

SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN LESOTHO
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Metsing Lekhanya Cleared of Gunrunning

In a court case in the border town of Ladybrand in June 2004, one Ian Pretorius had been charged with being in possession of 18 unlicensed firearms, 17 of which had been supplied to him by Brigadier-General Metsing Lekhanya, former head of the Lesotho's Military Council and now Leader of the Basotho National Party.

A Lesotho police spokesman, Sergeant Khoabane Mpepe, was quoted in *The Mirror* of 30 June 2004 as saying that the arms had been given to Lekhanya by friends when he was Head of Government and had been kept at police headquarters since Lekhanya had been toppled as Chairman of the Military Council 1991. It seems that Pretorius had recently offered to sell the guns on behalf of Lekhanya, and had indeed been issued with a Lesotho police permit to take them to the border. The problem arose because he did not have the required import permit for the South African side of the border.

History of BCP Published by Veteran Politician

The veteran Basutoland Congress Party politician, Ntsukunyane Mphanya, in July 2004 released *A brief history of the Basutoland Congress Party, Lekhotla la Mahatammoho: 1952-2002*. Published by the author, the book covers in 158 pages a personal account of the BCP from its beginnings. Mphanya, born in 1931, himself joined the party in 1953, one year after it was founded as the Basutoland African Congress.

Mphanya describes pre-Independence colonial society and its overt and more subtle forms of racial discrimination. He provides an explanation as to how the Sesotho name of the Congress Party, *Lekhotla la Mahatammoho* came about (it was in 1954) and also how the political slogan *Ea lla koto* ('the knobkerrie rings out', meaning in effect 'we are fighting') came to be adopted as its rallying cry in 1958.

In the 1960 elections, there were 40 elected members, of whom 30 supported the BCP, 5 the Marematlou Party (MTP), 4 were independents and 1 supported the then Basutoland National Party (BNP). The BCP remained in opposition because there were 40 nominated members including the principal chiefs. As far as District Council elections were concerned in 1960, the BCP had a majority in all districts except Mokhotlong, which was won by the MTP.

Later disputes and rivalries in the BCP are covered in some detail, as is the 1965 General Election, which the BCP lost. On the question of why the BCP opposed the extension of the franchise to women, Mphanya admits it was more a matter of political expediency than of principle. The BCP was afraid that more women would vote for the BNP, as in fact apparently occurred.

There are details of the campaign strategy for the 1970 General Election and of the BCP's success at the polls, where they won 36 of the 60 seats. The terrible consequences when Leabua Jonathan did not abide by the election results and seized power are described: large numbers of BCP supporters including virtually the whole leadership were arrested and mistreated, while others countrywide were subjected to violent attacks from the BNP Youth League or *Lebotho la Khotso*.

The account covers the uprising of 7 January 1974. ('It wasn't a very smart plan.') A consequence of the uprising was a 'most brutal period of politically motivated violence that surpassed even 1970'. A figure of 1000 people dead is quoted, although the source is not provided.

The years of the BCP in exile are covered in detail, beginning from a July 1974 meeting in Lusaka. Divisions developed amongst the BCP in exile, when five members of the Executive Committee attempted to expel Ntsu Mokhehle from the party. His position was saved by strong support from Transvaal BCP members.

The circumstances which led Mokhehle in 1979 to become associated with the South African security establishment at Vlakplaas are explained, but thereafter the period 1979 to 1991 remains undocumented, possibly because the real events of BCP infighting and the Lesotho Liberation Army campaign remain still too sensitive to be described.

Instead, the book jumps to the impending restoration of democracy and the emergence of the 'Pressure Group' of the BCP, which Mokhehle described as 'Mphanya's people' (*Batho ba Mphanya*). The party conference of 1992 (pictured on the cover) is criticized for avoiding issues about the BCP in exile which should have been discussed. Mphanya describes this conference as 'deliberately and constitutionally derailed'.

The role is described of Tom Thabane, who, despite his association with previous regimes, entered the Office of the Prime Minister as an adviser. It is stated that his role was initially to help bring stability in the army, but he later became very close to Ntsu Mokhehle, and it is said that due to his influence Molapo Qhobela, Tšeliso Makhakhe, Ntsukunyane Mphanya and Sekoala Toloane were expelled from the cabinet. Dr Moeketsi Senoana and Dr Khauhelo Raditapole later resigned in protest.

In the 1998 General Election, the BCP, led by Molapo Qhobela, was fighting against the Lesotho Congress for Democracy which had emerged as a new party led by Ntsu Mokhehle, after the BCP had expelled him as leader. The LCD won 79 of the 80 seats and the BCP, although it acquired 10.6% of the votes, won none. Following the election Molapo Qhobela attempted to expel members from the remaining BCP. Ultimately he finished up being himself expelled and having to form his own party, which adopted the old name of the Basutoland African Congress. There is a brief account of the 2002 General Election, in which the BCP like the BAC won three proportional representation seats.

Chapters near the end of the book have the titles 'Our achievements' and 'Mistakes we committed in the course of the struggle'. An annotated picture gallery of important persons discussed in the book is provided on the last pages.

Some detail in the book must be treated with caution. For example the described circumstances which led Bob Edgar to write the book *Prophets with honour: a documentary history of Lekhotla la Bafu* are totally wrong. (He personally confirms this.) Nevertheless, the book is an important source for those wishing to gain an insight into the politics of Lesotho of the past 50 years.

Local NEPAD Hampered by Absence of LCCI

As reported in *Public Eye* of 2 July 2004, assistance from the G8 countries to NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development) would be providing job opportunities for Basotho in small scale industries. However, in a conference on NEPAD in Lesotho, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mpho Malie told delegates that government was concerned that there was no representative of business the government could talk to because the government could not talk to individuals.

He was referring to the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry which was not represented at the meeting and has not been functional for some time.

In fact, the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) was founded in March 1976, replacing an earlier Chamber of Commerce which had its roots in the Basutoland Chamber of Commerce originally founded by George Hobson in 1890. The first President (1976-8) of the new LCCI was Ian Dare of a long established trading family. He was followed by J. M. Nthongoa (1978-91), G. T. Monaheng (1992-4) and Makalo Khiba (1994- ?). The LCCI apparently became dysfunctional in 2000 after some internal disputes.

When investigated by *Public Eye*, it was found that LCCI still had an Acting Executive Secretary, Thuso Thokoa. He said that the LCCI was working on a restructuring of staff, and that at present he was 'the only active member of staff'. According to Thuso Thokoa, LCCI did have a President, Teboho Mokau, and Vice-President, Koena Phafane.

New Book Highlights Problems of Teacher Education

Copies of a new book, *Initial primary teacher education in Lesotho*, recently became available in Lesotho. Written by J. Pulane Lefoka and E. Molapi Sebatane of the Institute of Education at the National University of Lesotho, the book summarizes the findings of the **MUSTER Project** in relation to Lesotho primary teacher education. MUSTER stands for Multi-Site Teacher Education Research, and is the acronym for a project in which experiences were compared between the countries of Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa and Trinidad & Tobago. The project was coordinated by the Centre for International Education in the University of the Sussex in UK (where Janet Stuart, formerly of the National University of Lesotho, was one of the coordinators), and sponsored by the British Department for International Development (DFID). The research was undertaken mainly in the period 1998-2000, and published initially in the period 1999-2002 as a series of discussion papers, nine of which are devoted to Lesotho. A special double issue of the *International Journal of Educational Development* for May/July 2002, edited by Janet Stuart and Keith Lewin, summarized the findings as a whole, following which DFID has sponsored books reporting the findings in relation to each country.

