

BOTSWANA Daily News

THE PAPER THAT INFORMS AND EDUCATES

Modipane stages impressive comeback

Page 9



National championships attracts elite athletes

Page 10



NEWS

Kidney disease patients find renewed hope

Page 2

BUSINESS

Pandamatenga leaps toward regional dev.

Page 6

DIKGANG

Ba Tsabong ba rapelela ditsela

Tsebe 7

Botswana signs SADC development agreement



Ketshepile More
GABORONE

Botswana has signed the Agreement on the Operationalisation of the SADC Regional Development Fund (RDF) and the Agreement Amending the SADC Protocol on Finance and Investment.

The RDF is a special fund aimed at supporting economic development and sustainable growth in SADC, and consists of contributions from member states and receipts from regional and non-regional sources.

Speaking during the signing ceremony at the Office of the President yesterday, President Advocate Duma Boko said Botswana's commitment to the protocol would help close off micro networks that facilitated money laundering and intensified efforts to fight corruption.

He urged other member states to sign the protocol as that symbolised commitment.

Cont... page 3

President Advocate Duma Boko (left) and SADC Executive Secretary, Mr Elias Magosi after signing an agreement on the Operationalisation of SADC Regional Development Fund and the agreement amending the SADC Protocol on Finance and Investment at Office of the President yesterday. President Boko said signing the agreement amending the SADC Protocol on Finance and Investment would help close off micro networks that facilitated money laundering and intensified efforts to fight corruption. Photo: Pheny Moalosi

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Kidney disease patients find renewed hope

Esther Mmolai

MAUN

Living with chronic kidney disease is not easy and often involves phases of grief, shock and denial before reaching acceptance.

Patients may fear the progression of the disease and the need for dialysis but despite the challenges, many learn to manage the condition effectively as they find strength through family support and faith.

For Mr Sedika Modisaemang

of Maun, working closely with healthcare officers, support from family members and adopting a strict healthy diet helped him to live a fulfilling life.

He was diagnosed with kidney disease around August last year during a routine test and

immediately started hemodialysis which is performed three times a week.

"Being told your kidneys are weak hopelessness and sadness, but I had to face the reality of the situation and with the support of my family, I eventually accepted my illness," said Mr Modisaemang when sharing his journey with chronic kidney disease during the World Kidney Day recently.

Mr Modisaemang began accessing specialised health services in Francistown and the introduction of a new hemodialysis unit (kidney dialysis) at Letsholathebe Memorial Hospital in Maun that operated in a public-private partnership was an answer to him and other patients with a similar condition.

While the disease presents significant challenges such as dietary restrictions and mild painful treatments, he said it did not define him because he still led an active life.

Dialysis has become part of his life and he appreciates and that, together with adhering to doctor's advice that has kept him going.

Determination and being strict on himself, which meant, eating healthily, being physically active and drinking water as recommended, improved his condition.

"The most difficult thing for me was reducing meat consumption. I like meat a lot but I am trying to reduce how much I eat it. Leading a fulfilled life with the disease requires making positive choices and I appeal to fellow patients to obey doctors' orders," Mr Modisaemang advised.

Ms Segametsi Segosebe who takes care of her 85-year-old mother living with kidney disease also testified that coming to terms with her mother's condition put a strain on the family.

Her mother suffered from uncontrollable high blood pressure and when she was diagnosed with kidney failure, they were

shocked because she had no other symptoms.

She said she needed kidney transplant because her quality of life was deteriorating but opted for peritoneal dialysis, which was performed at home because of her age.

"What makes her history remarkable is how she reacted to this tough challenge at her age, our mother cooperated and followed treatment to the latter. We did everything the nutritionist and doctor told us to do and currently, she the disease is stable. She can walk and even visits relatives," said Ms Segosebe.

While the disease is interlinked with other conditions, she emphasised that early diagnosis was crucial, to prevent it from progressing and also to enable one to get help on time.

Kidney specialist, Dr Seabe Thupa, explained that one out of 10 people had the disease, which often had no outward signs or symptoms in the early stages.

This means, it can go undetected until it is very advanced.

Dr Thupa therefore, urged people to prioritise regular testing of blood and urine, to prevent fatal consequences.

Although, highly preventable through lifestyle changes and management of underlying conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, Dr Thupa said other prevention steps that included maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, limiting intake of alcohol salt and fatty foods as well as quitting smoking and avoiding overuse of pain killers helped.

"To protect your overall long-term health, you should love your kidneys and follow the health officials advices to prevent chronic kidney disease which is often silent until advanced stage.

Drink enough water to help kidneys clear toxins and get checked before symptoms appear," he advised.

BOPA

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MINISTRY OF LANDS AND AGRICULTURE

30 March 2026

To: All Media Houses

PRESS RELEASE

UPDATE ON THE FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE OUTBREAK IN ZONES 3C AND 6B AND REVISED MOVEMENT CONTROLS

Farmers, members of the public and stakeholders are updated that -

1. The on-going surveillance has not detected Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) cases outside disease control zones 3c and 6b.
2. The second round of vaccination of cattle in zone 6b and 3c has been successfully completed on the 18th March 2026.
3. Therefore, movement restrictions that were announced in the press release of the 2nd March 2026 have been revised with immediate effect as follows:
 - a) Movement of cloven hooved animals into, out of and within (including slaughter) zones 3c and 6b remains **prohibited** until further notice.
 - b) Movement of live cloven hooved animals into, out of and within zone 6a remains prohibited, except for **direct slaughter within the zone at registered slaughter facilities. However, movement for direct slaughter is prohibited in zone 6a crushes which are located within a 20km radius from zones 6b and 3c, Maitengwe.**
 - c) Slaughter for social events including for own use (weddings, funerals etc.) in zone 6a is **allowed only at registered slaughter facilities** within the zone.
 - d) Movement of live cloven hooved animals from zones 4a,4b,5,8,9,10,11,12 and 13 into zones 7 and 3b for **direct slaughter** is allowed under a Veterinary movement permit. Movement **within** zones 7 and 3b is also allowed for **direct slaughter** under Veterinary permit.
 - e) Movement of live cloven hooved animals from zone 3b into zones 1 and 2 is allowed under a Veterinary movement permit.
 - f) Movement of fresh cloven-hoofed animal derived products (meat, fresh milk) out of zone 3b into zones 1 and 2 is allowed without a permit
 - g) Movement of fresh cloven-hoofed animal derived products (meat, fresh milk) out of zones 3b, 3c, 6b and 7 **remains prohibited** except into and within a zone without a permit.
 - h) Movement of fresh cloven-hoofed animal derived products (meat, fresh milk) out of zone 6a **remains prohibited** except into zones 6b and 3c without a Veterinary movement permit. **Movement into** zone 6a is allowed under Veterinary movement permit. Direct movement of cloven hooved derived fresh products between zones 6b and 3c is allowed without a Veterinary movement permit.
 - i) Transit of cloven hooved derived fresh products through zones 3b, 3c, 6a, 6b and 7 is allowed in sealed containers or trucks under Veterinary movement permit.
 - j) Movement of livestock feeds, trophies, skins (dikgole), and hooves out of zones 6a, 6b and 3c **remains prohibited**, except milled or processed livestock feeds from 6a.

Farmers, members of the public and stakeholders are urged to comply with the revised disease prevention measures, remain vigilant and **report any signs** of illness in livestock to the nearest **Department of Veterinary Services or Botswana Police Service** offices.

The press release supersedes the previously announced movement protocols.

For more information please contact the National Emergency Operations Centre; telephone 3934505 and 3934510 or toll free – 0800600130 or WhatsApp: 77702971 or email – fmdneoc@gov.bw or MoLA Public Relations Office at 3689151

Dr. Kobedi Segale
Ag. DIRECTOR OF VETERINARY SERVICES



Maun residents came to test for non-communicable diseases during the World Kidney Day in Maun recently. Kidney specialist, Dr Seabe Thupa, urged people to prioritise regular testing of blood and urine to prevent fatal consequences. Photo Esther Mmolai

Parliament reaffirms commitment to regional cooperation

Lorato Gaofise
GABORONE

The National Assembly has reaffirmed Botswana's commitment to regional cooperation, democratic accountability, and social development as it deepens its engagement with the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF). Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Helen Manyeneng, stated this during a courtesy call by the SADC PF Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) in Gaborone on Friday.

"Botswana remains an active participant in the forum's work, influencing regional policy and strengthening parliamentary diplomacy," Ms Manyeneng said.

The country has been actively involved in SADC PF activities, contributing to policy harmonisation and fostering dialogue among legislatures.

Ms Manyeneng highlighted key initiatives, including a Memorandum of Understanding signed in January to implement a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV Governance Project.

Parliament's committee system plays a crucial role in oversight, scrutinising government ministries and addressing issues such as health, agriculture, and education.

Botswana is also a member of regional and international parliamentary bodies, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The country's parliamentary committees align with SADC PF structures, focusing on areas like health, HIV, local government and social welfare.

