

SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN LESOTHO
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Veteran Journalist Joe Molefi Dies

The person who for a generation had been the doyen of Lesotho's journalism profession, **Joe Molefi**, died quite suddenly at the age of 73 on the morning of Monday 29 September 2003 at his home at Upper Thamae. Only the previous day he had been in discussions with the editor of the newspaper *Public Eye* about his reporting schedule for the coming week.

Joseph Sallie Poonyane Molefi was born in 1930 at Winburg in the Free State, and after primary school in Winburg and Evaton near Johannesburg, attended the Anglican St Peter's Secondary School in Rosettenville from 1944 to 1948. This school had in the early 1930s become the first school in the then Transvaal to provide training up to matriculation standard for African pupils.

An able scholar, he was admitted as a medical student at the University of the Witwatersrand, but was there caught up in political activities. He abandoned his studies and became a full-time political organizer at the time of the 1952 Defiance Campaign. In 1955 together with Vus'umzi Make, he organized the Evaton bus boycott, which eventually resulted in the bus authorities having to cancel an unfair sixpence fare increase. From 1956 to 1961 he was one of the 156 defendants in the Treason Trial, being eventually still one of the remaining 29 defendants as charges against the others were dropped.

Joe Molefi identified with the Pan Africanist Congress on its founding in 1959, and became a member of its executive. In October 1961, he skipped bail and fled to Lesotho when he was charged with publishing seditious material in a publication called *Mafube*. Thereafter, while maintaining his PAC sympathies, he worked as a journalist. This brought him into a collision course in the 1960s with the government of Leabua Jonathan, who tried to deport him, while he maintained that he was protected by his refugee status. The court case went as far as the Privy Council in London, but was lost on a technicality. Eventually, Joe Molefi was left alone by the Lesotho Government as long as his reporting during the Leabua Jonathan years did not criticize the government in power. He eventually became a Lesotho citizen.

From the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, what was then known as the Leabua Jonathan Airport in Maseru, was host to three international flights from Johannesburg per week, expanding later to include flights from elsewhere including Maputo. The tiny arrival and departure areas were also host to Joe Molefi, who had long learned that the airport was the best place to spot visiting experts, consultants and diplomats, engage them in conversation, and thereby to find out whether they had a story worth pursuing.

Papa Joe, as he came to be called, worked in the 1960s as Lesotho correspondent for Associated Press and United Press International. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s he was also a stringer for various South African newspapers and for the BBC, where he reported for the *Focus on Africa* programme. For a number of years he was Public Relations Officer for the Lesotho National Development Corporation. He was also at times employed by the Lesotho Department of Information, both as a journalist and as a newsreader for Radio Lesotho, where his diction and pronunciation were without equal amongst the newsreaders of the time. From 1978 to 1981 and again from 1994 to 1997, he was also the Radio Lesotho news editor. Thereafter he became a freelance journalist again, mainly for the *Public Eye* newspaper and was still filing stories right up until his death. One of his last stories covered the Queen Mother's funeral at Matsieng on 19 September 2003, and the following week in *Public Eye* of 26 September he filed his last story on talks between the Ministers of Agriculture of Lesotho and South Africa.

Neatly dressed and with courteous manners, Joe Molefi was indeed a gentleman of the press. He was also a conscientious family man. He married Esther 'Matšepo Rabotapi in 1954, and they had three

children Tšepo, Molefi and Rahab. In less tumultuous times, Molefi Molefi was able to complete what was denied his father. He became a qualified medical practitioner.

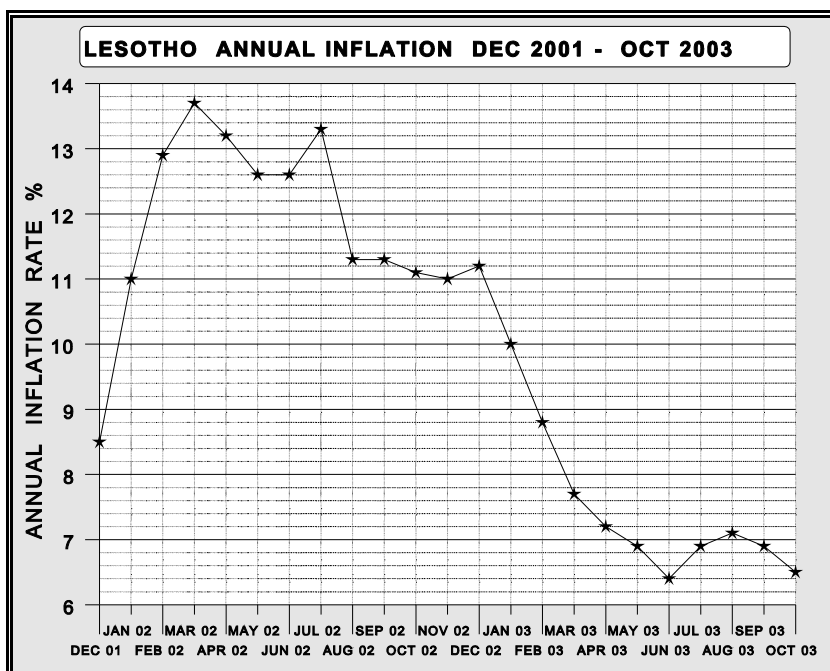
When asked, ‘Joe, haven’t you retired yet?’, he would say with a twinkle in his eye, ‘You will know I have retired when you see my obituary notice in the press’. And so it was, although in the event, the news of his passing spread faster than the printed word.

Joe Molefi’s funeral on 11 October 2003 at Bryanston in South Africa was attended by about a thousand people. He was buried at Fourways Cemetery in Bryanston.

Introduction of VAT Interrupts Falling Inflation

During the year 2002, as shown on the chart, inflation in Lesotho both rose and fell, peaking at 13.7% in March 2002.

Following the same trend as in South Africa, inflation in Lesotho then fell steadily from 11.2% in December 2002 to 6.4% in June 2003. The introduction of Value Added Tax at 14%, replacing the previous 10% Sales Tax interrupted the downward trend for two months, with rises to 6.9% in July 2003 and 7.1% in August 2003. By September 2003, however, the downward trend was again apparent and inflation dropped back to 6.9% in September and 6.5% in October.



The comparable South African inflation rate, the rate excluding interest rates on mortgage bonds, dropped from 6.3% in August 2003 to 5.4% in September 2003. The difference between the South African and Lesotho rates is presumably largely accounted for by VAT not having changed in South Africa during the previous 12 months, whereas the Sales Tax to VAT change in Lesotho resulted in a tax hike of 4% which will take a year before its impact disappears.

New Minimum Wages Gazetted

The annual review of minimum wages came into effect on 1 October 2003. The wages set a year earlier were increased by only 5.5% across the board, compared with 10% the previous year, and although inflation has been dropping, did not match the actual Lesotho inflation rate, which was still 6.9% in September 2003. Workers were thus faced with wage rises of less than the inflation rate for the second year running. (In October 2002, they had received a 10.0% rise, when the inflation rate for September 2002 had been 11.3%.)

The minimum monthly wage for a copy typist is now M732 per month, for a driver M849 per month, for a machine attendant M732 per month, for a machine operator M849 per month, for a messenger M621 per month, for a waiter M703 per month, for a person working in a small business (such as a village shop) M421 per month and for a domestic servant M210 per month. This last figure

can be compared with South Africa where the minimum monthly wage for a domestic worker was fixed on 1 November 2002 as M800 in urban areas and M650 in rural areas.

Minimum wages are set by the Minister of Labour & Employment annually based on advice from the National Advisory Committee on Labour which consists of 27 persons appointed by the same Minister, three from Government and 12 each from organizations of employers and organizations of employees. The most recent Committee took office for four years on 1 August 2003, and is notable for having a very largely male composition, with only one female employers' representative out of 12, and only three female employees' representatives out of 12.

Commission of Inquiry Appointed after Escape of Phakiso Molise

Amongst repercussions following the escape on 7 August 2003 of one of Lesotho's most notorious prisoners, the former policeman **Phakiso Molise**, was the appointment on 1 October 2003 of a three person Commission of Inquiry headed by a South African, Mr Justice Colin Stewart White. Molise, before his escape, had been serving 15 years in gaol for sedition, murder and other charges. The terms of reference for the inquiry 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. Recommendations were also to be made on the need to construct a new prison complex. The Commission's hearings were to be open to the public.

The extension of the White Commission's terms of reference to include prison conditions threw light on a little documented area, the prison service. As quoted in *Public Eye* of 28 November 2003, the Acting Director of Prisons, Mojalefa Thulo, revealed that in 2002, 39 prisoners had died at the Maseru Central prison from illnesses including tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Homosexuality resulted in rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and Lesotho laws did not allow the distribution of condoms in prisons. Prisoners were allowed to listen to radios, but were not allowed to read newspapers. Prisons were without electricity and sanitation was by a bucket system. Overcrowding was rife.

A 'white collar' prisoner gave evidence to the White Commission. He was D. P. Matebesi, a former Accountant-General, who with his deputy M. P. Makotoane, had been sentenced in February 1996 to an effective 30 years in gaol for fraud. Makotoane had already died in gaol, but Matebesi appeared before the Commission apparently 'physically fit, smart and clean in a navy blue suit'. He told the Commission that he shared his cell with 12 inmates instead of the recommended six. He was the only one in the cell to have a bed. All the others slept on the concrete floor. Moreover the cell had only a very small window, inadequate for ventilation. As quoted in *Public Eye*, Justice White 'was appalled, saying that prison conditions in Lesotho resembled those of pre-colonial [sic] era'.