Teacher education has a long history in Lesotho, beginning with the first primary school which was opened at Beersheba by the Pestalozzi-trained Elizabeth Rolland in 1835. As elsewhere in the world at the time, the best pupils when they completed formal schooling became pupil-teachers. They learned the craft of teaching by actually doing it under more experienced colleagues. It was the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society which introduced western-style education into Lesotho. Although their earliest teachers were women, as time went on their male evangelists also had to function as teachers in the many mission outstations. The need for these and other teachers to have a formal education at least two years more than the highest class of pupils in their schools led to the founding of the Morija Training College in 1868. For much of the next century, Morija Training College, popularly known as Thabeng, was Lesotho's leading educational institution.

At the time of Independence, there were seven teacher training colleges in Lesotho, all denominational. The Lesotho Evangelical Church had the **Morija (or Lesotho) Training College** (Thabeng) for men; and the **Morija Girls' Training College** for women. The Catholic Church had four colleges, of which the two most important were **St Joseph's Training College** (recently moved to Maseru from Roma) and **St Mary's Training College** for women at Roma. **Mazenod Teacher Training College** specialized in domestic science, and the fourth Catholic College, for men and women was **Hermitage Training College**, in Qacha's Nek District, specially designed to meet the needs for teachers in the mountain districts. The third denomination with teacher education facilities was the Anglican Church, which had **St Catherine's Training College** to train women teachers in Maseru.

For many years, reports on education in Lesotho had recommended that there be a government teacher training institution. This proposal can be found as far back as a report by F. M. Urling Smith in 1926 and was very strongly recommended by Sir Fred Clarke, the Director of the University of London Institute of Education, who headed a Commission on Education to Lesotho in 1945. In the event, the Colonial Administration spent the available money for colonial development not on teacher education, but on controlling soil erosion and building the first stage of the Mountain Road. The Clarke Commission's recommendation was not to replace the denominational colleges, but to redress the then serious shortage of trained teachers by building a government training college to function alongside the four best of the denominational colleges.

The matter was revisited by a 1964 UNESCO Mission Report which also came out strongly in favour of a government college, and it was under UNESCO auspices, and with support also from Denmark and Britain, that this institution was finally created. Along the way, it became policy that the new institution would be the *only one* to train primary teachers. The **National Teacher Training**

College (NTTC) first opened its doors to students in April 1975, temporarily using the former St Joseph's Training College during 1975, until its own buildings were ready on an adjacent site. Teacher training at the existing denominational training colleges was then terminated and each of them then became high schools.

An important feature of the structure of NTTC in the first years was that the three year programme for both primary and secondary teachers included a full year of teaching practice ('the internship year') between the first and third years of the programme. Special field staff ('internship supervisors') were appointed as NTTC staff at 35 centres throughout the country, each of them supervising a number of the eventual 300 or so students undertaking their internship year. The centres helped to turn NTTC into a national rather than a single-site institution.

As time went on and the initial external funds for the institution fell away, problems of financing the internship year developed, particularly funds for transport. This resulted in some criticism of the internship system, which spilled over into a radical decision to discontinue it after 1987. A high-powered report by senior educationists was commissioned *only after this decision had been taken*. This report pointed out that the internship year, for all its imperfections, was serving a useful purpose, and was also cost efficient. Its abandonment would have a number of implications, one of which was that by having three instead of two residential years, NTTC could accommodate one third less students, a very serious matter given that it was in any case not producing enough qualified teachers to meet the national need. In the new arrangement, teaching practice was scheduled for the second semester of the second academic year and the internship supervisors were absorbed into the Primary Division of NTTC.

Following the practice of the colleges it replaced, NTTC at first used a minimum entrance level of a second class Junior Certificate for the Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC) programme. However, by this time the real standard of achievement by JC pupils was far less than it had been in the 1960s, and complaints arose about the amount of remedial teaching needed to be given to PTC entrants, particularly since a JC pass in mathematics was not a prerequisite for entrance to NTTC. Eventually, with effect from 1994, COSC was regarded as the standard entrance requirement, although passes rather than credits in English and Mathematics were deemed sufficient. Entrants to the Diploma in Education (Primary) course at NTTC in 1998 included only 7% with a credit in English and only 14% with a credit in Mathematics. The problem of remedying poor communication skills in English in fact permeates much of the discussion on teacher training.

Some of this background can be found in the MUSTER discussion papers and book, which concentrate on providing meticulous documentation of the state of teacher education at the NTTC in the period 1998-2000 (NTTC has subsequently been renamed the Lesotho College of Education and given semi-autonomous status).

Amongst major findings with very serious implications are that whereas the supply of secondary teachers in Lesotho is close to the actual demand, the number of qualified primary teachers being produced at NTTC (which peaked at 227 in 1983) has in recent years been less than 150 per year, far less than the projected need of about 1200 per year. The proportion of unqualified primary teachers has in fact been rising, despite an in-service programme designed to help them to qualify on the job. It seems set to rise further as free primary education (now provided as far as Standard 5) works its way through the primary school system, and as also significant numbers of teachers die at a relatively early age from HIV/AIDS.

It is noted that the cost of teacher training in Lesotho is one of the highest in Africa, but that economies are possible, and in particular consideration should be given to dedicating NTTC solely to primary teacher training. NTTC over the years has expanded its output of secondary teachers, the distortion towards producing secondary teachers reflecting the fact that its own staff are far more comfortable in the secondary education area. A MUSTER survey of the tutors found agreement with the

statement that ‘most tutors do not know much about teaching primary pupils’. This is perhaps hardly surprising in the light of the typical career path of most of the NTTTC tutors. They had themselves been trained at NTTTC, and after a period of secondary teaching, entered the National University of Lesotho for a four-year education degree, after which some had proceeded, either at NUL or overseas to a Master’s degree in education. At no point had they themselves taught a primary class.

With the benefit of hindsight, Lesotho’s policy of replacing all the denominational colleges in one fell swoop with a single national college in the capital was clearly unwise. Botswana and Swaziland, which both have smaller populations than Lesotho, have both retained denominational colleges as part of a teacher education programme which is spread over several colleges in different geographical locations. Teachers from the mountains in Lesotho were once trained at the Hermitage Training College in Qacha’s Nek District. However, qualified primary teachers today are so scarce that they can choose their schools and, having experienced urban life in Maseru during their training, are hardly likely to opt to go to teach at one of the more than 250 primary schools in Lesotho which still have no access by wheeled vehicle. Yet quality primary education is the indispensable foundation needed for all other subsequent education and training, while at village level it is an essential prerequisite for creating versatile citizens able to develop their rural communities. While the provision of free primary education has been a major and much welcomed development, to produce the primary teachers needed to provide this education clearly needs a comparable major national effort.

Even though the MUSTER study findings do not go as far as saying this, the creation of not one but two additional primary teacher training colleges, both located away from the capital, would seem to be a high priority needing a major diversion of national resources. In these new primary teacher training colleges, key personnel might well be the 65 or so persons taken out of primary schools in the 1990s to be used as District Resource Teachers. These DRTs, chosen from amongst the best primary school teachers, had been sponsored by the US-financed Primary Education Project which ran through the years 1991 to 1997. The job of DRTs was to move around and to assist other primary teachers in their areas. However, at the end of the project, they found themselves stranded with inadequate transport and resources to continue their work. These DRTs have already played the role of helping to train unqualified teachers on site. They might yet have a major role to play as teacher trainers complementing that of other trainers with a succession of academic qualifications but no actual primary teaching experience.

