Government Election Act 1998*. Given that the amended *Act* is nearly as long as the original Act, and given that consolidation of legislation with amendments is a tedious process, it might have been more efficient to have produced the Act as a new piece of primary legislation.

Amongst changes are corrections of various spelling mistakes; correcting the voting age from 28 to 18; harmonizing qualifications to vote so that they are the same for national and local elections;

making provision for official symbols for political parties and independent candidates; and confirmation that the electoral model for local elections will be 'first past the post'. A Fourth Schedule is added to the original Act setting out an Electoral Code of Conduct.

The Administrative Boundaries Commission mentioned in the *Local Government (Amendment Act) 2004* was appointed on 28 April 2004 and consisted of five persons headed by the Honourable Justice Guni, Judge of the High Court. Its functions *inter alia* were 'to demarcate new administrative boundaries having regard to the interests to local communities, to secure local governance and development'. New boundaries for local government were in fact finally gazetted in a *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary*, no. 120 of 2004 (22 November 2004) as a Legal Notice, *Local Government (Declaration of Councils) Notice 2004*.

The boundaries as gazetted use parliamentary constituencies as the basic units for creating Community Councils. Whether this is wise only time will tell, because parliamentary constituencies are reviewed in terms of the Constitution not less than eight and not more than ten years after the previous review, and since this last review was in 1998, they are likely to change within the next two to four years. Local government areas, by contrast, might usually be expected to have more stable boundaries.

Using the 80 parliamentary constituencies, the 8 constituencies which correspond to the Maseru Urban Area are excluded, and from the remaining 72, a total of 128 Community Councils have been created, the numbers ranging from 10 in Butha-Buthe, Berea and Quthing Districts up to 18 in Leribe District. The total number is considerably less than envisaged in the original *Local Government Act* which had specified 17 to 21 councils per district (a very restricted range given the vast differences in population between districts). The amended *Act* provides appropriately more freedom. Although, as will be seen, the boundary descriptions are not always clear, the effect of the new boundaries published in November 2004 is that some 34 Community Council areas coincide with parliamentary constituencies while another 6 are similar to constituency areas, but have had relatively small boundary adjustments made to link together areas across constituency boundaries with community of interests. These 40 constituency type Community Council areas are all in the Lowlands or Foothills and many of them embrace urban areas including district headquarters, which might expect to have urban or municipal councils, although these are not provided for.

Each of the remaining 32 constituencies are subdivided into 2, 3 or 4 Community Councils, with the five cases where four CCs are created being constituencies in Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek Districts. This has resulted in some CCs, although relatively large in area, having very small populations. For example the Matsoku CC (part of Malingoaneng Constituency) has a total population of less than 2 500 people, while the Pae-la-itlhatsoa CC, part of the same constituency has villages with only about 1 000 people, although since its area embraces the Letšeng Mine, the total resident population is considerably larger. The reasons for such small CCs are no doubt related to local feelings. The Matsoku river, which divides constituencies and also districts, is populated by Batlokoa on the east bank, and by non-Batlokoa (called by the Batlokoa 'Bakhalahali') on the west bank. Geographically it would be logical to put all villages in the valley under a single CC. However, the Batlokoa have a strong separate identity and always want their own institutions. At meetings of boundary commissions, they have been heard to say, 'Ntate, we cannot work with people who have not attended our initiation schools'. Thus the Matsoku valley is served by Seshote CC on the west and Matsoku CC on the east. Matsoku CC at less than 2 500 people has less than 10% of the population of a number of CCs in the Lowlands, for example those which include district headquarters (and also Mazenod and Maputsoe) which typically have populations in the range 25 000 to 50 000.

Of some interest is the fact that apart from omitting the Maseru Municipal Council Area, the delimitation of CCs fails to cover the whole of Lesotho. There have been some omissions closely adjoining Maseru, notably the Sekamaneng, Koalabata and Sekhutlong villages to the north-east of Maseru and Masianokeng to the south-east. Presumably it is envisaged that when the Maseru City

Council is re-established, Maseru should logically include these villages which are essentially already suburbs. The other omissions are communal pasture areas, typically large parts of the Central Range and of the eastern summit plateau, mainly devoid of settlements although Sani Top, Oxbow and the Mahlasela Ski Resort are included. Although all such rural areas fall under the jurisdiction of area chiefs, they have mainly not been incorporated within the boundaries of CCs. They now seem to fall into some local government limbo, which may create problems given that many of these areas fall under the Maloti/Drakensberg Transfrontier Project which needs to work closely with local government authorities.

The *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* of 22 November 2004 with the new boundaries is 98 pages long and without a map. It was apparently prepared in some haste, because the text shows clear signs of not having been carefully checked, and as a result contains numerous errors, some simply misspelled names or wrongly numbered cross-references, but others of some substance. From stylistic differences in the boundary descriptions, it seems the boundaries are the work of at least two persons, one of whom had great difficulty in distinguishing between east and west which are frequently interchanged. Other problems are the use of the word 'watershed' to mean 'watercourse' and 'ridge' to mean 'escarpment'. Even when 'watershed' is more correctly used, it is often used in reference to a single river when as part of a boundary description, it is only meaningful as a catchment boundary between two different watercourses. Boundaries are often said to 'follow the district boundary' assuming that the boundary marked on the 1: 50 000 maps is in fact the correct district boundary, when in reality it often deviates from the locally accepted district boundary. District boundaries in Lesotho are in any case problematic, because, apart from Thaba-Tseka District, they have never been legally defined and their boundaries have (apart from small sections demarcated after disputes) never been accurately described. Although the CC boundaries as described often cannot be drawn with complete precision on maps, the intention is generally clear. However there is one serious error in that councils H05 Matebeng and K13 Sehong-Hong (the numbering system uses the same district identifying letters as are used for car registrations) are described so that both contain several of the same villages, those between the Matebeng and Patiseng rivers, while some other villages near their common boundary are in neither CC!

Amongst interesting features of the gazetted councils are the names assigned to each of them. Many coincide with urban constituencies, and in such cases new names different from the towns have been found. Linare CC at Hlotse should please football supporters, and Makaota CC at Mafeteng reflects the fact that people in western Mafeteng District are known as Makaota. The Mohale's Hoek urban area is served by Motlejoeng CC named after an infamous cannibal, while the CC embracing Qacha's Nek urban area is named Letloepe, a locally familiar name for the town, deriving from a rock which rises above the town shaped like the neck of a spitting cobra. Some other names seem less happily chosen. Likila CC in Butha-Buthe District includes areas occupied both by the people of Butha-Buthe ward, who use Likila as their praise name, and areas occupied by the Makhoakhoa. If the CC is named instead after the protea trees, *likila*, found in the district, then this ought to have been given as the name to Linakeng CC nearby, which includes the village of Ha Mothuntšane with the largest protea forest in Lesotho. In a few cases the names seem to have been chosen in error. Council F06 in Mohale's Hoek District is named Mootsinyane which is a village name, but the village is located in the area of Teke CC (F05). No doubt one of the first tasks of Community Councils, once constituted, will be to decide their official names. Thus Khomokhoana CC, at present hardly recognizable as Maputsoe (Khomokhoana is a river on its eastern boundary), will no doubt come up with something more appropriate, and councils with rather mundane names such as Thaba-Kholo, Thaba-Khubelu, Thaba-Chitja and Likhohlong may come up with more distinctive and memorable names.

WASA's Debt of M200 million to be Written Off

The **Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA)**, which is responsible for water and sewerage in 14 of Lesotho's towns, has long been plagued with management problems, which have led to the

accumulation of a M200 million debt. In an interview with the Minister of Natural Resources, Mr Monyane Moleleki, reported in *Lesotho Today* of 7 October 2004, it was revealed that the Lesotho Government had signed a performance agreement with WASA which provided for the writing off of this debt in return for a binding contract which states clearly the quantity and quality of water WASA will supply. In a separate interview, the Chief Executive of WASA, Mrs Refiloe Tlali, gave further details of the agreement and said that the achievement of WASA's financial sustainability will depend on the management and implementation of tariffs to provide sufficient income. Government's obligations include development of timely procedures for approving tariff changes. Moreover all government ministries would have to pay their water and sanitation bills on the due date or be disconnected.

Mrs Refiloe Tlali is relatively new to WASA, having previously been with the Financial Division of Lesotho Highlands Development Authority. For a while she was LHDA's Acting Chief Executive. She succeeded Mrs 'Mamosebi Pholo, a lawyer by training, who had become WASA's Chief Executive, having previously acted as its Corporate Secretary.

Public Eye Tackles the Problem of Abortion

In an editorial in its 8 October 2004, *Public Eye* called for abortion to be either legalized or some other solution to be found to the problems that cause unwanted pregnancies. The same issue carried as its lead story, a report that the bodies of 10 abandoned newborn babies had been found in the Mejametalana Dam in the suburbs of Maseru during the previous week. It also carried the story of a 22-year old Qacha's Nek woman and her 34-year old woman abortionist accomplice, who were gaoled for attempting to procure a miscarriage. Both women were gaoled for two years, one year of which was suspended for two years, with the alternative of a M800 fine.

No political party in Lesotho has yet dared to incur the possible wrath of churches by suggesting abortion in Lesotho might be legalized, even under stringent conditions. The abortion law is thus the same in Lesotho as it was at Independence in 1966. Abortion was then illegal both in Lesotho and in the former colonial power, Britain. Subsequently abortion laws were liberalized in Britain, and abortion is also legal and freely available in South Africa. Only 200 metres beyond the Maseru Bridge Border Post on the South African side, near to the taxi rank, a large vertical sign advertizes Safe Abortion at the Mary Stopes Clinic in Bloemfontein, and provides telephone numbers for those wanting further information. The reality, however, is that only women living close to Lesotho's borders and with adequate funds can afford an abortion. The poorer women, those least able to provide for an additional child, have no option but to complete the pregnancy, or as frequently occurs, to be involved in an illegal and often life-threatening practice.