Meanwhile *Public Eye* of 14 November 2003 published an interview with Molise which it said had been conducted by one of its reporters at Kroonstad in the Free State. In the interview, he attacked the Lesotho courts and maintained he had been wrongly convicted. In a letter to *Public Eye* of 28 November 2003, Mr Justice White summarised the findings of the Commission of Inquiry in relation to Molise and at the same time stated that 'Molise's attack on the courts in Lesotho is totally unwarranted, and no more than the rantings of a disgruntled criminal'.

NUL Pro-Vice-Chancellor Steps Down

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho, **Dr Ngosa Mahao**, decided not to continue as Pro-Vice-Chancellor when his term of office expired at the end of September 2003. Dr Mahao had spearheaded the academic transformation process at the University since 2000.

In an interview on the Radio Lesotho radio programme *Seboping*, reported in the University's weekly *Information Flash*, Dr Mahao referred to the external environment and frustrations such as not getting cooperation with government departments on policy issues. Amongst examples given were the

bridging programme, which was designed to upgrade high school leavers without formal entrance requirements so that they could enter the first year of the University. In 2003 this programme had foundered because there was insufficient government funding to admit the students. Another problem had been Government's insistence of the demerger of the University's Faculty of Agriculture and the Lesotho Agricultural College, something for which he said there as still no clear explanation.

The new Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, appointed for 6 months, is **Dr H. 'Manthoto Lephoto**, Director of the University's Maseru-based Institute of Continuing and Distance Education, still better known to many people by its former name, the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies.

Autobiography of the Agricultural Reformer and Novelist J. J. Machobane Published

A new book, *Drive out hunger: the story of J. J. Machobane of Lesotho* became available in Lesotho in October. It is coauthored by J. J. Machobane and Robert Berold, who reproduces much of what Machobane told him in interviews verbatim, and also includes text by others who know him well. The book, which has 110 pages and is illustrated is published in South Africa by Jacana costing R95.00.

In the book, J. J. Machobane, describes his life from when he was born in 1914 at Frankfort in the Free State and as a small child worked with his sharecropping father on a farm leading spans of 14 oxen. His parents moved to Lesotho because sharecropping with Africans was banned in South Africa. Machobane was then educated at Morija, where after some initial rejections, his books *Mehla ea malimo*, *Mphatlalatsane* and *Senate, shoeshoe'a Moshoeshoe* were eventually published.

Machobane worked for a time for the newspaper *Leselinyana*, but quarrelled with the management and was dismissed in 1944. At that point he returned to his father's home at Nqechane, acquired land and began the experimentation which led to the system of intercropping which proved successful and resulted in his beginning the Machobane Mass Agricultural College (also known as Mantša-Tlala, 'drive out hunger') at Nqechane in 1957. Funds for the school were provided from royalties from the sale of books and from sale of cattle.

Machobane's first 12 tutors, 6 from Leribe District and 6 from Butha-Buthe District were trained for five years after which they in turn supervised 250 other farmers in their own areas. His success, particularly with potatoes, led to confrontations with the government agricultural officers, although he found an ally in the Resident Commissioner, A. G. T. Chaplin.

In 1959, Machobane won a Ford Foundation travel award, and in 1961 was awarded the Lane Bryant International Award of \$1000 which he received in New York.

The book describes trials at the Experimental Farm in Maseru and at Pius XII College in Roma in 1959-60, where the Machobane Farming System and a more formal system were to be compared in parallel plots. In both cases the Machobane System yielded considerably more bags of potatoes.

In the 1960s, Machobane fell foul of the government of the time and his college was closed in a raid in 1965. His methods were officially opposed as erroneous and he became something of a fugitive, apparently in danger of his life. However after nearly a quarter of a century, in 1989, his system received support from Clark Tibbits, an American volunteer agriculturist working at the National University of Lesotho. With the encouragement of two women agriculturists Letlamoreng Mosenene and Norah Klaas, the system was adopted as part of the Soil and Water Conservation and Agroforestry Programme, SWaCAP from 1991 to 1996. This paved the way for the registration of the Machobane Agricultural Development Foundation (MADF) which opened an office in Maseru in 1997, with the support of the aid organizations, Helvetas and the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada.

Machobane, once hailed as a successful innovator, then discredited for apparently petty political reasons, has come full circle. In 2003, the Machobane Farming System was recognized by the new Minister of Agriculture, Dr D. R. Phororo, as having an important role in sustainable agriculture.

Moriya Arts and Cultural Festival Coincides with Independence Celebrations

The four day **Fifth Morija Art and Cultural Festival** in 2003 also embraced Lesotho's **37th Anniversary of Independence** celebration on Saturday 4 October. The King and Queen as well as the Prime Minister and most senior government officials were present for a relatively short programme of events at the Thabeng Football Ground, followed by an opportunity for those present to tour the usual large display of exhibits. Earlier the festival had hosted a wide variety of events, including on its opening day a lecture by the octogenarian author and educationist 'Masechele Khaketla. In her lecture, Dr Khaketla (she has been awarded honorary doctorates by both the National University of Lesotho and the University of Fort Hare) called for moral regeneration and for people to take pride in Sesotho culture. There was in fact plenty of Sesotho culture on display with *nllamo* dances by young men and the kneeling dance, *mokhibo* by girls, some performing bare-breasted as the dance must have originally been performed. Another dance *litolobonya* involves short plastic fibre dresses made from bags of mealie meal and weighted down inside with jingling bottle tops. These billow up around the waist when the dance is performed. This is a relatively new dance which had apparently not been heard of in Lesotho as little as 15 years ago, and until recently was said to have only been performed before audiences of women. However, it is now a very popular dance performed by teams of girls on cultural occasions. Dr Khaketla's opinion of this dance has not so far been recorded.

Although the Festival (now commonly known by its acronym **Macufe**) was in terms of numbers of participants and income a success, there was also an unfortunate element of drunken behaviour and worse, covered particularly by *Public Eye* journalist Moeti Thelejane in the issue of 10 October 2003. He wrote about attending the Festival late on Saturday night when he was witness to assaults, obscenities and a drunken girl who was dragged away to be gang raped. The Morija Police Station Commander, Inspector Lerata Fobo, was also reported in the same issue of the newspaper as saying that he had received many reports of crime, including an incident in the main arena where youths were engaged in a brawl and one person was shot dead; a girl who had been gang raped by eight men; and three other young girls who were drunk and had been undressed and their clothes sold. *The Mirror* newspaper of 8 October 2003 and *Leselinyana la Lesotho* of 15 October also reported the death of a 27-year old Morija resident, Molefi Mokeke who was stabbed to death on the Friday night of the festival at the notorious Roadside Bar at the Morija road junction.

The Festival organisers had done their best to prevent the festival degenerating into a drunken orgy by banning drink sales inside the festival grounds. Unfortunately this had resulted in serious problems outside the grounds, where drunken behaviour became the order of the day.

Border Congestion a Disincentive to Potential Tourists

The newspaper, *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, of 30 November 2003, contained an unsigned report by a migrant worker headed 'Difficulties at the Maseru Border Post' (*Mathata lelibohong la Maseru*), which commented on congestion on the South African side of the international border at Maseru Bridge, where people returning from the Morija Festival had to wait as long as three to four hours to pass through. The writer was obviously impressed by the number of white tourists who had attended but comments 'For white people thirty minutes is a very long time' (*Bathong ba basoeu metsoso e mashome a mararo ke nako e telele haholo*). The writer remarks that if Lesotho wants tourists to come in large numbers then the organizers of the festival and the Department of Tourism must give priority to making border crossing easier.

It is in fact a sad fact that while Lesotho seeks to promote tourism and has much to offer visitors, the international border, with serious congestion at Maseru almost any day of the week, is a major obstacle, which results in the organizers of tours avoiding entering Lesotho. Eastern Free State tourism has expanded rapidly in the past decade, but the tourist buses simply cruise down the tarred road on the South African side of Lesotho's border, stopping at towns such as Ladybrand, providing business for its

restaurants and a well-patronised craft shop. Meanwhile the tourist facilities on the Lesotho side including the Basotho Hat and the recently refurbished Basotho Shield receive very little of this trade. There is a 'Maloti Route', a joint tourism venture, which includes roads on both sides of the border, which has recently been marked both in Lesotho and South Africa with brown and white road signs showing stylized flat-topped mountains. However it appears that whereas the Maloti are geographically situated in Lesotho, it is the South African portion of the Maloti Route, from which the Maloti are only visible but not experienced at first hand, which is most used by organized tours.

Studies have apparently been made of the implications of abolishing border controls between Lesotho and South Africa, it being well-known that they serve very little purpose in preventing people from Lesotho entering South Africa illegally seeking work. At the same time, as has been noted, they are a barrier to Lesotho's participation in the southern African tourism boom. However, it seems that neither government has taken the initiative to create something like the Schengen Treaty in Europe which effectively abolished border controls between all mainland western European countries except Switzerland. (Whereas Lesotho has often been described as the 'Switzerland of Africa', because of its mountains, Switzerland, because of its enclave status in 'Schengenland' might now be considered from the point of view of border controls to be the 'Lesotho of Europe'.)

