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Telling It Like It Is

Lesotho's assets seized

Staff Reporter

MASERU

LESOTHO's international assets are being seized to pay off an M855 million claim by a German company accusing the government of breaching a contract.

The contract with Frazer Solar was signed by former minister Temeki Tšolo in September 2018 when he was a Minister in Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's office. Frazer was to supply Lesotho with solar water heaters, solar lanterns and LEC lights.

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TEMEKI Tšolo

What beer has done
to our country
—Muckraker



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LCA boss faces
ouster

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Lesotho's M855
million mess

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Gang wars spill into
courts

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Lesotho's M855 million mess

Staff Reporter

MASERU

FORMER Minister Temeki Tšolo played a central role in negotiating and signing the M1.6 billion solar deal that has soured and could see Lesotho losing its international assets after violating the contract.

There are fresh details on how Tšolo committed the government to a staggering contract – without cabinet approval or following procedure – and then repeatedly ignored clear legal warnings that his decision was leading Lesotho into a monumental disaster.

Now Lesotho has lost an arbitration and three cases as Frazer Solar, the German company, goes after its international assets.

The German company is claiming M855 million from Lesotho and has been winning court cases across the world.

Last week the company applied to a United States court, seeking an order to enforce its right to confiscate Lesotho's assets in that country.

In South Africa, Frazer Solar has been granted an order to take the royalties Lesotho receives for water exports under the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Also, the debt that Eskom owes to Lesotho has been garnished to

pay Frazer Solar.

In Mauritius, the company has been granted permission to take control of Lesotho's five percent stake in the West Indian Ocean Cable Company (WIOCC), a broadband company based in that country. Lesotho's shares in WIOCC, which supplies broadband to Lesotho and other regional countries, are owned through the Lesotho Communications Authority.

There is also another order allowing Frazer Solar to seize Lesotho's assets in the United Kingdom.

Those assets include the ambassador's official residence.

But while the hunt for more assets continues and the government claims to be investigating what happened, Tšolo, whose signature is alleged to be on the contract, is pleading ignorance.

He tells *thepost* he never signed the contract and claims his signature could have been forged.

"What is happening here is fraud. It's a lie," Tšolo says.

He describes Robert Frazer, the director and shareholder of Frazer Solar, as a "con-man out to fleece Lesotho".

"It is true that I had several meetings with the man (Robert) but I never signed anything with him. Never!" he says.

"I only facilitated negotiations and meetings but there was never anything signed. I swear I never signed that contract or any other document."

Robert Frazer's media team refused to comment on those allegations.

Tšolo's emphatic denials have added to the mystery and confusion surrounding the debacle.

A brief statement last week revealed that the government too was miffed by Frazer Solar's claim and the turn of events.

But despite calling for calm, the statement has done little to allay fears that the government did sleep on the job and that Lesotho's international assets are safe. Instead, the public is outraged and counter-accusations are being traded within a government that appears to have been caught unawares and is scouring for explanations while national assets after being plucked one by one.

Until the government has a handle on the issues surrounding the contract and Tšolo proves that he is not culpable, the answers can only be found in the arbitrator's report and Frazer Solar's court documents.

These tell a

Special Report



PRIME Minister Moeketsi Majoro

story of a minister who willingly signed a contract with an international company and a government that reneged on its obligations. They paint a picture of a minister and civil servants who then ignored warning letters, court notices and failed to defend the country's interests.

So, how did we end up here?

The genesis, according to the documents, appears to be the Lesotho Energy Policy 2015-2025 which sought to reduce the country's power import bill, increase the use of renewable energy and promote universal access to electricity.

Robert Frazer, who worked for Rheem, an Australian-based solar company, got his hands on that policy and it fitted squarely with a strategy he had earlier pitched to his bosses. Together with senior managers at Rheem, Frazer developed what was called the Solarhart Business Strategy whose main thrust was to market Rheem's large-scale renewable energy directly to African countries. The projects were to be funded by the Australian government's Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC).

Frazer started marketing Rheem's products in Southern Africa, beginning with meetings with government officials in South Africa and Lesotho. He claims to have come to Lesotho at the invitation of one Seqhebolla Letsie.

Frazer arrived in Lesotho in January 2016 and started peddling the Solarhart project to several government departments and officials. But he had barely made much progress

tral figure in the deal that got Lesotho on the hook for M855 million.

In October of the same year, Tšolo invited KfW to submit a proposal to fund the €100 million (M1.6 billion at that time) project with Frazer Solar.

According to procurement regulations, Tšolo did not have the authority to solicit funding from any local or international financial companies. That was the responsibility of the Finance Minister who was Dr Moeketsi Majoro at that time.

The Ministry of Energy, which should have initiated and implemented the project, was not involved.

Yet despite this obvious deviation from the procedures, Tšolo also went on to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Frazer Solar in November 2017.

This too was an anomaly because the project was not under his ministry and ministers are not allowed to sign MOUs on the government's behalf without cabinet approval.

The Attorney General's office, which is supposed to scrutinise such legal documents, also did not see the MOU. It is not clear who Tšolo had consulted before signing.

But those internal procedures did not matter to Frazer Solar and KfW, who quickly moved to turn that non-binding MOU into a concrete agreement. After all, the MOU stated that Frazer Solar and Tšolo were going to get the government's approval for the project in March 2018 following a final proposal Frazer was to submit three months earlier (January 2018).

