



MAIN STORIES

Dissatisfaction with
Government

Budget 2023/24

Few Benefits from
Cannabis

Impunity Index

Index of Economic
Freedom

Legatum Prosperity
Index

HIGHLIGHTS

- Opposition parties in parliament warned Prime Minister Sam Matekane in a letter to halt new statutory appointments until the ongoing multi-sectoral reforms process has been fully implemented or risk throwing the whole exercise into jeopardy. Eight opposition leaders in parliament said they were surprised that the government was continuing with appointments and dismissals of senior officials despite a discussion the parties held in “good faith” on such appointments during a meeting with the prime minister on 13 February.
- The Democratic Congress (DC) and Basotho Action Party (BAP) are concerned about the ‘questionable appointment’ of the former South African acting Special Director of Public Prosecutions of the Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU) and former head of the KwaZulu-Natal branch of the AFU, Knorx Molelle, as the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) director general. Molelle was placed on precautionary suspension in November 2020 for alleged gross misconduct and negligence linked to two major state capture cases in South Africa.
- The Atlas of Impunity, which assessed 197 countries on unaccountable governance, abuse of human rights, economic exploitation, conflict and violence and environmental degradation on a 0-5 scale, with higher scores signifying more impunity, awarded Lesotho a score of 2.46 and it is ranked at 78.
- The 2023 Index of Economic Freedom published by the Heritage Foundation ranks Lesotho at 141 out of 176 countries (176=worst; 1=best). Lesotho falls in the category of “Mostly Unfree” nations.
- The 2023 Legatum Prosperity Index, based on a definition of prosperity that combines economic growth with quantified measures of happiness and quality of life, ranked Lesotho at 132 out of 167 countries (1=best; 167=worst), up from 136 in 2013.



- According to Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2023 report, Lesotho is rated as "Free" with an aggregate score of 66/100 (0=Least Free, 100=Most Free). In 2022, its aggregate score was 63/100. The report states that Lesotho's status improved from 'Partly Free' to 'Free' due to the formation of a new government.
- Matekane announced a crime-fighting plan, saying that he had re-established a combined team from the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), National Security Service and the Lesotho Correctional Service (LCS) to act upon criminal activities.
- Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Retselisitsoe Matlanyane, presented the 2023/24 budget on 27 February 2023. In 2022/23, growth is estimated at 1.8% and projected to accelerate to 2.3% in 2023/24. The overall revenue target for 2023/24 is estimated at M25.1 billion, 27.2% over the 2022/23 revenue estimated outturn. The proposed total expenditure is M24.1 billion.
- Total Government debt at the end of January 2023 stood at M22 billion, which is an increase of M3 billion from the previous financial year.
- In 2017, Lesotho became the first African country to legalise cannabis. Nearly six years later, the industry is yet to change the fortunes of the country's poor and jobless. Basotho, many of whom have grown cannabis for decades, say only the 'elite and multinationals' benefited from the industry.
- Preparatory stages of construction of the Polihali commercial centre at Masakong are under way after the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) awarded the contract to Unik Construction Engineering. The commercial centre, the only one of its kind in the area, includes space for a supermarket, a clinic, police post and specialty retail stores, as well as the option to extend the centre to include a filling station at a later stage.





- The Famine and Early Warning Systems (FEWS NET) said that cumulative rainfall for the 2022/23 cropping season has been above average across the country. However, the area planted for the current cropping season is nearly 30% below normal due to high seed and fertilizer costs.
- Lesotho and South Africa signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to combat cross-border crime during a meeting between SA Police Minister Bheki Cele and his Lesotho counterpart, Lebona Lephema.
- In February, the clan chiefs of Bakhatla, Basia, Makholokoe, Baphuthi, and Bakuena living in both Lesotho and South Africa said that they would be pushing for the return of land to Lesotho by South Africa.
- Matekane said in his maiden speech at the 36th ordinary session of the assembly of the African Union (AU) that his country is committed to bring the Comprehensive Reforms Programme back on track.