Prime Minister Inaugurates New Ministry of Works Building

The Prime Minister, Mr Pakalitha Mosisili, on Thursday 9 October inaugurated a new M57 million complex for the **Ministry of Works Headquarters** and two of its departments the **Department of Roads** and the **Department of Building Design Services**. The new building complex is situated on the southern part of the site long occupied by the Roads Department.

During his speech at the inauguration, the Prime Minister made reference to other buildings the government intends to build including the National Museum, the National Referral Hospital and the Maseru Fire Station. Although he did not make mention of this, the National Museum is a much frustrated project which goes back over 35 years since funds were first collected for the project at Independence. The National Referral Hospital is a younger project perhaps only some 25 years old, but its expected construction led to the National Health Training College being sited some 20 years back next to where it is expected the National Referral Hospital would be built at Botšabelo. Finally the Maseru Fire Station has long been a temporary structure next to the Palace gates, but the fire service in recent years has hardly been operational, with fire engines having to be summoned from the Moshoeshoe I International Airport, 18 km distant, whenever there is a fire in Maseru.

Tenth High Court Judge Sworn In

Thamsanqa Nomngongo, formerly Chief Magistrate of Maseru and before that Magistrate at Mohale's Hoek was on Thursday 9 October sworn in as the tenth judge of Lesotho's High Court. Mr Nomngongo, who comes from Quthing District, had been an acting judge since 2002.

At the swearing in, the High Court Registrar, Ms Lisebo Chaka-Makhooane said that the backlog of cases still to be heard by the High Court had reached such crisis proportions that the media were declaring that Basotho had lost confidence in the courts' efficiency.

Formerly, cases now before the High Court were heard by the Resident Commissioner, and later by a single Chief Justice who served the territories which are now Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. At Independence, Lesotho had its own Chief Justice and one puisne judge. Quite why, with a population twice as large, five times as many judges cannot cope is an interesting question. In part it may be because the High Court still has exclusive jurisdiction in matters such as divorce cases, which might otherwise be devolved to magistrates' courts. The High Court also has to deal with numerous cases involving disputes within political parties, within churches, and indeed even court cases brought by law

students at the University against their lecturers. The High Court procedures are also an obstacle to speedy justice. Even when everyone in the court room is Sesotho speaking, everything said is nevertheless translated into English, and all judgments are delivered in English. High Court judges are also subject to being hijacked by government to conduct Commissions of Inquiry and to perform other duties, and this contributes to the backlog of High Court work. Another problem is the inefficiency in law documentation. The publication of the bound *Laws of Lesotho* is now nearly 12 years in arrears, the last volume to have been published having been the volume for 1991. The multitudinous issues of the *Lesotho Government Gazette* which cover the gap are neither collated into bound volumes nor indexed which results in much inefficiency in finding relevant laws and applying them. Indeed, as a recent book (*In search of justice: where do women in Lesotho go?* (2000)) points out, many dispensers of justice, such as Court Presidents have complained that they are not even supplied with copies of recent laws!

Unlike most civil servants who retire at 55, High Court Judges may serve until they reach 75 years of age. 'Thami' Nomngongo is currently 50 years old and so potentially has 25 years of service ahead of him.

Death of Member of Parliament Peter Mokuena

Speaking in the National Assembly on Friday 10 October after the Independence holiday break, the speaker Ms Ntlhoi Motsamai announced the death of Member of Parliament for Thaba-Putsoa, **Mr Molefe Peter Mokuena**. He had died in Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Maseru, on 19 September.

Bahá'ís Celebrate 50 Years in Lesotho

The **Bahá'í Faith** on 10 October 2003 celebrated the 50th anniversary of its arrival in Lesotho. The Bahá'í Faith was founded in 1853 by a Persian religious leader, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-92) who was regarded by his followers as the latest in a line of Messengers of God who included Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ and Mohamed. His teachings included the unity of religions, equality of men and women and the importance of education and loyalty to governments.

On the centenary of the founding of the religion in 1953, the Bahá'í Faith embarked on a worldwide crusade to promote the faith, which brought two Americans, Frederick and Elizabeth Laws to Lesotho. Their first converts were Chadwick and 'Maselai Mohapi nine months later. An important convert in 1960 was 'Mapheko Mofolo, a Russian-educated geologist, who was also daughter of the writer Thomas Mofolo. The Bahá'í Faith has subsequently enjoyed steady growth in Lesotho, and has built a Bahá'í Temple near the Race Course in Maseru. Numerous Bahá'í texts have been translated into Sesotho.

Founder of *Mohahlaula* Newspaper Dies

The editor and proprietor of the newspaper *Mohahlaula*, **Pofane 'Afrika' Molungoa**, died on 10 October 2003 after a long illness. An 8-page A4 newspaper, which has somehow survived despite a minimum of advertising revenue, *Mohahlaula* had been founded in 1999 by Molungoa to support the then Qhobela faction of the Basutoland Congress Party. Before that, Molungoa had been editor of the party newspaper *Makatolle*. Later when the BCP divided again into its own factions, Molungoa's paper supported the BCP faction of Tšeliso Makhakhe rather than that of Molapo Qhobela, which eventually renamed itself the Basutoland African Congress.

Molungoa was buried on Saturday 1 November in his home village of Makaung, 5 km south-west of Mafeteng, the same village whose name he gave to Makaung Press, the publishers of his newspaper. Molungoa leaves a wife and a daughter aged three years. *Mohahlaula* is now published by his wife.

18 Die in Bus Accident at Peka

A horrific accident occurred at Peka on Saturday 11 October 2003, when a bus carrying children from Kolonyama High School on a Catholic pilgrimage to Pitseng collided with a tree at Peka, apparently after a tyre burst. 18 people died, most of them school pupils. The driver, a teacher and the conductor of the bus also died. 15 others were injured, some of them seriously.

Reporting on the same accident, *The Mirror* newspaper of 15 October 2003 commented that some of those who died of their injuries after the accident might have been saved if the Motebang Hospital, which serves Leribe District had had a working X-ray machine. The X-ray has apparently been out of order for a very long time.

Roma Business Centre Gutted by Fire

Roma Business Centre, the main shopping complex in Roma, opposite the University gate, was gutted by fire on the evening of Tuesday 21 October 2003.

The fire started in **KayCee's Restaurant** (its name derives from the initials of its local owner **Kali Charles Thaanyane**) at about 10 p.m., apparently as a result of cooking oil catching fire. The restaurant was in the centre of the row of shops and since there were no fire barrier walls in the roof space, once the fire reached the roof it burned steadily in both directions. Westwards El Communicator, a computer, photocopying and telephone shop, was completely burned out; and beyond it the Roma Branch of Lesotho Bank was badly damaged, although the security guard on duty saw the fire from the beginning and there was time to rescue the bank's computers and remove them to safekeeping in the police station.

Eastwards the fire spread to the adjoining butchery and over about twenty minutes from about 10.50 p.m., there were four loud explosions when it reached gas cylinders. The shop next to the butchery was Chinese run, and sold a great variety of goods, although the proprietor had been arrested only the day before for dealing in groceries for which he did not have a licence. Many goods in the shop were inflammable and the stock was completely burned. A second butchery on the far side of the Chinese shop was also destroyed.

By 10.45 p.m., the University fire brigade and fire engines from Moshoeshoe I International Airport were on the scene, but they were severely hampered by a water shortage. The University in fact had since early October been restricted to water for only a few hours on some days and on other days none at all. The fire tenders as a result had to go down to the Liphiring river at Lehoatateng 4 km away where, although the river had stopped running because of the drought, some water could still be found in a few pools.

At the end of the row of six smaller shops was the large **NUL Thorn's Supermarket**. The efforts of the fire brigade prevented the stock in the shop burning, but it could not prevent the fire continuing its progress through the roof timbers because there was no fire wall. The goods in the supermarket were extensively damaged by smoke and falling embers, and the heat at the end of the shop nearest to the main fire was enough to melt or otherwise damage computers at the sale desks.

The Roma Business Centre had originally been constructed with finance provided by an Austrian entrepreneur, Paul Sappl, who bought the assets of the estate of the late Father Rudolph Bacher, an eccentric physicist, who had acquired the original land next to the road as a large parking space, linked by an ascending avenue of cypress trees to a planned complex of buildings and observatories, known as the Lesotho Observatory Foundation. The aims of LOF were stated to be to 'harmonize cosmology and theology to fight communism for the benefit of the Basotho people'. Father Bacher died in 1971 without completing his buildings, and was in fact originally buried within his planned parking area. When Sappl

took over the complex, Father Bacher was disinterred, and reburied on the upper part of the site, which made way for the Roma Business Centre, which first opened its doors to a butchery in February 1980. Lesotho Bank followed a month later, moving from the Rondavel (originally a Handicrafts Shop) next to the University gate which it had rented since it first acquired a fixed site in Roma in July 1977. By late 1980, the Roma Business Centre had acquired petrol pumps, Ntja-Peli Dry Cleaners and a shoe shop and for a while it even had two rival pharmacies.