Sodomy Trials Expose Bleak Conditions in Lesotho's Prisons

As reported in *Mopheme* of 12 October 2004, two awaiting trial prisoners were charged before a Maseru Magistrate on Friday 8 October of sodomy with a third prisoner, an 18-year old youth awaiting trial on a rape charge. The two accused, awaiting trial respectively for murder and car theft, are said to have competed to sodomize the youth on his first night in the cell, resulting in a fight with an iron bar.

In another case, reported in *Mopheme* of 26 October 2004, two prisoners in the Maseru Central Prison were convicted of forcibly sodomizing another inmate. Under the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* they were each sentenced to 10 years imprisonment without the option of a fine.

Conditions in Lesotho's gaols are notoriously bad, and were exposed by the White Commission Report tabled before Parliament on 24 February 2004. Amongst its findings were that 'prisoners are housed in abysmally dilapidated prisons, which are mostly antiquated, overcrowded and devoid of basic maintenance'. Homosexuality resulted in rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and Lesotho laws did not allow the

distribution of condoms in prisons. Inefficiency in the legal system, led to a large proportion of prisoners being not convicts, but prisoners on remand awaiting trial.

In a related report in *Public Eye* of 5 November 2004, the Officer Commanding the Central Prison in Maseru, Senior Superintendent Matete Mahao, was quoted as saying that at least two prisoners died in his prison every week, most of them from tuberculosis, an HIV opportunistic disease.

Although the serious state of affairs has now been publicly ventilated, there is little evidence so far of the necessary action to rectify it.

German Football Coach Arrives

A new coach for the Lesotho national football team, Likuena, arrived to take up his post in Lesotho on Tuesday 12 October. He is **Tony Hey**, who had a long career as a footballer in Germany's Bundesliga, and also played in the English Premier League, and in Switzerland and Cyprus. He took up coaching after 15 years as a player, and became head coach of two different teams in Germany.

The new Lesotho coach does not come cheap. He received an advance payment of _40 000 (about M320 000), and will receive a salary of _10 000 (about M80 000) per month (about M1 million per year) together with a free house and car.

LEFA Accused of Conspiring to Lower Players' Ages to Qualify for Under-20 Team

In a lead story in *Public Eye* of 15 October 2004, photographic evidence was produced that at least one member of the Lesotho Under-20 Team, the Makoanyane XI, had had a new passport issued reducing his age by more than 5 years. The photograph showed both the old and new passports of Manamolela Qhobela, and there were allegations that similar duplicate passports had reduced the ages of five other members of the team. The newspaper report stated that it appeared that coaches and technical staff of the Lesotho Football Association (LEFA) had been embroiled in the criminal activity of requesting the Ministry of Home Affairs to issue emergency passports for players with fictitious ages when they knew their real dates of birth.

It seems that five of these players with reduced ages were members of the Lesotho Under-20 team which went to play the first leg of the African Youth Soccer Championship qualifying matches against the Zimbabwe Under-20 team. As reported in *The Mirror* of 10 November 2004, this has led to an official complaint by the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA).

After a goalless draw in Harare, the Makoanyane XI beat the Zimbabwe team 3-0 in the second leg at Setsoto Stadium in Maseru on Sunday 24 October. On the second occasion, only one of the players with apparently reduced ages was in the team, although when *The Mirror* spoke to LEFA's Public Relations Officer, it was said that this was a mistake, confusing two persons who had the same name, Motlalepula Mofolo, and were of different ages.

In theory, the Makoanyane XI now qualifies to travel to the African Youth Championship finals in Benin next February. However, an enquiry into 'age cheating' seemed likely and some felt that the great euphoria greeting Lesotho's 3-0 win might in fact have been premature.

Students Demonstrate in Maseru

A strike and demonstration by National University of Lesotho students in September or October is unfortunately becoming almost an annual event. The cause of the demonstration is usually the late payment of loan bursary instalments by the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) and/or the failure to pay the book allowance in full because the privatized university bookstore is unable to provide the required books. In 2003 a demonstration in Maseru was not allowed because of mourning for the Queen Mother, and as a result a very damaging affray occurred at Roma. In 2004, students abandoned classes from 14 October and on Monday 18 October invaded Maseru to complain about the non-availability of textbooks. Petitions were handed in at the Ministry of Education and the

Ministry of Finance and Development Planning under which NMDS falls.

However, the students also indulged in unruly behaviour which led to the University later apologizing through and to the media for the conduct of the students. The Secretary-General of the Students Representative Council, Thabang Rantsoabe, also apologized to Senate for the behaviour of the students. Bad language, insulting songs, damage to property, abuse of alcohol and exposure of buttocks in an offensive way were hardly calculated to endear the students' cause to the population of Maseru. Some newspapers such as *Mololi* of 21 October 2004 carried photographs of this offensive behaviour. The university announced that it would institute disciplinary proceedings against those found responsible for violating its regulations.

LCD Wins Qhoali By-Election

In a low poll, a turn-out of only 26.7% and the third election in the constituency in less than 3 years, **Mrs 'Matanki Mokhabi** of the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) won the Qhoali By-Election in Quthing District on Saturday 16 October 2004 with 2868 votes. The only other candidates were from the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) with 116 votes and the Patriotic Front for Development (PFD) with 106 votes.

New EU Ambassador Presents his Credentials

The new European Union Ambassador to Lesotho, **Peter Beck Christiansen**, presented his credentials to King Letsie III on Thursday 21 October. In presenting his letters of credence, the new ambassador said that he would ensure that the Kingdom of Lesotho received all possible benefit from the Cotonou Agreement [the successor to the previous Lome Agreements] between the European Union and the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. He also assured the King 'of our political, developmental and trade-oriented cooperation to the benefit of the people of Lesotho'.

CNA Closes Maseru Branch

The only branch of the **Central News Agency** in Lesotho, which was situated in the LNDC Centre in Maseru, closed down in October. Interviewed by *Public Eye* in its issue of 22 October 2004, the manager, Selina Lekoekoe, attributed the closure to poor business and high rental fees. The closure has left Maseru with no commercial bookshops other than the two run by the Catholic and Lesotho Evangelical Churches, both of which stock only a limited range of books other than religious books, school text books and books produced at their local printing works. Another consequence is that Lesotho apparently now has no outlets for news magazines such as *Time* or *Newsweek* or *The Economist* or even the *BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*. Some of these can be found in Ladybrand, where the Spar Supermarket has a small but useful selection of magazines available for sale. For a larger selection one has to travel to CNA in Bloemfontein.

The high rental fees which might have tipped the balance in the case of CNA, apparently resulted from the management of the Lesotho National Development Corporation's property portfolio by JHI Real Estate Management. In August 2003, a number of businesses at the LNDC Centre had petitioned JHI to lower the rent. When this did not happen, several closed down, while others moved to different locations.

JHI's contract awarded for five years in 2001 entitles it to manage financially 150 000 m^2 of industrial property, 8 000 m^2 of retail space, 4 100 m^2 of offices and 5 000 m^2 of residential property.

IDM Confers Certificates on 800 Graduands

The **Institute of Development Management (IDM)** was originally conceived as an Institute of the trinational University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Its gestation coincided with the break-up

of UBLS in 1975, as a result of which it preserved its tri-national character by becoming an independent tertiary institution with headquarters in Botswana, but with campuses in all three countries and a graduation ceremony which rotates between the countries. On Friday 22 October, it was Lesotho's turn for the graduation ceremony at which 800 graduands from the three countries received certificates.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Minister of Education praised the IDM for being a self-financing institution with minimal government support. He said that the three governments look to IDM for its contribution to finding sustainable solutions to national and regional development problems. The Regional Director of IDM, Ms Audrey Kgosidintsi, reminded those present that the mission of IDM is management development through training, consultancy and research. Its strategic goals to be accomplished by 2010 were to turn IDM into an institute which was autonomous and commercialized; profitable and financially self-sufficient; reputable and customer-focused; to be known as a centre of excellence and a provider of quality services with state of the art facilities; and at the same time to be responsive and results oriented.

Tragic Accident at Letšeng-la-Terae

Two workers were tragically drowned near the Letšeng-la-Terae Diamond Mine on Monday 25 October 2004. According to *Lesotho Today* of 28 October 2004, the incident occurred at 7 a.m. in a 'diamond cleaning pool'. One worker, Sam Selamela of Thaba-Tseka had gone into the pool to reposition a pumping machine which had drifted out of position. The rope holding Mr Selamela unfortunately became unfastened and he began to drown. His supervisor, Louis Thister jumped into the water to rescue his colleague and managed to get him to the edge of the pool, but there was no ladder on the side, and the synthetic lining of the pool was too slippery for them to climb out. With no-one else in the vicinity to help them, they eventually both drowned.

FNB Opens in Lesotho

First National Bank opened its first branch in Lesotho on Monday 25 October 2004 on the ground floor of the new LNDC Building on Kingsway. The bank was officially opened by the Prime Minister who said that FNB's entrance into Lesotho was a sign of the confidence in the political, economic and financial stability and the peace which currently reign in the country. The Chief Executive Officer, Mr Richard Hudson indicated that the new bank offers a full range of internet banking and an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM).