In terms of domestic developments, Ms Manyeneng said the inauguration of the 13th Parliament in November 2024 marked a significant milestone in Botswana's democratic journey, following a historic political transition after nearly six decades.

The new Parliament, she said was focused on building a strong, independent institution that sat at the centre of democratic governance and national development.

"Our vision is to transform the National Assembly into a high-performing institution anchored on effective oversight, robust lawmaking and responsiveness to



SADC Parliamentary Forum committee members Mr Tebogo Letsie (left) from South Africa and Dr Lindiwe Nxumalo from eSwatini during a courtesy call to the Speaker of the National Assembly in Gaborone on Friday. The team is on a three day visit to Botswana to interrogate progress in the implementation of the SADC protocol on education and training, protocol on employment and labour, focusing on accelerating the ratification, domestication, financing and effective implementation across the SADC region. Photo: Gaseitsiwe Moruakgomo

the needs and aspirations of our people," she added.

She also outlined an ambitious reform agenda aimed at strengthening the capacity of Members of Parliament (MPs) and staff, improving institutional systems and enhancing accountability mechanisms.

Key priorities, she said included; diversifying funding sources, strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks, expanding public access and awareness of parliamentary work, promoting inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities

as well as preserving parliament's institutional heritage.

In addition, Ms Manyeneng called for deeper collaboration between Botswana and regional counterparts, particularly through the SADC PF's Human and Social Development structures.

She said areas of cooperation could include joint training programmes on governance and oversight, policy exchanges in education, health and social protection, coordinated initiatives targeting youth and vulnerable groups and strengthened research and data support to promote

evidence-based lawmaking.

"These partnerships are critical to strengthening oversight, improving the quality of legislation and ensuring that our programmes deliver measurable impact for our citizens," she stressed.

The courtesy call formed part of a broader programme of engagements by the SADC PF Statutory Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes, while in Gaborone.

The committee later convened its meeting of the Standing Committee on HSDSP on Friday.



Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Ms Helen Manyeneng

It was then followed by public hearings meant to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to contribute to regional discussions on health, social development and related programmes.

Ms Manyeneng assured members that Botswana looked forward to continued collaboration with regional partners and to hosting parliamentarians from across the SADC region in future engagements aimed at advancing shared development goals.

For his remarks, the SADC PF Standing Committee on HSDSP chairperson, Mr Mope Khati expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality they had received since arriving in Botswana.

Botswana, he said provided an ideal setting for hosting the three-day event, acknowledging the leadership and political support the country provided to the forum's regional agenda.

Led by the SADC PF secretary general, Ms Boemo Sekgoma, Mr Khati added that the delegation had brought together MPs from 15 SADC nations to share experiences, from different countries, and address regional topics, including education, employment and human capital resilience. **BOPA**

Botswana signs SADC development agreement

from... page 1

The agreement on the operationalisation of the RDF was signed in 2016 and President Boko expressed concern in the delay, noting that governments needed to commit quickly to such obligations.

He stressed the effectiveness of the implementation of SADC financial framework, saying it was critical for advancing regional infrastructure development.

Improved infrastructure, President Boko said was essential to enhance connectivity across the region and support broader continental integration including those aligned to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, President Boko said.

SADC executive secretary, Mr Elias Magosi said Botswana's commitment to signing of the agreement, reflected the country's unwavering commitment to strengthening regional mechanisms that drove development financing, economic integration and financial stability.

He said Botswana was among the few countries that took a bold and decisive step to implement one of the aspirations of the SADC

This initiative will support member states in operationalising the RDF and developing a pipeline of bankable regional infrastructure projects. It will also enhance SADC's institutional capacity to facilitate policy dialogue and foster consensus.

Treaty that established the RDF.

The RDF, Mr Magosi said had the potential to enhance the region's stability to mobilise resources for infrastructure, industrialisation and socio-economic transformation, and hence the 2025 SADC Summit urged member states to accelerate national roadmaps and complete signature and ratification processes.

Furthermore, Mr Magosi

said the secretariat had advanced preparations for full operationalisation of the Fund in partnership with African Development Bank (AfDB), with three key components of Proof-of-Concept operationalisation of the Fund; Institutional strengthening, policy dialogue and project management.

"This initiative will support member states in operationalising the RDF and developing a pipeline of bankable regional infrastructure

projects. It will also enhance SADC's institutional capacity to facilitate policy dialogue and foster consensus," said Mr Magosi.

The next phase will involve establishing robust governance structures, policies, and procedures, while mobilising seed capital from member states, donors, Multilateral Development Banks, and Development Finance Institutions.

In addition, Mr Magosi said positive progress had been made in implementing various provisions of the Agreement Amending the SADC Protocol on Finance and Investment (FIP). The Protocol, Mr Magosi said sought to harmonise financial and investment policies across member states, ensuring alignment with SADC objectives and preventing destabilising policy divergence.

To advance regional integration and accelerate investment flows requires harmonised financial and investment policies therefore, creating predictable and enabling environment, the region can attract investors and fully realise the objective of the SADC Protocol on Finance and Investment. **BOPA**

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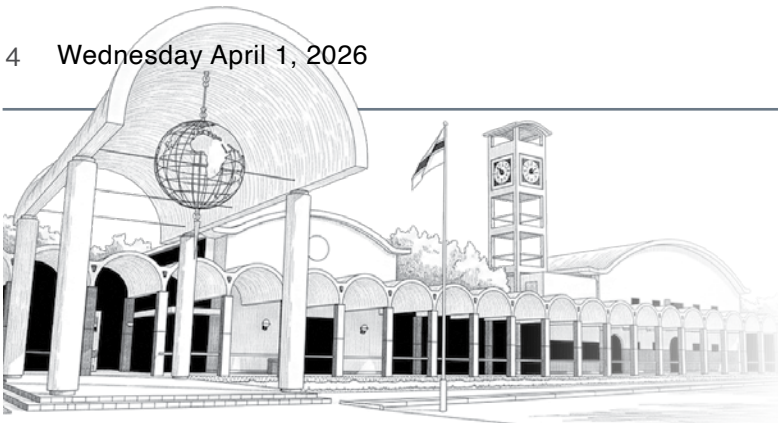
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PARLIAMENT 2026

Parliament clears way for P6.3bn loan

Marvin Motlhabane
GABORONE

Parliament has cleared the way for a P6.3 billion financial injection after passing the Standard Chartered Bank Loan Bill under a certificate of urgency to rescue a parched national budget and settle a mounting backlog of government debts.

Presenting the Bill on Monday, Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe acknowledged the country's difficult economic situation, adding that despite austerity measures, government continued to face high expenditure pressures and slower-than-expected revenue recovery.

Minister Gaolathe said in recent months, authorities had struggled to meet monthly obligations, resulting in payment delays, stalled projects and strain on service delivery and local businesses.

"This is not a theoretical concern. It is a lived reality," the minister said. To protect economic stability and ensure continuity of public services, he said government secured short-term liquidity support and longer-term financing from commercial banks for the 2026/2027 financial year. He told Parliament that a major part of such was the P6.3 billion facility from Standard Chartered Bank Botswana, backed by a World Bank Group guarantee through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

"The MIGA guarantee provides political and credit risk insurance, lowering the lender's risk and allowing government to access more favourable borrowing terms at significantly reduced interest rates," he explained.

Mr Gaolathe said the loan would finance four strategic and implementation-ready infrastructure projects aligned with the 2026/2027 budget and national development priorities, which included the Kanye and Moshupa Water Supply Distribution Network Rehabilitation, which involved full rehabilitation and reticulation in Kanye and Moshupa villages, including feeder lines, reservoirs and telemetry/SCADA systems.

The project, he said, was estimated to cost P1 billion, for a duration of 36 months and was ready for procurement. The other project would be the Molepolole Water Supply Network Rehabilitation which would upgrade water distribution and sanitation networks in Molepolole.

He said despite adequate bulk supply from the newly completed Gamonyane-Molepolole North South Carrier project, the village still suffered from inadequate distribution due to dilapidated and undersized pipes.

The project has an estimated duration of 24 months and currently at the tender evaluation stage. The Francistown (Mambo) Waste Water Scheme included comprehensive rehabilitation and upgrading of the ponds system, pipelines,

pump stations, expansion of the treatment plant from 15 millilitres per day to 30 millilitres per day, remedial works on the wastewater collection system and installation of telemetry equipment. The project has a duration of 36 months and ready for procurement. The North-West Transmission Grid Connection Phase 2 (NWTG II) is a high-impact national infrastructure initiative to expand power transmission capacity in northern Botswana.

It supported economic transformation, energy security and regional integration and formally included in the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) and the Botswana National Energy Compact.

The project, which comprises Lot 5 and Lot 6, is implementation-ready. Mr Gaolathe said such initiatives aimed to improve access to reliable water and energy, enhance service delivery, stimulate economic activity and support long-term resilience.

