

BOTSWANA Daily News

THE PAPER THAT INFORMS AND EDUCATES

San healing dance highlight of Macheng Bushfire Festival



PAGE 7

Baggy Blues miss regional final despite stellar run



PAGE 8

BUSINESS

Multi Choice cautions against piracy

Page 4

DIKGANG

'Lore lo ojwa lo sa le metsi'

Tsebe 5

NEWS

Family embarks on 500km walk to raise awareness on Down Syndrome

Page 6

Initiative opens energy opportunities

Lesedi Thatayamodimo
GABORONE

As Botswana seeks to reduce dependence on diamonds and prepare for a rapidly changing global economy, government has launched the Botswana Youth, Women and Citizen, Oil and Gas Programme (BYWC), an initiative aimed at positioning citizens at the forefront of the country's emerging energy sector.

Speaking at the launch in Gaborone on Monday, the Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo, described the programme as more than an economic initiative, calling it "a national mission and a covenant between the state and its citizens." *Cont...page 3*



Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo during the launch of the Botswana Youth, Women and Citizen Oil and Gas Programme in Gaborone on Monday. Photos: Thompson Keobaletswe



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Concern mounts over rabies cases

Esther Mmolai
MAUN

The ongoing fatalities in the North West District, with some identifies as probable cases of rabies disease has sparked fear in the community.

The fatal viral infection which is reported to be 100 per cent preventable has triggered fear in the community following four confirmed deaths related to rabies and high numbers of dog bites attacks due to stray dogs roaming the streets.

The district has a high population of pets estimated around 20 000, of which a larger percentage are stray dogs roaming the streets and public places.

Therefore, the cause of the panic is the agonising uncertainty of, "did that bite infect me," causing severe health anxiety for bite victims and their families.

Since January this year to date, 157 dog bites were registered across health facilities and the

spike propelled the authorities to embark on an extensive vaccination campaign of all pets to contain and control the spread of the disease which is not only affecting humans but other animals as well.

The Department of Veterinary Services also embarked on humane culling of stray dogs roaming the streets, while vaccination continues as rabies poses a serious public health threat.

One of the residents, Ms Kago Masake of Sanyedi ward in Maun confirmed that rabies disease had brought panic among members of the community especially after learning about the unfortunate deaths involving children following bites of infected dog bites.

She said the district had experienced a worrying increase in dog rabies cases noting that it was unfortunate as children were particularly vulnerable because they were unaware of the danger and more likely to calmly approach stray dogs.

Ms Masake who is passionate about dogs and owns five greyhound highlighted that the humane destruction of stray dogs was a proactive intervention to reduce pet population, eliminate human rabies and promote responsible pet ownership.

"The situation has created communal distress as we worry about the safety of our beloved pets, which we keep for home security.

Although we try our best to confine them, at times they can slit past the gate or dig under the fence and join stray dogs roaming the streets," she said.

She said a pet was more than just an animal, but a family member and when it died, grief could be overwhelming.

Ms Masake said she could not imagine bearing the pain and trauma of losing a dog suspected to be infected with rabies considering the investment and the relationship she has with her pets.

Following a string of terror by criminals, Ms Masake started keeping dogs in 1989, since then, a dog has proved to be her life companion, providing the necessary home security and a loyal friend.

Despite the fear of losing her beloved pets to rabies, Ms Masake is fully aware of the danger they could pose to the society, as carriers of the deadly virus, therefore her dogs are well maintained, by getting vaccinated at all times and veterinary check-ups without fail.

"Losing a dog that you care for and love dearly is a traumatic experience as it breaks a bond built on unconditional love. The emotional and physical grief is often parallel the pain of losing a close family member," she said.

While appreciating council byelaws compelling dog owners to contain their pets to ensure public safety, she is of the view that dogs which were chained or kept in a safe shelter all the time, become

more aggressive and a danger to people. Even though supporting human destruction of stray pets as they could be nuisance, Ms Masake said authorities should also consider that at times dogs were forced by starvation to scavenge for food thereby becoming a menace to neighbourhoods.

In a recent interview, Deputy Council Secretary for Primary Health Care, Dr Sandra Maripe-Ebutswe revealed that the culling of stray dogs' campaign which would continue until the end of the year, was progressing well with over 250 dogs already killed.

Dr Maripe-Ebutswe encouraged members of the community to keep their pets confined and report any bites immediately to any health facility.

She also highlighted that vaccination campaign was also ongoing noting that currently, over 12000 dogs had been vaccinated and implored dog owners to bring their pets for vaccination. **BOPA**

BDF sets course for modern and agile future

Lorato Gaofise
MOGODITSHANE

Botswana Defence Force (BDF) Commander, General Mpho Mophuting has unveiled a roadmap aimed at transforming the military into a modern, agile and globally aligned force capable of responding to evolving security threats.

Officially launching the BDF Commander's Strategic Guidance 2025-2029 in Mogoditshane on Friday, General Mophuting said the military ought to embrace modernisation, innovation and continuous learning if it was to remain relevant in a rapidly changing security environment.

He said contemporary warfare was evolving at an unprecedented pace, making it imperative for military personnel at all levels to remain informed about global security developments and emerging threats.

Drawing lessons from conflicts taking place in different parts of the world, Gen. Mophuting said the BDF must continuously adapt its doctrine, training and operational capabilities to remain effective.

"The purpose of a military force is to fight and win wars. In the absence of war, it must train to fight and win wars," he said.

The BDF commander described the strategic guidance as a blueprint anchored on institutional growth, modernisation and international alignment, adding that the principles would shape the force's transformation over the next five years.

He said Commander's Strategic Guidance was built around the priorities of; leadership, modernisation, military justice

reform, strategy and doctrine development and cost control.

He, therefore, stressed that the success of the strategy would depend largely on leadership, teamwork and investment in human capital.

Gen. Mophuting called on commanders to identify, mentor and develop young talent, arguing that future military leaders must be nurtured early through deliberate training and professional development programmes.

He reflected on his own military journey, saying opportunities provided by senior leaders played a pivotal role in shaping his career. He urged commanders not to overlook potential among junior officers and soldiers.

He further emphasised that troop welfare must remain a priority, describing it as one of the foremost responsibilities of military leadership.

"Every member of the BDF has a vital role to play in achieving the institution's mission and vision, regardless of rank or position," he stressed.

The Commander's Strategic Guidance, he said also sought to strengthen operational readiness, professionalism and organisational effectiveness, whilst positioning the BDF to address future security challenges.

Gen. Mophuting encouraged all members of the force to embrace the vision contained in the document and work collectively towards building a capable, resilient and future-ready military.

