



MAIN STORIES

**Letšeng Diamonds
Mine and Pollution**

**Ombudsman Report
on Police Torture**

LHWP

**Corruption
Allegations against
PODCPF**

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Pulitzer Centre, an American news media organisation that sponsors independent reporting, conducted investigations into allegations surrounding Prime Minister Sam Matekane's administration, which is accused of shielding Letšeng Diamonds Mine from significant fines and potential legal consequences due to water pollution. The Department of Water Affairs (DWA) found in 2023 that scientific evidence pointed to the fact that Letšeng was polluting water from the Maloraneng stream. Despite possessing the incriminating evidence, the government, under Matekane, has remained unmoved.
- Amnesty International said on 26 March that authorities must investigate torture of detainees at Maseru Correctional Centre Institution (MCCI) after Ombudsman Tlotliso Rapolaki found that correctional officers in December 2023 executed a well-orchestrated plan to torture and ill-treat inmates, in particular, members of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF).
- Gauteng faces five years of water disruptions and water supply will periodically fall lower than demand until the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) Phase 2 comes on stream.
- Energy Minister Nqosa Mahao was reportedly forced into a humiliating climb-down after Matekane ordered him to cancel the launch of an electrification project in Mokema constituency because he did not follow correct procedures.
- Former police commissioner Holomo Molibeli asked the High Court to shut down the Lesotho Times after the paper carried a story linking him with a M40 million fraud scandal. On 27 March, the High Court dismissed the application.
- National University of Lesotho (NUL) students embarked on a strike on 8 April 2024, amongst others because of an increase in fees. Students from the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) are still on strike, protesting against increases in tuition fee. The strike commenced on 25 March.

LESOTHO

- According to the 2024 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), Lesotho is ranked 89 out of 163 countries (1=worst; 163=best), indicating no impact from terrorism, with a score of 0.000 out of 10 (1=low number of incidents; 10=high number of incidents).
- The Public Officers Defined Contribution Pension Fund (PODCPF) has roped in security agencies to try and help it investigate corruption allegations and the leakage of a report by the South African law firm, Bowmans on NBC-Lesotho.
- Frazer Solar GmbH, a German company currently embroiled in a legal dispute with the government, warned that the country risks losing more money if it continued to drag its feet instead of settling the case. This is as the government has applied for leave to appeal the South African (SA) High Court order, where the judge rejected Lesotho's application for a rescission of an arbitration award.
- Member of Parliament (MP) for the Malimong constituency, Lephoi Makara, and a prominent figure within the ruling Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) party, is accused of misappropriation of funds belonging to the International Centre for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs (ICAP) Lesotho for the purchase and supply of laptops through his company, Electro Tech Supplies.
- Anti-corruption authorities are probing a deal between two companies which were battling for a lucrative government contract. A South African debt collecting company, Cabana Zenowethu, reportedly promised R13 million to its Lesotho competitor, Super Solutions, to withdraw a court application challenging the award of the tender to its rival.
- On 2 April 2024, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) decided to maintain the CBL rate at 7.75% per annum.





- Headline inflation fell to 7.3% in February 2024 from 8.2% in the preceding month.
- The World Bank April 2024 Macro Poverty Outlook (MPO) states that growth is projected to remain subdued, at around 2-2.5% over the next three years.
- The Ministry of Trade launched the Lesotho National Industrialisation Policy 2024–2028.
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2023/24 Human Development Report (HDR), updated in March 2024, shows that Lesotho's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2022 is 0.521, which put the country in the 'Low' human development category, positioning it at 168 out of 193 countries and territories.
- Lesotho's Minister of Home Affairs, Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs and Police, Lebona Lephema and South Africa's Minister of Home Affairs, Aaron Motsoaledi signed an agreement allowing Basotho citizens to stay in South Africa for up to 90 days visa-free, with the possibility of extension to 180 days. Previously, Basotho visitors were limited to 30-day stays.
- Matekane announced that the United States Millennium Challenge Account (MCC) Compact II became operational with effect from 31 March 2024, unlocking US\$322 million in financial support for development programmes.