He highlighted the facility's key terms of loan amount of P6.3 billion, interest rate of Euribor + 1.6 per cent (all-in rate approximately 4.19 per cent based on current Euribor of 2.59 per cent), tenure of 15 years and a five-year grace period. He said the extended grace period provided breathing room for government to implement economic reforms, strengthen revenue collection and advance diversification efforts without immediate debt-servicing pressure.

The minister further said the P6.3 billion facility formed part of a larger package of loan authorisations being processed through Parliament, including other facilities from Standard Chartered Bank Botswana and Stanbic Bank Botswana, aimed at addressing the overall financing gap for the current and upcoming financial years. Minister Gaolathe stressed that the borrowing was not merely to bridge short-term gaps but to invest in tangible projects that delivered real benefits to citizens while protecting the nation's long-term fiscal health. He said the urgent passage of the Bill reflected government's determination to act decisively amid ongoing economic headwinds. **BOPA**

Policy prevents Dikgosi upgrade in some Kgalagadi villages

GABORONE

The villages of Kolonkwaneng, Khawa and Struizendam and other villages within Kgalagadi South do not qualify for Dikgotla upgrade and establishment of Kgosi and deputy Kgosi positions as guided by the Revised National Settlement Policy of 2004.

Responding to a question in Parliament on Monday, Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Kethlalefile Motshegwa said the growth and development



President advocate Duma Boko (right) and Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe at Parliament on Monday. The President said under NDP 12, government was committed to transforming agriculture into a diversified, resilient and export-oriented sector that achieved food security, reduced imports and drove economic growth. Photo: Thompson Keobaletswe

Boko sets sight on export-oriented agricultural reform

Thato Mosinyi
GABORONE

President Advocate Duma Boko has outlined a transformative roadmap for the agricultural sector to move away from subsidy-driven dependency toward an enterprise-driven model aimed at high-growth exports and economic diversification.

Debating the draft national agriculture policy in Parliament on Monday, President Boko said the agricultural sector was prioritised under the twelfth National Development Plan (NDP 12) and the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) due to the sector's strong backward and forward linkages with the rest of the economy and its potential to create jobs, sustain

livelihoods and contribute to GDP growth.

The President indicated that under NDP 12, government was committed to transforming agriculture into a diversified, resilient and export-oriented sector that achieved food security, reduces imports and drove economic growth and the vision was anchored in livestock production and processing, agricultural production and processing as well as land resource management.

"Some of the proposed programmes expected to transform the sector over the medium term include promoting the use of agricultural technology to enhance productivity through precision farming, smart water management systems and soil enhancement technologies," he said.



President Duma Boko on Monday outlined a new plan to shift agriculture from subsidy reliance to a business-driven sector focused on exports and economic growth. Speaking in Parliament, he said the sector remained key under NDP 12 and the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme due to its potential to create jobs and boost the economy.

of Kolonkwaneng, Khawa and Struizendam demonstrated the ongoing national progress, adding however that their population remained at 715, 1 347 and 746 respectively based on the data as per 2022 National Housing and Population Census. Minister Motshegwa said the populations remained below the established 5 000 threshold required for such upgrade. "Funds permitting, due consideration will be made to upgrade these villages together with other eligible villages in the

future as these villages continue to grow in size and population," he said. He further acknowledged the vital role traditional leaders played in fostering social cohesion and administrative stability within rural communities. Member of Parliament for Kgalagadi South, Mr Tokyo Modise, had asked the minister when the dikgotla in small villages within his constituency would be upgraded to include Kgosi and deputy Kgosi positions, owing to their growth in population. **BOPA**

The President, however, acknowledged structural constraints in the sector, hence highlighted the need to invest in infrastructure development at production sites. "This includes prioritising access roads and electricity to production centers to effectively transform the industry," he said. He noted that creating an enabling environment for higher agricultural output would promote food security and self-sufficiency, adding that government should be commended for its efforts in transforming the sector.

He cited the proposed 186-kilometre road network, which included Talana Farms and parts of the Bobirwa constituency, as testament to government's commitment to creating an environment where agriculture can prosper. Furthermore, President Boko commended the previous administration for its role in the sector, though he noted that outputs were low relative to the level of investment.

"Credit to the past regime for investing heavily in the sector, though it is clear that the yield per hectare was low despite the investment, primarily due to a lack of programme monitoring and evaluation," he said.

He also applauded the previous administration for its devotion to the sector through the presidential bull and buck donations. Again, President Boko emphasised the importance of resuscitating co-operatives and suggested establishing a model to ensure such enterprises acted as growth points for agro-business, which would enhance economic activity and add value to primary goods produced by the farming community.

He also expressed a desire to better utilise land for agricultural purposes, noting that it was disappointing to see so much designated agricultural land remain underutilised. Regarding the Middle East smallstock export market, President Boko admitted that the primary challenge was meeting market demand.

"The demand is significantly larger than the supply, the Middle East market requires 500 000 smallstock for slaughter per month. This is currently beyond the country's capability and could only be attained through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) deal," he said. **BOPA**

Govt withdraws mandatory theology qualifications

Marvin Motlhabane
GABORONE

Religious leaders across all societies are set to regain the autonomy to lead by faith rather than by degree, following government's decision to withdraw mandatory theology qualifications.

In a statement delivered in Parliament recently, Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Major General Pius Mokgware explained that by replacing academic requirements with universal security vetting, government was moving away from overregulation to strike a balance between national security and the constitutional right to religious freedom.

"By easing the educational threshold and shifting focus to security vetting, government aims to strike a better balance between protecting national security and the integrity of non-profit organisations on one hand and preserving religious freedom and freedom of association on the other," the Minister said.

He said government was planning to amend the regulations under the Societies Act 2022 to repeal the stringent educational requirements previously imposed on religious societies.

The minister explained that the 2022 amendments to the Societies Regulations had required spiritual leaders of religious organisations to possess a minimum accredited certificate in Theology from an institution recognised by the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA), along with a release letter from any previous religious society.

He said the measures were introduced to uphold the fit and proper principle and protect the public from exploitation by unqualified or unscrupulous individuals posing as religious leaders.

However, he noted that internal reviews found such educational criteria had not meaningfully contributed to compliance with the Financial Intelligence Act or improved the overall integrity of faith-based institutions. "These criteria do not add value to compliance and effectiveness requirements of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) rating," he stated. He added that the original requirements were part of Botswana's efforts to address FATF Recommendation 8 on non-profit organisations (NPOs) and the risks of terrorism financing.

"While they helped improve Botswana's rating from Non-Compliant to Largely Compliant, government now seeks to achieve fully compliant status ahead of the third round of mutual evaluation in January next year."

Again, Minister Mokgware said

the proposed amendments included repealing Regulation 4(3) in its entirety to remove the theology qualification and release letter requirements for spiritual leaders of religious societies as well as replace the term "security clearance" with "security vetting" in Regulation 4(2)(vi) for office-bearers and extend security vetting to board members and office-bearers of all societies, not just religious ones. "Security vetting requirement will apply universally because criminals can abuse any form of society for terrorism financing. The changes aim to better align with Section 49(1) of the Financial Intelligence Act, which seeks to prevent criminals from holding controlling or management positions in societies," he added. Maj. Gen. Mokgware further told Parliament that the amendments fell within the minister's authority

under the Societies Act and did not require new parliamentary legislation.

"Botswana is preparing intensively for the 2027 FATF/ESAAMLG mutual evaluation and will continue to demonstrate effective, risk-based and proportionate regulatory measures that do not unduly burden legitimate civil society and religious activities," he said.

In his comment, Francistown West MP, Mr Ignatius Moswaane, welcomed the development, saying it would uphold the integrity of pastors who had received a divine calling to lead churches. Mr Moswaane added that the introduction of security vetting for individuals with malicious intent would help secure churches and give believers confidence to exercise their faith without worry.

BOPA



Religious leaders across all societies are set to regain the autonomy to lead by faith rather than by degree, following government's decision to withdraw mandatory theology qualifications.

Consultations ongoing to review former Presidents benefits

GABORONE

Consultations with former Presidents are currently ongoing to review their existing benefits and entitlements accorded to them to improve their welfare. This was said by Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa when responding to a question from Kgatleng East MP, Mr Mabuse Pule in Parliament on Monday. Minister Mohwasa informed Parliament that former Presidents had submitted both monetary and non-monetary proposals aimed at improving their welfare.

"Some of the non-monetary submissions can be addressed administratively, while the monetary submissions will be dependent on the country's financial situation," he said.

As part of the review, the minister said the ministry would also consider benchmarking Botswana's framework against those of other countries in the region to assess the appropriateness and sustainability of the country's benefits framework for former Heads of State.

Mr Mohwasa explained that the current benefits were governed by the Presidents (Pensions and Retirement Benefits) Act of 1998, as amended in 2017. "Under the law, former Presidents are entitled to a tax-free monthly pension equivalent to the monthly basic salary attached to the office, at the time that person ceased to hold office or 80 per cent of the incumbent President's salary, whichever is greater," he said. Other benefits, the minister said included a furnished residential

house in Gaborone or a housing allowance as might be determined by the President, along with two house helpers and a gardener. Additionally, he said former Presidents were provided with fully equipped office accommodation, including a telephone, computer, office furniture and other equipment as might be determined by the President.