A local company known as Hata-Butle Supermarket eventually acquired the Roma Business Centre, but the supermarket business, although initially managed for Hata-Butle by the Fraser company, in the long run was a failure owing to a combination of fraud, theft, or simply bad management. The petrol station and supermarket closed and eventually the supermarket premises were leased to the local traders Ashley and Jennifer Thorn, from a family long established in Roma. Hata-Butle meanwhile had long been in liquidation, and was due to be sold by auction in November 2003 at the insistence of its creditors so that they could recover some of their losses.

Given the financial situation of the Hata-Butle company, whose premises were apparently uninsured, there seems little hope that Roma Business Centre could soon rise from its ruins. Members of the Roma community and particularly students and staff were suddenly faced with major inconveniences in that a number of services which had been available in Roma, were now only to be found in Maseru.

Meanwhile some 40 people who worked in the Roma Business Centre were suddenly faced with the loss of their jobs. The day after the fire they were seen literally 'money laundering', washing the coins recovered from the cash tills. Unfortunately the paper money did not survive the fire.

Severe Drought Affects Maseru and Other Centres

Rainfall in Lesotho for both the previous summer and winter in 2002-3 was significantly below average. The drying up of rivers and springs was exacerbated by an extremely dry October when most parts of the country received only some 10% of normal rainfall for the month, and some received no rainfall at all. The Mohokare (Caledon) river at Maseru stopped flowing and the city's one major storage facility, Maqalika Dam was reduced to a small residual pool. Water was rationed by the Water & Sewerage Authority (WASA) from mid-September by supplies being cut off from the suburbs in the daytime and from the centre at night, although some areas in the outer suburbs complained that they had had no water for several weeks, and were forced into buying from neighbours who had boreholes which were fortunately still supplying water.

WASA had a major dilemma. Industrial development had seriously increased the demand for water (one factory alone, the Nien Hsing Denim Mill needs the equivalent of one-third of the total supply), and yet there were no additional supplies, despite long discussions about remedial measures such as raising the height of the Maqalika Dam, and building a new dam on the Phuthiatsana. There had been a run of seven years all of them significantly wetter than normal, which had possibly engendered false complacency. However now reality had struck home as Lesotho had apparently entered the second year of a cycle of dry years.

For Maseru, however, relief was at hand. As was well known, Lesotho was already exporting some 17 cumecs (cubic metres of water per second) to South Africa through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Just one of those cumecs would be more than adequate to meet Maseru's modest needs. But how to get it there? The Lesotho Highlands Water Commission on Thursday 16 October 2003 agreed to allow 1 cumec (figure given by Willie Croucamp in *Nutthouse Maseru*; some other published sources said it was 6 cumecs) to be released from the 'Muela Dam where the water is stored briefly, pending its export to South Africa through the Transfer Tunnel. The release began on Thursday 16 October, and initially much of it disappeared into the dry river bed. However, eventually, after its

journey successively down the Nqoe, Hololo and Mohokare rivers to Maseru, some water which had survived abstraction by South African towns and farmers along the way finally reached the WASA water intake at Maseru nearly a week later at 3 a. m. on Thursday 23 October, thus saving the city and its industries. WASA pumped as much as possible of the water into the offstream storage at the Maqalika Dam. Quite who was going to pay for the water was not immediately clear. The Minister of Natural Resources, Mr Monyane Moleleki, as quoted in *Lesotho Today* for 27 November 2003, said in Parliament that negotiations on this matter were being initiated with the South African Government.

Other towns had similar problems to Maseru. At Mohale's Hoek, the spring supplying parts of the town including the hospital, dried up in July, and water to the hospital was being supplied by tanker. At Roma, where water demand had doubled over the previous decade, the University was in dire straits, as WASA was supplying it with only some 10% of its needs. Some 6 tankers a day from Maseru, each carrying 18 kilolitres of water, had to be used to supplement the supply, but despite this, large parts of the campus found themselves without water for periods for up to a day, and when the water did arrive at unpredictable times, it only lasted for at most a few hours. The cost of the tankered water from Maseru was M53 per kilolitre compared with ordinary piped water at M3.75 per kilolitre, and it was not immediately clear who would be paying for the difference in price.

The drought was temporarily broken in late October and early November in northern Lesotho so that the Mohokare regained some natural flow, but in most of central and southern Lesotho November rain was less than half average, and the drought continued into December, finally broken over much of Lesotho by a series of thunderstorms during the period 23 to 25 December. It is conventional wisdom that maize to be successful must be planted by 16 December. The rain was thus probably too late for crops in much of the Lowlands of Lesotho. However the situation was better in northern Lesotho and in the Foothills and Maloti elsewhere, because many farmers had taken advantage of earlier showers in those areas, and had already planted in November.

Designer of Lesotho's Flag Revealed

The present Lesotho National Flag was introduced by the Military Government in 1987 which objected to the previous flag because it bore the colours of the Basotho National Party which the military had just overthrown. At the time of the unveiling of the new flag, nothing was said about its designer. In fact, as revealed by Thabo Thakalekoala in an article in *Mopheme* of 21 October 2003, the designer was **Sergeant Retšelisitsoe Matete** of the then Royal Lesotho Defence Force. He was a skilled artist who used to be engaged to draw the picture of a Mosotho warrior on the side of the buses run by the military. These buses were known as Kokoptje ea Mara, literally meaning the leader of the regiments (i.e. general) and a praise name of King Moshoeshoe's most famous warrior, Makoanyane.

In an interview, Sergeant Matete said that the colours white, blue and green on the flag represent peace, rain and prosperity. The brown Basotho shield on the white part of the flag which signifies peace, symbolizes the guarding of the peace of the country. Sergeant Matete, who retired from the army in 1988 indicated that he was bitter that he had never been paid or even recognized for designing the flag.

If the designer of the second Lesotho flag has remained anonymous until now, what about the designer of the first flag in 1966? His name was also not mentioned at the time. The answer is given by Scott Rosenberg, in his unpublished 1998 PhD thesis for the Indiana University Department of History, *Promises of Moshoeshoe: culture, nationalism and identity in Lesotho, 1902-1966*. The designer of the first flag was a Maseru architect, Peter Hancock. His design was submitted to cabinet, but the originally yellow Basotho hat on the flag was changed to white by the cabinet so that the colours of the flag coincided with those of the ruling Basotho National Party. However, as has been seen, this was ultimately the flag's undoing. Possibly with a yellow Basotho hat, the flag used at Independence might still have been in use today.

Veterinary Surgeons Act Brought into Operation

The *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1973*, an Act of the Interim National Assembly, received the Royal Assent on 31 December 1973, the date when it was also according to the *Lesotho Government Gazette* supposed to commence operation. However, it seems that the necessary required procedures to set up a Lesotho Veterinary Council and a formal Register of Veterinary Surgeons, as required by the Act, were never implemented.

This has now been rectified by a Legal Notice published on the authority of the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Dr Daniel Rakoro Phororo, himself a veterinary surgeon. The Act now becomes operational from 1 November 2003, and amongst provisions is that on 1 January of each year the *Lesotho Government Gazette* should publish a list of registered veterinary surgeons.

Auditor-General's Report on Public Accounts for 2001/2 Published

The Auditor-General has the responsibility of reporting annually on the public accounts of Lesotho. However, such reports have been the exception rather than the rule because of the failure of the Accountant-General to submit the accounts on time.

The most recent report on public accounts had been for the three years 1993/4 to 1995/6 and published in July 2001. In October 2003, the report on the accounts for 2001/2 was published, it being noted that for the previous five years the accounts had not even been submitted (under the *Finance Order 1988* they have to be submitted by the Accountant-General within six months of the close of each Financial Year!), and that the 2001/2 public accounts had only been prepared as a result of the work of the consultants Khali & Co., and a task force of government employees who prepared the accounts.

Not having the accounts available from the previous year, the Acting Auditor-General, Mrs L. L. Liphafa, had had to work with unknown opening balances. Her report reveals major discrepancies, unauthorised payments and overpayments as well as irregular payments and fraud, where very often no steps appeared to have been taken against the perpetrators. Overall, the public accounts showed a government bank balance in the commercial banks on 1 April 2001 of M695 million whereas the Central Bank and commercial banks had confirmed balances totalling M2 065 million. The Auditor-General was at a loss to account for this discrepancy. As a result of these and a number of other omissions and deficiencies, the accounts would have been more appropriately presented as a statement of affairs. The Acting Auditor-General (Mrs L. L. Liphafa) states that in view of such matters she is 'unable to express an opinion on whether the financial statements ... fairly present the state of affairs of the Government of Lesotho and in particular the financial position as at 31st March 2002'.

In a section headed 'Recommendations' it is noted that 'non-compliance of [sic] Government legislations [sic] and Financial/Stores regulations at free will by Accounting officers without redress is cause for serious concern.... it is evident that the Ministry of Finance has not effectively discharged its responsibilities regarding management of Public Funds'. Six recommendations follow which require the Ministry of Finance to ensure that key positions are held by professionals, appropriate training is provided and performance should be monitored with regulations revised, if possible, to include penalty clauses. The preparation of the accounts should not be outsourced to preserve confidentiality, and the accounts for 1996/7 - 2000/1 should be prepared and submitted for audit as soon as possible. [The matter of outsourcing is obviously a tricky one, because it appears that if this had not been done in relation to the 2000/1 accounts, the present accounts might not have even been available for auditing!]