The strategy is expected to guide the BDF's development and transformation agenda over the next five years as the force seeks to align itself with emerging global military trends and best practices.



Botswana Defence Force (BDF) Commander, General Mpho Mophuting (left) launching the BDF Commander's Strategic Guidance 2025-2029 in Mogoditshane on Friday. He said the roadmap aimed at transforming the military into a modern, agile and globally aligned force capable of responding to evolving security threats. Photo: Phenyio Moalosi

"Every member of the BDF has a vital role to play in achieving the institution's mission and vision, regardless of rank or position."

Gen. Mophuting

The BDF commander of the ground forces command, Major General Simon Barwabatsile described the initiative as a defining milestone in the

continued transformation and professionalisation of the defence force.

Maj. Gen Barwabatsile, who is also the Commander's Strategic Guidance chairperson said the framework was developed following extensive consultations.

"The Commander's Strategic Guidance is not simply an administrative document, but an operational command tool intended to guide leadership, decision-making, institutional development and mission execution across all commands, formations and units of the BDF," he said.

He said the strategic framework was developed with a strong emphasis on realism, measurability and people-centred leadership, whilst ensuring alignment with

operational realities and future force requirements.

"The launch comes at a time when military institutions across the region continue to adapt to increasingly complex security challenges, including transnational crime, border security threats and cybercrime and emerging global security risks," he added.

He also highlighted the significance of the newly unveiled BDF Signature Song, describing it as a symbol of unity, patriotism and institutional pride.

"The Signature Song reflects the values, traditions and spirit of the Botswana Defence Force as a professional institution dedicated to safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Botswana," he added. **BOPA**

Botswana and EU commmits to shared prosperity

Ndingililo Gaoswediwe
GABORONE

Botswana and the European Union have reaffirmed their longstanding partnership and shared commitment to sustainable development. Opening the 7th Botswana–European Union Partnership Dialogue held in Gaborone recently, Minister for International Relations, Dr Pheny Butale, described the meeting as a reflection of the enduring relationship between Botswana and the EU, founded on shared principles of democracy, the rule of law and a common commitment to sustainable development.

He said EU had remained one of Botswana's most strategic and enduring partners since the country's early years of independence, with cooperation steadily evolving into a broad alliance that continued to deliver meaningful benefits for citizens.

Dr Butale stressed that the dialogue remained a vital platform for engagement, enabling both parties to review progress on EU-supported development initiatives, assess the impact of financial and technical assistance, identify areas requiring further attention and explore new opportunities for collaboration.

He expressed appreciation for the EU's support in key sectors, including renewable energy, digital transformation, biodiversity conservation, capacity building, economic diversification and employment creation. He also acknowledged the additional regional assistance provided through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union.

Turning to the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme launched in November 2022, Dr Butale highlighted its focus on green transformation, economic diversification and job creation. He further welcomed the additional allocation of €8 million (about P124.9 billion) for the Green Value Chain Development for Job Creation Programme, signed in November 2025, which supports eco-tourism and horticultural value chains.

This year's dialogue, he said, was particularly significant as it coincided with the programme's mid-term review, a process that would guide the allocation of

resources for the remainder of the implementation period up to 2027.

He also observed that the meeting took place shortly after the successful conclusion of the 11th Summit of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States Heads of State and Government, held in March in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The outcomes of the summit, he said, had reinforced collective resolve under the Samoa Agreement framework and reaffirmed Botswana's commitment to delivering tangible economic transformation for its people.

The minister further noted that the discussions were taking place against a backdrop of growing global uncertainty, marked by

geopolitical tensions, volatile international markets and the continuing effects of climate change. These challenges, he said, underscored the importance of stronger cooperation, collective action and an unwavering commitment to multilateralism.

He urged participants to renew their commitment to deepening the partnership in ways that uplifted communities, empowered young people and promoted inclusive economic growth.

In her remarks, European Union Ambassador to Botswana and SADC, Ms Petra Pereyra, reiterated the EU's commitment to strengthening its long-standing partnership with Botswana amid an increasingly uncertain global

environment.

She said that this year marked several important milestones, including 45 years of EU-Botswana relations, a decade since the implementation of the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and Botswana's forthcoming 60th anniversary of independence. Congratulating Botswana on its achievements, Ms Pereyra described the country as a model of stability, democratic governance and steady development. She said the EU remained a reliable partner guided by mutual respect and shared values, while highlighting strong cooperation in trade, investment and economic diversification. **BOPA**



Minister for International Relations, Dr Pheny Butale (second right) European Union Ambassador to Botswana and SADC, Ms Petra Pereyra (second left) and their delegation during the 7th Botswana-European Union Partnership Dialogue in Gaborone recently. Dr Butale said EU had remained one of Botswana's most strategic and enduring partners since the country's early years of independence, with cooperation steadily evolving into a broad alliance that continued to deliver meaningful benefits for citizens. Photo: Thompson Keobaletswe

Initiative opens energy opportunities

...from page 1

She said the programme aimed to equip young people, women and citizens with the skills, opportunities and support needed to take ownership of emerging industries, create jobs, foster innovation and ensure broader participation in national wealth creation.

She emphasised that Botswana's economic success over the past six decades had been largely driven by the diamond industry, which financed critical infrastructure, education, healthcare and democratic institutions.

However, she noted that changing global markets and evolving technologies required the country to prepare for a different economic future.

"The economy that has carried us for the past 60 years cannot be the economy that carries us into the next 60," she said.

Ms Chombo pointed out that the initiative aligned with Botswana's broader vision of building a high-income, digitally enabled, export-driven and diversified economy.

She further said it also supported objectives outlined in the National Development Plan 12 and the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme, which sought to expand growth beyond traditional mining activities. Ms Chombo highlighted

several sectors identified as future engines of growth, including agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, financial services, digital technology, infrastructure, creative industries and energy.

She stressed that economic diversification was not only an economic objective but also a social imperative.

She argued that prosperity should not be concentrated in a few sectors, regions or individuals but should be distributed across industries, communities and generations.

She also highlighted ongoing government reforms aimed at increasing youth participation in the economy, including the recently adopted National Youth Policy, the forthcoming Youth Development Act, and reviews of programmes such as the Youth Development Fund and the Botswana National Service Programme.

According to the minister, the government has increased procurement opportunities for youth-owned businesses, raising the allocation quota from 20 per cent to 40 per cent.

The minister noted that women constituted a significant proportion of unemployed youth and often face multiple barriers to economic advancement.