Former Presidents, he said were also entitled to support staff, including security personnel, two drivers, a private secretary, a secretary and an office attendant. Minister Mohwasa further stated that government covered medical insurance for former Presidents and their spouses, as well as travel benefits such as first-class air and rail travel within Botswana.

He also added that former Heads of State were also entitled to up to four first-class international trips

per year, including for spouses, together with per diem allowances. On transport, Mr Mohwasa said the package provided for three vehicles, which included a sedan, four-wheel-drive station wagon and pick-up van, as well as access to government transport on a case-by-case basis, subject to terms determined by the President.

He said other benefits, included an entertainment allowance as might be determined by the President and telephone, water and electricity expenses for both office and official residence in Gaborone. Mr Pule had asked the minister to apprise Parliament on the current framework governing the benefits and entitlements accorded to former Presidents.

Additionally, the Kgatleng East legislator asked the minister to state the specific benefits currently provided to former Presidents,

including, but not limited to, financial allowances, security detail, housing, medical care and staff support.

He also asked whether the ministry considered the benefits to be commensurate with former Presidents' past service to the nation, or whether they were deemed excessive or inadequate in light of the country's current economic realities.

He further wanted to know whether the ministry intended to undertake a review of the existing benefits package with a view to reducing, maintaining or increasing such benefits and whether it planned to conduct any benchmarking exercise against other countries in the region to assess the appropriateness and sustainability of Botswana's framework for former Heads of State. **BOPA**

Trade ministry restructuring to boost efficiency

GABORONE

The Ministry of Trade and Entrepreneurship has embarked on an extensive restructuring of its seven core departments to eliminate functional overlaps and boost operational efficiency.

Responding to a question in Parliament on Monday, Minister Tiroeane Ntsima informed legislators that the process, which aligned with Government Gazette No. 742 of 2024, began on August 4 last year and was expected to conclude by June 30. Minister Ntsima said the departments included Business Services, Cooperatives, Entrepreneurship Development, Industrial

Development, Research, Statistics and Policy Development, Trade Development as well as Value Chains and Cluster Development. Addressing concerns regarding personnel, Minister Ntsima clarified that Wealth Creation was not a standalone department but a division within the Department of Entrepreneurial Development. On the division's staff, he said there were no temporary employees within the division, adding out of an establishment of 128 contract positions, 106 were currently filled. Additionally, he said there were six permanent positions, five of which had been filled and while there were no temporary staff, the average length of service for

contract employees was nine years.

He further indicated that the staff establishment for the units under the Department of Entrepreneurial Development included 134 positions under wealth creation, six under Entrepreneurial Mindset Change as well as seven under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Member of Parliament for Maun East, Mr Goretsetse Kekgonegile had requested for progress update on the restructuring, specific departments involved, the intended goals of the exercise, and a comprehensive breakdown of the staffing complement and employment status within the Wealth Creation division. **BOPA**

Infrastructure loan to restore fiscal balance

Thato Mosinyi
GABORONE

Government remains committed to restoring balance to the fiscus, strengthening revenue performance and ensuring that financing is directed primarily toward productive investments and critical infrastructure projects that drive growth and support economic diversification.

This was stated by the Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe, when presenting the Standard Chartered Bank Botswana Limited (Loan Authorisation) Bill of 2026, which sought parliamentary authorisation

for a loan amounting to P750 million at a fixed interest rate of 13.7 per cent and a five-year tenure. Minister Gaolathe noted that the facility was contracted to finance critical budget-related expenditure, including eligible infrastructure projects and to support financing of fiscal deficits arising from approved budgetary allocations.

"This means that the resources will go directly toward sustaining the functioning of government, ensuring that the commitments we have already made to our people are honoured. It is about ensuring that the services our citizens rely on are not disrupted," he said. He

stated that the loan would provide the breathing space urgently needed to maintain government operations while work continued toward restoring fiscal stability and economic recovery.

He explained that the Ministry of Finance undertook daily cash management, which involved closely monitoring balances in the Government Investment Account (GIA) and making difficult decisions on which obligations can be met at any given time.

"This is not a routine administrative exercise, it is a constant balancing act where priorities must be set under constrained conditions," he said.

He further noted that SACU revenues had become the country's largest source of income, though they often fell short of total accumulated obligations.

To address government's immediate liquidity requirements, Mr Gaolathe also presented the Bridge Financing Loan Stanbic Bank Botswana Limited (Loan Authorisation) Bill of 2026, which he described as a short-term, six-month facility urgently required to ensure that government can meet its obligations and maintain continuity in its operations.

"This is a practical and necessary intervention, one that allows us to bridge pressing liquidity gaps while

broader fiscal measures continue to take effect," he said.

He added that the public debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 34.16 per cent as of February, which he said was projected to rise to approximately 39.42 per cent with the inclusion of the new facilities.

"While this is close to the previous statutory limit of 40 per cent, the limit was recently revised to 60 per cent," he added. Furthermore, he emphasised that Botswana had consistently maintained and continued to maintain a relatively low debt-to-GDP ratio when compared to many other countries in the region.

BOPA



Daily Business

Absa bank releases 2025 financial results

Mpho Mosojane
GABORONE

Absa Bank Botswana has delivered overall strong financial results for the year 2025.

This was despite the year marked by fiscal pressure, persistent geopolitical tensions, tightened liquidity conditions, rising credit stress across not only the banking industry but various sectors of the economy.

Revenue increased by five per cent by December 31st 2025 to P2.39 billion, while profit before tax dipped by 10 per cent to P951.6 million compared to the previous year.

Non-Interest Income remained a key driver of the business, rising 10 per cent to P589.5 million compared to the previous year.

This strong revenue line was mainly driven by net fee and commission income as well as trading income.

Absa Bank Botswana Managing Director, Ms Keabetswe Pheko-Moshagane said the performance reflected resilience and discipline in the midst of a dipped and challenged domestic economy.

Globally, the economic growth remained resilient at around 3.3 per cent, while in sub-Saharan Africa growth remained stable at around 4.1 per cent supported by easing inflation across key sectors.

However, the environment still remained constrained characterised by high debt levels,



ABSA managing director, Ms Keabetswe Pheko-Moshagane (right) and finance & executive director Mr Kudakwashe Mukushi during the 2025 ABSA Bank Botswana financial year result presentation in Gaborone recently. She said ABSA capital and liquidity position reflected disciplined risk management and provided a resilient foundation to support continued growth and navigate potential market challenges. Photo: Washa Bofelwang.

fiscal pressures and climate related risks.

For 2025, the economy contracted by 0.4 per cent caused by weak diamond demand, their lower prices as well competition from lab-grown diamonds.

The domestic economy remained under-sustained with consecutive contraction across the quarters, however showing a modest recovery in quarter three of 2025.

This recovery was supported by improved diamond production and early gains in the value addition industries across other sectors.

In 2025, inflation rose averaging

2.7 per cent, which is slightly below the Bank of Botswana lower end range target of 3-6 per cent.

This was primarily caused by reduced domestic demand by government, lower fuel prices, reduced water and electricity tariffs for the lower income households.

The contained inflation provided some cushion for households in terms of enabling disposable income for households.

Despite a challenging environment, the bank has remained profitable, resilient and strategically focused while continuing to invest in technology

that will sustain long-term growth.

On a heavier note, the cost to income ratio of the bank significantly increased to 55.6 percent compared to the previous year.

This was attributed to the bank's strategic alignment to notable industry shifts, specifically the heightened forex compliance framework, constrained deposits, investment in cybersecurity as well as cash flow challenges in the commercial and corporate investment segments.

According to Ms Pheko-Moshagane, the weaker microeconomic environment impacted their business banking and corporate banking segments as customers adopted a more vigilant approach resulting in lower credit demand and lower transaction fees. Business exposed to government experienced delays in payments causing significant cash flow challenges.

This vulnerability caused the bank to prudently increase impairments in response to a more uncertain credit environment.

Collectively, all these factors caused a 22 per cent impairment spike compared to the previous year. Furthermore, she said liquidity conditions remained tough, consequently causing prolonged, constrained competition for deposits across the industry resulting in increased pricing and margin compressions.

This caused a 41 percent increase in their interest expense as a response to the cost of funding.

The adjustment of the Pula led to currency weaknesses, resulting in an increase to their cost of foreign denominated expenses, which largely are related to technology services. Costs were increased by their priority towards strengthening cyber security and fraud prevention as digital adoption increased across the industry.

The bank spent on scaling secure digital capabilities to ensure that while they continue to offer banking services, controls are in place to ensure that customers transactions are protected at all times. **BOPA**

Pandamatenga leaps toward regional dev.

Portia Keetile
KASANE

Pandamatenga, the country's premier agricultural hub, has been designated a special economic zone (SEZ) to accelerate its growth from primary farming to a comprehensive regional value chain, maximizing economic output.

Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe, emphasised that the Chobe District offered a unique combination of agricultural potential, logistics connectivity, and cross-border trade access.

"Transformation must be deliberate, targeted and anchored on flagship programmes that

respond to real macro regional opportunities and challenges," he said.

The Zambezi Integrated Agro Commercial Development (ZIACD) Project, anchored at the Pandamatenga SEZ, is one of 12 flagship programmes identified by the Ministry.

Mr Mathoothe highlighted the importance of adopting modern agricultural practices, such as smart irrigation systems, digital soil monitoring and precision farming tools

"We must move from the farm to the factory, from the factory to the market, and we no longer wish to simply export raw grain.

We want to produce flour, oils, animal feed, packaged foods, and value-added products that can

compete regionally and globally."

Minister of Environment and Tourism, Ms Wynter Mmolotsi, emphasised the need to unlock Chobe's potential as a premier tourism destination, leveraging its unique competitive edge.

The ministry's 10-year National Tourism Strategy and Master Plan aim to increase the average length of stay and spend per tourist in the Chobe region.

Government, he said was seeking private sector investment and collaboration to unlock Chobe's potential and stimulate growth.

Several high-value tourism development sites have been identified in Kasane and Kazungula, and are open for private sector partnership. **BOPA**



Pandamatenga silos

BUSINESS BRIEFS

'Reducing food waste pathway to ecological resilience'

NAIROBI

Humanity must take bold action to reduce food waste and promote ecological resilience and inclusive growth, two United Nations agencies said on Monday on the International Day for Zero Waste. More than one billion tonnes of food, equivalent to 19 per cent of all food available to consumers, are wasted, while 13 percent is lost before arriving at retail outlets, according to a joint statement from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). About 60 per cent of food waste happens within households, followed by food service at 28 percent and retail at 12 percent, with households alone wasting over one billion meals daily, according to the UN agencies. Inger Andersen, UNEP executive director, noted that food loss and waste cost the global economy US\$1trillion annually. **Xinhua**

Tunisia, FAO to strengthen cooperation on food security

TUNIS

Tunisia Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Ali Nafti met with Nabil Assaf, representative of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Tunisia on Monday, to discuss deepening bilateral cooperation and food security, said a ministry statement. Nafti emphasised the strategic importance of Tunisia's partnership with FAO in boosting national and regional food security. He urged greater focus on integrating modern technologies and improving specialised training to tackle challenges like climate change, health crises, and conflicts. He reaffirmed FAO's commitment to supporting Tunisia's food security and sustainable development efforts. **Xinhua**

High logistics costs lock Kenya SMEs out of African market

NAIROBI

High logistics costs for cross-border trade are locking Kenyan small and medium enterprises (SMEs) out of Africa's markets, according to a study released on Monday. The Logistics Study Report by the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM), an umbrella body for industrialists in Kenya, revealed that logistics costs for intra-African trade remain high and unpredictable, often outweighing the benefits of tariff reductions under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). "While the AfCFTA has opened access to 54 countries, the ability of Kenyan manufacturers, particularly SMEs, to access these markets is constrained by inefficiencies in logistics systems, including border delays, infrastructure gaps, high freight costs, and limited cargo consolidation mechanisms," the report says. **Xinhua**

Dikgang

PAMPIRI YA THUTO LE DIKITSISO

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261 0480 | 241 3402 | 365 3500

Mopalamente o abela sekole sa Kathiana Mahunga

Kedirebofe Pelontle

SHAKAWA

Mopalamente wa kgaolo ya Okavango bophirima Rre Kenny Kapinga o abetse sekole se se botlana sa Kathiana Mahunga sa motse wa Shakawe diboto (white boards) tse di lesome e le tsela ya go thusa mo matlhokong a sekolo seo. Fa a amogela dimpho kwa sekolong seo ka Laboraro, mogokgo wa sekolo Mme Oweditse Rammokolodi o lebogetse thuso ya diboto tseo a re di arabile dingwe tsa dilelo tsa bone.

O tlhalositse fa sekole seo se dira bontle fela thata mo dithutong ka se fentse ka matshwao a 85.4% mo maduong a lekwalo la bosupa mo ngwageng o o fetileng, a re seo se dirwa ke go bo barutabana ba ititaya ka thupana go ntsha maduo le fa ba nale dikgwetho tse di farologanyeng.

A re sekole seo se nale tshaelo ya matlo a borutelo mo baithuti bangwe ba rutelwang ka fa tlase ga ditlhare.

A re lethoko le lengwe ke la didirisiwa jaaka diboto, ditilo le dibuka ga mmogo le tshaelo ya matlo a barutabana, se se pateletsang gore bangwe ba nne mmogo mo matlong.

Mme Rammokolodi o supile fa mo nakong eno, sekole seo se na le baithuti ba le 1 065, palo e

e akaretsang setlhopho sa bana ba thuto e e kwa tlase ga lekwalo la ntlha ya pre-school education. Mopalamente Rre Kapinga o ne a tlhalosa fa a ne a gwethlega go batlela sekole seo dithuso ka se dira bontle thata mo maduong.

A re o ne a kopa dithuso tsa diboto mo mookameding mogolo wa kompone ya lebenkele la Choppies mme a atlega.

O tswelotse a re thuto e botlhokwa ka e le yone boswa jwa bana jwa sennelaruri, ka jalo a gwethla batsadi gore ba se gane fa ba kopiwa dithuso dipe fela ke baeteledipele ba sekole, a a fa sekai ka dithuso tse di tshwanang tsa madi go tokafatsa thuto.

Mopalamente Kapinga o ne a re seemo sa mathata a tsa madi a lefatshe le lethoko la ditiro ke dilo tsa nakwana tse di sa tshwanelang go ka kgoba marapo, a re thuto e bulela bana dikgoro tsa ditiro tse di farologanyeng mo isagong.

Fa a leboga, modulasetilo wa khansela ya Okavango Rre Gaopalelwe Ronald o ne a re batsaya-karolo ba botlhokwa mo mererong ya tsa thuto ka puso e ka se kgone e le esi.

O ne a leboga Rre Kapinga go bo a tsentse letsogo go thusa sekole seo.

Rre Ronald o ne a re batsadi, baeteledipele le ba makalana a a ikemetseng ba tshwanetse go tshwaraganela thuto. **BOPA**



Mopalamente wa Okavango bophirima, Rre Kenny Kapinga (mojeng) a abela mogokgo wa sekole sa Kathiana Mahunga Mme Oweditse Rammokolodi nngwe ya diboto tse di lesome, ele tsela ya go araba lethoko la sekole seo. Senepe: Kedirebofe Pelontle

Tiro e tswelotse go isa metsi kwa metseng ya Bobirwa

PALAMENTE

Kago ya letamo la Thune le diphaephe tse di phatlalatsang metsi mo metseng ya Bobirwa e kgaogantswe ka dikonteraka di le thataro go isa metsi kwa metseng e le lesome.

Fa a araba potso kwa Palamenteng ka Mosupologo, mothusa tona wa lephata la metsi le bonno, Rre Motsamai Motsamai

o tlhalositse fa dikonteraka tse nne tse di akaretsang kago ya letamo la Thune, mafelo a go tlhatswa metsi le diphaephe tse di isang metsi kwa metseng ya Lepokole, Gobojango, Semolale, Mabolwe le Mathabaneng, di weditswe ka ngwaga wa 2018.

Rre Motsamai o ne a re dikonteraka tse pedi (contract 3B le 3C) tse le tsone di tlaa isang metsi kwa metseng e e boletswe

di tlaa dirwa, a tlatsa ka gore lephata ga le ise le kgone go simolola dikonteraka tse ka mabaka a lethoko la madi.

O ne a tswelotse a tlhalosa fa dikonteraka tse pedi tse di setseng (Contract 3B le 3C), tse le tsone di tlaa isang metsi kwa metseng e e setseng, di ise di simololwe ka ntlha ya tshaelo ya madi.

Rre Motsamai o ne a tlhalosa gape fa maiteko a ne a dirwa ka 2024 go simolola tiro eo, mme ga seka ga atlega ka jaana nngwe ya dikhampane tse di neng di tswelotse mo thendareng ya Contract 3B e ne ya ganetsa maduo a thendara mme ya isa kgang kwa lekgotleng la Procurement Tribunal, a tlatsa ka gore kgang eo ga e ise e rarabololwe.

O ne a tlhalosa fa maikaelelo a lephata e le go diragatsa tiro e e saletseng kwa morago ya Contract 3B le 3C fa seemo sa madi se ka tokafala mo ngwageng wa madi wa 2026/2027, gape le fa kgang ya Contract 3B e setse e rarabolotse kwa Procurement Tribunal.

Mopalamente wa kgaolo ya Bobirwa, Rre Taolo Lucas, o ne a kopile tona go tlhalosetsa Palamente gore tiro kgotsa thulaganyo e kopanyang noka ya Thune le metse ya Lepokole, Gobojango, Semolale, Mabolwe le Mathabaneng go ba neela metsi e tsamaya kae.

