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News

School feeding schemes face collapse

MATHATISI SEBUSI

...as caterers not paid mull cutting services

MASERU – Thousands of needy children reliant on government feeding schemes countrywide could drop out of school because private caterers are mulling cutting services owing to non-payment.

Some schools in Mokhotlong are now sending children home early because of collapsing feed schemes, putting children from poor families' lives at risk.

Reports from parliament indicate government has not paid private catering contractors for months, forcing some to borrow to buy ingredients for meals.

Some contractors are now seriously considering pulling out of the programme altogether.

In a futile attempt to allay restive parliamentarians' concerns, the Minister of Education and Training Ntoi Rapapa last week blamed the recent teachers' strike for delays in paying the caterers.

But Tseliso Sello who caters at Ikaheng Primary School in Thaba Bosiu, rejected Rapapa's excuse, saying teachers had nothing to do with their payment as invoices were submitted directly to the ministry.

"It is a lie that the delay in payment was caused by the



Minister of Education and Training Ntoi Rapapa

teachers' strike as the documents have nothing to do with school principals because we personally take those documents to the Teaching Service Department two weeks before month end," he said. MPs had asked Rapapa to explain why the feeding scheme had been suspended at some schools despite funds being set aside for the programme.

The minister was also asked to explain why school caterers had not been paid and also whether he was aware suspension of the feeding programme could cause nutrition related deaths as some children wholly depended on the

scheme for sustenance.

Senqu MP Likeleli Tampane asked the minister to reveal how many caterers in the districts had been paid and when the outstanding group would be paid to save the crucial scheme.

PR MP Sehloho Monatsi noted that in some districts, Mokhotlong among them, children are now sent home at noon because of food scarcity.

Rapapa said he not aware of this development, adding his office would investigate the report immediately and take corrective measures.

He said the feeding programme had not been suspended but had been hobbled by problems the ministry had encountered with a company hired to work on the programme.

Rapapa noted delays in paying caterers were, in some cases, because contractors had submitted documents and

invoices late.

He said his ministry was committed to paying the caterers as soon as requisite documents were submitted.

"We will only be able to pay the caterers when all the needed documents have been submitted to the ministry.

"The ministry is fully aware that lack of schools feeding programmes has a bad impact on children's performance and wellbeing hence why the Government strongly supports school feeding programmes in schools.

"Recently, the Government has endorsed a school health and nutrition policy which guides feeding schemes in schools," he said.

Dismissing Rapapa's submission, caterer Sello, said in an interview with Public Eye on Sunday he had only been paid for services provided in January and February.

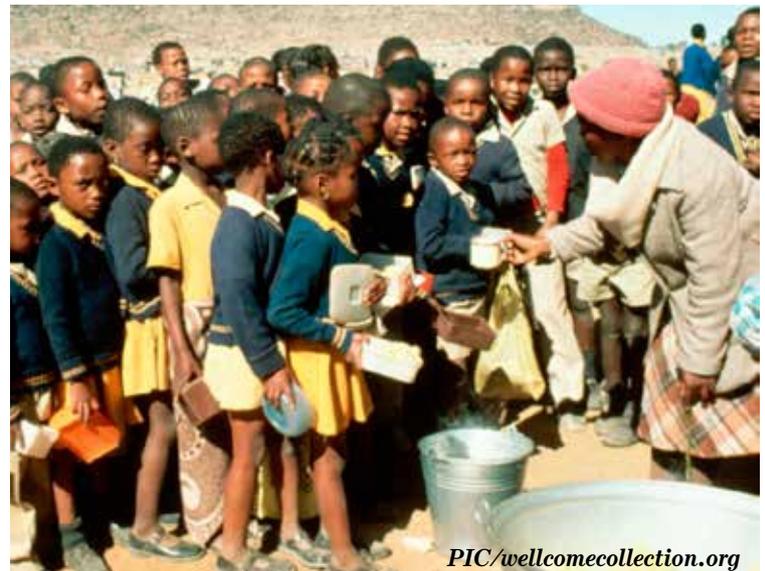
He said he was contracted for the whole year providing "everything by ourselves without any assistance from the ministry of education".