Based on the MOU and Tšolo's invitation in October, KfW wrote to Majoro in December 2017 expressing interest to fund the project. And as if to seal the deal, Frazer organised a workshop where he sold the project to several government officials.

By March 2018, KfW was piling pressure on Majoro to approve their funding proposal.

But when Majoro supposedly ignored their letters, the company turned back to Tšolo with a letter reiterating its intention to fund the project.

Despite lacking the authority to discuss such matters, Tšolo obliged and requested KfW to provide a breakdown of the interest rates, duration of the loan and guarantees. KfW responded with another letter, giving the details as Tšolo requested.

Tšolo continued on this unprocedural path in August 2018 when he told Frazer, in a letter, that the government had agreed to proceed with the project. He is alleged to have told Frazer to prepare the loan and export contracts for signing. He also said the project will be included in the budget but the government would not sign the contract until it had received the financial offer from KfW through the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA).

The letter however had a curious caveat which could indicate he wanted to keep the deal in the Prime Minister's Office. The Arbitrator's report says Tšolo's letter "expressly" indicated that the Prime Minister's Office will be the primary point of contact to ensure "effective and efficient communication between the parties".

I know the procedure, that is why I am saying I never signed any contract with that man and his company

when Rheem relocated to Vietnam and closed Solarhart, meaning the project could no longer be funded by the Australian government.

Frazer however plodded on with the idea and roped in KBB Kollektobau, a German solar energy company that bought shares in his Frazer Solar. To fill that void left by the EFIC, Frazer struck a deal with German's KfW IPEX-Bank which agreed to fund African countries that bought KBB's products.

The Arbitrator Vincent Maleka's report says in August 2017 Frazer met Tšolo who allegedly assured him that the then Prime Minister Thomas Thabane and the government were interested in the project.

Meetings and letters between Frazer and government officials followed.

This is where Tšolo allegedly became a cen-



Temeki Tšolo



FRAZER solar team during a site inspection in Maseru

Easy money!

Staff Reporter

MASERU

WHICHEVER way you look at it, Frazer Solar is the ultimate winner in this disaster over a botched contract.

Because of the government's bungling, the company is set to walk away with a staggering M855 million (€50 million). This is the same profit the company would have received had the government implemented the solar project as per the September 2018 contract that has been a subject of court cases in South Africa, Mauritius, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Frazer Solar has now confiscated Lesotho's assets that include water royalties, debts and shares. It is pursuing other assets across the world as it seeks to collect its dues.

The initial contract was worth M1.6 billion (€100 million) and was supposed to be financed through a loan to be paid over ten years.

It included the supply and installation of between 34 000 and 40 000 solar water heaters. Frazer Solar was to supply and install 1.5 million LED lights in government offices and houses of civil servants. This is in addition to the supply of 350 000 solar lantern lights to rural households.

It was a scrumptious deal for Frazer Solar which expected to make a M855 million (€50 million) profit.

The brand and capacity of the solar water heaters are not specified in the court papers but Frazer Solar told the arbitrator that each was going to cost the government €2 500 (M40 000).

Including the freight, insurance, installation and 'overhead per unit', each heater cost the company €1 206 (M19 296). This means it was making a €1 294 (M20 704) profit on each water heater.

But the profit could have been more because there are mark-ups on the freight, insurance, installation and the so-called overhead per unit. The actual price of each heater was €811 (M12 976) before the additional charges.

Based on the 30 896 units it was supposed to supply in the initial phase of the contract, Frazer Solar was going to make M639 million (€39.98 million), a 51.8 per cent profit margin.

That is the same profit margin the company was going to make on the 355 000 solar lanterns, 75 000 of which were said to be free. The unit price of each solar lantern was M832 (€52) giving the company M642 million (€40.18 million) in revenue. From the LED lights Frazer Solar was going to make €500 000 or M8 million in profits.

That brings the total profit to €51.6 million which is almost the same amount the arbitrator awarded. It is not clear if these are special LED lights or the ones sold over the counter and are already used in most government offices and houses.

Chaos amid

Staff Reporter

MASERU

PRIME Minister Moeketsi Majoro allegedly ignored a legal warning that Lesotho's assets were about to be seized to settle Frazer Solar's M855 million claim.

The revelations are in stark contrast to what Majoro and the government claimed last week when it was announced that Frazer Solar was about to seize Lesotho's assets for breaching a solar contract signed in September 2018.

Majoro told a press conference, last week, that the government was still investigating the issue. The government said the same in a statement that urged Basotho and international partners to remain claim.

However, Frazer Solar this week insisted that the government knew about the claim and the impending seizures.

The company says Majoro was "personally notified – one month in advance – of the seizure of water royalties and chose not to oppose the seizure".

It says it told Majoro about the impending seizure of the water royalties that Lesotho receives from South Africa under the Lesotho Highlands Water Project on April 21 this year. Those royalties, confiscated this month, could be about M1 billion annually.

The company has also appropriated Lesotho's assets in Mauritius and the United Kingdom. It is now going for assets in the United States.

It would appear that the warning to Majoro in April was one of the more than two dozen the government ignored over two years while Frazer Solar was suing for damages. The company claims the Lesotho government was notified of legal proceedings on 25 occasions over 25 months.

That means the government had ample time and opportunity to challenge the proceedings before the assets were confiscated.

Arbitrator Vincent Maleka's report supports this claim and shows that the government was aware of every stage of Frazer Solar's case.