Customers visiting the new FNB branch and hoping to get similar interest rates on savings to those enjoyed at the FNB branch in Ladybrand were, however, disappointed. FNB in Lesotho is governed by the Central Bank of Lesotho, whose regulations enforce ceilings which prevent these higher rates. However any bank which can offer a service without excessive bank charges and without long queues for service is likely to be successful in Maseru.

Ombudsman's Report on Hospitals Fuels Public Debate on Health Services

The Ombudsman, **Mr Sekara Mafisa**, has interpreted his role to include the inspection of government owned facilities which might be providing the public with less than the appropriate level of service. In 2003, he personally reported on a number of government hospitals, and in 2004 he prepared a further report on government hospitals not covered in the 2003 report, namely the Machabeng Hospital at Qacha's Nek, the Ntšekhe Hospital at Mohale's Hoek and the Mafeteng Hospital.

At **Machabeng Hospital** in Qacha's Nek, the Ombudsman reported that although there were sufficient medical officers, there were too few nurses and support staff. There was no administrator and a ward attendant was the acting administrator of the hospital. There was also no hospital accountant. As far as equipment was concerned there were grave deficiencies. For example there was no X-ray

apparatus and patients had to be transported to Matatiele at considerable additional expense for X-rays to be taken. There was apparently not even a single working sphygmomanometer (blood pressure measuring apparatus), and no equipment for testing blood for HIV/AIDS. Blood samples had to be sent to Maseru. Many other items of equipment were out of order or not working as they should including laboratory equipment, the incinerator, the generator, fire fighting equipment, the heating system, the laundry and the mortuary. The cupboard storing habit-forming drugs had no key and was left unlocked making such drugs accessible to anybody. Some wards were overcrowded as a result of which some patients in the female, TB and isolation wards were sleeping on the floor. Staff morale was low because many had been transferred to Qacha's Nek from other parts of Lesotho as much as five years earlier and then left there even though their families might be elsewhere. 'Officers feel that they are a lost flock. They have not had a visit by either the Minister or Principal Secretary. Their pleas for re-transfer and reports about shortages of staff and equipment go unheeded'. At the end of his report on the hospital, the Ombudsman provides a long series of recommendations needed to remedy the situation.

At **Mafeteng Hospital**, there were three doctors and this was considered too few. There were also shortages of nursing, pharmacy and accounting staff. The X-ray machine was unusable because there was no processor for the film. Other equipment not working included the sterilizer, the emergency generator, and the central heating system. There were also no incubators for the children's ward, nor rails to prevent patients from falling out of the beds, and court cases had already been brought after patients had been injured after falls from beds. The Ombudsman found, however, that there was no overcrowding in the wards and that they were kept clean, although in many wards the roof leaked. A particular problem at the hospital was created by 'junior staff recruited at the request of Members of Parliament'. 'These individuals feel that they do not owe their appointments to anybody in the hospital and that they are not subject to the authority of any body therein. Consequently it is difficult to control them.' It is recommended that such people be the subject of discussion between the Ministry and hospital management, which should resort to the available public service machinery in order to discipline them.

The **Ntšekhe Hospital** in Mohale's Hoek is named after Lesotho's first qualified Mosotho psychiatrist, the late Dr V. R. Ntšekhe. It is a general hospital which also includes a Mental Observation Unit. The Ombudsman found that although the Ntšekhe Hospital had four doctors, the District Medical Officer felt there should be two more. Problems arose because some of the doctors were from Cuba and did not understand English well. The hospital had seven health centres each of which should be managed by a nurse clinician, but in practice only two qualified nurse clinicians were available. In the hospital itself, there was overcrowding resulting in patients sleeping on floors. Sheets, blankets and mattresses were insufficient. The generator and central heating system were out of order and the hospital had no photocopier nor computer. General cleanliness was impossible because there was no soap, floor polish or toilet paper. The Social Welfare and Public Health Sections of the hospital were unable to function due to lack of transport. As in the case of the other hospitals, there are a series of recommendations, with the need to reduce the likelihood of cross-infection within the hospital emphasized as a matter of grave concern.

In its issue of 29 October 2004, Refiloe Lesiamo of *Public Eye*, reported on an interview with the Minister of Health, Dr Motloheloa Phooko, on the findings of the Ombudsman's report. In relation to shortages of equipment, the Minister stated that he did not buy X-ray machines. Hospitals were given their own budgets to meet their needs. However, he admitted that the Ministry worked under severe financial constraints. On shortages of staff, he 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.

The interviewer also raised with the Minister two other health matters which had received media attention. One related to an elderly man who had been brought to Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru on 16 October and despite other patients repeatedly asking nurses to help him had finally died

while lying on the bench waiting for service. Dr Phooko replied that what had occurred was due to a shortage of staff.

The second matter was the loss of more than M40 million Irish foreign aid made available to build a new headquarters for the Ministry of Health. On this the Minister's explanation was that there had indeed been an offer of assistance from Ireland. However, when the Ministry of Works had designed the new headquarters building the cost had escalated to M80 million. No means had been found of covering the shortfall, particularly since financial regulations did not permit his ministry to borrow from banks.

Microchip Identification Introduced to Combat Stock Theft in Qacha's Nek

As reported in *Public Eye* of 29 October 2004, ten villages In Qacha's Nek District, with a total of 2 000 animals, including cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys, have been chosen for a pilot project undertaken by the company Camelot Lesotho. The 2 000 animals are being implanted with microchips through injections using a gun-like device. Once implanted the device is invisible, but it can be read with an appropriate scanner, and any animal in the possession of a person other than its lawful owner can then be apprehended.

The scheme to fight the cross-border stock theft very prevalent in Qacha's Nek District is backed by money from Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) to the extent of M300 000, and forms part of a larger project to reform Lesotho's justice system.

President of Court of Appeal Makes Hard-Hitting Speech on Judicial Delays

The appalling conditions in Lesotho's prisons are exacerbated by the inefficiency in Lesotho's legal system, which results in vast numbers in prison awaiting trial, while others are bailed out on serious charges such as murder, awaiting trials which take years to be heard, or may not be heard at all. The Lesotho Justice Development Programme had recently revealed the extent of the problem, but further evidence, if needed, was provided in *Mopheme* of 3 November 2004, which quoted from a hard-hitting speech by the President of the Lesotho Court of Appeal, Justice Jan Hendrick Steyn, at the closing of the current session of the Court on Tuesday 27 October 2004.

Justice Steyn was no respecter of legal dignitaries. His speech attacked court clerks, lawyers and even judges and called for the appointment of a 'high powered' task team to address the increasing inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the justice sector. He gave examples of the inefficiency of the system by quoting two cases. One was a dispute over a dismissal that occurred in 1989. It had been argued before the High Court only in April 1993, after which judgment was reserved and not delivered for 5 years! Shortly thereafter, the records of the case were destroyed as a result of the burning of part of the High Court buildings in the disturbances of 1998, and the case had to be heard before a different judge in February 2004 before proceeding for disposal by the Court of Appeal in the present session. A second civil case quoted had taken over 16 years to come to finality. Similar delays occurred in criminal cases, and the Court of Appeal had this year heard appeals relating to cases dating back 6 to 10 years. He criticized the willingness of courts to 'only too readily' grant postponements. 'In a way a culture of postponement has become endemic in the practice of law in the Kingdom.'

Justice Steyn also attacked court clerks for failing to update court proceedings in time for use by the Court of Appeal. He said the poor filing system of records had resulted in evidence being lost. He criticized practitioners and the Crown for certifying records without ensuring that the records are complete with important documentary records included.

Judges were not spared: 'Sadly some judges take months, sometimes years, to deliver judgments and from time to time appeals come before us with no judgments having been delivered or delivered orally and not transcribed'.

Justice Steyn may have felt that he was making a necessary speech at the end of his three year term of office as President of the Court of Appeal. However on 11 November 2004, he was reappointed for a further three year period.

Army Commander, Lieutenant-General Mosakeng Retires

Lieutenant-General Makhula Mosakeng, Commander of the Lesotho Defence Force, formally retired at a ceremony held at Ha Ratjomose barracks on 27 October 2004. He had been 27 years in military service and commander for 10 years. The new Commander is **Lieutenant-General Edward Thuso Motanyane**, whose original home is Ha Ntebele near 'Mamathe in Berea District.

In his speech at the ceremony, the Acting Prime Minister, Lesao Lehohla, praised the role of Mosakeng in the disturbances of 1993, 1994 and 1998. He commended him on significant achievements, particularly the transformation of the army and its depoliticization.

Mozambique President Chissano Pays Farewell Visit to Lesotho

The President of Mozambique, **Joaquim Alberto Chissano**, who is also Chairperson of the African Union, paid a State Visit to Lesotho on 2 and 3 November 2004. President Chissano had celebrated his 65th birthday two weeks earlier and had been President of Mozambique for 18 years. He was stepping down for a successor to be chosen after elections in December 2004.

Addressing the Lesotho Parliament on Tuesday 2 November 2004, President Chissano said that his retirement was with a sense of 'mission accomplished' because the Southern African Development Community (SADC) had become a unique organization with its own ideals and objectives. Moreover and more widely, the African Union had become one big family of independent States aspiring to a more dignified place in the community of nations. He hoped that the friendship between Lesotho and Mozambique would 'transcend generations and generations of leaders'.

During his two-day visit, President Chissano did not have much time to sit still. He lunched with the King and Queen in Matsieng, was given a tour of the Katse Dam, and was taken to the Liphofung Cave Cultural and Historical Site in Butha-Buthe District.

New Film on King Moshoeshoe Screened

A 40-minute film devoted to the life of King Moshoeshoe was first screened at the University of the Free State on 12 October 2004 and more widely on SABC2 television at 19 00 on 4 November 2004.