In relation to the Loan Bursary Fund, it is noted that M6 653 000 had been received as repayments and M114 117 000 disbursed (thus repayment was about 5.8% of disbursement). It is noted that the subsidy for scholarships appeared as an error in the recurrent budget. It should not have been recurrent expenditure but a capital allocation to the Loan Bursary Fund which is intended to be a revolving fund. [This observation clearly has considerable implications for future loan bursaries if insufficient funds are allocated in future capital budgets and recovery procedures are not made more efficient.]

It is noted that the Office of Auditor-General has been restructured and now contains a Deputy Auditor-General and five Assistant Auditors-General.

The previous audit report (for the three years to 31 March 1996) is noted as having been submitted to the Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly something regarded as a 'very positive effort towards encouraging the Chief Accounting Officers to ensure public accountability in their respective ministries and parastatal organizations'.

In a statement to Parliament quoted in *The Mirror* of 29 October 2003, the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr Timothy Thahane criticized the Accountant-General's Office for being weak with low morale and general lack of focus. In recent years an Accountant-General (D. P. Matebesi) and his deputy (M. P. Makotoane) had been gaoled for massive fraud, and a subsequent Accountant-General had died after a long illness. Although a team of senior government accountants had been detailed to make up the backlog they had been disbanded after producing the 1995/6 public accounts, their pace having been such that they would never have caught up with the backlog. For the 2002/3 public accounts, the firm of Khali and Company had again been detailed to assist the Office of the Accountant-General to prepare the accounts, even though the Accountant-General himself must be held ultimately responsible for their completeness and the accuracy. These accounts were to be submitted to the Auditor-General on 31 October 2003, after which the audit report was expected three months later.

Reproductive Health Survey Published

Problems with the accuracy of the 1996 Census, and the recommendation that all Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries should carry out a census in the period 2000-2 resulted in a *Lesotho Demographic Survey* being undertaken in May 2001, the three volumes of which are still being published. Linked to this is a *Lesotho Reproductive Health Survey* undertaken in February 2002, the first volume of which, the analytical report, was published in October 2003. This report, based on a stratified sample survey, investigates sexual practices in detail not previously undertaken in Lesotho, with the analysis at pains to relate the findings to Lesotho's most serious crisis, the very rapid spread of HIV/AIDS.

The report found that marriage in Lesotho was virtually universal. At age 45 to 49 years only 5.5% of males and 1.8% of females had never been married. In relation to sexual behaviour, the report found that by the age of 19, 47.2% of males and 41.9% of females had had sexual intercourse, and by the age of 24 the figures were 86.0% of males and 88.8% of females. There was very little difference in these figures between urban and rural areas. 90.4% of females reported that their first sexual partner was older and 13.6% that he was 10 years or more older. Only 10.4% of males and 7.0% of females reported using a contraceptive or protective sexual device at first sexual intercourse. 19.1% of men and 6.1% of women reported that they had had sex with more than one partner in the four weeks preceding the survey. The figures were highest for males in the 12 to 19 age group (29.9%) and for females in the 20 to 29 age group (6.8%). They were also highest for men who had never married (32.7%) as well as women who had never married (11.8%). The report notes that 'the tendency of girls to have sex with older males not only exposes the young girls themselves to the risk of infection, but they also run the risk of serving as a conduit for infecting younger sexual partners, if sexual relations later develop between them. The latter could, in turn, infect other sexual partners or their wives when they get married. The process could be a very deadly vicious circle'.

The report showed that knowledge of some contraceptive methods was relatively high, but use was low, with only 31.4% of males and 35.3% of females who had had sexual intercourse in the previous 4 weeks using any form of modern contraception. The male condom was most widely used, followed by injectables and the pill. Some two-thirds of respondents rarely or never discussed contraception with their partners or spouses.

While 94% of males and 93% of females had heard of HIV/AIDS, lower proportions knew that it was a sexually transmitted disease. The most commonly cited source of information on HIV/AIDS was radio followed by school or workplace.

37.5% of males and 36.3% of females stated they considered that they were at no risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS, and about half of these said that this was because they had only one partner, although as is pointed out this is inadequate because one's partner must also have only one partner. Overall 79% felt that a person's HIV status should be made public and 17% that it should be kept private (4% recorded 'don't know'). 71.7% of people thought children 12-14 years should be taught to use condoms to avoid infection. Attitudes against those infected with HIV were strongly discriminatory. For example, 61.4% said that a teacher who has HIV and is not ill should nevertheless not be allowed to continue teaching. 61.1% said a child who is HIV positive should not attend school with healthy children. 67.5% would not buy groceries from an HIV-positive shopkeeper, and 77.7% would not buy food from an HIV-positive seller. On the other hand, 73.3% of females and 69.7% of males would be prepared to provide care in their own homes to a relative ill with HIV/AIDS. Amongst persons who had ever heard of HIV/AIDS, it was found that of those under 20 years, only 7.2% of males and 4.7% of females were adopting effective prevention methods, while of those 20 to 39 years, 19.8% of males and 16.4% of females were adopting effective prevention methods.

A chapter on rape makes reference to the Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association poster, which has been widely distributed in Lesotho and shows a baby girl with the message (there are posters both in Sesotho and English): 'Don't be fooled - you can't cure AIDS by raping your baby girl or my baby girl. You are only infecting her with HIV'. [That such a horrific poster is necessary or appropriate is a matter of concern to many.] In relation to this, 9.2% of males and 9.9% of females who knew of HIV/AIDS believed that it could be transmitted by supernatural means. It is commented that in several countries in southern Africa, traditional healers had advised clients infected with HIV/AIDS to have sex with virgins to rid themselves of the virus, and that, with virgins being in short supply, this had no doubt contributed to the recent increase in the rape of very young girls including babies.

One in seven persons interviewed knew someone who had been raped in the past twelve months. Half of those raped were 18 years or younger and about 5% of rape survivors were less than 10 years old. In 2% of cases the rapist was a parent, and in 9% of cases a sibling, close relative or guardian. When asked why men rape, the three most common reasons given were that people rape when they are starved of sex (19.7% of female respondents and 19.4% of male respondents); men rape because they don't know how to attract girls (11.9% of female and 20.1% of male respondents); and men rape when they are drunk (15.1% of male and 14.4% of female respondents). 7.8% of female and 5.4% of male respondents said that men with AIDS rape young girls to cure their illness. The chapter on rape concludes with policy implications of the findings of the survey. ('Punishment for offenders should be swift and severe.... the police, judiciary, law makers, health workers and social workers should be sensitised to deal with rape survivors in a mature, caring and sensitive manner so that survivors do not have to experience another trauma as they go through the civil, legal and health procedures associated with reporting rape and following through a prosecution.')

A chapter on gender and violence includes a survey of attitudes towards popularly-held beliefs. 56.8% of males held the belief that boys are more intelligent than girls, but rather surprisingly, given that girls in Lesotho are in general better educated than boys, the same belief was held by 55.9% of females. The chapter asks for opinions as to what constitutes abuse, and surprisingly only 72.7% of males and 72.8% of females regarded rape as a form of abuse. It seems there must have been a language problem in administering the abuse question (the questionnaire seems only to have been provided to the enumerators in English), because 26.5% of females are also recorded as not considering gang rape as a form of abuse. Another confusion in this part of the survey concerns 'female circumcision', which the United Nations Population Fund defines as 'female genital mutilation'. The commonly practised manual extension of the labia in Lesotho, which is a practice believed to enhance sexual pleasure, could perhaps strictly fall within this UN Population Fund definition of mutilation, but is quite obviously in a different category from clitoridectomy. It is thus not clear what question the respondents thought they were

answering when 30.5% of females and 28.8% of males said that 'female circumcision' is a form of abuse. Answers to the succeeding question on personal experience of abusive behaviour are also difficult to interpret. 2.6% of female respondents stated they had experience of 'female circumcision' (this might perhaps be the proportion who had attended initiation school if circumcision had been translated *lebollo*?) On the other hand, 2.8% reported experience of rape, 2.2% of gang rape, 4.1% of marital rape and 9.0% of domestic violence. 63.5% of males and 62.5% of females thought a pregnant schoolgirl should be sent away from school. 16.8% of males and 11.1% of females approved of a man beating or abusing his wife if she made him angry. Only about half of males and females felt that teenage children should discuss issues concerning family life, safe sex and reproductive health with parents. The figure was, however, higher amongst more educated people and also amongst younger people.

In a chapter on adolescent behaviour, males and females aged 12 to 19 years were surveyed, and of this group, 9.8% of males (4.6% in the age group 12 to 14 and 12.7% in the age group 15 to 19) said that they had had sex in the past 4 weeks and of these, 30.8% said that they had had multiple sexual partners in that time. Amongst females, 9.3% (0.3% in the age group 12 to 14 years but 14.0% in the age group 15 to 19 years) said that they had had sex in the past 4 weeks and of these 5.0% said that they had had multiple sexual partners in that period.

A chapter on fertility, breaks new ground by trying to make estimates of male fertility. Reliable answers to questions on fatherhood were much more difficult to obtain, but tabulated figures based on responses show that whereas by age 14, 1.1% of males had ever made a girl pregnant, by 24 the figure was 17.9%, by 34 was 68.1% and by 44 was 94.1%. The mean number of children ever fathered was found to be 1.46 in the age group 30 to 34, but rose to 4.72 in the age group 50 to 54. This contrasts with 5.37 children ever born for females in the age group 45 to 49.