The government started receiving letters and notices relating to the case in March 2019, beginning with a letter of demand from

Frazer Solar. That letter detailed how Lesotho had breached the September 2018 contract and the company's claim.

The letter was addressed to Tsolo, who was Minister in the Prime Minister's Office at that time and had signed the contract, but he didn't respond.

On July 29, 2019, Frazer Solar notified the government that it was terminating the contract and a day later it informed Tsolo that it was declaring an arbitration. Again, the government received the letter but did not respond. The letter said the arbitration was to be held in South Africa as per the terms of the contract.

On August 7 the company requested the President of the Johannesburg Bar Council to appoint an arbitrator. A copy of the request (email and hard copy) was sent to the government. A day later Maleka, a senior lawyer, was appointed arbitrator and the government was informed again.

On August 22 Frazer Solar notified the government that Maleka had scheduled the first arbitration meeting for September 22. Seven days before that meeting the company sent the government a procedural order detailing the Tribunal's timetable, the arbitrator's confirmation that he will be available and the minutes of the preliminary meeting.

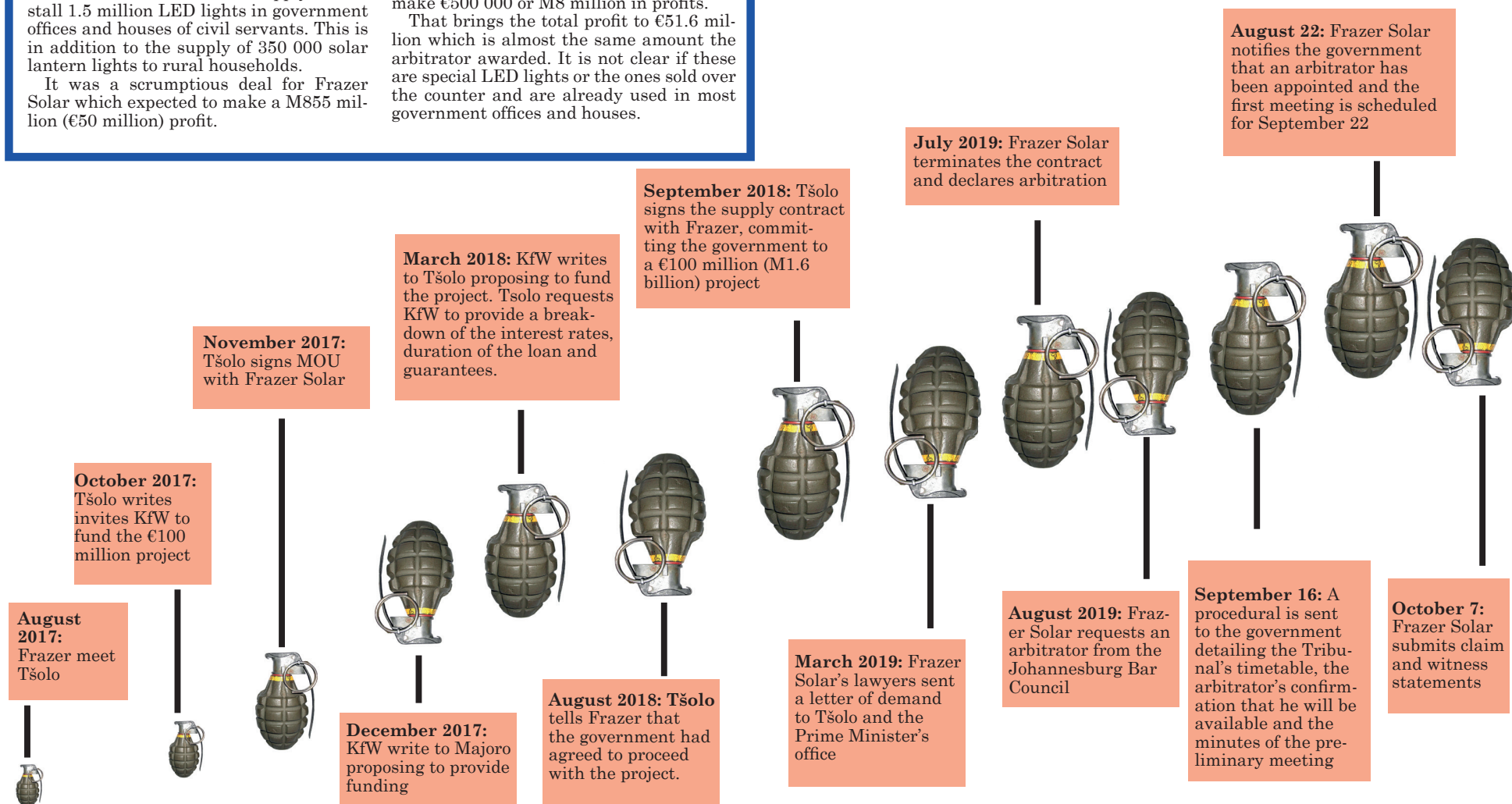
Frazer Solar submitted its claim and witness statements on October 7. It served the government which, however, did not take any action.

The tribunal held a procedural call on November 25 but the government did not participate despite being informed. The government received minutes of that meeting two days later.

When the hearing started on December 2 Maleka noted that the government had not submitted any explanation why it did not attend.