Rre Lucas o ne a kopa go tlhalosediwa ka dikgwetho tse ba kopanang le tsone go thibela maikemisetsa ao, mmogo le gore ba tlaa rarabolola jang. **BOPA**

Ba Tsabong ba rapelela ditsela

Cathrine Simane

TSABONG

Ba komiti ya ipabalelo tseleng mo kgaolong ya Kgalagadi borwa ba tshwaraganye le ba lekgotla la baruti ba ne ba tshwere merapelo go rapelela mesepele go ya malatsing a boitapoloso a papolo ya morena jaaka a le gaufi.

Fa a bua maikaelelo a letsatsi leo ka Laboraro mo kgotleng kgolo ya Tsabong, mothusa molaodi Mme Maitumelo Maemo o ne a tlhalosa fa merapelo eo e akaretsa masula otlhe le matshwenyego a a diragalang mo lefatsheng leno ebile a tswelotse ka go golela pele. A re go setse go na le mowa o o maswe o o jwelelang mo lefatsheng leno wa dipalo tse di kwa godimo tsa dipolao tsa

bomme le bana, kgokgontsho ya tlhakanelo dikobo le bana ba ba kwa tlase ga dingwaga, dikotsi, borukutlhi, ditagi le tse dingwe.

O ne a supa fa ditiragalo tseo di garola pelo mme jaanong mongwe le mongwe a tshela ka poifo. Mme Maemo o ne a gakolola bogolo jang borre gore fa lorato lo fedile, ba tshwanetse go amogela e seng go tsaya ditshwetso tse di seng maleba le gore ba nne le letswalo le poifo modimo gore ba se raelesege.

O ne a kgothatsa baeteledipele le baruti ba dikereke go gasa molaetsa le go rera lefoko la modimo ba itebagantse le masula otlhe a diragalang mo lefatsheng leno. A re bokopano bo fa komiti ya ipabalelo tseleng, baruti le diphuthego le sepodisi go buisana le go gakololana ka fokotsa dikotsi tse di tswelotse

ka go nyeletsa sika loo motho.

Mme Maemo a re matshwenyego a mangwe ke a ditagi, a supa fa seo se bakwa ke barekisi ba ba di rekisetsang bana ba dikole ka bokukuntshwane, selo se se felelang se ba tsenyetsa bokamoso, mme a kopa gore ope yo o ka lemogang seo a lome mapodisi tsebe gore ba kgone go tselwa dikgato tse di maleba.

Moeteledipele wa lephata la dipalame le ipabalelo tseleng Mme Mando Chaba o ne a supa fa mo bogaufing dithwatlhwa tsa dikathlo tsa tsela di tlaa okediwa, maikaelelo e le go fokotsa melato ya tsela gore bakgwetsi ba kgone go fetola boitshwaro jwa bone ka seo se ka thusa go fokotsa dikotsi tse di felelang di baka dintsho, mme seo se ame itsholelo ya lefatsheng leno. Mme Chaba,

yo gape e leng mokwaledi mo komiting ya ipabalelo tseleng a re komiti eo le ba sepodisi, ba tswelotse ka letsholo la go gasa molaetsa wa ipabalelo tseleng kwa dikerekeng ka nako ya paseka e le gaufi, le go tsamaya mo ditseleng ba ruta le go gakolola batsamaya ka dinao le setshaba ka kakaretso.

Superintendent Reuben Ramoleele, yo e leng mookamela mapodisi a tsa pharakano o ne bua ka dipalo tsa dikotsi go tswa Bokspits go ya Kang.

O ne a tlhalosa fa ka 2025, ba gatisitse di le lekgolo masome a mane le boferabobedi, mme go tlhokafetse batho ba le lesome le motso, fa ka ngwaga wa 2026 ba gatisitse di le lesome le boferabongwe, mme go setse go tlhokafetse motho a le mongwe. **BOPA**

Court ends public sector wage appeal after settlement

GABORONE

The Court of Appeal has struck out an appeal in a long-running public sector wage dispute, ruling that the matter has been overtaken by events following a negotiated settlement between Government and unions.

In a judgment delivered on Friday, the Court found that a comprehensive salary agreement reached in October 2025 rendered the appeal moot, with no practical issues left for determination.

The appeal had been filed by six unions, including the Botswana Public Employees Union (BOPEU), Botswana Teachers Union (BTU) and Botswana Sectors of Educators Trade Union (BOSETU), who challenged Government's earlier

decision to conclude a separate wage agreement with the Botswana Landboards and Local Authorities Health Workers Union (BLLAHWU).

The dispute dates back to mid-2025 salary negotiations between Government and public sector unions under the Public Service Bargaining Council framework.

During those negotiations, BLLAHWU broke away from the broader union coalition and entered into a separate agreement with Government in June 2025, securing salary adjustments for its members ahead of other unions.

Government subsequently implemented the agreement through a Public Service Management directive issued on June 30, 2025.

The move triggered objections

from the remaining unions, who argued that the process undermined collective bargaining arrangements and created disparities within the public service.

In July 2025, the unions approached the Industrial Court seeking urgent relief, including an order to halt implementation of the BLLAHWU agreement and to compel Government to resume negotiations on a collective basis.

The Industrial Court initially granted interim relief to preserve the status quo but later declined to grant substantive orders sought by the unions.

In its ruling, the Court found the matter only marginally urgent and discharged the interim relief. Dissatisfied with the outcome, the unions escalated the matter to

the Court of Appeal, arguing that the Industrial Court had erred in failing to intervene decisively in the dispute.

While the appeal was pending, Government and the unions resumed negotiations in October 2025, culminating in a comprehensive collective agreement on public sector wages.

The agreement brought all parties into alignment and was subsequently implemented across the public service. In its ruling, the Court of Appeal held that the settlement effectively resolved the dispute, leaving no live issues requiring adjudication.

The Court emphasised that it does not determine matters where no practical relief can be granted, unless issues of broader public

importance arise.

It further noted that any remaining concerns, including disputes over the accuracy of negotiation records, fall within the jurisdiction of the Industrial Court.

The Court ordered that the appeal be struck out, with each party bearing its own costs.

The case highlights tensions that emerged during the 2025 wage negotiations, particularly around the conduct of collective bargaining and the implications of separate agreements within a multi-union framework.

It also underscores the role of negotiated settlements in resolving labour disputes, with the Court reaffirming that litigation may fall away once parties reach agreement outside the courtroom. **BOPA**

Minister notes progress in horticultural production

Baleseng Batlotleng TLOKWENG

Government has taken a deliberate decision through targeted import restrictions, investment in irrigation and strengthened extension services to create an enabling environment for local farmers to grow and compete.

Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe made this assertion during the Tlokweg Horticultural Farmers Association field day at Modi le Seriti farm near Tlokweg on Thursday.

Mr Mathoothe said government's interventions were bearing fruit as horticultural production from April 2025 to January 2026 had reached approximately 140 881 tonnes including 114 080 tonnes of vegetables, surpassing national demand by 1.8 per cent.

"Fruit production stands at 26 800 tonnes, representing about 67 per cent of national demand. Total planted area now exceeds 5 192 hectares. This progress clearly demonstrates that Botswana is moving in the right direction," he said.

Minister Mathoothe said however, that work was not complete as Botswana remained a net importer of horticultural produce due to seasonal gaps, climate variability, water scarcity,

high input costs and limited storage and processing infrastructure.

He said these were structural challenges that required both policy direction and practical solutions.

Mr Mathoothe said with 24 horticultural projects mostly small holder farmers operating on just one to three hectares, Tlokweg District was producing approximately 800 metric tonnes annually.

He said it was indeed a strong message that small scale farmers, when organised and supported, could make a significant contribution to the national production.

Mr Mathoothe said he was impressed by the adoption of the drip irrigation systems as the technology was essential in a water scarce area and key to improving yields while conserving water.

"The diversity of crops produced, ranging from citrus, mangoes and avocado to cabbage, tomatoes, onions and leafy vegetables demonstrates both resilience and market potential. However, increasing production alone was not enough, we must now shift our focus towards productivity, quality and affordability," said Mr Mathoothe.

He highlighted that one of the biggest challenges farmers faced was access to markets and urged them to strengthen the value



Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe (left) Kgosi Puso of Batlokwa (centre) and Tlokweg Horticulture Farmers Association chairperson Mr Kutlwano Mpudi at the Farmers Field Day in Modi Le Seriti farm near Tlokweg on Thursday.

Photo: Baleseng Batlotleng.

chain.

The farmers' association chairperson Mr Kutlwano Mpudi said their collaboration with South Africa-based agro experts company NETAFIM was a special partnership as the latter were global giants in horticultural production.

He said they had engaged the company as technical partners as they had assisted in the technical aspect of their business.

Mr Mpudi said horticultural farmers were faced with challenges among them lack of proper access to markets, which was reversing their gains.

He said however there was light at the end of the tunnel as they

had been in talks with some of those they supplied and they were waiting to sign some agreements.