"The money that we got this month was for January and February but it did not benefit me in any way because the bank took it all.

"When I started cooking, I took a loan from the bank so I could buy food and fuel, but now that the Ministry of Education has taken time before paying us, interest on the loan has increased taking all my money," Sello said.

He was now trying to get another loan so he can work next term when schools re-open.

Senqu MP Likeleli Tampane



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News

Reforms pace triggers Thabane plot

BONGIWE ZIHLANGU

MASERU - The move to oust Thomas Thabane's government through a no confidence motion in parliament has been triggered by sluggishness in pursuing key reforms needed to revamp the country's failing economy and to halt unbridled corruption, Public Eye on Sunday has learnt.

A cabal of influential MPs drawn from across the political divide, on Friday swore their parliamentary rebellion was not designed to tilt the internal ABC war in favour of Thabane's enemies. Rather, they insisted, the motion seeks to overthrow Thabane to pave the way for an inclusive government that would speed up reforms and crack down on rampant corruption.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has reported M1.4 billion was corruptly siphoned out of state coffers between 2012 and 2017.

Mechechane Constituency ABC MP Nyapane Kaya, opposition leader in Parliament Mathibeli Mokhothu, Democratic Congress (DC) Deputy-Leader Motlalentso Letsosa, and Movement for Economic Change (MEC) leader Selibe Mochoboroane debunked reports the no confidence motion was stirred by the bickering in the ABC and disdain for Thabane.

The MPs also confirmed submitting the motion to Speaker Sephiri Motanyane, who accepted it before questioning its validity.

Motanyane argued ABC MP Samuel Rapapa, nominated to replace Thabane, failed to pass the legal threshold that he should be leader of a political party.



The MPs argued the cited law was ambiguous as it did not state whether a nominee should be exclusively leader of a political party or of a coalition of political parties in parliament.

They also blasted the Speaker for insisting MP Motebang Koma should first cross the floor before moving the motion.

"What's important about this motion is that it was not moved by one or two parties but by MPs from different political parties in parliament. I must mention that according to Standing Order III, the minute you move a motion for a no-confidence vote, it should include the name of the nominee to replace the premier," Kaya said.

"In that regard, we have nominated Mosalemane MP Tsuinyane Rapapa. I must also register that before coming out with this motion, we ensured that our numbers are above 50 percent or above 60 plus one seats which is the simple majority required to form government in a parliament comprising 120 seats."

He added: "Let me once more say that the motion for a

no-confidence vote in our PM emanated from us ABC MPs but now has the support of a majority of parties in parliament."

Letsosa said the opposition and ABC rebels submitted the motion, which was accepted as valid "only for the Speaker and his deputy to later somersault".

"I and Ntate Koma went to the Speaker's office to submit the motion. He said it was in order after reading it," Letsosa said.

"Later on... he (Koma) told me that the Speaker...was now questioning its validity. They were clutching at straws.

"Their first query, they said, was wrong because the nominee is from the ruling party and if the person were to qualify, he would first have to cross the floor to the opposition. Secondly, they said the motion lacked credence because Rapapa is not leader of a political party.

"Thirdly, they said the mover of the motion being from ABC, had no right to express lack of confidence in another member from the same party. Lastly, they said that the names of those in support of the motion, should be written down with signatures appended on each."

Mokhothu said under a Rapapa-led government, focus would shift to reforms. "We do have a developmental agenda for this nation should Sam Rapapa hold the steering wheel.

"In the three years leading to 2022, we will be seized with the implementation of the multi-sectoral reform agenda: security, parliamentary, constitutional, judiciary, public sector, economic and media reforms.