He repeated the same in his award in which he noted that the government had received "due notice of time, date and place of the hearing and there was no sufficient cause shown to explain its failure to attend the arbitration proceedings".

Frazer Solar was awarded the claim on January 28, 2020, and the government received a copy but still failed to respond. Armed with the arbitrator's ruling, Frazer



accusations



THE Frazer solar team with Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro

Solar then approached the South Gauteng High Court for an enforcement order. It also sought a similar order in the Business and Property Court of England and Wales.

The UK court issued the enforcement order in September 2020. The South African court granted an order confirming the enforcement order on April 29 this year. The government has both orders, including the one issued by the Supreme Court of Mauritius on May 19 this year.

The government is also yet to respond to another case recently filed in the United States court.

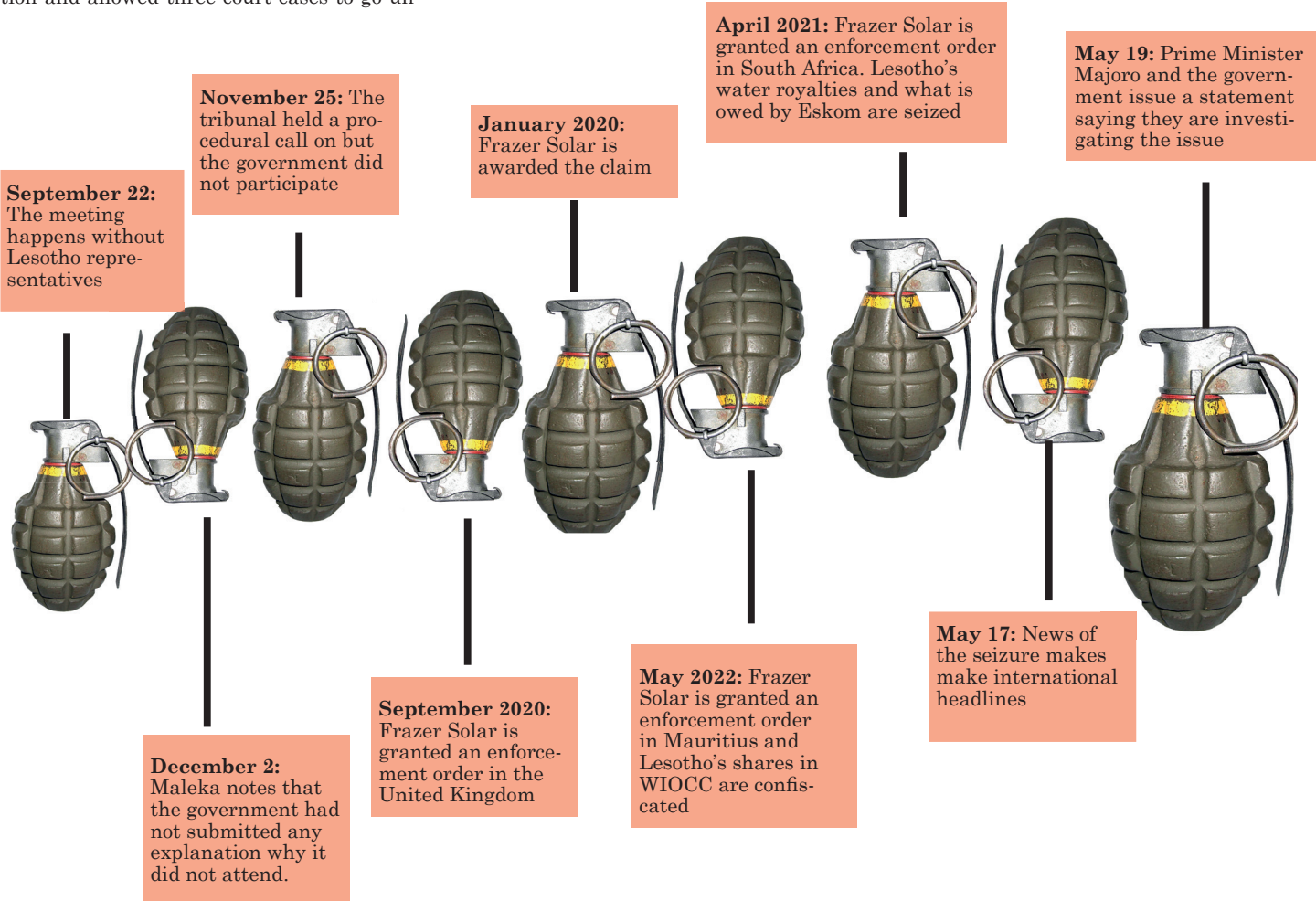
Having failed to participate in the arbitration and allowed three court cases to go un-

challenged, the Lesotho government might have a tough time undoing the damage.

In the meantime, its assets have been seized and Frazer Solar is already receiving the payments.

So far Lesotho has lost its royalties for the water transfer to South Africa. Frazer Solar is also collecting the electricity revenue that Eskom owes to Lesotho in connection with the LHWP.

Lesotho's five percent stake in the West Indian Ocean Cable Company (WIOCC), a Mauritius based company, has also been confiscated. Two properties in the United Kingdom are also likely to be seized.



Lesotho's M855 million mess

From Page 4

This too was incorrect because only the Ministry of Finance has the authority to discuss the government's financial contracts. Seven days after that letter Frazer met Tšolo and Thabane to discuss the project. It was soon after that meeting that Frazer handed the draft agreement to Tšolo who allegedly suggested minor changes and signed it on September 24, 2018.