Sod Turning at Site of National Library and National Archives

Work on a new building for the **National Library** and **National Archives** was formally initiated on Friday 2 July 2004, when there was a ceremonial sod turning at the site on Kingsway, Maseru’s main thoroughfare. Those participating in the ceremony included the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili and the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China, Mr Qiu Bohua. China is providing financial assistance for the M25 million building.

The new building occupies the site of the former National Library building, which was demolished in May 2003 to make way for the new building. The old building, which consisted of a modern frontage added to a sandstone house (the former residence of the Manager of the adjacent Standard Bank) had in recent years suffered from structural design problems, and in particular a leaking roof, exacerbated by the large number of trees on the site, whose leaves blocked the drainage provided.

No plans of the new building have yet been published, but it is understood to be a four-storey building with the National Library below and the National Archives upstairs. Provision is made for a roof garden, but given the size of the site in the centre of Maseru there can be little provision of parking space. Given the need for archives to expand with time, it is hoped that the plan for the building makes provision for this necessity as well as exhibition areas.

The wisdom of locating the National Archives in the heart of the Central Business District has not been the subject of public debate. Normally, matters pertaining to the National Archives fall under the Archives Commission, a body made up of interested persons and representative of users of the National Archives. However, this body at present does not exist because the Minister responsible for Culture (under whom the National Archives falls) has failed to nominate members to the Archives Commission, and the terms of office of previous members have long since expired.

Diamond Mine to be Developed at Kao

The source of diamonds was once shrouded in mystery. At one time, the only known source was India, but in what geological formations they could be found and how they came to be there was not known.

This changed when diamonds were found in southern Africa. After the discovery of alluvial diamonds, 'yellow ground' rich in diamonds was found in 1870 at the place later to be known as Kimberley. It was soon realised that the harder 'blue ground' beneath was the true source of these diamonds, and as excavation proceeded, that the diamonds were located in a tapering conical pipe coming from deep in the earth. Such kimberlite pipes are now known to have originated in the Earth's interior far below the lithosphere or realm of solid rocks. Ancient explosive activity accompanied by enormous pressure turned graphite from great depth into diamonds, although in only a minority of pipes was the pressure (or the graphite) sufficient for diamonds to form.

100 million years of erosion have taken the tops off the pipes and created alluvial diamonds, but in Lesotho as at Letšeng-la-Terae and Kao, the tops of the pipes are less weathered, and with the improvement in world diamond prices, interest has again developed in formal mining in Lesotho, excavating the pipes to great depths.

Work has already resumed at the Letšeng Mine, and advertisements in the press in July by the National Environment Secretariat invited the public to comment on a proposed diamond mine at **Kao** to be developed by the **Lesotho Diamond Corporation (Serious View Trading (Pty) Ltd)**. Comments from the public were required as an input into the Environmental Impact Assessment being carried out before a licence for the development could be granted.

Kao, in Butha-Buthe District on the east side of the Malibamatšo valley, has had the longest history of any of Lesotho's diamond diggings. The Colonial Administration had for many years dismissed reports of diamonds in Lesotho. However, in 1954 it was forced to change its mind. The District Commissioner of Butha-Buthe had received a report from a remote part of the district that a woman had been killed when the sides of a pit in which she was working had collapsed. Since the circumstances seemed somewhat unusual, a police patrol was asked to investigate. A week later they rode back into the district headquarters to report that they had found more than 100 people mining diamonds on a hillside in the Kao valley.

A year later, a prospecting licence was granted to Colonel Jack Scott, who built an access track

over the difficult Letele and Rampai passes from Hlotse to Kao, and in the period 1955 to 1959 produced 17 567 carats of diamonds at Kao, including a fine 46 carat blue-white diamond. In 1959, Anglo-American Corporation joined Scott (as Basutoland Diamonds), but fewer diamonds were reported found in this period. (Very possibly just as many were found, but smuggling was less adequately controlled.) After Basutoland Diamonds had left, former diggers reoccupied Kao, providing resistance when the government in 1968 tried to resettle other diggers who had been moved from Letšeng-la-Terae. In 1969, no less than 1031 digging licences were issued for Kao, this number reflecting the very large extent of the 22 ha main pipe, one of the ten largest diamondiferous pipes in the world.

The area became the scene of conflict after the January 1970 General Election. A group of Basotho diamond diggers calling themselves *Liphokojoe* (Jackals), took over the Malibamatšo valley, and threatened to march on the Lowlands to restore a legitimate government. Many miners had arms for their own protection. Lesotho then had no army and no military aircraft, but the police used a light aircraft and on 5 April flew it low over the miners' camp at Kao tossing hand grenades from the windows. Some miners, who had retreated to the ridge above the camp, fired down on the aircraft. They did not bring it down, but the plane came back with bullet holes on the top of the wings. Kao was later in the day invaded from the east by members of the Police Mobile Unit who had been flown to Letšeng-la-Terae, where they had taken over vehicles belonging to the Rio Tinto Company. Meanwhile other miners using commandeered trucks moved over the Letele Pass on the same day en route for the Lowlands. However at Ha Koasa at the foot of Letele Pass, another group of police was waiting for them. They were mown down by police gunfire and were buried in a mass grave near the Hlotse Golf Course. To this day no-one knows the true number who died.

As a result of the uprising, not many diamonds were mined in Lesotho in 1970, less than half of the record number of 29 787 carats in 1969. The only diggers allowed back to Kao had to have government approved identity cards. In September 1971, Kao was taken over by the Maluti Diamond Corporation (Newmont Mining Company in partnership with Lonrho). World demand for diamonds fell, however, and Kao was closed. It was only formally reopened after the military coup in 1986, when individual diggers were again allowed concessions. These claims were excavated to depths of up to 20 metres in the blue ground, despite water which flooded many diggings overnight, and in many cases had to be pumped out for two hours each morning before work could resume. The effluent from the diggings became a significant byproduct, discolouring the water down the Kao and Malibamatšo rivers as far as the Katse Reservoir.

The situation changed again in 2000, when no prospecting licences were renewed, pending negotiations relating to a major mining development. In February 2004, the mine was formally enclosed by a major security fence, and it became known that the Lesotho Diamond Corporation was planning to open a major mine.

A Background Information Document has now been issued to enable the public to participate in the Environmental Impact Assessment. This makes it clear that the proposed mine will create a 'big hole' at the top of the diamond pipe, excavating not only the kimberlite but also the country rock around the pipe to create benches which will enable vehicles to descend in a spiral path to the bottom of the hole to collect the blasted rock and take it to the primary crushing plant. Eventually the hole could reach a depth of 300 metres. The diamond recovery process will proceed through several stages from the primary crusher on site to a final diamond concentrate which will be flown to Maseru for final sorting at the company's offices.

The startup phase is planned for October to December 2004, and after two years will be built up to a plant capacity of 5.75 million tons per annum with potential for raising this to 8.5 million tons per annum. There is an estimated life of 25 years for the mine as an open pit, during which time a huge tailings dam will accumulate in the Mabunyaneng valley adjoining the mine. This dam, if the mine runs

for its full estimated life of 25 years, could reach some 380 metres in height on the downstream side, comparable in height to the highest man made structures on earth. The villagers of Tiping in the Mabunyaneng valley will have to be relocated as part of the mine development.

New Newspapers Launched

Two new newspapers appeared in Maseru early in July. One of these was the *Lesotho Sunday News*, published and owned by Makhakhe Tukula. The single issue which appeared on 18 July 2004 consisted of 20 pages of unsubstantial and incoherent text. The newspaper was given a roasting by other newspapers and also by the Media Institute of Lesotho (MILES). It did not make it to a second issue.