"We will be seized with ensuring that we deepen

democracy in those sectors and insulate them against abuse by politicians, making sure that they are geared towards serving the Basotho nation and uplifting this country from poverty."

Kaya added that their grand plan would fail if its founding principle was not the national interest.

"We want for the nation to understand the extent, the depth, the breadth of corruption we have in this country. And once that understanding has been achieved, we want a collective mind, psyche, a journey that we charter to address that particular disease."

Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) Director Tsikoane Peshoane, said reports that Motanyane wants to block Rapapa's nomination were disturbing. According to Peshoane, Motanyane was introducing laws that do not exist.

"But Koma is not a member of cabinet. He's just an ordinary MP. If he was a minister he would be asked to resign. This purported ruling by the Speaker is out of order.

"Where does it come from? The ABC was elected at the grassroots and Koma is part of that party," Peshoane said.

"The premier is the product of parliament which endorsed him and will be removed by the same parliament when need arises. Thabane was not endorsed by people in the grassroots, but by MPs."

On Rapapa, Peshoane noted that section 87 (2) of the constitution was not "exclusive to leaders of political parties" and that "it is misleading to say an ordinary MP does not qualify to become a premier".

"Any member of the national assembly qualifies to be elected PM in parliament. There is no constitutional crisis here. It is being fabricated as a mere delaying tactic to avert the inevitable," Peshoane said.



Widow breaks into tough world of taxi drivers

‘MASENTLE MAKARA

MASERU - ‘MathatoTaeli (38) is a widowed mother of two: 20-year-old daughter “Thato” and a 12-year-old son.

She has worked as a taxi driver since a chain of misfortunes turned her life upside down.

First, her husband was severely assaulted and later died in hospital in November 2014.

Then, her daughter (then 14) who had epilepsy (a disorder in which nerve cell activity in the brain is disturbed, causing seizures) dropped out of school in the middle of examinations because of the trauma of losing her father. “My husband was severely beaten and though he did not die immediately he was hospitalised for a month and some days but died in ICU at Ts’epong. I did not allow my children to go and see him because he was in a horrific state and I did not want them to see like that,” ‘Mathato says. Thato’s illness worsened after her father’s death. “I remember it was on the 1st of November 2014 when coming from my husband’s memorial service and I was told Thato had slept from 11 am. I suspected something was wrong with her.” Doctors at Queen ‘Mamohato Memorial Hospital confirmed Thato had Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

“She was like a new born baby and I had to nurse all over again as she could not walk or talk. “I sold everything including cars just to make sure she gets help. I had some money and I started a money lending project but in the end it failed.” Because of illness, Thato did not visit her father in hospital. She didn’t attend



‘MathatoTaeli

his funeral either. “During my troubles, although I had support from my mother and my husband’s siblings it was not enough since they (my husband’s siblings) are younger than me and instead of consoling me, they expected that from me as their elder sister.” All this affected ‘Mathato’s mental health and she succumbed to clinical depression. “When I went to Ts’epong I was told I had depression.

In those days, I often felt like crying out loud.” “After my money lending business collapsed, I started operating a restaurant and bar at Thabong and it thrived for a while. Every Saturday I would take home at least M700 profit, but economic the decline in Lesotho badly affected that business.” As her fortunes dipped, so did her ability to fend for her young family. Out of the blue, Bakuena Taole her late husband’s friend offered her a job as a taxi driver. “Ntate Taole approached me and said: ‘I have

a taxi without a driver, come and take it so that you can make a living.” She was undecided at first but things got worse at Thabong as customers’ numbers kept dwindling. “I realised that my children would die of hunger so I decided to grab the taxi driving offer. “Yes, some tasks specifically require great physique like lifting heavy loads but I believe any other work that requires thinking, even women can do it.