"Botswana cannot be the

Botswana that we want it to be while leaving half of our population behind," she said.

She praised the programme's deliberate inclusion of women, particularly in sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as energy, engineering and industrial development. She argued that economies performed better when women participated fully as entrepreneurs, professionals, innovators and decision-makers.

Ms Chombo also acknowledged social challenges that affected women's participation in the workforce, including caregiving and family responsibilities and called for policies that address these barriers.

She encouraged participants to embrace ambition, build networks and develop the resilience necessary to succeed in a competitive industry, emphasising that the programme's success would depend not only on government support but also on the commitment and mindset of those taking part.

The Botswana Youth, Women and Citizen Oil and Gas Programme is expected to serve as a platform for developing local expertise and ownership in the energy sector while advancing the country's long-term goal of creating a more inclusive and diversified economy. **BOPA**

Minister advises residents to reach consensus

Goitsemodimo Williams-Madzonga
MARAPONG

Leadership of Marapong and Semitwe have been encouraged to find a common ground on the name of the newly constructed police station.

The call was made by Minister for State President, Defence and Security Mr Moeti Mohwasa during a consultative meeting on Friday at Marapong noting that the police station was almost complete and needed to be named prior to its official opening to the public.

He stated that their dispute over the name had prompted him to step in and urged the leadership to resolve the matter amicably, noting that the decision on the naming of the station should bring them together as Batswana.

"This development is meant to serve and help you to fight crime despite coming from two different villages," he said, adding that they should not allow the issue of naming the newly police station to divide the communities.

However, the minister toured the police station project, and promised to address kgotla meetings on the June 8, 2026 at their respective villages to appreciate the resolution they had taken.

Their decision, he said should be based on land boards reports and maps as well as on submissions made by both parties with regard to the process followed until the construction of the police station.

Earlier on, when briefing the minister on the basis of disagreement, a representative from Marapong, Mr Vincent Mosweu revealed that Marapong community proposed the said police station since 1995 and throughout the years, they were given promises that the government had approved the project.

The project he said was included in National Development Plan 9 until 11 when it was granted.

He highlighted that during the ground breaking of the project, there was a portrait with the name Marapong Police Station written on it, hence they insisted that the name should remain as it is.

Meanwhile, Kgosi Batanani Joseph explained that as Semitwe people they had suggested a neutral name being Manwela, naming it after the stream that separated the two villages to avoid back and forth with their counterparts which he viewed as delay for progress.

He noted that the plot where the station has been built was allocated in 2004 as a ploughing field for Ms Bokani Nthobatsang who originated from Semitwe as per land board records.

Following the agreement between the plot owner and the police, he said land use was changed in 2007 with the lease issued in December 2002 as per land board resolutions which approved it as police plot in Semitwe. **BOPA**

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Daily Business

Multi Choice cautions against piracy

Ketshepile More

GABORONE

Piracy remains a complex, multifaceted issue that affects the entire satellite and cable broadcast industry across sub-Saharan Africa.

This was shared on Friday in Gaborone at an occasion where Multichoice Botswana hosted piracy awareness training for the Department of Broadcasting Services.

The move was one of the strategies to combat content piracy, strengthen the broadcasting ecosystem and promote respect to intellectual property rights in Botswana.

Giving a presentation on protecting content through anti-piracy, Multichoice Group Southern Africa Piracy Manager, Mr Edward Mnisi said piracy was not just a legal issue, but an economic concern that impacted government revenue and businesses.

He said the economic damage created by piracy extended beyond companies to governments due to lost tax revenue and to consumers through compromised safety.

Mr Mnisi said piracy affected the broadcasting industry, not just Multichoice but other television operators. He said various forms of piracy were identified such as cable piracy, cross-border decoder piracy, reproductive piracy (antenna piracy), counterfeit equipment, illegal public screenings, grape market piracy as well as internet streaming piracy.

Mr Mnisi said predominant in Botswana was the cross-border decoder piracy, where decoders were particularly purchased in South Africa but used in neighbouring countries such as Botswana.

"The practice use of such devices where they are not type-approved by local regulators, hinders the growth of local operators, as revenue and jobs shift away from the countries where content rights are purchased," he highlighted.

Furthermore, Mr Mnisi cautioned consumers that when they subscribe to a South African service, the money benefitted South Africa instead of Botswana, hindering growth and job creation in Botswana.

Although it is often argued that profits still return to the originating company, Mr Mnisi highlighted that the economic implications of piracy included loss of government tax revenue due to undermined legitimate subscription services.

He said another type of piracy which was a concern in Botswana was that of grape market; where individuals exploited decoder technology designed for use in South Africa to bypass regional broadcasting rights, particularly using OpenView decoders purchased in South Africa for use in Botswana.

Mr Mnisi said this created a detrimental cycle, hindering local economic growth in regions like



Members of the media at Multichoice Botswana piracy awareness training for the Department of Broadcasting Services in Gaborone on Friday. Ministry for State President, Defence and Security deputy permanent secretary - Information, Broadcasting and Printing, Mr Tshireletso Motlogelwa said piracy was a major threat, destabilising producers, studios and investors. Photo: Thompson Keobaletswe

Botswana because profits and subscriptions do not stay within the country.

Meanwhile, Deputy Permanent Secretary - Information, Broadcasting and Printing in the Ministry for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Tshireletso Motlogelwa said piracy was a major threat, destabilising producers, studios, and investors.

Therefore, Mr Motlogelwa called for systematic protection, saying developing the creative

sector supported social stability by providing opportunities for youth, lowering unemployment, and reducing security risks.

Mr Motlogelwa said the future of Africa's creative economy, was dependent on building robust systems to protect Intellectual Property (IP) rights, empowering independent creators, musicians, filmmakers, and small producers to benefit from their work.

Additionally, he emphasised a shift in diversification and sustainability

saying moving away from single-source economies toward varied, organised and sustainable industries was necessary for generational wealth creation in Africa.

Speaking on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Mr Motlogelwa said technology presented both opportunities and threats to the creative industry.

He said African creators must engage AI strategically with protections, ensuring preservation and ownership of culture. **BOPA**

'Disruptions in global supply chains threat to food security'

VICTORIA FALLS

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has called for urgent and coordinated regional action to strengthen food security, climate resilience and agricultural systems in the face of growing threats posed by global supply chain disruptions, climate change and livestock diseases.

SADC deputy executive secretary for Regional Integration, Angèle Makombo N'Tumba made the call while addressing the joint meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for agriculture, food security, fisheries and aquaculture in Victoria Falls on Friday. She warned that worsening climate shocks and geopolitical conflicts were placing millions of people at risk of hunger and economic hardship.