Demonstration against Low Wage Increases Leads to Deaths and Injuries

On Monday 10 November 2003, members of the Factory Workers Union (FAWU) in Maseru demonstrated against the recent 5.5% wage increase, protesting that it was 1.5% less than the inflation rate. Two separate processions were organized, one from the Maseru West Industrial Estate and the other from the Thetsane Industrial Estate. The two processions met close to central Maseru. The procession from Maseru West turned violent when protesters tried to co-opt workers from factories which were not joining in the protest. Police cancelled the demonstration permit, after which the police and protesters came into conflict. They came into conflict again in central Maseru when police fired into the crowd of protesters with rubber bullets trying to disperse the crowd. One woman died, apparently crushed in a stampede, five other protesters were seriously injured while 106 sustained minor injuries. One of those seriously injured later died in hospital and the body of a woman with gunshot wounds was later found in woodland adjoining the route of the marchers bringing the death toll to three. Almost all the casualties were women.

During the protest eight factories were attacked and three vehicles damaged. Most damage was done at the firms Hinebo Textile and Supa Knitting.

The Secretary-General of the FAWU, the Lesotho Workers Party member of Parliament, Billy Macaefa, was arrested the same day for breach of the Internal Security Act on processions and damage to public property. Willie Matheo, FAWU's deputy secretary-general was also arrested later at FAWU's headquarters in Manonyane House, Maseru.

Conditions were normal the next day when the 30 000 textile workers returned to work.

Lesotho out of 2006 World Cup

Although Lesotho's national football team, **Likoena**, held Botswana's Zebras to a goalless draw in Maseru on Sunday 16 November 2003, they had earlier been defeated 4-1 in Gaborone. As a result, Lesotho has been eliminated from the qualifying rounds of the 2006 World Cup.

China Contributes M20 million for National Library, Archives and Media Network

As reported in *The Mirror* of 18 November 2003, a visit to the People's Republic of China from 2 to 11 November 2003 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kenneth Mohlaba Tsekoa, finalized the details of a M20 million grant to the Lesotho Government for the construction of a new National Library and National Archives and for the extension of the radio and television network.

The National Library occupying a key site on Kingsway, was demolished in May 2003, and its staff and books (packed in boxes) moved to temporary quarters in the Maseru Industrial Area on a site belonging to the Ministry of Works. There they have been able to provide no library service whatsoever, and with the demise of the British Council and United States Information Service Libraries, Maseru has been virtually without any public library facilities whatsoever throughout most of 2003.

The National Archives have similarly been held in temporary facilities, where they are unusable, since October 1997, when they were evicted from the Thomas Mofolo Library at the National University of Lesotho having taken refuge there some 20 years earlier. The Archives Commission which is charged with advising on their management currently does not exist because the Minister of Culture has failed to appoint new members, and the term of office of previous members has long since expired.

It is believed that the new National Library building, occupying the old National Library site (once the residence of the Manager of Standard Bank), will be three storeys high, with the upper floors accommodating the National Archives. While this is an obviously welcome improvement on the current situation, some people, with memories of 1998, were wondering about the wisdom of making provision for the National Archives at such a key position in the Central Business District. Moreover, it was wondered whether the two storeys could be built in such a way to allow the obvious expansion with time required by an archives facility.

Basutoland African Congress Splits

The **Basutoland African Congress**, led by the veteran politician, Molapo Qhobela, is a party which has already resulted from two earlier splits. Qhobela headed the BCP when it dismissed the then party leader Ntsu Mokhehle, a move which led the party to split into the residual Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) and the Lesotho Congress for Democracy, which was still headed by Mokhehle. Later in opposition, the BCP again split into the BCP of Tšelisio Makhakhe, and the Basutoland African Congress (BAC) of Molapo Qhobela.

These fissiparous tendencies emerged again when a BAC special conference on 15 November 2003 called by the Deputy Leader, Dr Khauhelo Raditapole, suspended the leader, Molapo Qhobela, for allegedly amending and registering the BAC constitution without the mandate of the annual general conference. As a result of the conference, the party has effectively split with the third of its three Members of Parliament, Hape Tsakatsi, who is also the party chairman, backing Raditapole. Qhobela however apparently still enjoys the support of Ben Tsie Pekeche, the deputy secretary general, as well as the veteran lawyer, G. M. Kolisang.

It appears that both factions of the party may call separate annual conferences in January 2004.

War Erupts between Lesotho and South African Taxi Operators

According to a recent agreement between countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), there should be free movement of public transport between member states. However, according to a report in *The Mirror* of 18 November 2003, Basotho minibus taxi owners attempting to run services to Johannesburg and Durban were being stopped on the South African side of the border at Maseru, Ficksburg and Fouriesburg and their passengers forcibly transferred to South African taxis. Drivers and passengers had been injured, humiliated and abused and vehicles had been smashed and stolen.

Lesotho's Minister of Home Affairs and Public Safety, when asked about the matter, said that he was aware of the problem and was bringing up the matter with South African counterparts.

215-Carat Diamond Found at Letšeng

Letšeng Diamonds, the company which is engaged in re-opening the diamond mine at Letšeng-la-Terae, announced on 20 November that Alluvial Ventures, a small-scale mining company contracted to mine areas of ground adjacent to the main pipe, has found a 215-carat (43 g) gem-quality diamond which has been insured for \$2 million.

Originally a De Beers operation, Letšeng Mine was closed as unprofitable in 1981, but with improved diamond prices, it is now embarking on a new lease of life. R310 million are being invested in the reopening of the mine, which will be achieved early in 2004, when a hard rock processing plant is commissioned. The Letšeng Mine at 3000 metres above sea level is the highest diamond mine in the world. It is also noted for having the lowest number of carats per ton, but the highest proportion of large stones of any diamond mine in the world. Three stones of over 500 carats were found in the period up to 1981.

When reopened, it is forecast that 10% of the Letšeng Mine production of 70 000 carats per year will exceed 20 carats a stone, of which some 1000 carats will be made up of stones over 100 carats.

Afrobarometer Survey Report Released

The results of a sample survey of local opinion, the *2003 Afrobarometer Survey*, were released in Maseru on Friday 21 November 2003. The survey, conducted between February and April 2003, followed an earlier similar survey in 2000 and was overseen by John Gay, formerly of Sechaba Consultants, and Robert Mattes of the University of Cape Town. It was jointly published by The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development and Michigan State University Department of Political Science.

Whereas in 2000, 36% of the population had considered Lesotho to be wholly or largely democratic, this figure has now increased to 48%. Whereas 18% had favoured military rule in 2000, this dropped to 11% in 2003. The human rights and political freedom situation was generally seen as having improved with 78% of people believing there was more freedom of association, 68% believing there was more freedom of speech, and 62% thinking people were safer from unjust arrest.

58% of people said they trusted the Prime Minister and 49% trusted the Parliament. Interestingly rather more, 59%, said they trusted the Chiefs.

On particular issues, 77% said the government handled education well, a figure which no doubt reflects public approval of the free education introduced into primary schools. In other areas, people were less enthusiastic, with government handling of health approved by 56%, crime by 50%, HIV/AIDS by 49%, the economy by 40%, corruption by 35%, food by 32%, handling of employment by 28%, and handling of prices by 18%.

59% stated they discussed politics with others (40% in 2000) while 83% had attended a community meeting in the past year (only 20% in 2000). 65% listen to the news at least weekly (66% in 2000), 14% (10%) read newspapers, and 13% (11%) watch television.

In the past year 54% stated they had contacted traditional leaders, 37% religious leaders, 20% village development councillors (even though VDCs are no longer supposed to exist!) and 8% their Member of Parliament.

37% of people surveyed had a family member living in South Africa, 26% had one living there, 21% had sought medical care there and 18% had South African identification documents.

30% wanted Lesotho and South Africa to be one country, similar to 2000 (29%) but considerably lower than 1997 (41%).

On personal living conditions, a disturbing 86% said their own personal living conditions were bad or very bad, with the same percentage of 86% saying the same about national economic conditions, while 46% said that they had become worse in the last 12 months. 82% felt that living standards had

decreased over the past few years, and 88% said there were less job opportunities. 76% felt that the gap between rich and poor had widened.

The survey comments that ‘it is up to the government and foreign investment now to help the economic sphere catch up with the political sphere’.

Monument to Assassinated Editor of *Leselinyana* Unveiled at Morija

A sandstone obelisk, with a plaque in memory of **Edgar Mahlomola Motuba**, was unveiled at Morija on 22 November 2003 outside the office of the Lesotho Evangelical Church newspaper *Leselinyana la Lesotho* of which Motuba had been editor until his assassination on 7 September 1981. The monument had been constructed with support from the Commonwealth Journalists Association.

Motuba became editor of *Leselinyana* in 1971 in a period of increasing political strife, culminating in political assassinations by a death squad believed to be sponsored by the government. His newspaper covered these events in detail. On 4 September 1981, apparently in response to this coverage, there was an armed attack on Ben Masilo, a former editor and at the time a member of the *Leselinyana* Press Board. Although Masilo escaped, his grandson was killed in the attack. Three days later, Motuba was abducted from his house in Morija together with two friends. Their bodies were found a day later. It was subsequently reported that his abductors had been members of the paramilitary Police Mobile Unit, who were incensed that Motuba had refused to name the contributors who had written articles about the activities of the death squads. However, no one has been charged with the murders to this day.