“It has been five months since I arrived in this taxi rank. It was not easy at first because I was not used to driving taxis but my boss made things easy for me. When she assumed duty as a taxi driver, she encountered myriad challenges. Some passengers would refuse to ride in her taxi saying: “We can’t be driven by a woman”. “But what I told myself is that I am not just a woman, but a mother so I have to show them that I am not here for fun, but to provide for my children,” she states. She says even her conductor is often teased for working with a woman. Some male drivers often provoke her too. Thankfully she her colleagues rally around her. “This makes me feel protected because I never thought any man would protect me after my husband. “One by one, they would approach me and

try to make me understand the kind of work I am doing. The bus stop is full of insults and I’m used to them now, even on the roads I meet insults so I no longer have a problem with it. This work needs someone who respects herself; if you respect yourself they will respect you in return. “I never have a break but I don’t complain because now I am getting paid and it is better than when I was self-employed since sometimes business was not good.

Now I know I am bound to earn a salary month-end and this work is flexible since I can still do other things, especially after 9am when there are no passengers.” ‘Mathato says she considers herself blessed because of the kind of children she has. “They are very supportive. When I got here I feared for my son because the time I took this job was the time he has just becoming a teenager.

I thought it was going to affect him but he has been very supportive. “He would come to me and say, ‘Mom, I am so lucky to have you as my mother. You are strong and you can do anything to make sure that we do not go to bed on empty stomachs.

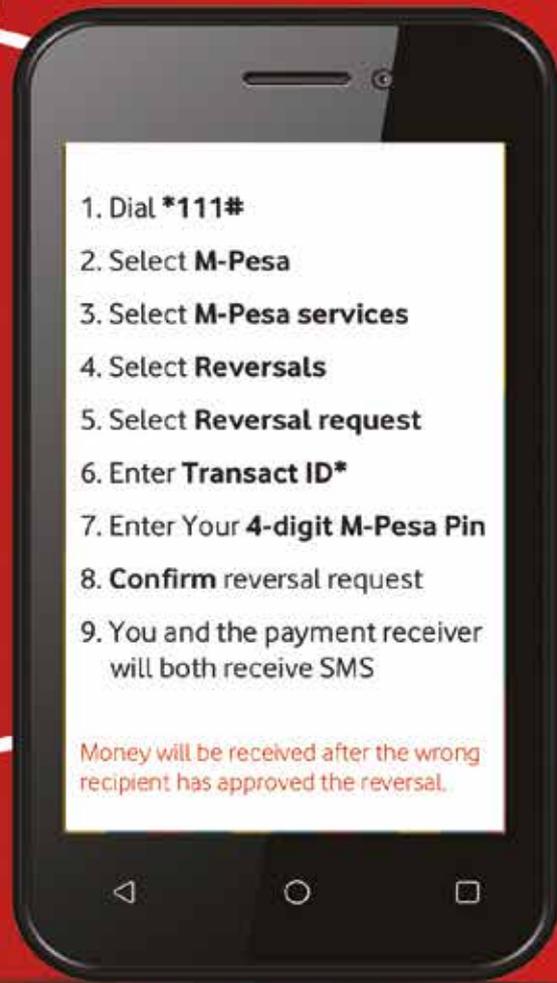
Some mothers go to bars or sell their bodies but you can work day and night because of us and I thank you”’. Her son is so inspired by her work that sometimes he asks to work with her on weekends though she does not encourage that as she fears he might leave school for the little money he makes at the taxi rank. She pays tribute to her late husband for moulding her into the strong woman she is today. “Sometimes I miss him; he was a problem solver and I know he would congratulate me for doing this work. He liked it when I did rough work. I remember he only taught me how to drive for two weeks. He always challenged me.” She used to work for an insurance company and on weekends would do people’s hair to boost household income. She encourages widows to fend for themselves too. “Yes, your husbands provided for you, but they are no longer around and will never come back. You are going to cry forever and end up moving from one relationship to another if you do not do something which will add value your life.

“If you are poor, people will talk and if you are rich they will still talk so forget about what people say.”