"According to Frazer, Minister Tšolo informed him that the financial agreement with the financiers would be signed by the Government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Finance," says the arbitrator's report.

A few things are worth pointing out here. The first is that Tšolo was committing the government and the country, by extension, to a M1.6 billion contract that would be financed through a 10-year loan facility.

This was at a time when the government was pleading poverty and Majoro had warned of the ballooning debt.

Second, this was a deal borne out of an unsolicited proposal that had not been scrutinised by the Ministry of Energy.

Third, Tšolo did not have the authority to sign the contract or discuss the financing agreement. He did not have the cabinet's approval and the Ministry of Energy was not informed about the deal. Even if the Ministry of Energy had been informed, it was not Tšolo's role to sign the contract.

The correct procedure would have been for Frazer to approach the Ministry of Energy which would then conduct a feasibility study, a needs analysis and the financing model. The ministry would then submit its analysis to the Ministry of Development Planning for further scrutiny by the Public Sector Investment Appraisal Committee.

The next stage is for the two ministries to involve the Ministry of Finance before submitting the project to the Cabinet for approval. The cabinet would then approve the project and instruct the Ministry of Finance to start the negotiations on both the contract and the financial agreement.

Several sources told thepost that all this did not happen. The Arbitrator's report also doesn't indicate that this procedure was followed.

Tšolo himself narrates this procedure to prove that there was no way he could have signed the agreement without following it.

"I know the procedure, that is why I am saying I never signed any contract with that man and his company," he says.

"Anyone who claims to the contrary should show me where I signed the contract. I want to see my signature."

It is because of the lack of procedure that Majoro rejected KfW's updated financial offer.

Three weeks after the contract was signed Frazer asked Majoro why the financial agreement was delayed. Majoro's answer was to repeat the correct process that should have been followed. He told Frazer that the contract should have been led by the Ministry of Energy and approved by the cabinet.

Without Majoro's signature on the financial agreement, the deal was now hanging by a thread.

The arbitrator's report says Tšolo and Thabane did not understand why Majoro was refusing to sign off the deal because the government supported the project.

During the hearing, Frazer told the arbitrator he suspected Majoro stalled his project because he supported a similar project by China's Exim Bank for M1.4 billion.

In November 2019 Harvest FM ran a programme where the project's delay was discussed.

That programme would lead Frazer to leave the country in a huff after he allegedly received death threats and had been informed by colleagues that it was no longer safe for him to remain in the country.

The arbitrator says while Tšolo and Thabane wanted the project to proceed, Majoro "obstructed its implementation by refusing to conclude the relevant Finance Agreement despite the offer of financing communicated to him by KfW".

In March 2019 Frazer Solar's lawyers sent a letter of demand to Tšolo and the Prime Minister's office, citing several breaches to the contract. The office acknowledged receiving the letter but did not respond.

The deal had unravelled and legal proceedings were about to start.

Solar project to cut power imports

'Mapule Motsopa

MAFETENG

A NEW solar project in Ha-Ramarothole in Mafeteng district is expected to generate enough electricity and significantly reduce Lesotho's reliance on power imports.

That was the message that was relayed to villagers during a consultative meeting held last week.

The project is also expected to create at least 200 jobs in its initial phase.

The villagers pleaded with the Lesotho Energy and Water Authority (LEWA) to speedily facilitate the issuance of a licence for Neo 1 Solar Project.

Neo 1 Solar Project is a subsidiary of OnePower Lesotho (Pty) Ltd which was given the job to supply power for the rural community in the area.

The project was initiated by the government in 2016.

The project aims to develop a 20MW PV generating station.

The planned injection point is the Ha-Ramarothole substation in Mafeteng at the transition between the Lesotho Electricity Company's 132kV and 33kV grid.

The benefits to Lesotho include clean and secure energy through a long-term power purchase agreement as well as community programmes to uplift the adjacent villages of Ha-Ramarothole, Ha-Raliemere and Ha-Lempetje.

OnePower's Neo 1 plant will be Lesotho's inaugural utility-scale solar power source, financed in partnership with Scatec Solar and Norfund.

The project came after the African Development Bank (AfDB)-managed Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA) approved a US\$695 500 (about M97.3 million) grant to Neo 1 SPV Pty Ltd to support the preparation of a bankable business case for the development of the winning project of the 2016 Lesotho 20 MW solar PV tender, foreseen to become the first utility-scale solar PV project in Lesotho.

The project is expected to contribute to a strategic phase-out of costly power imports from Mozambique and reduce reliance on imported coal-generated power from South Africa.

It will also contribute about 13 percent to Lesotho's maximum system demand of around 150 MW.

By substituting 20 MW of costly imported power from Mozambique, it will de-

crease power retail prices in Lesotho.

It will also entail greenhouse gas emission substitution effects as a result of reducing imports of thermally generated power from South Africa.

The project is aligned with the AfDB's 10-Year Strategy focusing on inclusive and green growth through the delivery of energy access, the Bank's Energy Policy and the New Deal on Energy for Africa.

On the national level, the project is aligned with the Lesotho National Electrification Master Plan (NEMP), the Lesotho Electricity Authority Act No.12 of 2002 and its National Rural Electrification Program (NREP) as well as with the government's Fifth Pillar of Poverty Reduction through Energy Access.