The Renaissance King was directed by Max du Preez with Kalosi Ramakhula as Lesotho coordinator. It was produced at the University of the Free State and lasts about 40 minutes.

The film intersperses shots (some from the air) of Menkhoaneng, Botha-Bothe mountain, and Thaba-Bosiu (all looking splendidly green in a wet summer) with interviews with historians and other knowledgeable persons, many of them from Lesotho. It provides a sympathetic portrait of the King, even showing how his diplomacy may have influenced modern South African leaders. For example, Moshoeshoe's action in making peace with the cannibals who had eaten his grandfather is compared to Nelson Mandela's act of reconciliation in taking tea with Betsy Verwoerd.

The film uses the Basotho Cultural Village in Qwaqwa when depicting Mohlomi (although the rondavel is an anachronism). It also uses some imaginative drawings of life and conflicts in the Moshoeshoe era, although to depict Moshoeshoe wearing a top hat in intimate conversation with his youthful missionary Casalis seems implausible. Overall, the film is competently made, if somewhat repetitive. It also missed some opportunities. For example the encounter between Cathcart and Moshoeshoe could have provided a far more dramatic film opportunity than is actually depicted.

Amongst those interviewed in the film are Lehlohonolo Machobane, 'Meshu' Mokitimi, Martin Lelimo, Peter Seboni, 'Cobus' Dreyer, Tšeliso Ramakhula, Leo Barnard, Stephen Gill, Naomi Morgan, Chief Seeiso Bereng Seeiso and Professor Frederik Fourie (Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State).

Newspaper Exposes Nursing College Scam but is Coy about who Published Advertisement

The newspaper, *Public Eye*, on 30 July 2004, below a heading 'It pays to advertise', had published an advertisement announcing: **'Notice! 800 People Needed to Work in South Africa'**. It went on to mention that a new Nursing College was opening soon, and no experience was required as full training was provided. 'You can earn money while training. Accommodation, uniform and food is provided plus a guaranteed Nursing job with a Diploma after training'.

The many unemployed Basotho who responded to the advertisement by sending the requested four postage stamps received two items. One was a copy of an impressive looking form issued by the South African Department of Health. They may have missed the small print which said that only persons wishing to apply for a job in a government department should fill in the form. Perhaps many of them thought that this is what they were doing in any case. The second sheet ought to have put applicants on their guard. It described the New Nursing College which was said to be attached to 'Domerton Hospital'. It contained inconsistencies, for example saying that the college was 'opening soon' and yet 'we have been in a position to maintain a pass rate of 100% since 2001'. Moreover, the English of the description seemed to have been written by someone without adequate high school education. 'Students Will be accomodeted in our residences....For church goers we have Roman catholic, Assembly of god, Nazaret, ST John Wesley, Christian church and many more' [captitalization and spelling as in original]. Next the sheet required a R200 registration fee. 'For your safetly [*sic*], please send your details in a brown envelop [*sic*]. You can send money in cash (rands or maloti).... Please use (Speed Express) [parentheses in original] its [*sic*] fast and safe... We no longer accept postal orders. Only cash payment accepted'.

The second sheet also shows photographs of Mr Dennis G. Sansers (smiling and with a neat moustache) and Mrs Cynthia F. Smith (complete with pearl necklace), said to be the Principal and Deputy Principal of the College, and for many applicants looking convincingly as if they might be what it is claimed they are. The address to which the money is to be sent in brown envelopes is at Clernaville, a small post office in the suburbs of Durban. Unfortunately it seems large numbers of unemployed Basotho, who probably in most cases had to borrow the money, sent off R200 dreaming that they would be, as promised, working within three months in the wards of the Domerton Hospital and receiving a salary of R2 000 per month.

Alas! The whole matter was a scam. Under the headline 'Rip off!', *Public Eye* of 5 November 2004 wrote the story of an applicant who had actually gone to KwaZulu-Natal to look for the college. He had been told by the Department of Health and the police that the College of Nursing did not exist. The South African High Commission also confirmed that there was no such college in South Africa. The same issue of *Public Eye* said that the college had originally been advertised 'in one of the local newspapers in July this year'. This was a little economical with the facts. The local newspaper had been itself!

Prisons become Correctional Service Centres

The *Fifth Amendment to the Constitution Act 2004* was published on 3 November 2004 and came into force on the same date. It contains three separate amendments to the Constitution, the first of which modifies the powers of the Public Service Commission, which are now confined to appointments and termination of appointments but not disciplinary matters.

The second amendment limits the maximum length of appointment for a member of the Independent Electoral Commission to no more than two terms of five years.

The third amendment, taking no doubt a cue from South Africa, abolishes the name 'Prison Service' and substitutes **Correctional Service**. The Director of Prisons is now the **Commissioner of Correctional Service**.

Payment of NUL Gratuities to Permanent Staff Becomes a High Court Issue

A long-running dispute between the Lesotho University Teachers and Researchers Union (LUTARU) and the National University of Lesotho entered a new phase in November 2004, when the Minister of Education applied to the High Court for an interdict restraining the university from making gratuity payments to local staff.

The matter goes back to an agreement made in 1996, which enabled local university staff to opt to receive gratuities instead of a pension, putting them on the same footing as expatriate staff. The agreement had been made at the time when a Nigerian Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adamu Baikie was heading the institution. His local successor, Dr Maboee Moletsane reversed the agreement, which put him in conflict with LUTARU, which did all it could to hasten his departure. The following Vice-Chancellor, Dr Tefetso Mothibe, whose appointment had originally been supported by LUTARU, did not take any action on the gratuities issue. This resulted in one staff member, the then Director of Transformation, Dr M. V. Marake going to the Labour Court, which ruled that the 1996 agreement was valid and that the gratuities owed from 1998 onwards should be paid with 18.5% interest. Other staff, encouraged by this victory, went to the Directorate of Dispute Prevention and Resolution, which ruled in their favour, requiring that gratuities to the 122 remaining affected staff, if they opted out of the pension scheme, should be paid out in four instalments in June, September and December 2004 and in March 2005.

It seems, according to a report in *Public Eye* of 12 November 2004 that just 20 members of LUTARU had opted for the gratuity payments, which amounted to some M4.6 million, but would amount to far more if others opted for gratuities. The Minister of Education has now intervened with an application at the High Court seeking an interdict restraining the university from paying the gratuities. In his application, the Minister states that the matter is a civil issue rather than a labour issue, and that in any case the additional payments were not catered for either in the current budget nor in previous budgets. The application restrains the defendant (NUL) 'from making the illegal payments in question, and further full argument will be addressed to this Honourable Court at the appropriate time if necessary'. The Minister also seeks that the interdict applies to any of the remaining surviving 102 staff who might also opt for gratuity payments resulting in a major escalation of the cost.

LEFA President Dies in Car Accident

The President of the Lesotho Football Association (LEFA), **Thabo Makakole**, died following a collision on the Thuathe Plateau in the evening of Thursday 11 November, when his car was hit by a minibus taxi. Ten people in the taxi also died. Makakole died in the casualty department of Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, having been brought there by friends when no medical emergency response vehicle arrived at the scene.

Four days before the accident, on Monday 8 November, Makakole had flown to Cairo to defend Lesotho before the Confederation of African Football (CAF) against allegations that Lesotho had used an over-age player in an under-20 match against Zimbabwe. His mission had been apparently successful and he had arrived back at his office in the Bambatha Tšita Stadium in Maseru at 5 p.m. on the Thursday. He left shortly afterwards for his farm on the Thuathe Plateau, and it was en route to there that the accident happened.

Makakole, was a businessman who was born at Ramabanta on 13 November 1958, and thus met

his death two days short of his 46th birthday. He was educated at Christ the King High School and Lerotholi Polytechnic where he studied architecture. He founded Rainbow Construction and became the successful owner-manager of Lesotho's Arsenal team. He took over as Acting President of LEFA in 1996 on the death of its founder-president, Bambatha Tšita. A stormy eight years in the LEFA President's seat followed, with competing factions repeatedly trying to unseat and to discredit him. At the time of his death Makakole was also Chairman of the Lesotho Sports & Recreation Commission. His widow, 'Mammatli Kabi is the daughter of Motete and the late 'Mamoshebi Kabi, and he leaves two children, Serabele and 'Mathabo.

Thabo Makakole's funeral was appropriately held on Saturday 27 November in the Bambatha Tšita Sports Arena, a development which he had pioneered during his presidency of LEFA. He was later buried at the Kokobela graveyard in Maseru West.

Letsema Holdings Responds to Accusations about Inefficiency in Running NUL Bookshop

An interview was reported in *Public Eye* of 12 November 2004, with Samuel Rapapa, Manager of the National University of Lesotho Bookshop which is owned by Letsema Investment Holdings (LIH). LIH had been running the bookshop since July 2002, but the two-year contract had not now been renewed. The unavailability of books had been one of the issues which apparently prompted the student strike with its unprecedentedly offensive behaviour in Maseru on 18 October 2004.

Rapapa explained the difficulties that the bookshop had encountered through university lecturers not ordering their booklists at the stipulated time in February for the following academic year; and through the National Manpower Development Secretariat failing to pay them in time so that they suffered serious cashflow problems, which destroyed their relationship with suppliers and partners. 'NMDS is no different from other government departments who are determined to destroy the economy of this country as quickly as possible.' Other complaints were that lecturers often made orders directly from suppliers instead of through the bookshop, and that university facilities were used to photocopy books instead of their being bought at the bookshop. It was noted that LIH had expected renewal of the contract, and that for the current academic year booklists had been received, orders made and deliveries were awaited.