Acting District Agriculture Coordinator Mr Orman Roy noted that the engagement of the technical experts was to expedite quality production and shift focus to exports.

He said some challenges which included climate change called for the deployment of technological practices. He said NETAFIM was engaged in order to impart knowledge to local farmers on the soil-plant relations for best quality production.

Mr Roy said the supply chain sector was also part of the day's events in order to advice on

market shares.

He said horticulture was a high risk endeavour that required perfect standards to avoid losses in the line of business. He said they were working on a plan to send farmers to South Africa on a benchmarking exercise to appreciate how large-scale farmers went about with their production.

NETAFIM representative, Mr Martin Bahnemann urged farmers to maintain consistency in quality and quantity from their produce. He said water was a vital component in horticulture and urged the farmers to develop reliable irrigation systems for better production. **BOPA**

Act to modernise Prisons Services – Nyatanga

Mmonieng Motsamai MOCHUDI

Prison officers at Mochudi have been implored to brace themselves for the upcoming Correctional Services Bill that will repeal and replace the current Prisons Act.

Visiting the Mochudi Prisons on Thursday, Assistant Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Augustine Nyatanga said through the Bill, the Botswana Prison Service would be transformed into a modern

Correctional Service.

In that regard, he called on officers to have an input in the draft Bill, whose objective he explained would be to focus on rehabilitation and re-integration as well as on the potential to permit unionisation by staff.

"The intention is to shift from traditional prison systems to correctional services that will be more focused on rehabilitation," he said.

Mr Nyatanga also encouraged officers to ramp up the implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Path (ORREP) as a strategic framework designed to shift the focus from punitive incarceration to rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

Regarding staff welfare issues, he said part of the reforms that come with the Bill would be to allow prison officers to unionise, adding that they would be in a better position to bargain better for improved working conditions including rebranding of the Prisons Service.

He implored staff to do their best under the prevailing circumstances of shortage of staff

housing and slow progression, adding that so far he was impressed about conduct of Mochudi Prisons staff.

Mr Nyatanga also commended them for zero escape incidents over the past eight years, adding that their records were orderly and that they were maintaining a clean environment.

On other issues, he called on the staff to consider contributing to the national economy through production of food and the marketing and sale of different artistic products produced by inmates.

While interacting with inmates, he said government was working hard to push the backlog of cases and improving turnaround times of disposing of cases.

For their part, inmates complained about welfare issues ranging from violation of their rights, denial of bail, overcrowding, poor nutrition and mental health issues.

Meanwhile Commissioner of Botswana Prisons Services, Mr Anthony Mokento said there were 4 394 inmates across all the facilities, a figure that included juvenile offenders. **BOPA**

Modipane stages impressive comeback

Benita Magopane

GABORONE

This year's Miss Botswana 2026 competition had, as all other years before, combined glamour with stiff competition.

What transpired next as the event reached its climax, was a remarkable comeback story for newly crowned Miss Botswana 2026, Magdeline Modipane.

The 25-year-old triumphed over 12 other contestants on a competitive night held at Molapo Creative Hub this past week. Her win signifies a classic

comeback story defined by perseverance, growth and determination, after falling short of advancing beyond the Top five last year.

Despite dominating the Majestic Vogue fast-track event, claiming top honours in the Top Model category and placing among the Top five in the Miss People's Choice fast-track in 2025, her journey fell short at a critical moment in the Q&A segment.

"I genuinely feel I wasn't really ready last year," Modipane explained, "I did not have much experience with other aspects of modeling in general and I did not have a clear direction of what I wanted to do to be honest."

But this time, the queen returned with clear intent, ultimately claiming the crown she had set her sights on. "When I heard my name getting called out, I was hit with a lot of emotions. I was overwhelmed. Happy. Nervous. And excited at the same time," she said.

For Modipane, family was the first thing that came to mind as she was crowned. Born into a close-knit family from Tonota, she is the second of three children. She affirmed that her parents' strong values of discipline, resilience and compassion helped shape her into

"I really worked hard, did a lot of self-introspection. I also took in all the constructive criticism that I got from the previous year and deepened my advocacy work aligned with my Beauty With A Purpose (BWAP) project, Tlhokomelo. I believe that is what worked for me."

the empathetic, nurturing and driven leader she is today.

"It has not really sunk in for some of them that I am Miss Botswana. At times they call me just to ask if I really am Miss Botswana. So yeah! It's still surreal," she said.

The evening activities had included displays of swimwear followed by an evening gown segment, which Modipane had effortlessly shone through in a sparkly baby blue floor length evening gown.

Her dress featured a daring thigh-high slit, and a one-shoulder design, accented with intricate lace hugging her single shoulder.

For most of the contestants, these segments were critical and determined their entry into the Top five.

However, not so much for Modipane! Having already secured the Miss People's Choice win and making history as the first contestant to win the award with a staggering one million-plus voting points, Modipane's remarkable feat guaranteed her an automatic spot in the Top five.

She would once again face the high-pressure Q&A segment, the very stage that had sealed her fate in a disappointing Top five finish the previous year.

Reflecting on that moment, Modipane said, focusing less on the outcome and digging her heels in becoming the woman ready for the crown made all the difference in her delivery.

Dr Brian Monaisa, one of the Miss Botswana 2026 judges, took note of this too. He observed that, Modipane exuded poise while remaining articulate and elegant.

In his view, if Botswana is seeking the best chance to win Miss World, he believes Modipane is the strongest contender.

Compared to last year when she had only one fast track win, Modipane had this time around secured two, another being a Best Impression win to add to her list of achievements this year.

The winning streak stands as testament of Modipane's overall performance improvement.

"I was very intentional this year," Modipane said, "I really worked hard, did a lot of self-introspection. I also took in all the constructive criticism that I got from the previous year and deepened my advocacy work aligned with my Beauty With A Purpose (BWAP) project, Tlhokomelo. I believe that's what worked for me."

She highlighted that she is ready to serve and make a meaningful impact, through her BWAP project, Tlhokomelo.

The project, she said, addresses issues of child neglect in Botswana using three holistic approaches: awareness and knowledge, the guardianship programme as well as the life skills program.

"The first approach focuses on educating children about their rights, the second on community and stakeholder engagement in children's welfare, whereas the last one is centred on equipping special needs children with life skills that ensure independence and self-reliance."

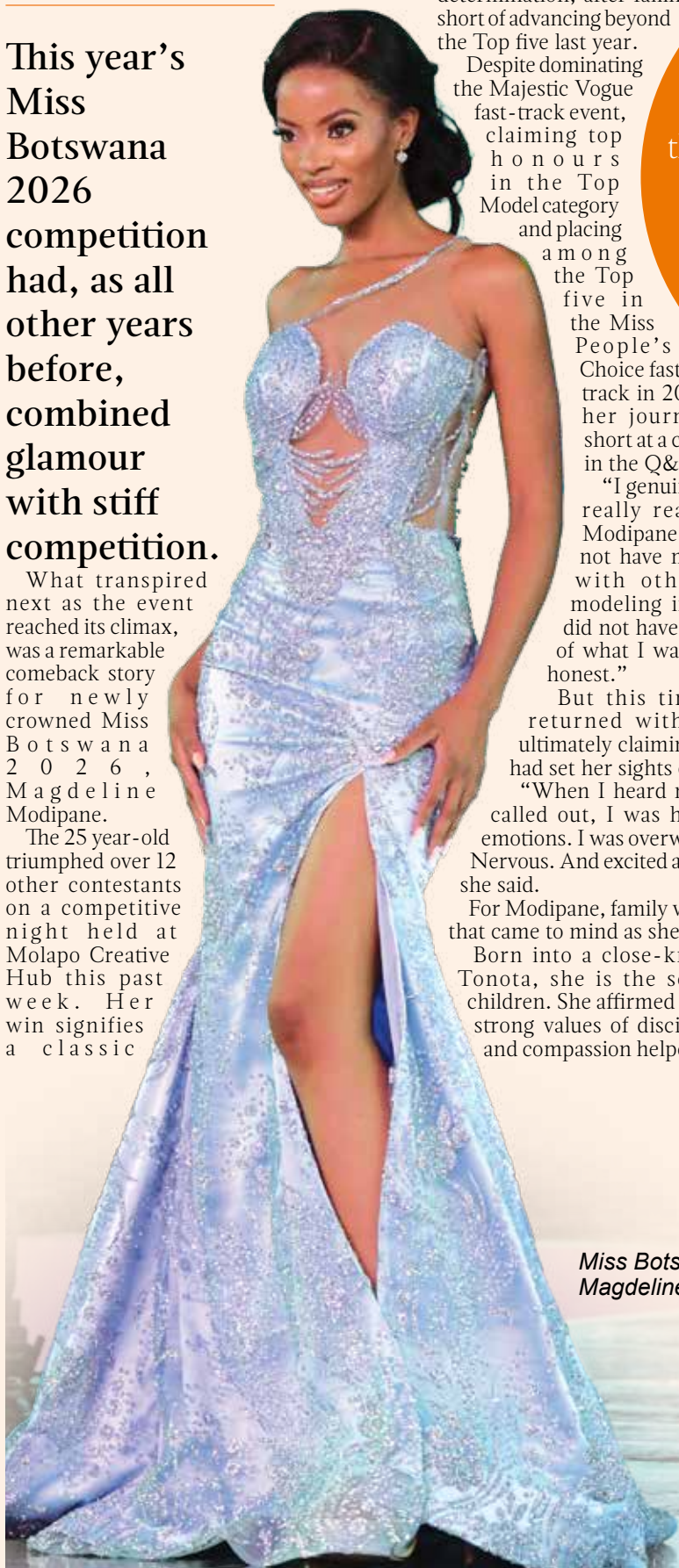
Whether this project will stand out at the 74th Miss World stage next year, or endure beyond the competition, it all remains to be seen. Only time will tell.

