

SCA issues arrest warrant for ex-Lesotho official

It's the end of the line for senior Lesotho Government official Reatile Mochebelele – convicted for bribery relating to payouts from the Lesotho Highland Water project and fighting extradition on SA soil for a decade – with the SCA calling for his immediate arrest. **Times Select** reports Mochebelele – who was Lesotho's chief delegate on the Lesotho Highlands Water Project – now faces time behind bars while his extradition to Maseru is moved through court and diplomatic channels. He faces a prison term of five years in his home country. **Justice Tati Moffat Makgoka found Mochebelele should never have been released while fighting his extradition – a fight premised on the claim that he was a political refugee in search of asylum.** The report says Mochebelele's dalliance with the law started in 2008 with the official conviction for bribery in his home country after his links to a German firm – which cashed in on contracts to build the Katse Dam – were thrust into the spotlight. In 2012, after nearly two years in custody and while his High Court bid of refugee status was pending, he was discharged and released by a magistrate, a move slammed by Makgoka in her judgment. 'The magistrate took the view that he was entitled to take into consideration the fact that the refugee status application was pending and to decide that it should be determined first,' Makgoka wrote. 'The magistrate's power to discharge the person is limited to only two instances: if he finds that the evidence does not warrant an order of committal or that the required evidence is not forthcoming within a reasonable time,' the judge said. Makgoka set aside the decision of the magistrate and issued a warrant of arrest of Mochebelele.