More carefully planned was *Our Times*, a 12-page tabloid printed in colour in KwaZulu-Natal, and published in Maseru by Peter Potjo, who has offices in the LNDC's Development House. The newspaper sold at M3.50, the same price as the 48-page similarly coloured *Public Eye*, now Lesotho's mostly widely read English newspaper, which also sells in bordering towns in South Africa.

A *sine qua non* for newspaper financial success in Lesotho is acquiring sufficient advertising, and *Our Times* has acquired a reasonable mix of advertising and stories, both local and international, although the quality of the local reporting still has to be worked on.

The fourth issue of *Our Times* dated 3 August 2004 at last seemed to have a major story. It carried the headline 'Thai sells *Public Eye*'. The Thai in this case was not from Bangkok, but a Mosotho, Bethuel Thai, Managing Director of Voice Multimedia which publishes *Public Eye*. The story by Moeti Thelejane was a bit short on detail, including the sum of money involved, but suggested that *Public Eye* had been acquired by the publishing house which publishes the Johannesburg-based *Sunday World*. In the same story, Bethuel Thai was said to be transferring his focus to running a new printing press, which had been acquired as a result of a M2.3 million loan from the Southern African Media Development Fund. The new printing press was to be situated in the Mohalalitoe suburb of Maseru and would serve the independent press with high quality colour printing at present being undertaken (for example for both *Public Eye* and *Our Times*) in South Africa.

The following week it seems that there was some doubt about the story in *Our Times*. The newspaper reported that Bethuel Thai was suing it for M139 094 'in damages for defamation and injury to business status and reputation'.

Nevertheless, the part of the story about a new printing works certainly had substance. 'Total Print House' with a 'state-of-the-art' web offset press capable of producing full colour newspapers had already been advertising for local staff since May.

Our Times achieved seven issues before progressing to *Balimong ba likoranta*, the abode of the newspapers' ancestors.

Conditions Improve at Maseru Bridge

The relaxing of controls so that all Basotho became entitled to six month border passes had earlier in 2004 led to enormous queues at the Maseru Bridge Border Post, because such passes could only be obtained in morning hours.

With effect from mid-July, officials on the South African side changed the opening hours for issuing the passes from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the forms to be filled in issued up to 3 p.m. instead of being rationed and not issued after 9 a.m. The average waiting time which had been around 3 hours was reduced for most people to a matter of minutes rather than hours, except at busy times such as holidays and the end of the month, when monthly pay is taken across the border to procure goods and services.

World Bank Blacklists Acres International for Three Years

As reported in *This Day* of 27 July 2004, the World Bank has blacklisted the Canadian firm, **Acres International**, for three years following its conviction for corruption in Lesotho. The Lesotho High Court found the firm guilty of paying bribes to Masupha Sole, Chief Executive of the Lesotho Highlands Project. Sole himself is in gaol serving a 15 year sentence for accepting the bribes.

The World Bank ruling affects new contracts over the next three years, but existing projects will not be affected. Acres, founded in 1928, currently has World Bank financed projects in the Middle East, Ethiopia and Tanzania. It expressed itself 'deeply disappointed' by the World Bank decision.

Several other international firms have either been convicted of corruption or are still to face the Lesotho High Court. They must be wondering whether a similar fate awaits them.

New Chief Executive Appointed at LNDC

With effect from 1 August 2004, **Peete Molapo** assumed the post of Managing Director of the Lesotho National Development Corporation. The new Chief Executive of LNDC comes with long experience at the Central Bank of Lesotho. He began work there in 1983, and was appointed Chief Economist in 1993, before moving to Lesotho Bank in 1997 as economic adviser and strategist to the Managing Director. In 1998 he became a Director of the African Development Bank, and in 2001 was appointed Deputy Governor of the Central Bank.

He succeeds Sophia Mohapi whose term of office ended after seven years of service.

Taxi Fares Raised

Following successive increases in the price of petrol, the month of July was one of considerable chaos in relation to minibus taxi fares. A new fare structure has to be approved by the Traffic Commissioner, but when no new fares were announced, taxi owners implemented their own rises in fares. As reported in *Lesotho Today* of 15 July 2004, 22 taxis and their drivers were in police custody for allegedly forcing passengers to pay illegal fares.

The matter was regularized on 1 August 2004 when fares were increased on most routes by some 25% to 33%. Minimum fares in the centre of Maseru rose from M2.00 to M2.50. On longer routes such as Maseru to Roma, the fare rose from M6.20 to M8.30, although in practice passengers are often forgiven the odd lisente, so that the effective rise was from M6 to M8 per single journey.

Defence Force Implements Retirement at 45 more than Two Years Late

The *Lesotho Defence Force (Amendment) Act 2002*, Act 6 of 2002, according to its wording, came into force on publication in the *Lesotho Government Gazette*, which in fact occurred in Gazette no. 34 of 2002 dated 2 April 2002. The Act changed Section 39(1) of the *Lesotho Defence Force Act 1996* so that it now reads 'A soldier shall retire from the Defence Force on attaining the age of 45 years'. Previously retirement had been at 55 years. According to the 1996 Act, 'soldier' does not include an officer but where the context otherwise provides, includes a warrant officer and a non-commissioned officer'. It is clear from this that officers do not have to retire at the age of 45, and that ordinary soldiers who are not NCOs must do so. As far as NCOs are concerned, the wording is far from clear, although it seems that they should be included.

The intention of Government in making the amendment to the *Lesotho Defence Force Act 1996* was clearly to reduce the size and cost of the army. However, rather curiously, the matter seems not to have been discussed with the Commander of the Defence Force, Lieutenant-General Makhula Mosakeng, nor even communicated to him! *Public Eye* of 10 September 2003 reported that a notice signed by the Commander of the Defence Force dated 15 July 2004 drew attention to the new

retirement age, and also stated that the army had been quite open in admitting it only became aware of the new legislation in July 2004, even though it had theoretically come into force more than two years earlier. The army was said to be studying how the new retirement age could be implemented. Soldiers retired would be entitled to pensions. It is believed that about 300 presently serving soldiers will be affected.

Quite what second career these retired soldiers will follow, is not immediately clear, although in the past many ex-soldiers have joined security firms. Unfortunately, as court cases have revealed, in the past some soldiers and ex-soldiers have also used their knowledge of firearms to indulge in criminal activity. *Mopheme* of 14 September 2004, for example, reported a court case in which six men, two of them members of the Lesotho Defence Force and a one police officer were amongst six accused of robbing Pep Store in Maseru on 23 May 2004.

Third Woman Judge Appointed

A third woman judge has been appointed to the High Court. She is **Nthomeng Majara**, and biographical detail was provided in an interview with 'Matipi Tsoho in *Lentsoe la Basotho* of 22 July 2004.

Justice Majara, born in June 1963, is the fourth of seven children of the late Matete Majara, a well-known Basotho National Party cabinet minister. She is a holder of the LLB from the National University of Lesotho, which she acquired in 1994. After an LLM from London University, she was on the staff of the NUL. She has also served as a magistrate in Maseru and Mafeteng Districts, and most recently in the past year was head of internal revenue for the Lesotho Revenue Authority. Justice Majara is unmarried and without children.

Vanity Car Registrations to Be Allowed in Lesotho

The present system of private vehicle numberplates in Lesotho was introduced in 1979. The plates show a blue *mokorotlo* (Basotho hat) a district letter, and a four digit number. The ten district letters start with A for Maseru District, and then jump to B for Butha-Buthe, thereafter moving anti-clockwise through the remaining districts to H for Qacha's Nek, J for Mokhotlong and K for Thaba-Tseka District. The letter I is understandably omitted.