Speaking on behalf of local chiefs, Chief Konyana Ramarothole of Ha-Ramarothole pleaded with the LEWA to speedily issue the licence to Neo 1.

"We have learnt of how cooperative they have been ever since their arrival here," Chief Ramarothole said.

"We hope they will fulfill their promises unlike other projects that came before but left the villagers without any benefits," he said.

On behalf of the local community, Abel Mohlabi, shared similar sentiments with the chiefs saying that they have seen the company's efforts to date and wished they could keep up that way.

"We hope compensation to field owners will be worth it so that by the end of the project they will have something to show for it," Mohlabi said.

The project is located at a site which used to be fields with the owners getting compensation.

Neo 1 Solar Project's representative, Kopano Tšenoli, said the 25-year project is a first of its kind in the country and approximately M400 million has been set aside to complete it.

Tšenoli said the project followed a call by the government in 2015.

He said the project will increase Lesotho's power generation capacity by 30 percent.

"This is a huge addition and it will help Lesotho not to rely more on other countries such as Mozambique and South Africa. This project is very important," Tšenoli said.

About 40 fields which were owned by 36 shareholders were taken to allow the project to take-off.

He said the project's kick off will depend on how soon they get the licence and their agreement with the government and the



KOPANO Tšenoli



LEC, which is their customer.

"There are still some agreements that need to be completed and only then we will be able to determine the timeframe," he said.

"Hopefully all this will be done by around July or August."

He said they were satisfied by the feedback from the villagers.

"This shows we are on the right track and we will continue working in transparency," he said.

He said 200 villagers will be hired during the work and about 30 will be hired permanently once completed.

He said construction of the project will take seven to eight months.

He said Scatec solar, the Norwegian development fund, Pension Fund and Izuba Energy have invested in the project.

"These investors have broad experience and they have built similar projects in South Africa, Mozambique and Rwanda."

He added that "our project will help protect our environment as polluting it is dangerous".

The LEWA Chief Executive Officer, Motlatsi Ramafale, said they were mandated by law to seek the public's views before issuing a licence.

"The public's input helps us make a decision," Ramafale said.

Lesotho's assets seized

From Page 1

Tšolo has however denied signing the contract and says he suspects his signature was forged.

The government has said it's investigating what happened.

But while the government is battling to get a handle on the issues, Frazer Solar is moving fast to impound Lesotho's assets.

Following the Arbitrator's award in January 2020, the company has been granted enforcement orders in South Africa, Mauritius and the United Kingdom. Another enforcement application is pending in a United States court.

On April 29 this year Frazer Solar won an order granting it permission to confiscate the royalties that South Africa pays to Lesotho under the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP).



Those royalties are estimated to be in the region of M100 million every month and they

sustain the operations of the LHWP and the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority

(LHDA).

They also provide substantial income to the government to fund its operations. The money that Eskom owed to Lesotho for the electricity under the LHWP has also been confiscated.

On May 19 the Supreme Court of Mauritius granted Frazer Solar an order to seize the five percent stake that Lesotho owns in West Indian Ocean Cable Company (WIOCC). The shares are owned by the Lesotho Communications Authority but are considered Lesotho government assets because it owns the regulator.

Registered in Mauritius, WIOCC is a broadband service wholesaler to several countries. It is owned by 14 major African telecom operators.

Frazer Solar is also armed with an enforcement order it won in September in the United Kingdom where Lesotho owns a building. The company says the Lesotho government ignored 25 notifications about arbitration and court cases over two years.

See stories on Pages 4, 8 and 9

Comment

Heads must roll

ELSEWHERE in this issue, we carry a massive story of how the government of Lesotho bungled an M855 million deal that it signed with a German solar company, Frazer Solar.

The Gauteng High Court has already ruled in Frazer Solar’s favour in a default judgment. The office of the sheriff of the High Court has now garnished water royalties which were due to be paid to Lesotho.

There are genuine fears that Lesotho’s assets outside the country could also be seized.

Yet with such a monumental scandal on its doors, the government of Lesotho has tried to put up a brave face, telling the media last week that all was well and that no assets would be seized.

How sad.

The then Minister in the Prime Minister’s office who is said to have appended his signature to the documents, Temeki Tšolo, is also denying culpability.

Tšolo has vociferously denied that he signed the contract suggesting that his signature might have been forged.

But that is too late. The arbitrator has already made a ruling on the matter and the courts have also issued enforcement orders in favour of the company.

We would like to believe that Lesotho will need to pull a miracle of biblical proportions if it is to undo the damage. That is a tall order.

Amidst all this anger and confusion, Tšolo and the government led by Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro are still digging in. That is unhelpful.

Despite the fervent denials by Tšolo, we would like to believe that it is either the government slept on the job or there is something that we are not being told.

Tšolo, who was a key ally of Thabane, could have thought the deal would work to advance the ruling All Basotho Convention (ABC)’s waning political fortunes.

There is a real possibility that he might have thought that by providing solar electricity to over 350 000 households, the party could gain political mileage out of the deal. He might have looked at the deal with politically tinted eyes.

Now that the deal has backfired, the government led by Majoro must live with the consequences of its ineptitude. That will not be nice.

It is clear that Tšolo did not have the power to sign the contract and that the Prime Minister’s office should not have dealt with the matter in the first place.

The Attorney General, who is the government’s chief legal adviser, was also not consulted. The contract, which was heavily tilted in Frazer Solar’s favour, was therefore never scrutinised.