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RELEBOHILE TSOAMOTSE

LCS boss loses appeal

MASERU - Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) Commissioner Thabang Mothepu and seven officers “promoted” with him will have to pay back salary increments paid to them since their now expunged promotions were effected in 2015.

This was confirmed by the Court of Appeal when it upheld a High Court judgement that had ordered the officers to repay monies in lieu of their new positions.

The late justice `Masehlophe Hlajoane nullified Mothepu`s promotion to Assistant Commissioner and the elevation of seven other officers to different positions.

Justice Hlajoane also ordered the Accountant-General to deduct from their salaries payments made to the officers, if any, pertaining to their promotions.

The order was however stayed when the officers appealed the High Court judgment.

According to the High Court judgment, the Accountant-General was ordered “to deduct any payment made if any, from respondent pertaining to the promotions in corrections internal circular notice No. 15 and 16 of 2015...”

The other officers are K Moeno who was appointed senior assistant commissioner, M Raphuthing who was made Acting Assistant

Commissioner, and one Selahla who was appointed Senior Superintendent.

Ntasa became Superintendent, Bereng, Assistant Superintendent, Rammasa, Assistant Superintendent, with Matingoe Phamotse appointed Acting Deputy Commissioner.

The Lesotho Correctional Services Staff Association (LCSSA) challenged the promotions, charging procedure had been breached rendering the promotions, “unlawful and irregular”.

LCS promotion guidelines state that there has to be a vacancy before an officer is promoted and such a post should be advertised internally.

In its papers, the LCSSA further argued the whole promotion process was defective as the positions the officers moved into had not been advertised.

The association then asked the court to order the officers be interdicted from performing duties of their new offices.

Mothepu was soon appointed Acting Commissioner in June 2017 and then made substantive commissioner the following month.

The officers petitioned the Appeal Court in August 2018 challenging nullification of their initial ranks although they filed papers after the dies induciae



Lesotho Correctional Services Commissioner Thabang Mothepu

(the time allowed for entering an appearance to a civil process) had lapsed.

They claimed they had failed to appeal the High Court order in time because they had been unaware of the damaging judgment.

Court rules demand an appeal be noted within six weeks of a judgment being handed down. The court allowed them to appeal.

During the hearing, the officers argued the case was moot as they had vacated the disputed posts.

They also argued the LCSSA lacked the legal right to challenge their promotions and thereby asked the Appeal Court to cancel the High Court order.

The Court of Appeal however upheld the High Court judgment in toto.

In their judgement, Justices: Moses Chinhengo, November Mtshiya and the President of the Appeal Court, Dr Kananelo Mosito said “...the other orders

of the court below still had to be given effect, if that has not been done.

“The High Court had declared, not only that the promotions were null and void, but also that the appellants were not to assume the duties of the offices to which they had been irregularly promoted; that no salary adjustment could be made pursuant to the purported promotions and if any such adjustment had been done the appellants had to pay back any money received in consequence of the aborted promotions.”

The judges agreed with Justice Hlajoane`s findings and said that the fact the promotions were effected by the then Acting Commissioner, meant they could not stand because “the commissioner had no powers to promote the officers”.

Justice Hlajoane in the High Court held that the promotions were invalid because the then commissioner had acted ultra-varies the powers she possessed.

Limkokwing suspends SRC



MAPALO NKHELOANE

MASERU - Limkokwing University of Creative Technology (LUCT) has suspended the Student Representative Council (SRC) with immediate effect because of misconduct.

The university said the students had committed “unabated acts of mischief, noncompliance and utter contempt of the university

structures”. In a letter to SRC Secretary General, Ntsane Moahloli, University Registrar Moroka Hoohlo, stated management took the decision to protect the “student union, structure of the university and maintenance of regulatory and authority within the university”.

The SRC is among others accused of hosting the “Mr and Miss Limkokwing 2019” pageant without management’s consent.

“Hosting Mr and Miss Limkokwing in direct violation

of the instruction from management and thereby staging an unsanctioned and uninsured event thereby placing the entire Student Union and the university at risk,” Hoohlo said.