N'tumba said disruptions in global supply chains and extreme weather patterns were threatening food and energy security across the region.

She said the conflict in the Middle East had disrupted the movement of key agricultural inputs and petroleum products through the Strait of Hormuz, resulting in rising food and fuel prices and increasing pressure on regional economies.

"Conflict in the Middle East has resulted in the restriction of movement of agricultural inputs such as nitrogen, urea, ammonia fertilisers and petroleum products, which are all key inputs to agriculture," she said.

N'Tumba noted that while

some SADC member states had recorded bumper harvests, others were battling crop losses, damaged infrastructure and livestock deaths caused by excessive rainfall and climate-related disasters.

She warned that climate experts were predicting a 77 per cent likelihood of a moderate-to-very-strong El Niño event developing towards the end of 2026 and into early 2027, which could trigger below-average rainfall and severe harvest failures across central and southern parts of the region.

"We must start preparing now for such a possibility," she advised. N'Tumba said agriculture remained the backbone of the SADC region, sustaining more than 70 per cent of the population through food production, trade and related value chains.

She stressed the need for member states to strengthen regional cooperation in tackling livestock diseases, particularly Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), which continues to affect trade, livelihoods and food security.

N'tumba also called on member states to invest more in fisheries and aquaculture to address food and nutrition security challenges. "I would like to urge member states to invest in aquaculture, cold chain systems, value addition and climate-resilient production systems to close the fish supply gap and improve livelihoods, particularly for women and youth," she said. Speaking at the same occasion, South African Agriculture Minister

John Steenhuisen, who is also the chairperson of the Joint Committee, said despite improvements in cereal production, the region still faced serious food insecurity challenges. "An estimated 58 million people across SADC member states still face acute food insecurity due to issues around access and affordability. This reality demands urgency from all of us," he said. He said global shocks, including climate-related disasters, rising fertiliser prices, disease outbreaks and supply chain disruptions, were negatively affecting agriculture and food systems in Southern Africa. Steenhuisen called on SADC countries to urgently harmonise fertiliser regulations and fast-track the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Harmonisation of Fertiliser Regulatory Frameworks to reduce production costs and improve regional trade.

"We cannot continue entering each planting season fragmented by unharmonised standards, duplicative registration systems and regulatory bottlenecks that unnecessarily increase costs for farmers and slow regional trade," he said. Zimbabwe Minister of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Water Resources Development, Anxious Masuka, echoed similar concerns, urging SADC member states to strengthen climate resilience and develop robust food security systems ahead of the anticipated El Niño-induced drought conditions. **New Ziana**

BUSINESS

Namibia plans state-coordinated fuel import system

WINDHOEK - Namibia plans to introduce a state-coordinated petroleum import system by the end of September as part of efforts to lower fuel costs and improve efficiency in the country's fuel supply chain. In a statement issued on Saturday, Industries, Mines and Energy Minister Modestus Amutse said government was at an advanced stage of finalising Bulk Petroleum Import Coordination Regulations that would allow the state to coordinate the importation of all petroleum products into the country. According to Amutse, the reforms are expected to reduce fuel import costs by consolidating national demand, capturing economies of scale and eliminating premiums charged above the basic fuel price. **Xinhua**

South Africa strengthens role in BRICS

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa's BRICS Business Council is intensifying efforts to position BRICS as a stronger engine for trade, investment and economic resilience. Chairperson of the council's Trade and Investment Working Group, Mtho Xulu, said the group was pursuing a targeted strategy focused on reducing trade barriers, aligning regulations and expanding the use of national currencies in cross-border commerce among member states. In a recent interview with Xinhua, Xulu said that the South African BRICS Business Council aims to deepen economic collaboration among BRICS countries while opening broader opportunities for African businesses and entrepreneurs. **Xinhua**

Kao diamond mine shuts down

MASERU - Storm Mountain Diamonds (SMD) in Lesotho will cease operations at its Kao Mine on June 30 due to rising fuel costs linked to the conflict in the Middle East and a prolonged slump in global diamond prices. The company announced earlier this week that the Kao Mine would be placed under care and maintenance from July, citing unsustainable fuel costs, depressed diamond prices and mounting capital requirements. The move is expected to affect hundreds of workers. "The biggest challenge confronting the operation was the prolonged, severe decline in global rough diamond prices," SMD Chief Executive Officer Neo Hoala said, noting that the market downturn is the primary trigger for the closure. **Xinhua**

Dikgang

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'Lore lo ojwa lo sa le metsi'

Keetile Bontsibokae

MOLEPOLOLE

E re ka gotwe tau e Iphutha methala fa ele esi..., e ne ya re phirimane ya Matlhatso borre ba Mokwena ba itima nako ya go itisa le ba malwapa a bone jaaka gale mme ba apara dijase ba leba kwa kgotleng kgolo ya Bakwena, go tsibogela pitso ya borre.

Ba ne ba dira jaana go tla go kokoana kwa lekgotleng la Molepolole ba ora molelo ka e bile e le paka ya mariga, ba ja dikgang tse di amang lenyalo le tsamaiso ya bogadi.

Gareng ga borre ba, kwa phuthengong e e neng e rulagantswe ke ba Young Fathers Forum (YFF), e ne e le Kgosi Kgari Sechele III.

E rile a ntsha la gagwe Kgosi Kgari o rotloeditse borre go arogana le bana ba basimane maele a botshelo segolo bogolo go tshaloganya boikarabelo jwa bone mo go ageng malwapa kgotsa manyalo a motia.

Kgosi Kgari a re borre ba tshwanetse go kaela bana ba basimane tsela gore ba kgone go hema kgotsa go emelana le dikgwetho tsa manyalo.

A re maikaelelo a maitiso ke go gwetha borre ba ba nyetseng go tla go abelana maele ka dikgang tse di ba tlhorisang boroko mo lenyalong le go tswa ka ditlharabololo.

Kgosi Kgari a re thitokgang e ne ele go sekaseka le go leka go kabakanya ditsamaiso tsa setso le diphetogo tsa sesha tse di amang lenyalo.

A re le fa ngwao le tsamaiso tsa Setswana e le tsone motheo wa malwapa go bothlokwa go itepatepanya le diphetogo. Le fa go ntse jalo a re diphetogo ga di a tshwanela go kgoreletsa tsamaiso ya lenyalo, di tshwanetse di dirisiwa go nonotsha le go rotloetsa lenyalo.