This system allows for up to 9999 registrations per district, but in two districts this number has been exceeded. Maseru District exhausted all A numbers as early as 1984, after which cars were registered with two letter combinations (each allowing an extra 999 numbers) beginning with AA, AB etc, a sequence (omitting AI, AO and AQ) which has now reached AW. Similarly Leribe District, moved from C to CA in the year 2000 and has now reached CB.

The exceptions to this system are the red number plates of government and project vehicles which respectively have X or Y registrations; the diplomatic corps, who get special plates reflecting their missions; and the King whose vehicles are marked MK.

This rather unexciting range of number plates is apparently shortly to be enlarged, allowing South African-type plates which can reflect a person's name or interests. According to the manager of the Lesotho National Transportation Information Service, Bahlakoana Makhera, as quoted in *Public Eye* of 20 August 2004, personalised car registrations will soon be available in Lesotho. Seven chosen letters followed by LS for Lesotho will be allowed, together with the *mokorotlo*. The cost for such vanity registrations will be about M2 000.

Death of JRL Kotsokoane

A veteran diplomat and public servant, **Joseph Riffat Larry Kotsokoane**, known as 'Joe' or 'JRL' to his friends, died on 25 July 2004. He was cremated in Bloemfontein on Monday 2 August, following which there was a memorial service at the Anglican Cathedral in Maseru on Friday 6 August.

Joe Kotsokoane was born in Hebron, near Pretoria, on 19 October 1922 and grew up in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. His high school education was completed at St Francis College, Mariannhill in the then Natal, after which he completed a BSc at the University College of Fort Hare, followed by a BSc (Hons) in Plant Ecology at the University of the Witwatersrand. He later completed a postgraduate Certificate in Crop and Animal Production at Wye College of the University of London. Both he and his wife, who is from Johannesburg, were part of the wider Basotho community resident in South Africa.

Joe Kotsokoane first came to Lesotho as Agricultural Education Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture in 1952, and he served in the Ministry in a number of posts up to Independence. During this period he was Principal of the School of Agriculture (the forerunner of the present Lesotho Agricultural College) from 1955 to 1962.

At Independence in 1966, he became the first High Commissioner of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the United Kingdom, where he served for three years. He was subsequently High Commissioner in Nairobi during the period 1970-3. Thereafter he became a member of the Cabinet, serving successively as Minister of Education & Culture, as Minister of Health & Social Welfare, and as Minister of Agriculture. He was also briefly Lesotho's Representative to the United Nations, and later Minister to the Prime Minister.

After the Military Coup in 1986, Joe Kotsokoane undertook a variety of consultancy work in South Africa, mainly in the agricultural field. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Fort Hare in 2001.

Joe Kotsokoane is survived by his wife, Mamie 'Mankabi, and by five children and seven grandchildren. Their oldest son, Captain Nkabi Kotsokoane, is a retired military officer and lives in Ladybrand, while their youngest son, resident in Maseru, is Tšepo, who trained as a miller in Italy, and works in the flour mills at Maputsoe. One daughter, 'Makahlolo ('Lolo'), who also lives locally, has followed in her father's footsteps and has an MSc in Agriculture from the University of Reading. Together with her husband, Bob McKee, she is owner of the Garden Centre in Maseru. A daughter, Koena, is now resident in Cape Town. In the early 1980s, she was well-known as a newsreader on Radio Lesotho and as editor of *Lesotho Today*. The third daughter, Ipuseng, has also become a media specialist, and works in publishing in Johannesburg.

Justice Sector Development Programme Reveals Shocking Delays and Inefficiencies

The Lesotho Justice Sector Development Programme (LJSDP), as revealed in a report recently released, is charged with documenting deficiencies in the Lesotho Justice Sector, developing a strategic development plan, and then (from January 2005) ensuring its implementation. The Programme has been developed by a team of locally recruited staff supported by external consultants.

The situation report, compiled during the LJSDP's inception phase was made available to the Press, and was serialized in *Public Eye* over six issues, beginning with the issue of 6 August 2004. This report is hard hitting and refers to serious lack of effective management of resources and finance throughout the sector; a 'startling lack of management information'; ineffective leadership; poor management of human resources; and serious lack of communication, consultation and coordination.

On the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), the LJSDP found serious concerns relating to crime investigation. The Police Training College could not even say when it last held a course in crime investigation techniques. 'Interviewing techniques are non-existent and there are many allegations of

torture and abuse of persons who have been arrested'. Forensic scientists do not visit scenes of crime and management of exhibits and dockets is generally poor.

The LJSDP also found that Public Prosecutors are poorly trained and have to work under tremendous pressure. As of March 2004, there was a backlog of 6 308 cases in the Maseru Magistrates' Court. The management of the Magistrates' Courts is said to be 'almost non-existent.... There was no evidence of planning, written instructions, records, communication or supervision.... Faith in the Magistrates' Courts has been undermined because of the delays and there are allegations of corruption at every level. We discovered cases which were the subject of a preliminary examination at a Magistrate's Court taking five years or more to reach the High Court.'

On the other hand, the LJSDP found that there were relatively few issues of concern in the Local and Central Courts. 'There was no evidence of any appreciable backlog of cases and people using the courts to resolve disputes were generally satisfied with the levels of service they received.' The relatively simple procedures and the fact that proceedings were in Sesotho was welcomed.

Amongst other findings, the LJSDP also discovered a serious backlog of cases at the High Court. It examined criminal trials registers for the period 1990 to November 2001, and found 680 cases from that period which had not yet been completed. When searching files from the period dating back to 1995, the investigators found that 'for many files all activity with them stopped in December 2001. Quite literally, nothing has happened to them; they have simply been left in the filing cabinets and appear to all intents and purposes to have been forgotten. What is more worrying is the fact that the vast majority of these files were for offences of murder, some having been committed in the 1980s. The prospects of a conviction after so long must be questionable.'

The report blames much of the inefficiency in the High Court system ('day upon day we found very few of the 9 courts were actually in use') on a poor system for listing matters to be placed before the courts. It also comments on the poor execution of judgments, commenting 'it is clear that many of the problems with the execution of judgments entail corruption. It is a commonly held belief that one has to know someone in order to have a judgment executed. However, there is no management information about the extent of the problem.'

In relation to the Court of Appeal, the report is more positive, and states 'it was especially pleasing to note that all judgments are delivered within weeks in stark contrast to the High Court'. However, there is criticism of the incomplete records prepared for the Court of Appeal. Audio tapes used for transcription sometimes went missing. 'In one notable case, where a person appealed against conviction having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment exceeding 10 years, one of the tapes was missing, and the Court of Appeal had no alternative but to allow the appeal.'

In relation to the use of bail, the report states that 'there are numerous cases where people were granted bail for the charge of murder, only to abscond and never to be found again. We found one case where an accused murdered someone at the beginning of a month and then went on to commit another murder at the end of the same month and was still given bail'.

In relation to the Probation Unit, the LJSDP notes that with just 12 probation officers, it is hopelessly understaffed, which probably accounts for those administering justice in courts not resorting to alternatives to imprisonment. It is noted that the Legal Aid Unit deals more with civil cases than with criminal cases, whereas in some countries such a unit only services those charged with a criminal offence.

As far as defence lawyers are concerned, it is noted that in the absence of an effective listing system, they take advantage of the weak administrations within the courts, exploiting them to the advantage of their clients and obtaining adjournments 'on the flimsiest of pretexts'. Some engage in 'forum shopping', arranging which judicial officer will hear their case, choosing those who are lenient when it comes to allowing bail or sentencing.