In the mean time, for the new queen, "this all feels surreal and represents years of hard work, resilience and consistency.

I am your newly crowned Miss Botswana and I am ready to serve." **BOPA**



Miss Botswana 2026
Magdeline Modipane



DailySport

BDF win
netball
championship

JWANENG

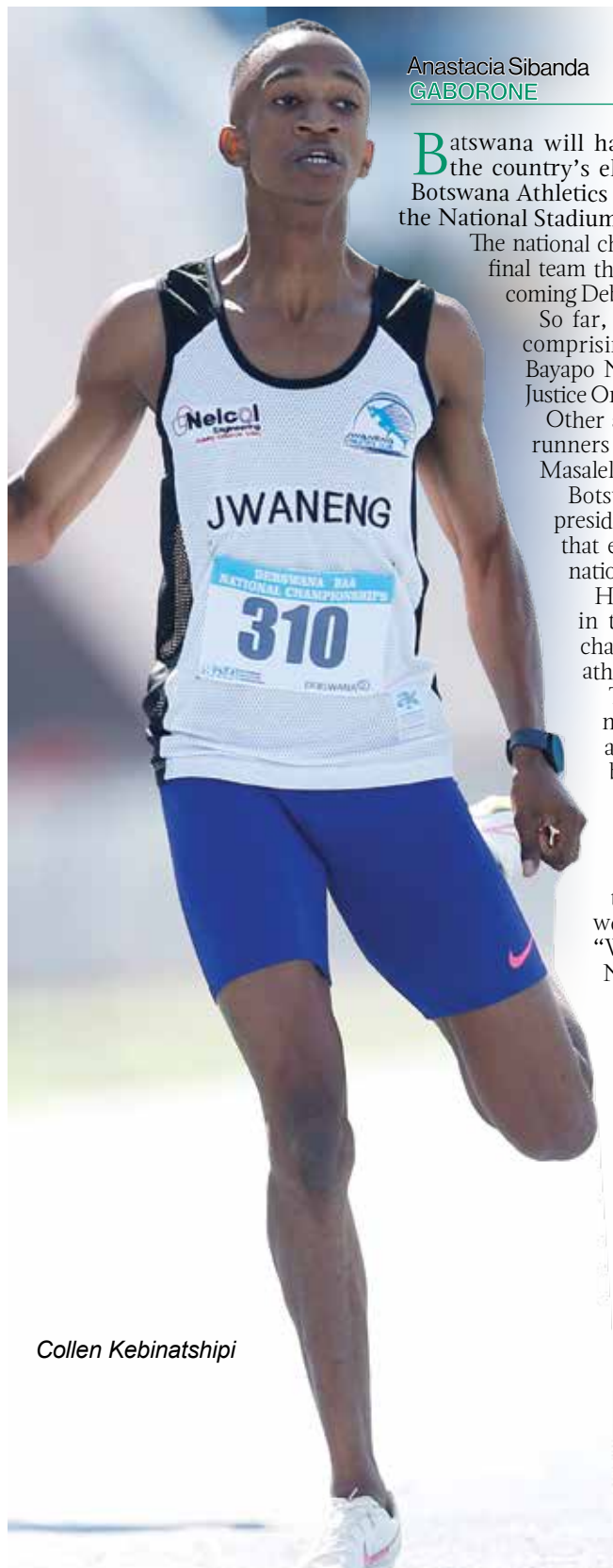
BDF Cats women were on Sunday crowned 2026 champions of the Jwaneng Netball Extravaganza. The team snatched the championship trophy by defeating the host, arch-rivals and defending champion, Jwaneng Netball Club 35-32 in a closely contested encounter. The two were pitted against each other in the finals after beating Police and Young Buffalos 35-28 and 53-13 in the semi-finals respectively. The 3-point margin denied the Diamond Girls the opportunity to retain the championship which they won from last year's inaugural tournament. Police women were relegated from last year's second position to third, ending the tournament as Bronze medalist. In the male category, Green Lightning walloped Notwane 55-32 to carry the trophy all the way to Eswatini, while BDF Cats put on a strong fight against Police to finish the tournament with Bronze medals with a 43-28 score board. Jwaneng Mine General Manager, Goitseone Gadifele said the netball extravaganza formed part of the overall objective of transforming Jwaneng into a sporting hub. **BOPA**

Orebonye
motivates NICO
United players

SELEBI PHIKWE

Tumisang Orebonye has urged players to be mindful of their lifestyle, saying drug and substance abuse as well as gambling can destroy their career and reputation. Speaking at a NICO United skills transfer master class workshop for the its players as well as students in the Selebi Phikwe sub-region, the Libya-based striker at Al-Shomooa emphasised the need for players to be mentally fit. Orebonye said they must strive to balance between football and life outside the pitch. He also urged them to stay away from platforms such as social media that could derail them if not used properly. He further encouraged players to believe in themselves and behave well because they were role models to the young ones. The aim of the workshop was to foster holistic development among the participants and provide them with essential life skills focusing on personal branding, sports development, health and financial literacy. **BOPA**

National championships attracts elite athletes



Collen Kebinatshipi

Anastacia Sibanda
GABORONE

Batswana will have a rare opportunity to watch the country's elite track athletes compete at the Botswana Athletics National Championship billed for the National Stadium on April 3 to 5.

The national championship will be used to select a final team that will represent the country at the coming Debswana World Athletics Relays 26.

So far, the 4x400 men's relays team comprising Letsile Tebogo, Lee Eppie, Bayapo Ndori, Collen Kebinatshipi, and Justice Oratile has confirmed participation.

Other athletes to watch are 800 meters runners Kethobogile Haingura, Tshepiso Masalela and Kemorena Tisang.

Botswana Athletics Association acting president, Oabona Theetso was impressed that elite athletes would compete at the national championship.

He said it was unfortunate that in the past, most of the national championships clashed with other athletics events in Europe.

Theetso also said this year's nationals followed a series of athletics events that were hosted by different clubs such as Jwaneng Athletics Association and Twin Towers.

He said the events were used as championship qualifiers, adding that each event at the championships would only admit top 24 athletes. "What I can assure Batswana is that the Nationals are capable of producing good times," he said.

Theetso said it was important for Batswana to come and support their own, adding that from the ladies category, they were expecting the likes of Same Mohutsiwa, Naledi Monthe and Nancy Buzwane to give spectators value for their money.

Tickets were sold at P50 grand stand, P30 elsewhere and free entry for children under 15 and were to sit at elsewhere stands.

BOPA



Letsile Tebogo

Masunga Sports Complex open for public use

MASUNGA

Masunga community has at its disposal, the use of Masunga Sport Complex.

Addressing the North East District full council session recently, Property Manager at Botswana National Sports Commission (BNSC), Mr Tshiamo Ratshonka said the sport grounds were open for use to all citizens for different activities that

comprise sports, celebrations and activations. Nevertheless, he said the facilities were meant mainly for sport development initiatives.

Mr Ratshonka stated that there were standard processes and procedures in place for the use of all BNSC facilities countrywide, noting that the Ministry of Sport & Arts District Coordinator was responsible for sport activities in the region.

He told councillors that there

were some rates associated with the use of the stadiums as per the standard guide from their Business Development & Property Management department.

Also, he indicated that trade exchange was allowed within the BNSC facilities. He said if there were no funds, communities could exchange with in-kind services such as bush clearing and other non-monetary services pre-approved by the Business

Development and Property Management department.

In response, Mapoka/Masukwane/Nlaphkwane councillor, Mr Nabulane Lenyatso called for review of booking fees as he felt they were high.

Mr Lenyatso said as local teams played games during public holidays, they could be allowed to use the stadium and trade exchange be applied to reduce booking fees.

Councillor for Masunga/

Letsholathebe, Mr Shandulani Maunge said if prices were reviewed, small businesses could benefit and improve the economy of the district.

Kgosi Maruje III advised on the use of solar lighting at the stadium to reduce high cost of electricity.

Other councillors requested that some of Botswana Football League (BFL) games be played in Masunga as the stadium was constructed for that purpose. **BOPA**