Fa a tshalosa ka thulaganyo ya bogadi mo ngwaong ya sekwenana, a re bogadi ke dikgomo mme a seka a ithokomolosa gore metlha e tsile ya gore bangwe ba ikanye go ntsha bogadi jwa madi.

O ne a tshalosa gore go le gantsi bogadi bo tswa ele dikgomo tse di namagadi kgotsa di ka kabakanngwa ka tse di tonanyana.

"Gore go bo sa tlwaelesegare gore go ntshiwe bogadi jwa dikgomo tse ditonanyana ke gore ga se tse go ka solofelwang gore di ate.

Kgosi Kgari o kgadile mafoko a puo ya seesemane a reng, bride price, a re ga e beye bogadi sentle ka gore e supa jaaka o kare bogadi ke tuelo.

O ne a gatelelela gore bogadi mo setswaneng ga se tuelo ke tebogog.

Tlhaloso ya ga Kgosi Kgari ya gore bogadi ke tebogog e seng

tuelo, e ne ya tlisa ketsaetsego mo go bangwe ba borre ka ba ne ba ipotsa gore ke eng gotwe ga se tuelo ntsa go lete gore o ka tsaa mosadi fela o sa ntsha bogadi.

Mo tshalosong ya gore ga tla jang gore pudi e seka ya dirisiwa go ntsha bogadi, mongwe wa mabutswepele a Mokwena, Rre Moshakanyana Motshweneng o ne tshalosa gore 'ga re na bogadi jwa podi.

Kana podi e na le mmolelo, e bolelela thata, e dipuopuo. Fa o ntshetsa mosadi bogadi ka yone, go tsile go tlhaga medumodumo fela mo go ene,'.

Rre Moshakanyane a re mo tsamaisong ya Sekwena, nku ke yone e e neng e a tle e ntshiwe ele bogadi, e bidiwa perepetsha.

Mongwe wa matlhogoputswa, Rre Tsogang Mmelebele o ne a latlhela la motlapitso, a re bogadi jwa sekwenana ke kgomo tse thataro mme di nna borobabobedi ka kgomo ya kota e e tsewang ke malome le ya metsi e e tlhabiwang.

Ya re dikgang di ya magoletsa jalo ga tsoga ngangisano fa modulasetilo wa YFF, Rre Merapelo Karabo a sena go ngwaya ntho legogo ka gore mo segompionong borre ba patelesegang go mekamakana le go ntsha bogadi le mokgweleo otlhe wa lenyalo go sena yo o ba emang nokeng.

Rre Merapelo a re batsadi ba ikgatholositse maikarabelo a go thusa ngwana bogadi, ka jalo seemo seo se ama itsholelo ya lelwapa le a le simololang ka a kokonelwa ke dikoloto tse gantsi di tshosang kgotlhang mo nyalong.

A re kgokgontsho ya dipuo e tsena gone foo mme kgantele e tsale dintwa mme go bake tlhalano.

Bontsi jwa borre bo ne ba dumelana gore ba babalelwa ke bogadi le ditshenyegelo tsa mokete wa lenyalo.

Fa a ba kgwa kgaba Kgosi Kgari le matlhogoputswa ba supa fa manyalo a segompiono a tletse mantlontlo a a dirang gore borre ba ketefalelwe ke lenyalo, ba lebile gore go seka gate ba paletswe ke go dira mokete wa mabono.

Fa a tswala, Kgosi Kgari a re, 'mokgokgontshi o tlaa nna a gogela kwa kgokgontshong fela, ka gore le ba ba sa nyalang go lebeba ba kgokgontsha go feta.'

Kgosi Kgari o ne a bua jalo a kgala kgang ya gore kgokgontsho e tlhotlhelediwa ke bogadi.

O gwethile batsadi go thusa bana go ntsha bogadi, a gatelela gore bogadi ke bontlha bongwe jwa ngwao ya Setswana.

"Go fetola ngwao go laolwa ke batho ba yone. Go lebeba batho ba santse ba rata bogadi. Bogadi bo santse bo nale bokao mo matsheleng a rona," ga tlhalosa Kgosi Kgari. **BOPA**



Borre ba Bakwena ba le kwa kgotleng kwa ba neng ba buisana ka dikgang tsa bogadi le lenyalo kwa Molepolole bosheng. Kgosi Kgari Sechele III o rotloeditse borre go arogana maele le bana ba basimane, segolo bogolo gore ba tshaloganya boikarabelo jwa bone mo go ageng malwapa kgotsa manyalo a motia. Senepe: Bots-Lee TV

Ba Mokobeng ba kopa go abelwa ditsha

Omphile Ntakhwana

MOKOBENG

Banni ba Mokobeng ba buile ba sa kgwe mathe ka go diega ga lekgotla la kabo ya ditsha go ba abela ditsha.

Fa ba a kgwa dikgaba mopalamente wa Tswapong Borwa, Dr Kesitegile Gobotswang kwa phuthengong ya kgotla, ba supile fa malwapa a apareswe ke dikgotlhang ka ntsha ya go nna ga batho ba le bantsi mo lelwapeng le le lengwe.

Ba supile fa se se ngomola pelo ka jaana bagwe le dingwetsi di gorogela mo ditsheng tsa batsadi, go felele go tsisa dikgotlhang ka banyalani ba sena ditsha tse ba ka ikagelang kwa go tsone.

Banni ba tswetsetse ba supa fa ba ngongorega ka bobegadikgang jwa puso, ba re ga bona boithlamedi (creativity), se se feletsang se ba tlama go ikanya jwa Aforika Borwa.

Fa a tswala la gagwe, Dr Gobotswang o tshosetse fa go sena thulaganyo e e tlhapileng ya gore go bewa ditsha.

O supile gore le fa seemo sa tiego ya peo ya ditsha se ngomola

pelo, o nalee tsholofelo ya gore puso e tlaa se tsibogela ka bofefo.

Fa a bua ka bobegadikgang jwa puso, Dr Gobotswang a re tsholofelo ke gore bobegadikgang jwa puso bo tlaa fetolwa go dirwa jwa setshaba (public broadcasters), mme seo se tlaa dira gore bo ikemele ka nosi.

Fa a tshwaela ka lenaneo la setshaba la ditlhabololo la bolesome le bobedi (NDP12), Dr Gobotswang o supile fa molelwane wa Martins Drift o tlaa tlhabololwa go bereka bosigo le motshegare.

"Borogo le jone bo tlaa dirwa. Re bo tshwaraganetse le ba Afrika Borwa," o ne a tshalosa jalo, a supa fa maikaelelo a go bula kgoro ya molelwane bosigo le motshegare e le matlhagola-tsetla go isa kwa itsholelong e e tsamayang bosigo le motshegare.