On the way forward, the LJSDP report mentions the need for a Vision to be developed; the need for effective communication, co-ordination and co-operation between institutions; and the need for a national forum meeting quarterly to review the problems affecting the Justice Sector'. The sector as a whole and each of its institutions need strategic development plans.

Lesotho Participates in Athens Olympics

Lesotho has competed in the Olympic Games since 1972. Its team for the Olympic Games held in Athens from 12 to 30 August 2004, was rather smaller than the 15-strong team sent to the Sydney Olympics in 2000. The 2004 team consisted of a woman Tae Kwondo expert, Lineo Mochesane; and two marathon runners, 'Mamokete Lechela and Ntlotšoeu Mpesela. The team had a much larger number of supporters, including the Minister for Gender, Youth & Sports, Mrs 'Mathabiso Lepono; her Principal Secretary, Makalo Theko; the President of the Lesotho Olympic Committee, Mrs 'Matlohang Ramoqopo; and a team doctor.

As in previous Olympic Games, the team returned without medals. Lineo Mochesane was knocked out of the Tae Kwondo by an Austrian competitor. The marathon runner, 'Mamokete Lechela finished 64th in her race, an achievement in itself because a number of competitors, including Britain's Paula Radcliffe, dropped out of the race. Ntlotšoeu Lechela, Lesotho's only male competitor, also managed to finish his marathon race coming 70th out of 81 runners.

Lesotho also participated in the Olympic Games in a non-competitive role. A helicopter pilot in the Air Wing of the Lesotho Defence Force, Captain Thabo Mohapi, is also a qualified and experienced boxing referee. He was chosen as a referee to judge bouts in Athens.

Sentencing of Soldiers Guilty of Murder of Deputy Prime Minister

After a trial lasting two years, sentences were finally announced in August for the five members of the Lesotho Defence Force who had been found guilty on 11 June 2004 of the murder of the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, **Selometsi Baholo**. The murder had taken place more than 10 years earlier on 14 April 1994. Sentences were also handed down at the same time for the kidnapping of four cabinet ministers which occurred on the same date.

In relation to the murder of Baholo, Sergeant Lenkoane Molelle was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment; Captain Lijane Kaloko to 10 years; Privates Setsomi Letsie and Tankiso Moletoa to 4 years imprisonment. All of these were without the option of a fine, but Corporal Tankiso Majoro, received 4 years with an option of a fine of M4 000, half of which was suspended for 2 years. Lesser concurrent sentences were imposed for the kidnappings.

New Principal Chief of the Batlokoa Installed

Chief Halikopane Matšohlo Sekonyela was installed as Principal Chief of the Batlokoa at a ceremony in Mokhotlong District on Friday 20 August 2004. Chief Halikopane succeeds the widow of his older brother, Chieftainess 'Maqheqheba Halialohe Matšohlo Sekonyela. She had been the Senator representing the Batlokoa Chieftainship from 1996 to 2003. Her husband, Halialohe, had succeeded his father Matšohlo Sekonyela after he had died in September 1995. However, he hardly had the chance to rule because of ill-health.

Chief Halikopane Sekonyela is a great-grandson of Chief Lelingoana who settled with his Batlokoa people in Mokhotlong in 1882.

New Road Transport Regulations Gazetted

New Road Transport Regulations 2004 were published as a supplement to a *Lesotho Government*

Gazette of 27 August 2004. Excluding the various schedules with specimen forms, they expand the original 5 pages of the *Road Transport Regulations 1981* to 14 pages.

Despite their wide application, the new regulations, published only in English, are hardly user friendly. They make reference to amongst others holders of C-permits, D-permits and F-permits, without providing a definition. Reference to the parent *Road Transport Act 1981* establishes that a C-permit is in fact a public service permit entitling the holder to run a bus, while a D-permit is a taxi service permit. However the same Act makes no reference to F-permits. There has been no consolidated edition of Lesotho's laws since 1960, but the diligent searcher will eventually come across the definition of an F-permit in the *Road Transport (Amendment) Order 1991*, where it is stated that 'An F-permit shall entitle a holder thereof to convey passengers of [*sic*] goods to and from the Common Customs Area member countries'.

The regulations include detailed specifications for the dimensions of entrances and seats on buses. For example, entrances have to be at least 530 mm wide and 1.29 m high measured from the lowest step, while the distance between seats (backrest to backrest) has to be at least 600 mm. Seats have to be 400 mm wide when standing passengers are allowed and otherwise have to be 360 mm wide.

A great deal more is also now part of transport law. For example, under 'Touting' it is stated that 'A person shall not for the purpose of inviting or obtaining passengers for any public motor vehicle, make any noise or sound any instrument, or do anything which causes or is likely to cause annoyance, inconvenience or danger to the public'. It remains to see what impact this might have in reducing noise levels. In Maseru and elsewhere, the sounding of horns by minibus taxis to attract passengers is commonplace, as is the shouting by the *k'hontae* or conductor of 'Setopong' or 'Seteisheneng' or 'Thetsane' or some other destination.

In fact it will be interesting to know at what point the taxi drivers and their conductors will even be made aware of the new regulations, since they are unlikely ever to acquire or read the *Lesotho Government Gazette*. Even if they do try to find the *Gazette* (difficult when there is no conveniently situated Government Bookshop) they will encounter considerable confusion. Leaving aside the linguistic and typographical errors in the regulations, there is something strange about the legal notice itself (no. 129 published on 27 August 2004) which sets out the *Road Transport Regulations 2004*. It is in fact repealed by new *Road Transport Regulations 2004* published as Legal Notice no. 166 in a *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* of 15 September 2004! It might be expected that the new regulations, published 19 days later, were needed to correct some mistake in the original regulations, but in fact they are word for word the same as the ones they replace. There is, however, one difference. The *new* regulations (but not the old), have had their pages permuted so that as continuous text they have become nonsense.

New AME Bishop Welcomed

A new Bishop for the 18th Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was welcomed in Lesotho on Sunday 29 August 2004. She is **Bishop Dr Sarah Frances Davis**, replacing her predecessor, Dr Vashti Murphy Mackenzie. The AME, whose followers are chiefly black Americans, was founded more than 200 years ago in Philadelphia. 13 of its 19 Episcopal Districts are located in North America, 3 in Africa, and one each in South America, the West Indies and London.

Embarkation Charge Increased on International Flights

With effect from 31 August 2004, the embarkation charge on international flights from Moshoeshoe I International Airport was raised to M50. At the same time the embarkation fee for domestic flights was

raised to M10. There are, however, at present no scheduled domestic flights.

Vice-Chancellor of NUL Proceeds on Terminal Leave

The Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho since 1 March 2001, **Dr Tefetso Henry Mothibe**, proceeded on terminal leave on 1 September 2004. He had assumed office in 2001, promising to bring stability to NUL in the context of a Transformation and Restructuring Plan. Although much effort subsequently went into what was called 'transformation', it proved to be a very costly exercise involving the creation of a number of new highly paid positions, including Executive Deans, a Director of Human Resources, a Corporate Secretary and a Director of Transformation, none of which were provided for within the University's existing statutes. The transformation process had been brought to an abrupt halt by the meeting of the University Council on Monday 31 May 2004 when, consonant with a directive from the Ministry of Education, the Council required that no further money be spent on the transformation process, and that the university should revert to the situation in 2002 before the new posts were created.

The new Acting Vice-Chancellor is the recently appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor, **Professor Mafa Sejanamane**. He has a particularly difficult task ahead, given that the financial situation of the university has deteriorated over the past four years. The detailed financial situation is not even known with any certainty, because the university has been without a bursar and deputy bursar for over three years (they were suspended on full pay pending disciplinary charges which seem not to have succeeded). One result is that the university's accounts have not been prepared since the financial year 1999/2000, and thus for the following four years cannot be audited. Advertisements have appeared in the press for qualified accountants to help to prepare these accounts. The university itself teaches Accounting within its Department of Business Administration, where it is one of the available specializations in the four-year Bachelor of Commerce degree.