Woman Gathering Vegetables finds Large Meteorite Stone

'Malelimo Roto was gathering wild vegetables (*meroho*) on the Thuathe Plateau during November 2004, when she chanced upon an unusually angular stone. It turned out to be a stone from the Thuathe Meteorite of 21 July 2002, and while smaller stones have been found in recent months, this one weighed in at 450 g, making it the tenth largest to have been so far recovered. Although somewhat rusty as a result of more than two years of exposure to the elements, the new stone exhibits the typical black fusion crust of meteorites on all of its surfaces, and in addition has fine regmaglypts, the thumb print like impressions caused when vortices of molten stone ablated its surfaces during its brief fiery entry from space.

The Thuathe Meteorite has in the meantime gained considerable coverage in both popular and scientific publications. The most recent scientific paper appeared during 2004 in the United States periodical, *Meteoritics & Planetary Science*, and is the most detailed to date. The paper, 'Thuathe, a new H4/5 chondrite from Lesotho: history of the fall, petrography, and geochemistry' is the work of nine authors in research institutes in places as diverse as Tokyo, Vienna, Mainz, Heidelberg, Milton Keynes and Johannesburg as well as Roma in Lesotho. Amongst the conclusions are that the original bolide had a mass of about a ton; was aged about 4 000 million years (i.e. was older than any rocks on Earth); and while silicon dioxide was the dominant mineral, 30 different metals were present, ranging from iron (about 27%) and nickel (about 2%) to gold (about 0.00002%).

’Malelimo Roto’s stone is the 1048th to be catalogued and they range from tiny fragments of mass 1 g to what is known to have been a stone of at least 3 147 g. This largest stone was unfortunately smashed up by the finder looking for diamonds and the estimated mass is from the five known pieces. The second largest stone was also damaged for similar reasons, and the largest completely unmodified stone, known from its shape as ‘The Bear’, is the third largest, weighing in at 2 387 g.

Once the meteorite became known internationally early in 2003, dealers came flying into Lesotho from places such as Tucson, Arizona to buy stones. The fact that stones were now known to have a significant monetary value encouraged searchers, and the Thuathe Meteorite now has had one of the largest stone recovery rates of any meteorite fall in the world. The one local purchaser of the stones placed his unexpected profits into a Meteorite Fund, which has, amongst other projects, funded hospital equipment and school fees for poor pupils. The Fund’s biggest undertaking has been at Boqate Ha Majara in the strewn field. Many pupils at Boqate Lesotho Evangelical Church school had collected stones and the school has benefited by having a new classroom block funded by the resulting money. Who says that money does not fall from the sky?

Emergency Services Criticized

A representative of the Public Private Partnership and Manager of the Hoogland Medi-Clinic in Bethlehem, Johan van der Walt visited Lesotho in the second week of November. He was inspecting Lesotho’s emergency response system and the readiness of Lesotho’s hospitals to receive casualties. He had apparently been invited to Lesotho together with members of the South African emergency service ER24 by a private road safety company, Blue Sky, in an effort to reduce road deaths. ER24, with a fleet of some 100 emergency response vehicles, specializes in pre-hospital emergency services.

Some of Van der Walt’s findings were reported in *The Mirror* of 17 November 2004 and *Public Eye* of 19 November 2004. He was especially critical of facilities at the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru, where he found 500 people waiting for treatment and no theatre and no X-ray. In an interview he said that the life of the President of LEFA, Thabo Makakole, could have been saved if the right equipment for treating casualties had been in place at the hospital.

Van der Walt also visited several other hospitals and was critical of facilities at almost all of them. Only at Motebang Hospital in Hlotse, whose Trauma Unit had been equipped as a result of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, did he note that the necessary equipment was there. There was nevertheless a problem at this hospital due to shortage of staff and lack of training.

Major Cabinet Reshuffle Announced

The Prime Minister, **Pakalitha Mosisili**, announced on Thursday 18 November 2004, major changes within the cabinet. Five senior ministers were allocated new portfolios.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Training, **Lesao Lehohla**, was moved from being Minister of Education & Training to Minister of Home Affairs & Public Safety (returning to a portfolio he had held 10 years earlier). He is replaced by **Kenneth Mohlabi Tsekoa**, whose portfolio of Foreign Affairs has now been allocated to the former Minister of Natural Resources, **Monyane Moleleki**. The new Minister of Natural Resources is **Dr ’Mamphono Khaketla**, and her portfolio of Communications, Science & Technology is now occupied by **Motsoahae Tom Thabane**, the former Minister of Home Affairs and Public Safety. If one thinks of the relevant portfolios as chairs and the Ministers as sitting on them, then the effect of the reshuffle is simply that the same ministers are sitting on the same chairs, except that they have all moved one place to the right (or left, depending how the chairs are labelled).

Two other ministerial posts had to be filled, one of them the post of Minister of Public Works and Transport, vacated as a result of the death of Mofelehetsi Moerane on 28 September 2004. The new

minister is **Popane Lebesa**, formerly Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Finance & Development Planning. The second post was that of Minister of Employment and Labour. Clement Sello Machakela, MP for Malimong, had been forced by ill-health to retire from his cabinet position. The new Minister of Employment & Labour is **Ms Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa**, formerly Assistant Minister of Justice, Human Rights & Rehabilitation and of Law & Constitutional Affairs.

Three other changes which were announced were that the MP for 'Maliepetsane, **Rammotsi E. Lehata**, is a new minister in the Prime Minister's Office; the MP for Tsikoane, **Khotso Matla**, is Assistant Minister of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives & Marketing; and **Mothejoa Metsing**, Assistant Minister of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives & Marketing has been transferred to replace Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa as Asssitant Minister in the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights & Rehabilitation and of Law & Constitutional Affairs.

One Sente and Two Lisente Coins Disappear

Lesotho's one sente and two lisente coins have long since ceased to have any significant value (one sente is worth about US$0.002 or UK£0.001). In a Legal Notice dated 24 November 2004, the Central Bank announced that they would cease to be legal tender after 1 March 2005. The notice merely regularizes what has long been the case. Shops have long been refusing to accept these coins and in practice amounts have been rounded to the nearest five lisente for some time. For those prepared to go to the trouble, the Central Bank is willing to exchange one and two lisente coins (provided one has enough of them) for higher denominations, and has generously stated it will provide this service until 28 February 2010.

Auditor-General's Report on the Public Accounts for 2002-3 Published

Even though it is dated 30 July 2004, the Acting Auditor-General's Report on the Public Accounts of Lesotho for the Financial Year ending 31 March 2003 was only published at the end of November 2004, some 20 months after the end of the financial year. This is nevertheless a record for recent years. Despite the Financial Regulations which require otherwise, Public Accounts have often been submitted many years in arrears, or indeed not at all. Even though accounts for 2001-2 had been submitted and audited a year earlier, public accounts for the previous five financial years 1996/97 - 2000/01 have still not been completed and submitted for audit.

The Government Accounts are set out on pages 5 to 29 of the Report, and in relation to these the Acting Auditor-General, Mrs Lucy L. Liphafa, prefaces her Audit Certificate with a series of qualifications to the accounts, being a summary in general terms of irregularities which have widely occurred due to non-compliance with legislation and regulations. She also lists omissions from the accounts which include failure to incorporate outstanding loans of some M149 million due from Government Corporations and Companies; and failure to bring forward a Recurrent Account surplus of some M27 million and a Capital Account deficit of some M157 million from the previous financial year. Moreover some M22 million advanced from the Contingences Fund and uncleared by the required supplementary appropriation in the previous financial year still remained uncleared in the following year. 'In view of the significant matters referred to ... I am unable to express an opinion as to whether the financial statements set out on pages 5 to 29 give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Government of Lesotho and in particular the financial picture as at 31 March 2003, and of the deficit for the year ended on that date'.

The Acting Accountant-General, after reviewing statutory requirements relating to accounting operations, states that 'it is evident that the Ministry of Finance has not effectively discharged its responsibilities regarding the management of Public Funds'. She goes on to make a series of recommendations (almost identical to those in her report on the previous year's accounts) which include strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Finance and of the Accountant-General's office; developing appropriate training for existing staff; close monitoring by the Ministry of Finance of the

Accountant-General and Chief Accounting Officers; review of the current regulations to include penalties; not allowing the preparation of Public Accounts to be out-sourced; and (a new recommendation) upgrading the current GOLFIS (Government of Lesotho Financial Information System) to remedy the lack of internal control mechanisms for effective financial management.

The remaining pages of the 143-page report draw attention to discrepancies and anomalies. For example, it is noted that M6 million was drawn by the Ministry of Health from the contingencies fund for upgrading the Lesotho Pharmaceutical Corporation but was apparently unspent. A rather larger sum of M406 million was advanced as loans made to traders and co-operatives for agricultural inputs in the 2001/2 year but had still not been paid back in 2002/3.

The report uncovered a number of cases of apparent fraud on which no action had been taken. It also uncovered financial oversights such as the Assistant Storekeeper in the Ministry of Education who had gone absent on study leave without authority in February 2001, but was still being paid full salary in March 2004.

In a final part to the Report, it is noted that the Office of the Auditor-General has a total of 159 staff of which 135 are Audit staff and 24 support staff. Although it currently occupies the whole of the top (fourth) floor of Finance House, this provides insufficient office accommodation and a separate building should be considered. It is noted that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament had now examined the Audit Report on the much delayed Public Accounts for the three years 1993/94 - 1995/96. The PAC had made recommendations towards the improvement of financial management in the public service and it was hoped that the PAC recommendations would be implemented appropriately by all concerned.