Fa a bua ka ditsela, Dr Gobotswang o supile fa lephata le le tlhokometseng ditsela le supile fa le tlaa baakanya dingwe tsa ditsela tsa kgaolo go rotloetsa tomagano ya batho mo kgaolong.

O kaile fa ditsela di tshwana ya Seleka-Mokobeng,

Seleka-Rrammai, Seleka-Ramokgonani, Pilikwe-Maape le Moshopha-Shakwe e le dingwe tsa tse di tlaa baakanngwang.

O tswetsetse a supa fa go itumedisa go bo puso e dumalane le banni ba Tswapong gore ba tshwanetse go akola meamuso ya noka ya Limpopo, mme ka sekgwama sa puso se santse se sa ema sentle, kgang ya teng e santse e eme.

"Re batla go baya masimo le rona gaufi le noka e, re batla go tshwara ditlhapi, re dire le bojanala, mme ke tsholofelo ya rona gore fa seemo sa itsholelo se tokafala, re baakanye kgang e," a rialo Dr Gobotswang.

O tswetsetse a re seemo sa gore Batswana ba tshwanetse go kopa go fitlhelela le go anywa meamuso ya noka ya Limpopo le go bereka fa molelwane se sa swabisa.

Dr Gobotswang o supile fa nako e tsile ya gore kgaolo ya Tswapong Borwa e thame ditiro ka go aga madirelo le go ntsha ditsho ka go farologana. "Seemo se re tlama go ema ka dinao gore bana ba rona ba bone mebereko," Dr Gobotswang o ne a wetsa jalo. **BOPA**

Official confirms FMD presence in Molapowabojang

Marvin Motlhabane
GA-SEGWAGWA

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Coordinator for Vaccination, Dr Kingsley Siele, has confirmed the presence of FMD in Molapowabojang while clarifying that there are currently no reported cases in Kgomokasitwa and Kanye.

Dr Siele was addressing allegations of new cases in Kanye and Kgomokasitwa during a kgotla meeting convened by the Member of Parliament for Kanye West, Mr Victor Phologolo in Ga-Segwagwa on Tuesday.

Speaking in an interview with BOPA on Wednesday, Dr Siele said the cases were detected last Wednesday and Thursday in two separate kraals in Molapowabojang.

To curb the spread of the disease, Dr Siele said a biosecurity checkpoint had been established at the Magotlhwane turn, next to Ga-Moswaane, to monitor traffic coming from the southern part of the region and prevent the disease from reaching areas such as Kanye.

He added that authorities were strengthening operations at the Mmathethe checkpoint to ensure all necessary control measures were effectively implemented.

Vaccination efforts were also being intensified across the zone, with teams extending services

from Kgomokasitwa along the Magotlhwane main road into the southern part beyond the Moswaane river stream.

To this end, an emergency vaccination campaign had been instituted to cover Tshweneyagae, Molapowabojang, Dipotsana, and extend all the way to Mogojojo to contain disease spread.

"The prevalence of these new FMD cases is worrying as it continues to undermine our efforts towards completely eradicate the disease in the region. This setback further delays our progress in meeting the necessary conditions to reopen export gates for beef trade with the EU market," he said.

Dr Siele highlighted ongoing collaborative efforts, noting that

Botswana, in partnership with the European Union (EU) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), has rolled out targeted training interventions on best practices for FMD prevention and control.

These trainings focus on improved biosecurity measures, early detection, proper vaccination protocols, and movement control.

During the kgotla meeting, Member of Parliament for Kanye West, Mr Victor Phologolo, urged livestock farmers in the affected areas to fully cooperate with veterinary officers on control measures, including movement restrictions and vaccination programmes.

He also called on residents to

remain vigilant and report any suspicious symptoms in their cattle immediately to the nearest veterinary office.

Kanye Police Station Commander, Superintendent Onkgomoditse Sekaba-Masala, addressed the community on harmful practices contributing to the disease's spread.

"We are seeing recurring issues where some members of the public engage in illegal slaughtering of cattle and then attempt to disguise the meat as having been legally bought from the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC)," she said.

"These actions seriously undermine disease control efforts by allowing potentially infected meat to circulate without proper veterinary inspection." **BOPA**



Down Syndrome Association of Botswana and other stakeholders joined Ms Neo Nkele (second left) during a Strides 50 of Walk launch in Francistown recently. Lead walker, Ms Nkele said she initiated the walk as part of her 50th birthday celebrations to help raise awareness on Down Syndrome. Photo: OgoPoleng Kgomothata

Family embarks on 500km walk to raise awareness on Down Syndrome

Kelebogile Taolo
FRANCISTOWN

In an effort to raise awareness on Down Syndrome, the Nkele family, in collaboration with the Down Syndrome Association of Botswana (DSAB), has launched a 500 kilometre walk dubbed the 'Strides 50 of Walk'.

Speaking at the official send-off in Francistown recently, lead walker Ms Neo Nkele said she initiated the walk as part of her 50th birthday celebration this year.

"This year marks my 50th birthday, and I wanted to do something impactful for the community rather than just celebrating it by myself," she said.

Ms Nkele explained that the walk would provide a platform for people to learn more about Down Syndrome, how to support children with the condition, and how DSAB can assist them.

"We have a friend with a child who has Down Syndrome, and I have noticed that many people are unaware of this condition.

This walk gives us an opportunity to enlighten others about Down

Syndrome," she said.

She also noted that the initiative served to show solidarity with parents of children with Down Syndrome in challenges they encountered.

Upon reaching Gaborone, Ms Nkele said, there would be a 21 kilometre walk on June 13, to wrap it up.

When speaking at the official send-off, specially elected member of council, Mr Ishmael Seitshiro, commended the couple's commitment to walking 500 kilometres in support of efforts to enlighten people about Down Syndrome.

"This journey represents more than merely covering distance; it embodies purpose.

It signifies using a personal milestone like turning 50 not just for celebration, but as an opportunity to foster awareness and drive change," Mr Seitshiro said.

Reflecting on the theme: Walking for Every Extra Chromosome, he said it served as a reminder that each person had value, every child deserves dignity, and every family deserves support.

Mr Seitshiro also highlighted the need to create environments where individuals with Down Syndrome are seen, heard, respected and included such as in homes, schools, churches, communities and national development agendas.

As the walk passes through villages along the A1 road, Mr Seitshiro encouraged residents to come out in support, engage in conversation, and walk alongside participants to demonstrate that Botswana is a nation of compassion.