That is what is making the whole deal stink.

Lesotho’s anti-corruption unit must swing into action and look into this. This is their moment to shine.

In our opinion, the scandal seems to suggest that there was negligence of duty which almost borders on criminality. It is for that reason that those who signed and pushed for the deal must face the music.

The list of those to be hauled over the coals should include any civil servants who might have received notices from the courts but decided to sit on the case.

The government’s own bureaucracy has now left the country saddled with an M855 million debt, money that could have been channeled towards the development of Lesotho.

Heads should certainly roll.

We also note that Lesotho received at least 25 notices informing it that it was in breach of the contract. But that was not enough to jolt the sleepy bureaucrats in government.

This could also be the clearest signal that government systems are in shambles and that they are not working.

Lesotho will need to jerk up its administrative systems so that nothing of this sort happens again.

Walk away from



Thakane Rethabile Shale

View Point

however that admission of paints one out to be a monster. It is also an admission that risks more victims not getting the help that they need because people are tired.

The thing that we never want to admit as a society is that abuse does not happen in a vacuum. Yes, it is primarily a burden borne by the one being abused but its consequences are more far-reaching than that. There are friends who love the woman that is being abused. There are family members who must watch her become a

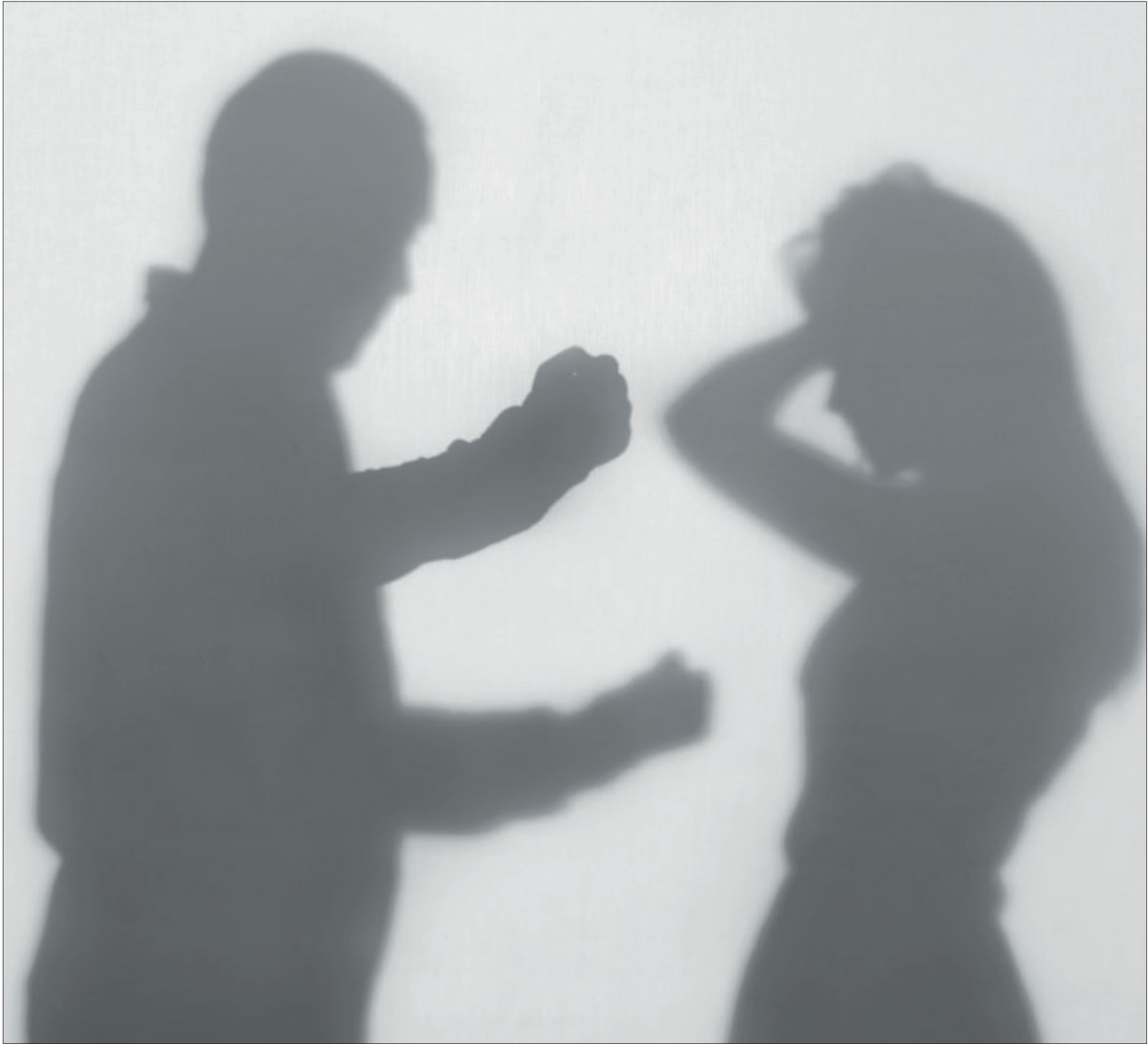
shadow of her former self.

There are sometimes young children who are now exposed to their mother being beaten or worse are left motherless when she dies at the hands of her partner. All these people suffer the consequences of her steadfast refusal to leave a relationship that is abusive and is hurting her. When it ultimately ends in her death all these people go through a lot of emotions but the one that remains most prevalent is guilt.