Amongst other problems facing the university are serious imbalances in student registration. Large numbers of students are registered in programmes for which there are few employment opportunities on graduation, while at the same time Lesotho has very severe shortages of nurses, doctors and primary school teachers as well as mathematics and science teachers at secondary level. Most of these shortages are the result of qualified personnel in these areas having skills marketable in South Africa or overseas. The consequent brain drain, the migrant labour system of the new millennium, does result in money being remitted back to Lesotho. However the loss of manpower from Lesotho requires a massive increase in training opportunities, with appropriate incentives to ensure that Lesotho itself retains enough professional staff to service its own needs in these areas of demand.

Professor Moletsane Moves from NMDS to LIPAM

The former Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho, **Professor Ramoshebi Maboee Moletsane**, on 3 September 2004 took leave of the National Manpower Development Secretariat, where he had been employed as Director for the past three years. His new assignment will be the Directorship of the Lesotho Institute of Public Administration and Management (LIPAM). This will not be a particularly easy task. The main buildings of LIPAM were declared structurally unsound in 2002 and were demolished. Its administration offices is at present on the third floor of Block A of Development House in Maseru's Central Business District. Teaching takes place in borrowed classrooms at the University's Institute of Extra-Mural Studies (which fortuitously has classrooms otherwise empty all day, because they are mainly used for part-time evening classes); and the LIPAM library is currently accommodated in space rented from the mine recruiting organization, TEBA, at the other end of town on Moshoeshoe Road.

Registration for Pensions Hits Hurdles

As announced in the Budget for 2004/5, the Lesotho Government is embarking on a scheme to provide pensions of M150 per month to all persons over the age of 70. However, the actual mechanism to achieve this is taking a long time to develop.

An initial approach to the Independent Electoral Commission to undertake registration of pensioners was unsuccessful, and a subsequent approach was made to the Bureau of Statistics, which recruited members of the public to assist in the task. However, as reported in *Public Eye* of 3 September 2004, this brought protests from Members of Parliament who considered that they should recruit the people needed themselves. The Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, appeared on Lesotho Television on 27 August to announce the beginning of the registration process on 30 August. Constituency lists were being compiled by September.

The actual payment of the pensions is planned to be carried out through post offices and postal agencies, although the date of the first payments is yet to be announced.

New United States Ambassador Arrives

The new United States Ambassador to Lesotho, **Ms June Carter**, arrived in Lesotho in September. She is the first Afro-American woman to occupy the post, and replaces the former ambassador, Mr Robert Loftis.

Death of Principal Chief of Ramabanta

The Principal Chief of Kubake and Ramabanta's, **Chief Seeiso Griffiths Api** died at his home at Ha Ramabanta on 13 September 2004. Chief Seeiso was the great-grandson of Chief Ramabanta after whom the ward is named. Ramabanta in turn was named after Sir Godfrey Lagden, Resident Commissioner of Lesotho, 1894-1902, who gained the Sesotho nickname Ramabanta, 'father of belts', from his military uniform with its characteristic additional decorative Sam Browne belt.

Mohale Feeder Roads Completed

As reported in *Mopheme* of 14 September 2004, 76 km of feeder roads, costing M130 million, have been completed around the Mohale Reservoir. The road around the dam includes 4 vehicular bridges crossing arms of the reservoir. Three footbridges have also been completed over rivers feeding the reservoir.

UNFPA Report Predicts Drop in Lesotho's Population

The *UNFPA state of world population 2004* report, compiled by the United Nations Population Fund, was released in Lesotho (and globally) on 15 September 2004. It shows that the World's population is currently 6 400 million and still growing at 76 million a year. Although the rate of growth is slowing, a total world population of 8 900 million is predicted by 2050.

The reported situation for individual countries is however rather different. In the case of Lesotho, the report takes the 2004 population of the country to be just 1.8 million, presumably reflecting the actually enumerated figures of the 1996 census. (The 1996 census is generally acknowledged to have been flawed, resulting in an underenumeration generally considered to be at least 5%. A 2004 figure of 2.1 million would have been a more plausible estimate.) The UNFPA attempts estimates of the 2050 population for each country, and for 2050 estimates that Lesotho's population

will have dropped to 1.4 million. It also predicts drops in the populations of all other southern African countries by 2050 except Namibia.

Other estimates for Lesotho are an overall population growth rate for the period 2001-5 of only 0.1%, although the urban growth rate is estimated at 0.9%; an infant mortality rate of 92 per 1000 live births (the highest in southern Africa); male and female life expectancies of 32.3 years and 37.7 years (in the case of males the lowest in the world, even less than male life expectancies for Zambia and Sierra Leone which are marginally higher); maternal mortality of 550 in 100 000 live births (the highest in southern Africa); a total fertility rate of 3.84 live births per woman; and a HIV prevalence rate of 25.4% of males and 32.4% of females in the age range 15 to 49 (higher prevalence rates are only given for Botswana and Swaziland). A more cheerful statistic is that Lesotho is recorded as being the only country in Africa with more females than males enrolled in primary school, a statistic closely related to its having the lowest female illiteracy rate (10%) in Africa.

Many of the Lesotho statistics are grim reflections of a deterioration in the health status of Basotho and of the health services themselves. In 1994, ten years earlier, a UNICEF-sponsored report, *The situation of women and children in Lesotho*, estimated the population growth rate to be between 2.6% and 2.8%; an infant mortality rate of 79 per 1000 live births; a maternal mortality rate of 282 for 100 000 live births; and a total fertility rate of 5.1 (using a 1986 census figure). The *reported* HIV prevalence rates in 1994 were less than 0.1% for both men and women. Life expectancy rates, while not appearing in the 1994 report, were more than 20 years greater than the extremely low figures reported by the UNFPA for 2004.

No critique of the UNFPA figures for Lesotho has yet been published, but in South Africa, the figures for South Africa were immediately challenged by the Statistician-General, Lesotho-born Pali Lehohla (in *Business Report*, 21 September 2004). The UNFPA South African figures for life expectancy, 45.1 years for males and 50.7 years for females, are much higher than those for Lesotho but are challenged as being too low, 50 for males and 53 for females being the South African official figures. Also the total fertility rate for South Africa of 2.61 is considered too low, 2.77 being a more accurate estimate.

Masianokeng Cannery to Reopen

The canning factory at Masianokeng was opened in 1976 to provide processing facilities for an asparagus project which had expanded to 1000 growers, most of them women, by the end of 1987. At this time small open sided shelters were established in many of the villages in the Lowlands of Maseru District, where producers could bring asparagus to be collected daily for transfer to the newly established cannery. In terms of returns in maloti per hectare, it was the most profitable crop in Lesotho. The cannery at Masianokeng bought, marketed and processed the asparagus, and while most of it was canned in the form of spears or as soup, fresh asparagus also proved to be a profitable export by air freight to Western Europe in the period September to November each year. Unfortunately, even though the cannery also tried canning beans and peaches, the quality and availability proved insufficient for agribusiness, and asparagus proved to be the only profitable product. However, it only kept the cannery busy for three months in the year.

Eventually management problems affected the cannery, as well as competition with extensive asparagus growing (using cheap Lesotho labour for seasonal agricultural work) near Ficksburg and other parts of the Free State. A South African firm was brought in to run the Basotho Cannery, but it found that by this time there was insufficient Lesotho produce for profitability. Bringing in South African asparagus to keep the production line busy was tried, but ultimately the enterprise collapsed and the cannery closed in 1999. At the time of its closure it was employing 15 permanent staff and 750 seasonal staff.