Ms Bone Nkele, founder of The Gull Empowerment and daughter of Ms Neo Nkele, said the Strides of 50 initiative aimed to stimulate dialogue on inclusion, acceptance, understanding and community support.

"This initiative is significant as it continues the mission of The Gull Empowerment, the organisation I established in 2024 in honour of my friend who lived with Down Syndrome," she said.

The Strides of 50 Walk began in Francistown on Wednesday and will pass through various villages before concluding in Gaborone on June 13. **BOPA**

Councillors urge balance in spending as financial constraints persist

Lindi Morwaeng
MOLEPOLOLE

Kweneng District Councilors have called for unity, innovation and strengthened service delivery.

The appeal was in response to prevailing fiscal challenges, resulting shortage of health services, delayed assessment of potential social welfare beneficiaries, transport shortage and lack of infrastructure maintenance.

Responding to the Council Chairperson's address at a full council session recently, councillors even though acknowledging the financial pressures facing the country urged both political and administrative leadership to work collaboratively to minimise the impact on communities.

Cllr Michael Bagopi of Mokgopetsane Ward called for introspection among council leadership, stressing the need for cohesion between political and administrative authorities.

"We need to deeply reflect and assess ourselves on whether we are working together as a unit because differences and tension often affect service delivery," he said.

Cllr Bagopi noted that financial constraints were affecting implementation of projects and commitments made to communities. He cited a mobile clinic caravan previously proposed for his ward, saying clarity was needed regarding its status.

He further expressed concern that economic pressures could worsen poverty and hunger levels, urging social welfare officers to intensify assessments of vulnerable households.

At the same time, he commended government for absorbing temporary cleaners into permanent employment, saying the move had restored dignity to many workers.

He however, appealed for similar consideration to be extended to temporary teachers, some of whom have reportedly served for over a decade without permanent placement.

Cllr Benson Rauwe of Lesilakgokong-Kotolaname Ward emphasised the need for a deeper understanding of the country's economic situation, saying ordinary citizens should also appreciate

the implications of the economic downturn.

"When we talk about the economic downturn, we should take it seriously and help people understand what it means," he said.

He observed that a significant portion of the budget was directed toward salaries, leaving limited resources for development initiatives.

Cllr Rauwe said financial constraints have contributed to challenges affecting infrastructure such as roads and clinics, while shortage of vehicles continue to impact service delivery.

While appreciating recent grading of Molepolole-Lesilakgokong-Kotolaname gravel road, Cllr Rauwe said the development coincided with rainy conditions, therefore nullifying efforts made to improve the road surface.

For his part, Councillor Mpho Segwe of Lekgwapheng Ward urged leadership and communities to work together in addressing economic challenges.

"Let us work together to fight this financial crisis and demonstrate the leadership entrusted upon us by the people," he said.

Cllr Segwe said shortage of medicines was a matter requiring urgent attention, therefore encouraging exploration of partnerships through Botswana's bilateral relations, including engagement with international health institutions, to strengthen access to medication.

Meanwhile, Councillor Tsheltha Sentlha of Sojwe-Lephepe Ward highlighted transport shortages as a major impediment to service delivery in his constituency.

He cited challenges at the 24-hour clinic in Lephepe, including delays in disposal of clinical waste due to lack of transport.

Cllr Sentlha further raised concerns over maintenance of schools and staffing levels for cleaners, noting that at Sojwe Primary School, three cleaners were responsible for maintaining 20 classrooms, ablution facilities and an administration block.

He said additional support will strengthen hygiene standards and suggesting engagement of Ikageng beneficiaries for cleaning positions at the school. **BOPA**

Arts & Culture



San healing dance highlight of Macheng Bushfire Festival

Khama IV (left) lighting a bonfire to start for the San healing dance and other indigenous performances during the 4th edition of Macheng Bushfire Festival on Saturday.
Photos: Thuso Kgakatsi

Thuso Kgakatsi
HUKUNTSI

In an age where civilisation and modernity often dominate, one may be forgiven for thinking that Kgalagadi culture has faded into memory.

Yet that rhetoric is erased the moment you witness the rich traditional dances that communities in the area still uphold with pride.

At Macheng Bushfire, the San healing dance and other indigenous performances stand as living proof that the culture is not dead, but alive, breathing, and passed on from one generation to the next.

Now in its 4th edition, held on Saturday the show prides itself on a signature ritual, 'the healing

dance around the fire' called num dance in Sesarwa' that brought an endearing spectacle, leaving revelers captivated.

The night programme culminated with the healing dance around the fire, performed by a beautiful collaboration of groups comprising different Basawa traditional dancing groups from D'Kar, Maake and Zutshwa.

Revelers watched in awe as the groups delivered an eye-catching, inspirational and spiritual performance.

This is where the group collaborate without having practices together, but they danced in oneness, moving on a seemingly same formation as if they have had rehearsed for years.

The dance encompassed singing and clapping around the fire while dancers brought in their classical performance in a circle for a full hour without stopping.

According to the dancers, the movement and heat induce a trance state called, kia, during which spiritual energy known as, num, is accessed to heal participants.

Chances are, festival-goers, even though they were not invited into the circle, could feel healing through spiritual touch themselves, creating an unforgettable moment celebrated in unity.

As a matter of fact, the num dance is not just a performance for revelers, but rather, the way of healing people and repairing the community. It is an ancestral,

spiritual gathering where rhythm, song and movement come together to restore balance, promote healing and connect the community to their ancestors and natural world.

Around the fire, voices are said to rise in unity, feet beat the earth and generations old traditions come alive, reminding all of the deep wisdom of the Basarwa culture.

Kgosi Khama IV, of GaMmanagwato officially light the boom fire to pave way for the signature dance.

The lighting of the iconic Bushfire remains the hallmark of the annual event. More people graced this year's event compared to previous editions, with visitors drawn from across the country and neighbouring countries.

Here music, culture and tradition took centre stage as Khama called for greater efforts to preserve and promote Botswana's cultural heritage through community-led initiatives and cultural festivals.

Khama applauded organiser, Kabelo Moapare, for sustaining the event, describing it as an important platform for promoting tourism, celebrating cultural diversity and stimulating economic activity in Kgalagadi North.

He commended the festival organisers for its commitment towards providing a platform where traditions are honored, shared and passed on to future generations.

Khama emphasised the need to safeguard Botswana's cultural identity, noting that the Bangwato continue to uphold their traditions through mephato initiation ceremonies, Culture Day celebrations and traditional dance competitions.

He announced that this year's Bangwato traditional dance competitions will be held in Sefhare on July 4.