Did we do enough? How could we have made her see that she has to leave this relationship for her own sake? Did we raise her to have enough self-worth to not stay in toxic situations? If not, then where did we go wrong? Was the way we loved her not enough. Did we drive her into the arms of a man who would ultimately kill her?

I have asked myself these questions when first a friend died because I was too wrapped up in my own little world to see she was actually being abused. I have also asked myself these questions when another friend died despite my best efforts to get her to leave the situation. It appears my best efforts were not good enough.

If I, a friend who met her well into her adulthood can struggle with these feelings



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If you ululate for a moron misbehaving at a funeral you should not be shocked when he molests the corpse. There was a time when the government was farting on us. We would hold our noses and curse but console ourselves that at least they were doing it at a distance and we will kick them out via the ballot.

But soon the government was emboldened by our silent disgust.

They closed the window, locked the doors and gassed us with some thunderous farts that nearly suffocated us.

Yet still we hoped they would come back to their senses and retrieve their manners from their armpits.

Today Muckraker announces that our hope and patience were all in vain.

The government has now defecated on us and we are swimming in its manure.

Ours is now a cesspool of a country. Together with the maggots that come with it.

Muckraker is referring to the recent news that Lesotho's international assets are being seized after the government botched a solar contract. The chap who signed that ill-fated but stinking contract is Temeki Tšolo, the former Minister in the Prime Minister's Office.

He had no business either negotiating or signing that contract.

Tšolo is now perambulating the streets of Maseru while claiming that he never signed that contract. Holy dung!

He is suddenly an expert on how government contracts are signed.

His denials are noted but Muckraker is not buying such tosh.

His denials are coming too late when Lesotho's assets are already being confiscated.

As you read this, Frazer Solar has seized control of Lesotho's water royalties, income and shares.

More assets will be impounded to settle Frazer's M855 million claim.

Meanwhile, Tšolo is bellowing on radio that he didn't sign the contract.

Muckraker doesn't believe a word coming out of his mouth.

He is a politician and politicians are talented liars.

Muckraker will apologise, strip naked and walk the streets if it turns out that his signature was forged and he had nothing to do with the mess.

What has been told to the arbitrator and courts in three different countries is that he signed.

He had a lot of time and chances to disown that signature.

He has known for the past three years that a contract he is alleged to have signed has triggered a legal fracas. Muckraker is not surprised that Tšolo did not respond to the cases and is now denying any involvement in the contract. He could be right.

Remember this is the same man who once got in trouble for assaulting a government official after he had imbibed way more than his mind and body could process. He once threw

What beer has done to our country



TEMEKI Tšolo

a tantrum in parliament.

He is excitable like that.

His passion for the bottle is well documented. Even Uncle Tom, the man who insisted on shoving him into office despite his perennial thirst, knows about it.

He might have signed the contract under the influence of something potent.

Let's not forget that this was a time when the Feselady was spanking ministers and

Uncle Tom was dozing off in office. Maybe Tšolo was stressed by having to work with a cheeky Feselady while her hubby was snoozing. Whatever happened, Lesotho has been screwed.

Whether he signed the contract stoned, stressed or sober is no longer important.

The point is that his signature is now costing the country M855 million.

One lawyer told a local radio station that

the fiasco is a result of appointing herd boys to be ministers. He was right but should have added that the real problem is that of appointing drunk herd boys to be ministers.

This is also a wake-up call to all those misdirected souls who suffer under the illusion that a minister doesn't have to be educated. If you think education is expensive, look at how ignorance has cost this country almost a billion.

Muckraker



Laugh, cry or curse.
It's your choice



PRIME Minister Moeketsi Majoro

Helang!

You would think after being hit by a M855 million claim the government would summon all the legal minds in this country to find a way to extricate itself from this vice. By this time every lawyer should be camped at the Government Complex, adding their little knowledge to what should be the mother of all cases.

But, no! This is Lesotho.

Mr Softie is telling us he is investigating the matter as if this is something hidden in a grandmother's skirts.

The arbitration and the cases have never been a secret.

The mess was not of his making but he should know.

They buck stops with him as the Prime Minister.

The government has also issued a timid statement talking about investigating the issue.

Mr Softie and his government were speaking to themselves.

They were investigating a public matter so they could inform the public.

By the time they threatened to investigate the matter the public was already aware that Tšolo was the one who signed the contract. They also know that Uncle Tom had winked while Tšolo was scribbling his signature on that contract.

The records of both the arbitration and the court cases are public so there is no point investigating.

Just drag Tšolo by the ears and order him

to spill the beans. If he is reluctant, they can soften him up with a pint of beer and get him to slowly ease into his story as the liquor loosens his tongue.

Muckraker would also want to remind Mr Softie and his government to stop this mischief of telling Basotho to calm down when their assets are being impounded because of the government's bungling.

We are talking about M1 billion here and they are telling us to drink some water and relax while they "investigate". These are the same people who have been panicking at the mere mention of a government change.

They don't sleep when one MP threatens to cross the floor but they are telling us to relax when we are about to lose M1 billion. They go berserk when they hear that one of their sheep has been stolen in the mountains.

The same people who have set the house on fire are telling us that all will be well. *Helang lona, le se ke la nkena ka moseng!*

Nka! Ichuuuuuuuuuu!

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