New Princess Born in Royal Family

Her Majesty Queen ’Masenate Mohato Seeiso on Sunday 21 November gave birth to a baby daughter. The new princess is sister to Senate and is the second child of King Letsie III and Queen ’Masenate. She has been named **Princess ’Maseeiso** after her late aunt and the King’s sister, ’Maseeiso Seeiso.

Letšeng Mine Officially Reopens

The Letšeng Diamond Mine closed in 1982, but for the past two years has been gradually brought again into full operation. The reopening of the mine was officially marked on Friday 26 November by a ceremony at which the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, spoke about the history of the mine and King Letsie III unveiled a commemorative plaque [not a ‘plague’ as reported in the government newspaper, *Lesotho Today*!].

Roof of Africa Rally Held in Dry Conditions

The 2004 Vodacom Lesotho Sun Roof of Africa Rally was held in dry conditions on 25 to 27 November 2004. There are now just two main races, one for motorcycles and one for quadbikes.

In the motorcycle race, there were 99 competitors of whom 40 finished. The race was led from start to finish by **Darryl Curtis** on an AGA LG KTM. In the quadbike category, **Brendan Badenhorst** also led the race from start to finish on his ATV Powersport Laeger 450.

There were three Basotho competitors in the motorcycle race, all in different classes. John Thipane was placed sixth in his class, and Lebohang Phohleli and Mokola Andrews both finished ninth in their classes.

Old Age Pensions Paid Out to Over-70s

For the first time in the history of Lesotho, old age pensions were paid to persons over 70 years at the

beginning of December 2004. The pay-out followed registration of pensioners, which had begun in August, and by the end of November 64171 citizens had registered, rather more than the number of over-70s which might be expected from Lesotho's population age pyramid. The reality, however, is perhaps that the age pyramid had undergone recent distortions as a result of HIV/AIDS, and that the over 70s are suffering lower levels of mortality than younger age groups. Of course, another possibility is that some people inflated their ages.

It was decided, after exploring various options, that post offices would be the most logical pay-out points. This was the best compromise, even though many pensioners in fact live far more than a day's walk from their nearest post office. On 1 December almost all post offices were closed for postal business, and the dependent postal agencies were also closed as their staff were drafted to help at the main post offices. The new procedures took much time, and many pensioners were kept waiting in the hot sun, and indeed had to return on successive days because of the processing time. Some of those waiting in the heat collapsed and needed help. In the case of some post offices it took a week to complete the payout. Those who had travelled to the post offices by public transport in some case found that they had spent a large proportion of their pension money travelling backwards on successive day.

The January pension payout was brought forward to mid-December so that pensioners could receive it before Christmas. This time queues were shorter as the procedure became more streamlined. However, the involvement of postal staff in the pensions payout played havoc with Christmas mail deliveries which were generally seriously affected.

Even though the new pensions are only M150 ($25, £13) per month, for the recipients, most of whom are otherwise without cash income of any sort, they are a very welcome help in their struggle for survival. The money also helps to invest them with some dignity: with personal resources they are no longer so dependent on others. Despite the modest amount of the pension, many pensioners had a much happier Christmas than they could possibly have dreamed of.

Phakiso Molise Rearrested in South Africa

A press release from police headquarters in Maseru on 1 December 2004 announced that the former police officer, **Phakiso Molise**, had been rearrested in South Africa. Molise, who was serving 15 years for murder and other charges, had escaped from custody in Maseru on 7 August 2004, after which he was sought by the Lesotho Police and their South African counterparts.

Molise's escape had been followed by the setting up on 1 October 2003 of a three person Commission of Inquiry headed by a South African, Mr Justice Colin Stewart White. The terms of reference for the inquiry had included, apart from the circumstances surrounding Molise's escape, a review of the management and administration of the Lesotho Prisons Service and the treatment of prisoners.

Kao Mining Company to Change Name

Serious View Trading (Pty) Ltd, the rather curiously named company which is developing the large new diamond mine at Kao, gave notice published in the *Lesotho Government Gazette* of 3 December 2004 that it was applying to change its name to **Kao Diamond Mine (Pty) Ltd**.

Ladybrand Wins Vuna Award

Maseru's twin municipality of Ladybrand, just 16 km away across the border, has its life intertwined with that of Maseru to the extent even that Lesotho currency can be used there freely to purchase goods and services. Indeed many Ladybrand businessmen admit that as much as 80% of their trade is with Lesotho. Also linked with Lesotho is Ladybrand's large Chinese community, many of whom are involved in the management of Lesotho's textile factories. For their children, Ladybrand has a large Chinese school, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2004. For its Moslem community, Ladybrand also has a large mosque, which was completed in 2004.

The municipality of which Ladybrand and several neighbouring communities (including Hobhouse, Tweespruit, Excelsior) are a part was renamed Mantsopa Municipality on International Women's Day in 2002. The new name commemorates the Mosotho prophetess, 'Mantsopa, who died and was buried at Modderpoort within the municipal area in about 1904 (her gravestone does not give the year but gives her age at death as 111). A daughter of Makhetha, the half brother of Mohlomi, she had had a colourful career ranting against foreign influences in Lesotho, but had ultimately become part of them because she had agreed to be baptized by the French Protestant Church at the same time as King Moshoeshoe. In fact, Moshoeshoe died a day before his baptism, but 'Mantsopa was indeed baptized at Thaba-Bosiu. Four years later in 1874 she had moved close to Modderpoort where she became a close friend of the Anglican monks of the Society of St Augustine.

The Vuna Awards are sponsored by amongst others the South African Department of Provincial & Local Government, the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the South African Local Government Association. The awards are given for 'municipal performance excellence'. In 2003, Mantsopa won the Vuna provincial award, but in 2004, it went one better. It not only won the provincial award worth R750 000, but went on to win the national Vuna Award for the best local municipality worth R2 million.

Public Eye Installs M10 million Printing Press

As reported in *Public Eye* of 10 December 2004, Lesotho's largest and most widely circulated newspaper, the newspaper has purchased a M10 million web-offset printing machine so that it can undertake colour printing locally. Currently *Public Eye* has a weekly print run of 20 000 copies and is distributed throughout the eastern Free State as well as all of Lesotho's districts. It employs 26 permanent employees. It was hoped that the new machinery would enable the newspaper not only to expand its circulation but also to come out twice a week.

Public Eye had been formerly printed in Potchefstroom in South Africa, and the 10 and 17 December issues were apparently the first on the new machinery. Their uneven pages and blurred pictures however indicated that there was still much to be learned about using the new machinery effectively. The 24 and 31 December issues were printed in Durban.

New LEFA President is Salemane Phafane

As reported in *Lesotho Today* of 16 December 2004, the new President of the Lesotho Football Association (LEFA) is the former Vice-President, Advocate **Salemane Phafane**. He replaces the late Thabo Makakole who died following a car accident on 11 November 2004.

Large Portions of National Archives of Lesotho in Jeopardy Following Carelessness and Neglect

The National Archives of a country should contain in safe custody the documentary treasures of its past. Lesotho's National Archives have had a chequered history of sad episodes, but none so sad as that which has befallen them in the latter part of 2004.

The origin of the National Archives was a collection of valuable reference documents housed in the Secretariat, the building which housed the Colonial Administration. Its curator in the years immediately before Independence was the wife of the Deputy Director of Education, and she and her husband organized and indexed the collection and used it to publish significant historical articles in the periodical *Lesotho: Basutoland Notes & Records*. Near to Independence in 1966, a local curator was trained and appointed and the collection was transferred to an historical building (it had been built as Government Offices in 1888 and still stands) across Constitution Road from the then Ministry of Education.

The new Archives building soon became inadequate to accommodate the burgeoning bureaucracy of the newly independent Lesotho, and increasingly accessions had to be stored in rather

insecure and less than waterproof sheds, formerly used by the Boy Scout movement at the back of the National Archives. There was also inadequate space for readers. The Archives did, however, by now have friends. Under the *Archives Act 1967*, a widely representative Archives Commission was appointed, members being appointed for five years, and having the responsibility to advise the Government Archivist on policy matters.

Government funds were short in those days, but the Archives Commission had influential members, including academics who needed the Archives for use by themselves and their students. As a result, an agreement was reached that when the National University of Lesotho Library was expanded in the late 1970s, it would have a new three-storey (instead of a two-storey) wing and the basement would become available for accommodating the National Archives. The new wing, the Bishop Bonhomme Extension, was opened in 1979 and the National Archives took up residence there soon afterwards. Although some rats initially accompanied the papers from Maseru to Roma, appropriate measures were taken to exterminate them, and the Archives now had a new home secure from the weather and vermin.

Not all was well, however, in the new arrangement. When democracy had been abandoned in 1970, the archivist had been found to be of the wrong political persuasion, and she had been dismissed to be replaced by the alcoholic son of a member of the Council of Ministers. His superiors at the Department of Culture were in Maseru, and he rarely bothered to turn up to work. Unfortunately, this pattern of behaviour was copied by his colleagues some of whom had been expensively trained overseas in areas such as document restoration. Ultimately, the one staff member who turned up to work regularly was the cleaner. Of modest educational achievements, she nevertheless tried valiantly to be of help to visiting and local scholars wishing to use the archives.

There was clearly a crisis in archives administration, but the political climate at the time was such that the Archives Commission found it difficult to challenge the government and to intervene. Eventually, government itself got rid of the Archives Commission. Although it was a statutory body, it *de facto* disappeared because government failed to nominate or renominate members when the five year periods of office of existing members expired.