The inscription on the memorial is in English and Sesotho and includes the well-known words of Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-73): ‘The pen is mightier than the sword’.

Phase 1B of Lesotho Highlands Water Project Completed

The construction of Phase 1B of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project formally terminated on Thursday 27 November 2003, when the takeover certificate was signed for the 32 kilometre transfer tunnel linking the Mohale and Katse Reservoirs. The 145 metre high Mohale Dam had been completed some months earlier, a 145 metres high concrete faced rock structure, not as elegant as the double curvature of the Katse Dam, but still an impressive engineering feat. When the reservoir fills, water will move from the Mohale Reservoir through the newly completed tunnel to Katse for onward transmission to South Africa via ‘Muela, thus augmenting the total supply by an approximately further 8 cubic metres per second, and also adding to the hydropower generated at ‘Muela.

As originally conceived, a Phase 2 of the project was to follow Phase 1, with a further large dam at Mashai. However, South Africa has in the meantime seriously reconsidered its water requirements in Gauteng (where most of the water is destined). New estimates show less water will be needed, mainly because AIDS is cutting population growth to near zero. Phase 2 is therefore on hold, with little expectation that it will be constructed in the next 10 years.

The end of construction has serious implications for the 400 staff members of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority. Since October 2003, an organization and manpower survey has been investigating which essential services LHDA must maintain in the post-construction phase. Downsizing is inevitable and LHDA employees are waiting for the outcome with bated breath.

Meanwhile news came through that the Lesotho Highlands Water Project had been awarded the ‘Project of the Century’ award by the South African Institute of Civil Engineering, which was celebrating its own centenary. The award was accepted by Lesotho’s Monyane Moleleki at a gala dinner held in Midrand on 27 November.

Death of the Singer Frank Leepa, Leader of the Group Sankomota

The singer-guitarist, **'Captain' Frank Mooki Leepa**, a prolific composer, songwriter and producer and leader of the group **Sankomota**, died in Maseru at the age of 50 after a short illness on 27 November 2003. He was buried at the family home at Qhuqhu on 7 December. Speaking at his funeral, Tshepo Tshola, himself a former Sankomota member, made the point that Frank Leepa had been celebrated for more than 30 years in countries outside Lesotho, but had received little recognition in Lesotho itself.

Frank Leepa, also born in Maseru, was the third son of Clement and 'Makhothatso Leepa. His father had been Deputy Commissioner of Police and the most senior Mosotho policeman in the late 1960s. He had been unfairly dismissed by his post being abolished during the time of Leabua Jonathan, and he had been killed in 1970 in a cave at Ha Taole, while leading an armed opposition group against what he considered to be an illegal government, following the coup in January 1970. Such a background must have provided Frank Leepa with the impetus to use music as a form of political protest, although in the event his protest songs were best known for being directed towards change in South Africa.

Leepa began his singing career in groups like the Leribe Queens in the mid-1960s, shortly after completing high school. He successively founded the Anti-Antiques and then Uhuru ('Freedom'), a name which resulted in the group being banned from South Africa in 1978. In 1983, the group changed its name to Sankomota, the name of the group's first album, which was recorded in Lesotho in that year, and established the essential character of the music for which the group became known: themes owing much to Basotho folk tradition, but reworked into a distinctive idiom reflecting a more sophisticated urban musical awareness. Songs with themes about black aspirations resulted in the album being banned in South Africa, a fate which also was suffered by songs from the second album, *Dreams do come true*.

The group spent time overseas and was UK based from 1985 to 1989, acquiring for a while some London-born artists. Amongst Basotho performers at the time was Harebatho 'Musa, well known both for his dreadlocks and his nickname of 'BJ' or 'Black Jesus'.

Albums which followed were *The writing's on the wall*, and with the coming of change in South Africa, the more optimistic *Exploration: a new phase* in 1991, followed by *After the storm*. This period was noted for the soaring vocals of Tshepo Tshola ('The Village Pope'), who had once toured with Hugh Masekela. With the change in South Africa, Sankomota became more South African-based, but with a programme which resulted in a heavy travel schedule which took them up and down the length of the country. Sankomota suffered a very serious blow when four of its members were killed in a vehicle crash in the Free State while en route to Cape Town in April 1996.

Frank Leepa died shortly before he was due to receive 'The Songwriter of the Year' 2003 award from the South African Recording Rights Association. It was received on his behalf by Tshepo Tshola.

Commission of Inquiry into Reconstruction of Maseru City Centre Submits Report

The Commission of Inquiry under Mr Justice Michael Ramodibedi, which had been required to investigate allegations of corruption in the award of contracts for the reconstruction of Maseru, submitted its report to the Prime Minister, Mr Pakalitha Mosisili on 28 November 2003. Although the full report was not issued at that time, a press release summarizing the findings was released.

The Commission found 'disturbing evidence of corruption (bribery), inefficiency, mismanagement and poor performance at Maseru City Council'. It listed in the press release a summary of 23 different recommendations, amongst which the first was that there should be a functioning Maseru City Council. A new Council has in fact not been elected to replace the previous Council which, after an extension, had retired from office as long ago as early in the year 2000.

The Commission found major administrative deficiencies as well as irregularities in the issuing of planning and building permits. The Review Board which was required to be established in terms of the *Building Control Act 1995* had in fact only been appointed in September 2002, and was still not operational. The Commission recommended that the *Local Government Act 1997* be amended to allow the appointment of an Inspector to monitor the performance of the Maseru City Council in relation to sections of the *Urban Government Act 1983*. Disciplinary proceedings and/or criminal charges were

recommended against certain individuals and/or building entities, although details were not provided in the press release.

Central Bank Recreation and Cultural Centre Completed

The M52.3 million **Lehakoe Recreation and Cultural Centre** belonging to the Central Bank of Lesotho was officially opened on Friday 28 November by the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili. The complex, which is situated between the Central Bank and Parliament Buildings, took two years to build, incorporates thatched buildings shaped like a Basotho Hat, and has outdoor and indoor swimming pools, a multipurpose hall for basketball and netball, and tennis and squash courts. According to the Central Bank of Lesotho Public Relations Officer, Mr Thato Mohasoa, as reported in *Public Eye* of 28 November 2003, the management contract for the complex was being put out to tender.

Principal Chief of Thaba-Bosiu Marries

The Principal Chief of Thaba-Bosiu, **Khoabane Solomon Letsie Theko**, whose ward encompasses most of the City of Maseru was married on Saturday 29 November 2003 to **Mpoetsi Constance Molise** of Pitseng. After the service at the Catholic Cathedral, the newly married couple proceeded in a procession accompanied by pedestrians and horsemen to the Maseru Sun Cabanas for photographs and then the Bambata Tšita Stadium for a wedding reception.

A second ceremony took place in the Lesotho Evangelical Church at Thaba-Bosiu the following day followed by a reception at the bridegroom's residence at Qiloane.

Chief Khoabane, long a bachelor, had succeeded to the Principal Chieftainship on the death of his father Chief Letsie Jacottet Khoabane Theko in 1988. He is named after his great-grandfather, Chief Khoabane who died in 1942.

Anglican Priest Gaoled One Day after Ordination

Considerable controversy, reported in the local press, has surrounded **Rev. Maieane Khaketla**, who was ordained deacon in 2001, despite objections at the time that he did not have recognised qualifications in theology from a university or theological college. As he was due to be ordained priest on 30 November 2003, Bishop Tsubella of the Anglican Church received a petition by 46 members of the church objecting to his ordination on the grounds that he had sexually harassed Mrs Gladys Koloti, the wife of Rev. Mofokeng Koloti, the incident occurring at a time when her husband had been away from Lesotho. Despite the protest the ordination went ahead.

However, the following day, as reported in *Public Eye* of 5 December 2003, Rev. Khaketla was gaoled for contempt of court for having failed over a period of a year to pay a debt to a lawyer, and resisting attempts to have his property attached to pay the debt. While in gaol, Khaketla is likely to have his property seized in any case to pay the debt.

International AIDS Day Observed

International AIDS Day was observed on 1 December 2003. It could not be the cause for any celebration in Lesotho, because the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on Lesotho, far from diminishing, is worsening. The Minister of Health & Social Welfare, Dr Motloheloa Phooko, as quoted in *The Mirror* of 18 November 2003, told a regional skills building workshop that Lesotho now has over 73 000 AIDS orphans in a population of 2.2 million.

Death of Dr A. D. Lebona

A well-known medical practitioner, the much respected **Dr Aaron David Mahlehle Nkhato Lebona**, known to his friends as 'AD', died in Maseru on Monday 24 November 2003, at the age of 83.

Dr Lebona, a Mosotho of the Motaung clan, was born to Solomon Lebona, a miner, and his wife, Mary Matsie, a domestic worker, in Madubulaville Location, Randfontein in the then Transvaal on 23 January 1920. He excelled at primary school and gained a place at St Peter's Secondary School in Rosettenville, where Oliver Tambo was amongst his contemporaries. He achieved a First Class Matriculation in 1938. In 1939, he enrolled at Fort Hare, then known as the 'South African Native College'. Fort Hare had no facilities to train medical doctors, but with his father's encouragement, he took the only medical course available, which led to his obtaining in 1942 a Diploma in Medical Aid. Whilst at Fort Hare he became President of the Students Representative Council. He also worked as a volunteer at hospitals and clinics in the Transkei and also as a clerk on the mines where he gained insight into the extremely harsh working conditions experienced by his father and other black miners. It was at Fort Hare that he met for the first time Evelyn 'Mamohau Ntšihlele, a Durban born Mosotho from a Bakhatla family from the Berea District of Lesotho.