Hoohlo said the university had been inundated with complaints about the “unsanctioned” event owing to the SRC’s actions, thus bringing the university’s name into disrepute. According to the Registrar, the SRC failed to pay winners of its pageant promised amounts, and students engaged as service providers in the name of the university although no prior approval had been sought.

Hoohlo also indicated that the SRC collected money from students purportedly to be won in a soccer tournament.

“However and despite students contributing to sponsor this tournament, you misappropriated such funds to the prejudice of the students as

well as their participating teams which got nothing as prizes amongst others,” he said. The university would withhold all SRC members’ academic results for the current semester until they “have collectively regularised these pending commitments or repayments to the internal university stakeholders”.

“Your conduct has not only brought shame but huge disappointment and until you reimburse all the monies collected from the SU and settle all your internal commitments, this suspension shall persist and arrangements shall be made for appointment of an interim SRC,” Hoohlo concluded. The suspended SRC includes; Thabo Lebusetsa, President, Mampiko Machachamisa, Vice President, Moahloli, Secretary General, Fantene Moseli, vice SG and Patrick Rangoajane, the Treasurer.

Sport

THE BEST SUNDAY READ



Likuena fall to Zimbabwe again

NTHAKO MAJORO

MASERU – Likuena just cannot beat the Zimbabwean Warriors in the COSAFA Cup.

For the third time in a row, Likuena fell to the Zimbabweans, despite coming back twice to level the score in a 2-2 draw.

Likuena eventually lost 5-4 on penalties in an entertaining third-place play-off match at Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban, South Africa on Friday.

Likuena's two goals were scored by Jana Thaba-nts'o in the 32rd minute and Tswarelo Bereng in the 68th minute, after the Warriors had led the game in the 14th and 61st minute through strikes by Tafadzwa Rusike and Leeroy Mavunga respectively.

Bereng again fluffed his penalty gifting the match to

the Warriors. He casually took the penalty which Warriors goalkeeper, Talbert Shumba gratefully saved.

Bereng missed another penalty against Uganda, shooting over the crossbar.

But unlike Friday, his failure to score then did not harm his team's chances as goalkeeper, Samuel Ketsekile saved two Ugandans' spot kicks.

The Likuena-Warriors Friday match was a replica of last year's encounter where the latter beat Likuena 3-1 in a penalty shoot-out following a goalless draw in regulation time in the semi-finals.

Again in 2017, Likuena lost 4-3 to the Warriors in the semi-finals, this time in regulation time.

The Friday defeat was in total the fourth time Likuena have lost to the Warriors in

the competition after the 2000 unforgettable 6-0 drabbing on aggregate.

Likuena lost 3-0 in the first leg and again 3-0 in the second leg of the COSAFA Cup final, when the final was played over two legs.

In general, Likuena's performance in the COSAFA Cup has dropped somewhat from last year's third-place to fourth-place.

This was despite the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) demanding the team at least reach the final of the tournament after getting to the semi-finals twice in a row, last year and in 2017.

Likuena, who started in the quarter-finals for the third time in a row, went to this year's tournament without their head coach, Moses Maliehe, due to poor health.

As a result, the team was under the guidance of first assistant coach, Mpitsa Marai. He was assisted by former Bloemfontein Celtic defender James Madidilane.

Madidilane, who is the current head coach of Bantu FC, was appointed Likuena's second assistant coach after the debacle in Cape Verde to beef-up the technical team.

Another former Bloemfontein Celtic player, Posnet Omony, was appointed goalkeepers' coach, replacing Shokhoe Matsoai. Ugandan Omony, is also part of the Bantu FC coaching department.

Likuena beat Uganda Cranes 3-2 on penalties following a goalless draw in regulation in the quarter-finals of this year's tournament before losing 2-1 to the Botswana's Zebras in the semi-final on Wednesday.