Democracy was restored to Lesotho in 1993, but for five years the new dispensation was plagued with political instability and nomination of members to government statutory commissions was repeatedly overlooked. The Board of Trustees of the National Museum and the Protection and Preservation Commission as a result were in the same suspended animation as the Archives Commission. Even initiatives from the university side to get the commissions restored were unsuccessful. Instead of senior NUL administrators suggesting names of persons who might serve on the commissions, the University Senate decided that the suggested names should be provided by a Task Force, chaired by its Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Several Pro-Vice-Chancellors later nothing had happened.

Meanwhile, new pressures had appeared. The Thomas Mofolo Library, as the NUL Library was now known, was perceived to have inadequate space, and the most obvious area of expansion was to the basement area occupied by the National Archives. The National Archives had in fact become rather troublesome, because even though a new Government Archivist had by then been appointed, she deemed it her responsibility to occupy an office in the Department of Culture in Maseru rather than to provide a service to users of the archives at Roma. As a result, Library staff were repeatedly being asked to assist users of the National Archives in matters for which they had neither responsibility nor authority.

Matters came to a head in 1997, but in a totally unexpected way. The University Registrar asked the Government to remove the Archives and threatened them that if they did not do so, the Archives would be evicted. In doing this, the Registrar was acting on the Library's wishes, but there had been no consultation with academic staff in departments such as history, whose staff and research students depended on the Archives for their work.

There was in fact no warning to any of the users of the archives of what was to come. A visiting researcher from Britain arrived at the Library in October 1997 to be greeted with a sight he could hardly believe. A lorry had pulled up beside the library and a gang of convicts had been employed and were

throwing the contents of the archives one to the next and ultimately onto the lorry, including the very precious documents he had travelled so far to use. Having spent so much money travelling to Lesotho, he followed the lorry and found that the legal documents he was particularly interested in had been taken to a damp basement below a magistrate's court in Maseru, while the bulk had ended up being packed from floor to ceiling in rooms in a house in Lancers Road in Maseru West. This sandstone house was the recently vacated building next to the Police Officers' Mess, and had most recently housed the Traffic Commissioner's Office, before it moved to purpose-built premises.

Lesotho's archives are not well known locally because unlike National Archives elsewhere, they have not provided a public display of selected contents nor encouraged public access to Lesotho's priceless documentary heritage. The Government Archivist has apparently never even published an annual report. As a result, those who best know the National Archives are a few local scholars and a significant number of international scholars who have travelled to Lesotho to use them. In their remarks about the service provided by the National Archives in their theses and books, they have often not minced words. For example, the present Head of the Africa Institute of South Africa, Dr Eddy Maloka, wrote about the early 1990s that 'researchers have to work in these archives without any professional assistance whatsoever. Furthermore, large parts of the archives are not well referenced, and files mentioned in the catalogue are missing on the shelves. Where files do exist, their contents are often damaged and already incomplete...'.

When news spread of what had happened in 1997, a petition was organized at the university, letters were written by scholars from overseas to the Prime Minister, the King and to the press, and the King as Chancellor of the University raised the matter with the Vice-Chancellor. The petition itself emphasized that the Lesotho National Archives are 'a treasure house of irreplaceable documentary materials' and expressed 'grave concern about the manner in which the Archives were in fact transferred' stating that skilled persons were needed 'to ensure that everything is moved from a shelf in the original Archives to a corresponding shelf in the new Archives building'. It was proposed that 'as a matter of urgent priority, any items which are in danger of damage from damp, fire or insecure premises should be moved into secure storage'. Unfortunately, none of this activity achieved anything of significance, and indeed the body which should have been the watchdog in archival matters, the Archives Commission, was also not reappointed. The one positive step taken, but only a few years later, was that provision for the National Archives was incorporated into proposals for a new National Library building.

After 1997, Lesotho ceased to have a working National Archives, and the small band of 'academic tourists', academics mainly from North America and Europe, who came to Lesotho to use the National Archives, had to transfer their research interests to other countries. Local scholars were not so lucky. They wanted to research on Lesotho, but the essential local research collection was no longer available. Pre-Independence documents could in some cases be accessed through the Public Records Office by travelling to London, an expensive option not available to most of them. The PRO naturally does not include post-Independence documentation and research on many aspects of post-Independence Lesotho became virtually impossible.

At this point, the most optimistic hope was that when the new building was constructed, even though an estimated 200 person-years might be needed to restore and index the collection, the new National Archives might create a facility of which the nation could be proud, and which could serve a new generation of scholars.

Unfortunately the sequence of recent events provides little optimism. The Department of Culture during 2004 removed the National Archives from the house in Lancers Road where it had been stored to further temporary storage at its headquarters on the seventh floor of the Post Office Building, pending completion of the new building. The removal was carried out in the same careless manner as the 1997 removal, and a large part of the Archives were left behind. As of December 2004, all doors of the house where the archives had been kept were open to the wind and the rain, the windows had been smashed, and glass lay amongst the remaining documents. Children had had the run of the house, defecating in one of the rooms and festooning the building with unwound tapes which had probably

once housed historical broadcasts.

In one of the main rooms of the house, documents had been stored from floor to ceiling, and the sheer mass of these documents had caused the floor to collapse almost everywhere, so that the former floor was now a series of dangerous steep slopes forming valleys between the floor's former supporting cross beams. Those who had carried out the recent removal had taken most items from above the former floor level, and had left behind a relatively level but totally disorganized sea of paper. On top of the beams the documents were thin on the ground. In the valleys between they were deep and disordered. Many had been shredded by rats and mice. In damp areas valuable files were often in an advanced stage of transformation into *papier maché*.

Some friends of Lesotho's archives visited the site on 17 December. They were deeply distressed by what they found. Files of what had once been Lesotho's state secrets and might have been the material for future academic research had been left in a totally disorderly state. Cabinet minutes; files on foreign relations with countries such as Iran and Israel; court cases; government gazettes and government reports were scattered everywhere. Although most of the files could still be rescued (although some would require attention by a skilled document restorer), it seemed more likely that whoever would next use the building would simply dispose of them all. Very valuable books had been abandoned. A copy of the *Livre d'or*, published in 1912, and possibly the most expensive book on Lesotho ever published, was found at the lowest level next to the soil under the former floor. Its pages with their numerous historical photographs were still intact, but its map was torn and its front cover affected by mould. It could be restored, but at considerable expense.

The most amazing find, still to be fully evaluated, was a fragile bundle done up with string of about a hundred issues from the 1920s of the Mafeteng-published newspaper *Naledi ea Lesotho*. Staff at the National University of Lesotho have devoted much scholarly writing to this newspaper which was the first to be independently owned by Basotho. They have based their work on 16 isolated copies in the Morija Archives and 5 copies (some of them the same) preserved in the Johannesburg Public Library. Suddenly the available material has expanded manyfold. This exciting find (which the unindexed National Archives had kept secret for 40 years) led one of the university researchers to exclaim, when he heard of the find, that there would now certainly be a book published about *Naledi* and its owners, the remarkable Solomon Monne and Abimail Tlale.

While a few valuable items were removed for safekeeping for which the Morija Museum & Archives of the Lesotho Evangelical Church has offered storage, the vast bulk of them remain in place, it being impractical to move and store them without a major exercise. Such an undertaking would require many individuals working with dust masks and gloves in hot and uncomfortable conditions on a roller coaster floor for many days as they painstakingly sort out the mess. In the absence of an Archives Commission safeguarding the nation's documentary heritage it is difficult to be optimistic that such an undertaking could occur, unless there was an international intervention (but what body would request it?) of the kind that UNESCO once mounted to rescue the Zanzibar National Archives.

SAUSSA Games Encounter Difficulties

The **Southern African Universities Staff Sports Association (SAUSSA) Games** have now become an annual fixture in December and rotate between a number of southern African campuses, having been held last year at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria. To keep costs down, the games on each occasion are hosted on a university campus, competitors are housed in student hostels and the local campus sports facilities are used. From 14 to 18 December 2004 it was Lesotho's turn to host the games.

Unfortunately sports facilities at the Roma Campus of the National University of Lesotho are extremely limited, and even though Lesotho now has excellent sports facilities at the Lehakoe Club belonging to the Central Bank, cost ruled out making using these. Thus the 500 or so competitors from seven universities (UNISA, North-West, Swaziland, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and NUL) had to make do with what was available at Roma, where the sports field even lacks a pavilion with changing

rooms and showers. Accommodation also proved a problem. Negotiations to ensure that students had vacated their rooms and left keys started late and acquiring the rooms in time proved difficult (at Roma it was the middle of the academic year, whereas in many southern African universities it is the end of the year which makes matters easier).

The University of Botswana is known for its fine sports facilities which include an Olympic size pool (NUL has no swimming pool at all). UB Staff fielded a strong team and were the overall champions in the games.

Closure of British High Commission Apparently Forthcoming

Anton La Guardia in the *Weekly Telegraph* of 22 December 2004 quoted a report from the British Foreign Office that nine British Embassies and High Commissions around the world as well as 10 Consulates were to be closed. 11 other missions were to be locally staffed. In Africa, the closures included the High Commissions in Lesotho and Swaziland and the Embassies in Madagascar and Cameroon. If the closures are implemented, for the first time there will be no British diplomatic presence in a number of Commonwealth countries. The quoted savings from the closures is given as £6 million per year, which seems extremely small compared with other expenditures on Britain's foreign relations. No doubt the figure is small because the career diplomats will continue to be paid. Only local staff will be laid off. It rather seems as if the folly of the Iraq War is costing not only loss of goodwill in the Middle East but also at many other places around the World where at least some positive good was being done.

There are four Kingdoms in the Commonwealth, those of Lesotho, Swaziland, Tonga and the United Kingdom. If the closures announced are actually implemented, there will be no British resident mission in any of the other Kingdoms.