AD's thirst for further medical knowledge led to his being admitted in 1944 to the University of the Witwatersrand, from which he graduated MB ChB in 1948, winning the Cribbs Prize for Surgery. Together with Ismail Meer and William F. Nkomo (who also became a doctor), he was one of the first black students to be elected to the Wits Students Representative Council. During his time in Johannesburg, he did volunteer work in Alexandra Township, and at the Coronation, Johannesburg General and Sterkfontein Hospitals. He also read the news in Sesotho on Radio Bantu, and at the Bantu Men's Social Club gained a reputation as something of a trendsetter.

AD did his internship at McCords Zulu Hospital in Durban where he married Evelyn Ntšihlele in 1949. From 1950 to 1957 he worked in private practice in Bochabela Location, Bloemfontein. At their home the Lebonas played host to many ANC leaders, including Professor Z. K. Matthews, Dr A. B. Xuma and Chief Albert Luthuli. His stay in Bloemfontein is commemorated by a Dr Lebona Street which was named after him.

In March 1958, Dr Lebona joined the then Basutoland Medical Department, serving in several different districts, and also working for the Flying Doctor Service, after the government took over the pioneering work of Dr Carl van Aswegen. He eventually became Medical Superintendent at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru, and helped to initiate together with Dr Anton Rupert the scheme by which the Rembrandt Group paid for South African specialists to fly into Maseru at regular intervals to perform surgical operations.

As a Maseru resident, AD and his family played a significant role in the changing of the colonial practices which had resulted in *de facto* racial segregation. He was the first Mosotho to join the Maseru Club. This enabled an earlier enthusiasm for golf when he worked as a bare-footed caddie in Randfontein to blossom into a regular pastime. In 1975 he achieved a hole in one. In 1962, his children were the first Basotho to be admitted to the Maseru Preparatory School. Amongst other activities he was the Founder President of the Lesotho Medical Association, a Charter Member and one time President of the Maseru Rotary Club, and Chairman of the Lesotho Oenological Guild, a wine tasting club.

For a time shortly after Independence and before the Lebonas built their own house in Caledon Road, Maseru West, AD and Evelyn occupied Yallabee, one of Maseru's largest houses, originally built in the 1920s by the trader, Maitland Brown, and later acquired by the Lesotho Government. Dinner parties at the house were remembered, by those fortunate enough to have attended, as elegant formal occasions, where Dr Lebona would serve the champagne dressed in coat, tails and white gloves, and where Evelyn was the perfect hostess.

In 1977, AD left the government medical service and set up his own private practice in Maseru, for a long time close to the Teyatyaneng Road, and later in the Manonyane Centre near the Pitso Ground. He was still driving to this practice and attending to patients until about three months before his death, which followed a brave three year long fight against prostate cancer.

AD was a devout Catholic, who made pilgrimages to Rome, Fatima, Lourdes and Medjugorje. He daily attended the 7 a.m. mass at the Archbishop's Chapel in Maseru. A mass for the repose of his soul was held at the Catholic Cathedral by Archbishop Bernard Mohlalisi on Friday 5 December. The funeral itself began at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victories at 8 a.m. on 6 December, and continued on the playing field at Machabeng College, where numerous speakers paid tribute to AD's life and

work. It was very much an occasion for the Basotho who are Fort Hare Graduates, for AD was the Founder President of the Lesotho Fort Hare Alumni Association. Much in evidence were the black jackets with vertical gold stripes of Fort Hare alumni. Amongst speakers was Professor Derek Swart, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare, and he promised that Fort Hare would create a scholarship to be named after AD and his wife. Another speaker to pay tribute to AD was W. M. Mphuthing, who spent many years in exile in Botswana, and whose son, Dugmore is married to a daughter of the Lebonas. Willie Mphuthing spoke eloquently, although he is now confined to a wheel chair.

AD Lebona is survived by his wife, Evelyn 'Mamohau and by three sons, four daughters and eight grandchildren.

Leading Rider in Roof of Africa Rally Crashes on Finishing Stretch

The 36th annual **Lesotho Sun Roof of Africa Rally** took place from 27 to 29 November 2003, with the opening ceremony being attended by both King Letsie III of Lesotho and South Africa's Minister of Sport, Ngconde Balfour. The usual 'round-the-houses' race took place on the Thursday, an increasingly disruptive activity for Maseru, as apart from ordinary vehicles having to be diverted, container lorries bound for the factories found themselves either seriously delayed or diverted along minor roads through residential areas.

As has become the practice in recent years, there were two separate races, one for motorcycles and one for quad bikes. In the motor cycle race, Elmer Symons, who set an awesome pace, was 20 to 25 minutes ahead of second placed fellow KwaZulu Natalian, **Jade Gutzeit**, when he hit a rock and was thrown from his bike. Badly concussed, he had to be airlifted to hospital. Gutzeit accordingly won on his Tyrolit Cheetah Tech SA Racing KTM. The quad bike race was won by **Jacques Struwig** on a Southern Yamaha Raptor.

The races took place in fine weather on dusty tracks which had seen little recent rain. The quad bike race was marred on the Friday by a hitch when a marshal did not make it to his marshal point. As a result the Friday's 500 km stretch was discounted, and riders assumed the same starting positions on the Saturday morning as they had on the Friday morning.

Death of MP for Motimposo

The Member of Parliament for the Motimposo Constituency in Maseru, **Tšeliso Maruping Mohloki** and his wife 'Malibuseng Mohloki were both killed as a result of a car crash on 2 December 2003 in the Free State. Their funerals were held on 13 December 2003.

Mohloki had become the Lesotho Congress for Democracy MP for Motimposo in a by-election following the death in 1999 of the previous MP, 'Mamoshebi Kabi. He retained the seat with a comfortable majority in the 2002 General Election, gaining 65.54% of the votes, the best of the ten other candidates (the Basotho National Party candidate) only managing to score 19.81% of the votes.

WASA Appoints New Chief Executive

The new Chief Executive Officer of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) is **Mrs Refiloe Tlali**, who scored highest amongst a short list of 11 candidates, according to *Public Eye* of 12 December 2003.

Refiloe Tlali was most recently General Manager of Financial and Commercial Services at the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority and for a while had been the Acting Chief Executive. She succeeds Sechocha Makhoalibe, whose four year term of office has just ended.

Medicine Murder Reported at Initiation School near Butha-Buthe

The police newspaper, *Leseli ka Sepolesa*, of 18 December 2003, carried the story of an apparent medicine murder carried out at an initiation school.

The victim was a 54-year old man, who was apparently coerced on 21 November 2003 to go to the initiation school at night while intoxicated. When his body was exhumed, it was found to be missing

eyes, ears, the lower jaw and the scalp. Three men have been charged with the murder, including the initiation school teacher, Molebane Mathibeli, aged 61, of Likhutlong, Butha-Buthe; Chief Lerato Mabokoane, aged 31, of Ha 'Makuini; and Sonopo Thabisi, aged 22, of Tlokoeng. All three were remanded in custody.

Exchange Rate Threatens Textile Industry; AGOA III Promises Preferential Benefits to 2015

Lesotho's currency, the loti, is tied to the rand and its recent extraordinary performance on foreign exchange markets has serious implications for Lesotho's clothing industry. In mid-2000 the rate was \$1 = R6.50, and a year later it was about \$1 = R8.50. In the second half of 2001, the value of the rand underwent an extremely rapid decline, so that by December 2001 the rate was \$1 = R12.00. There was much speculation about the cause of the decline, just as there is now much speculation about its subsequent reversal. By December 2002, the rate was again about \$1 = R8.50, which was considered by many an appropriate value. However, helped by the weak dollar, the rand appreciated further still throughout most of 2003, so that by December 2003, it reached R1 = R6.10, essentially a doubling of its value against the dollar in the space of two years.

While cheaper imported goods in Lesotho are an obvious bonus from the changed exchange rate, for the Lesotho textile the implications are serious. Virtually the whole market for Lesotho manufactured clothes is in North America, and the returns from sales are now half what they were two years ago. A consequence is that no further clothing factories are likely to be constructed in Lesotho in the near future, and present factories are threatened with closure. Factory owners talk about relocating their activities to south-east Asia. The recent failures of Lesotho minimum wage increases to match inflation are probably the result of pressure from factory owners concerned about the decreasing profitability of their operations.

In contrast to this gloomy scenario, *African Growth & Opportunity Act III* was introduced into the United States Senate and House of Representatives in late November. If enacted, this promises an extension of the preferential trade benefits for qualifying countries (these include Lesotho) from 2008 to 2015. *AGOA III* is broadened to allow agricultural products to participate in the US market (probably not an area which Lesotho can extensively take advantage of), but also allows participating countries to continue using third-country fabric until 2012. The latter may be of advantage to Lesotho, for although it now plays host to the Nien Hsing Denim Mill, the largest in Africa, its factories are nevertheless still partly dependent on imported cloth.

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