It was announced in September 2004 by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mpho Malie, that the Lesotho Government had provided the Lesotho National Development Corporation with M9 million to reopen the cannery with a view to later privatization. The statement, as reported in *Public Eye* of 24 September 2004, said that the cannery would open in time for asparagus cultivation on 1 November 2004, and its products will be mainly beans, mushrooms, peaches and asparagus. There is some inconsistency in the statement in that November is the end of the asparagus season, and it would seem that by the time the factory opens there will be little remaining asparagus available for canning in the current season. However, there is a little-documented mushroom project currently underway apparently involving the Ministry of Agriculture and the University's Faculty of Agriculture. Possibly the newly opened factory will be able to make use of supplies from this project, as well as peaches and beans which become available from Christmas onwards.

993 Receive Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees at National University of Lesotho

The annual Graduation Ceremony at the National University of Lesotho was held on Saturday 25 September 2004 on a cloudy morning with occasional light rain. A total of 993 students received certificates, diplomas, or degrees. Amongst these were 12 Masters' Degrees, 5 in Agriculture, 2 in Humanities, 3 in Law and 2 in Economics.

Catholic Priest Sentenced to 15 Years for High Treason

A Catholic priest, **Father Anthony Thabo Monyau**, was on 28 September 2004 sentenced by Mr Justice Tšeliso Monaphathi to 15 years in prison on two counts of high treason and conspiracy in contravention of the *Internal Security Act 1984* and *Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 1981*. The long running court case had arisen from the 1998 political disturbances during which Father Monyau had associated with dissident soldiers and illegally supported the overthrow of the Lesotho Government. A request by Father Monyau's defence lawyers for bail pending appeal was refused.

Prince Harry's Lesotho Video Screened Widely on Television

The forgotten kingdom: Prince Harry in Lesotho was shown widely in late September on television in Britain and a number of other countries. The film was largely shot by Prince Harry himself earlier in 2004 and proceeds from the film will benefit a number of charity organizations in Lesotho, including 'Mantšase Children's Home in Mohale's Hoek District where Prince Harry spent part of his eight-week stay in Lesotho.

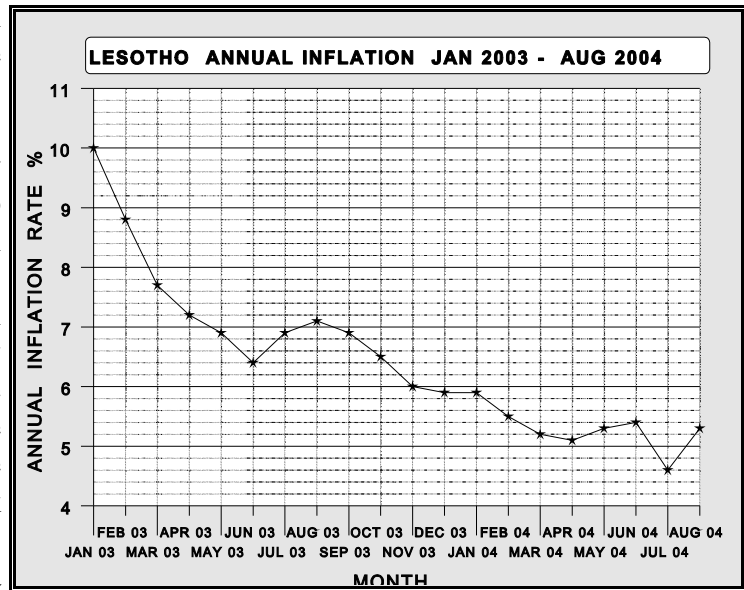
Prince Harry, aged 20, is the younger son of Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana. In 2005 he is due to enter Sandhurst for training as an officer in the British army.

Death of Mofelehetsi Moerane, Minister of Public Works and Transport

The Minister of Works and Transport, **Mofelehetsi Salomone Moerane**, died in a Johannesburg clinic on 28 September 2004 at the age of 72. He had been suffering from cancer for some time. He had represented the Koro-Koro Constituency in Maseru District since 1998.

Inflation Touches Lowest Level for 35 Years Before Bouncing Back Upwards

The **Annual Inflation Rate** for the period January to June 2004 had remained between 5% and 6%, approximately 1% higher than in South Africa, because of the residual effect of the introduction of 14% VAT in place of 10% General Sales Tax in Lesotho in July 2003. The impact of VAT disappeared in July 2004, making it possible for inflation to drop to as low as 4.6%, the lowest annual inflation rate for 34 years. However, offsetting this, there had already been an underlying inflationary trend from May 2004 resulting from fuel price rises. While the reduced impact of VAT had cut some 1% off inflation, the global oil price rise had by August already taken inflation back to where it had been earlier in the year. With global oil prices touching US\$50 a barrel by the end of September, further increases in inflation seemed inevitable in the next few months.



New Schedule of Minimum Wages Gazetted

The annual revision of minimum wages appeared in a Legal Notice in *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* of 28 September 2004. It provides for new minimum wages to come into force on 1 October 2004. The new schedule departs from the format of earlier years, so that whereas direct comparisons can be made in the case of some occupations, in other cases the changes are not so clear.

Right at the bottom of the wages schedule are domestic workers whose minimum monthly wage rises from M210 to M221, an increase of 5.2% (but still less than a third of the minimum wage for this category in South Africa). Workers in small businesses (those, such as village shops, with not more than two employees) have a rise of 5.5% from M421 to M440.

In manufacturing industry, the minimum wages are gazetted at M621 per month for a trainee and M650 for a trained person, exactly the same as the wages gazetted a year earlier for a sewing machine operator. Clothing sector workers are therefore awarded no wage increase at all, reflecting the difficulties this sector is facing as a result of the rise in value of the loti against the dollar, and the prospect of competition with China and other Asian countries when the present World Trade Organization agreement ends in January 2005. The failure to get a rise is certain to disappoint some 30 000 textile workers and their two rival trade unions, FAWU and LECAWU, who had been jockeying with the Wages Board for 12% and 6.9% increases respectively. The failure to get a rise will also create considerable hardship for workers, who in August suffered a 25% increase in taxi fares to get to work. They will have to absorb other inflationary costs, which by October are likely to be 6%, a serious setback given that salary rises in the three previous years had also fallen short of inflation.

Various categories of workers spelled out in the minimum wage legislation a year ago are no longer listed, but the Legal Notice says that they may not be paid less than the minimum wage set out in the earlier schedule. As a result, copy typists and telephone operators have had their minimum wages frozen at M732 per month; while drivers of light, medium and heavy vehicles have had their minimum wages frozen at respectively M849, M931, and M1191 per month.

On the other hand, watchmen with a minimum of M863 a year ago, are now presumably covered by the new category of security personnel with a gazetted minimum of M911, a rise of 5.6%. Another new category providing employment to increasing numbers of people is that of workers in funeral parlours. Such workers now have their own statutory minimum wage of M742 per month.

Winter Rainfall Close to Average

2004 winter (April to September) rainfall was close to average throughout Lesotho. The chart shows figures for Roma, where, although there was no rain in May, the four following months of June, July, August and September all had rainfall above average. The wettest winter on record at Roma occurred in 1950 with 477 mm (see bottom of the chart). The driest on record was 1994 with 66 mm. The average Roma winter rainfall is 186 mm, and the rainfall for the six months of winter in 2004 totalled 184 mm.

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