The British High Commission in Maseru at present has two career diplomats and 10 locally based staff. Closely associated with it is an office of the Department for International Development (DFID), which falls under the British Ministry of Overseas Development rather than under the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. DFID has one UK-based staff member and five local staff and seems not to be affected by the closing of the High Commission, except that it will lose its office space.

Lesotho has had continuous official British representation since 1868. The British High Commission, apart from representing the interests of the British community in Lesotho (currently estimated at about 350 to 400), played a major role in helping Lesotho to return to democracy in 1993, and once democracy had been re-established to help to counteract the forces which were threatening its stability. It is ironical that Britain should be withdrawing not long after it had been announced that the Irish Consulate in Maseru was being upgraded to a full Embassy. Moreover, Lesotho maintains a High Commission in London, and it would have been thought that the principal of reciprocality would apply, particularly since in terms of its available budget, it is relatively far more costly for Lesotho to maintain a mission in London than for London to maintain a mission in Maseru. Perhaps France will step into the vacuum. To some extent it already has. When the British Council closed, this gave a boost to France's own cultural centre in Maseru, the Alliance Française. Moreover, Radio France Internationale broadcasts in French on FM from a Lesotho transmitter alternately in English and French throughout the day.

Polisa Murder Accused Dies in Custody

A high level murder investigation followed after **Colonel Clifford Tjotjela Polisa**, Head of Military Intelligence of the Lesotho Defence Force, was shot dead and his woman companion raped when the car in which they were parked near Masianokeng was attacked on Friday 4 April 2003. Mobile phones, watches and M60 in cash had been stolen.

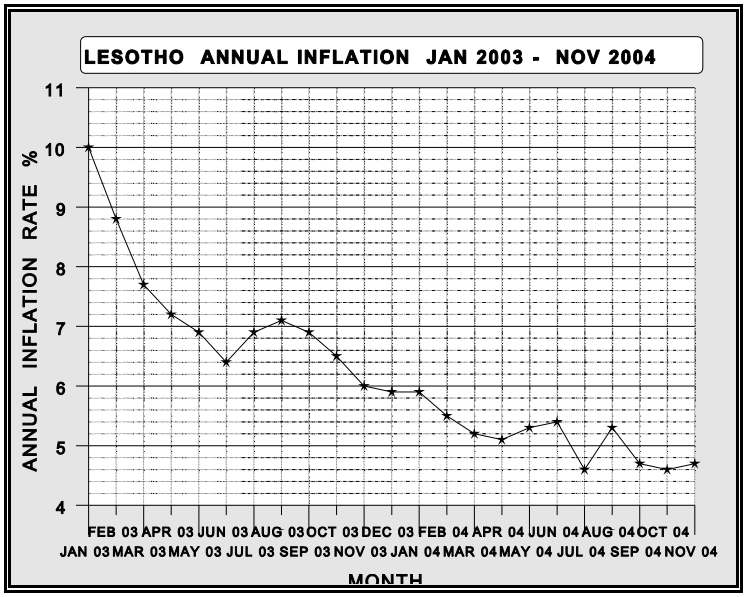
Police investigations following Colonel Polisa's death led to a series of tragedies. Police went

to the house of a 77-year old man named Mosola, apparently in connection with Polisa's death. The man initially refused to open the door, but when he did finally do so, he apparently had a gun and a policeman, Talimo Molapo, was fatally wounded. Mosola was taken into custody at Mabote Police Station, where it was reported he died soon afterwards of undetermined causes.

By 2004, Lebohang Khama of Nazareth in Maseru District, was on trial for the murder of Polisa and the rape of his companion. During the trial, Khama had pleaded not guilty to the murder and rape, and had complained bitterly to the court that he had been beaten in custody and his hand had been severely injured by a hacksaw. He had appeared in court limping and wearing gloves, and his lawyer had planned to apply for a medical examination. Unfortunately such an examination will now be a post-mortem. According to *Public Eye* of 24 December 2004, Khama died in gaol just three days before Mr Justice Molai, who had reserved judgment at the end of the trial, was due to deliver his verdict.

Inflation Remains Low Helped by the Loti Surging against the Dollar

Lesotho's **Annual Inflation Rate** which had reached a 34-year low of 4.6%in July 2004continued to remain low for the rest of the year. The retail price index from which the inflation rate is calculated is usually published at the beginning of the fourth week of each month for the preceding month, so that at the end of the year the November figure of 4.7% was the latest available.



Fears that the rise in oil prices would fuel inflation in southern Africa in practice proved groundless. The oil price peaked in early October and then declined, while at the same time the dollar lost further value against the rand and loti, ensuring that oil prices proved less inflationary than expected. The loti/dollar exchange rate which is proving disastrous for Lesotho's clothing export industry at least had a silver lining in that it has kept the inflation rate low.

Save the Children Fund (UK) Closes its Lesotho Office

As reported in *The Source* of 17 December 2004, after 43 years of service in Lesotho, the United Kingdom based **Save the Children Fund** finally closed its Lesotho Office in December 2004.

SCF first initiated work in Lesotho in 1961, when under the leadership of Mrs Winifred Coaker, it initiated primary school feeding schemes. These were later expanded to include support for school gardens, and sponsorship for children in both primary and secondary schools whose families could not afford the fees. A major project was the establishment of a Boys' Shelter in Maseru, where disabled boys could be looked after and when appropriate receive orthopaedic treatment.

The SCF organization in Lesotho split in 1979 when Mrs Coaker and the UK headquarters staff disagreed on certain issues. Thereafter there were two parallel organizations which specialized in different welfare projects. Even though the Lesotho Office of SCF (UK), long located in the BEDCO Centre, has now closed, Lesotho Save the Children, with offices near the Maseru Railway Station, still exists.

The SCF (UK) sponsorship programme eventually assisted some 16 000 Basotho children. The closing ceremony at the Lesotho Sun was appropriately addressed by Mr Hlonepho Ntšekhe, Assistant Minister of Gender, Youth & Recreation. In paying tribute to the work of SCF (UK), the Assistant Minister revealed that he himself had once been one of the beneficiaries of the scholarship programme.

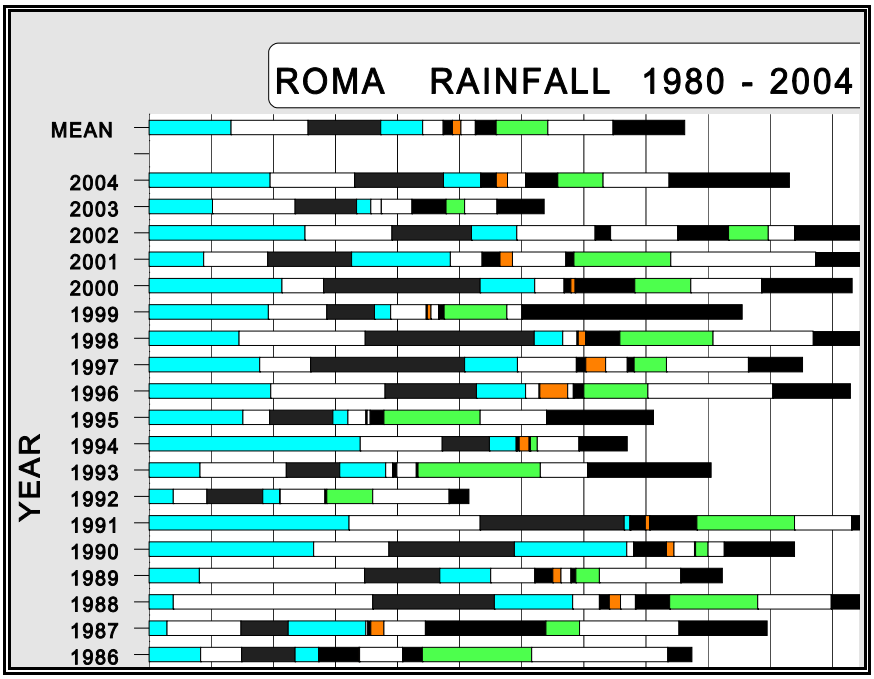
‘I am what I am today as a result of that scholarship programme.’

SCF (UK) has a successor, launched at its closing ceremony. This is the Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition (NGOC) on the Rights of Children, whose Chairperson is Ms Selloane Mokuku. A cheque for M55 000 and car keys were handed over by SCF (UK) to NGOC at the ceremony.

NGOC has the youngest patron of any organization in Lesotho. She is Princess Senate Mohato Bereng Seeiso, aged 3 years.

Calendar Year Rainfall above Mean

Rainfall for the 2004 Calendar Year was generally higher than average throughout Lesotho, with particularly high rainfall being recorded for the first and last months of the year. The figures for Roma are given on the chart provided and show monthly rainfall and annual totals for the past 25 years. Although 2004 was a year of good rainfall compared with the dry year 2003, it was observed that many of the fields in the Lowlands were not ploughed until December, risking damage to crops in April if there were early frosts.

Water supply remained precarious in several towns. The Maqalika Dam provides offstream storage from the Mohokare, but the Water & Sewerage Authority (WASA) has failed to raise the wall of the dam by 1.5 metres, even though this was first planned more than ten years ago. As a result, the Maseru water supply position becomes more precarious as demand grows. However in 2004, water restrictions were only imposed for a few days. Matters were far worse in Roma, where WASA took over the supply in 1993, but failed to maintain the offstream storage system. Boreholes proved an inadequate substitute, and at the end of the year, despite vast amounts of water running down the local stream in late December, water was being tankered in from Maseru, and residents were without water for much of the day.

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.