In a move aimed at fostering cultural exchange, Khama extended

an invitation to a NamaStap cultural group from Kgalagadi North to participate in the celebrations.

The group will be selected by dikgosi and the area Member of Parliament. The group has also been invited to perform during the Sir Seretse Khama Day commemorations in Serowe on July 1.

He further encouraged organisers to continue enhancing the festival's appeal, suggesting improvements to the bushfire spectacle to strengthen its uniqueness and attract more visitors in future.

For his part Member of Parliament for Kgalagadi North, Reason Lekutlane, commended played a significant role in uncovering and showcasing the rich cultural traditions and talents found in various parts of the country. He noted that such initiatives helped to strengthen national identity while creating platforms for local artists and cultural groups to thrive.

Lekutlane further emphasised the importance of continuing to support cultural festivals and community-driven events, saying they contributed to the preservation of Botswana's heritage and provided opportunities for young people to nurture and display their talents.

The MP also acknowledged the contribution of traditional leaders, artists, and community members in ensuring that Botswana's diverse cultural practices remained alive for future generations.

Festival activities began with a guided bush walk led by San community members, where participants moved through Kalahari vegetation, exploring nature while keeping fit and learning about the land.

In the afternoon, a motorcycle ride covered several Macheng villages including Hukuntsi, Lokgwabe, Tshane and Lehututu.
BOPA



The San healing dance and other indigenous performances stand as living proof that the culture is not dead and can be passed from one generation to the other.

DailySport

Sport pillar
of hope

Baggy Blues miss regional final despite stellar run

Anastacia Sibanda
GABORONE

The Botswana senior men's cricket team, affectionately known as the Baggy Blues, can, despite missing out on a berth in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Africa Regional Final, take immense pride in a campaign filled with stellar performances and historic milestones.

The team launched their tournament in spectacular fashion, putting together a flawless four-match winning streak that left opponents reeling.

Their dominant run included a 70-run opening victory over Sierra Leone, a crushing 10-wicket thrashing of Mali, a comprehensive 71-run win against Cameroon and a commanding 231-run victory over Côte d'Ivoire.

However, back-to-back losses late in the tournament halted their roaring momentum. The team fell by 62 runs to continental powerhouse Kenya before suffering a heart-breaking, narrow two-run defeat against Rwanda.

Despite falling just short of qualification, head coach, Stanley Timoni, expressed satisfaction with his players' overall growth, noting that the team improved with each passing game. He did, however, admit that tactical execution faltered in the final two crucial matches.

Timoni reflected that against Kenya, the bowling lacked discipline, conceding too many loose balls and leaving the batters with an uphill task to chase down a target of 198.

Conversely, he praised the bowling unit's bounce-back performance against Rwanda, revealing the strategic high-stakes gamble that ultimately cost them the game.

He explained that had they won, three teams would have finished on 10 points. Because they needed a superior net run rate to qualify, the team tried to push for a victory within 19 overs, believing that they would wrap up the game early.

Nonetheless, the coach remained confident in his squad, saying that the key to matching Africa's elite teams was securing more international exposure. Team captain, Karabo Motlhanka echoed the coach's optimism, saying that Botswana played high-quality cricket throughout the tournament.

Motlhanka noted that they lost to two good teams ranked in the top 10 in Africa, adding that competition in African cricket was tough right now as many countries were pushing hard and rapidly improving. To keep pace, he urged a fundamental shift in how Botswana approaches its long-term preparation, advocating for structured, year-round training even during the off-season.

He pointed to the Rwanda team as an example, where some young players had already played almost 100 matches, proving that continuous play made a big difference.

Motlhanka highlighted that Botswana was geographically well-positioned to solve the

issue given its proximity to major cricketing nations like South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

He argued that Botswana should be leveraging the expertise of its neighbours to keep players in the groove even when there was no upcoming tournament, identifying the consistent game time as the main element currently lacking to move the program forward.

Meanwhile, while the team results fell short of the ultimate goal, the tournament bore witness to a historic individual achievement as Motlhanka became the first-ever Mofswana to score a T20 International century.

The captain shared that it was a proud moment, made even sweeter by

accomplishing it on home soil. The intense seven-nation tournament featured Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

Ultimately, Rwanda and Kenya finished as the top two teams, successfully advancing to the Regional Final where they would battle for a highly coveted spot in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

BOPA



Botswana senior men cricket team's Valentine Mbazo in action against Côte d'Ivoire during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup encounter in Gaborone recently. Photos: Washa Bofelwang

Anastacia Sibanda
GABORONE

The downturn in Botswana's fiscal position, coupled with global instability and international conflicts, continues to exert heavy pressure on local markets and economies.

Amidst the economic hardships, he said sport remained a pillar of strength, hope and unity.

This was said by Botswana National Olympic Committee (BNOC) president, Tshepo Sitale during the organisation's Annual General Meeting.

Sitale said BNOC was convening at a time when Botswana, like many nations worldwide faces severe economic constraints.

"We continue to witness rising fuel prices, increasing food costs, and a decline in the general standard of living for many of our people," he said.

He said sport stands out as one of the few avenues providing public excitement during difficult times, bringing joy during uncertainty, and offering belief when the road ahead seems heavy.

Furthermore, Sitale said sport had the power to inspire communities, create sustainable opportunities, uplift spirits, and unite the nation behind a common dream.

"Indeed, sport remains our refuge and our source of resilience in trying times. I want to plead with sports leaders, stakeholders, and government partners to unite with a renewed purpose to drive initiatives that commercialise and professionalise Botswana's sports sector.

In the midst of the economic recession and the declining global demand for Botswana's primary natural resources such as diamonds, he said the aim is to position sport as an alternative vehicle for exporting national talent and promoting Botswana on the global stage.

"This vision is backed by the stellar performance of our athletes in athletics, tennis, karate, swimming, and surprise fields like equestrian sports, where a Mofswana athlete recently won gold at the Africa Youth Games in Angola," Sitale said.

Furthermore, he said Botswana's overall performance at the Africa Youth Games was impressive despite the ongoing absence of grassroots school sports.

He said lack of school sport was a challenge given that the country was losing talent at grassroots level.

The impact, he said would be felt in the 2032 Olympics, where there might have a generation of young people who have not played sport

"This matter requires immediate attention from the highest office in the land," he declared.

Addressing integrity in sport, he said doping cases and legal lawsuits were currently on the rise, therefore, there was a need for robust anti-doping education and stronger collaborative relations among all stakeholders.

"We cannot continue to attract negative publicity and expect our sports sector to grow through corporate sponsors and private sector investments," he said.

BOPA