

BOTSWANA

Daily News

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First National Bank of Botswana Chief Executive Officer Mr Steven Bogatsu

- With Botswana economy already facing global shocks owing to declining commodity sales, the Middle East conflict could place greater strain on the regional and global economy.

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Ikgopoleng allays fears amid Middle East conflict

What people see on TV and describe on social media is a far cry from what we experience on the ground. We are only feeling frightened because it is natural to feel so, but we feel safe as we receive constant warnings to stay away from danger.

Former national team boxer and two-time Olympian Khumiso Ikgopoleng

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'Gender gap persists in high positions'

Thandy Tebogo

KANYE

The traditional norm that women cannot stand for leadership position, has been a hindrance to women's progression overtime. Competent and qualified women are reluctant to stand for higher positions because of the patriarchal society and the "Pull Her Down" syndrome, says Ms Rhoda Sekgororoane, former Botswana National Front Women's League president.

As Botswana prepares to commemorate International Women's Day on March 05, 2026 at Moshana village, women in leadership positions and activists took turns to share their experiences.

According to Ms Sekgororoane her efforts to secure a Parliamentary seat in the past proved futile, associating her failure primarily to lack of support by women.

"Women are not supporting each other, I was even persuaded to step down by a woman," she said.

Ms Sekgororoane said women were mostly handicapped by financial constraints, while their male counterpart were accorded opportunities giving them the financial muscle to amass support.

"I wish that government could finance women in politics," she said.

Ms Sekgororoane, currently president of Botswana Caucus for Women in Politics, said her attempt to ascend the Mayoral seat in her political career in 2014 was equally unsuccessful after losing through a vote to a male challenger.

She observed that the situation was even worse as political parties were failing to satisfy the required 30 per cent representation quota reserved for women in politics.

Ms Sekgororoane said Botswana signed a Gender Protocol in 1995 at Beijing for a 30 per cent women representation in six critical areas with politics being one of them, unfortunately the agreement was failing to bare fruits.

As for women in the Media space, Ms Pamela Dube, a veteran female journalist, has over the years mentored and vocally advocated for women scribes.

Ms Dube said starting her media career as a cub reporter at Mmegi had not encountered any challenges in climbing the ladder in media.

She has covered real and hard core politics during the apartheid era in South Africa before the 1994 elections, working for the Mail and Guardian and Sowetan, surviving the challenging environment as black journalists were targeted by the then apartheid government.

Even though women have in the past ascended leadership positions in the local media such as the likes of Ms Banyana Segwe, Ms Beata Kasale and Ms Clara Olsen,

Former Botswana National Front Women's League president Ms Rhoda Sekgororoane

Ms Dube said their journey was however not a smooth sail as they were doing so in a patriarchal society.

She said local newsrooms were dominated by males, therefore making it difficult for a feminine to break through and ascend leadership position.

"We have predators running all over the show, we are failing to protect young women and we are losing a lot of them as a result of the situation on the ground," she said.

"Women hardly have a space where they groom, mentor and coach each other, on the other hand, men play golf while giving each other opportunities. We have predators in politics, sports and newsrooms. We need to come together and address issues of sexual harassment in the newsrooms," she said.

For her part the Managing Director of AT & T Monnakgotla, Ms Talita Monnakgotla said accessing financial support was the main challenge for women.

Ms Monnakgotla said financial institutions had the tendency of undermining the capability of women in business.

She indicated that in most cases, women had good accounting and financial management skills but remained undermined, adding that an unemployed woman could raise a child the same way that her employed counterpart would do.

Ms Monnakgotla said the transport industry involved time and commitment, therefore proving to be a challenging environment for women as naturally women were overwhelmed by responsibilities.

She implored women to venture into a businesses in areas of their specialty and skills.

According statistics from Sejelo Police Station in Kanye, 110 gender based violence related cases were recorded in 2025, 14 of the total reported cases affected children. **BOPA**



Public officers at a kgotla meeting addressed by Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae in Hukuntsi recently. He informed Kgalagadi North residents to expect significant improvements on roads infrastructure. Photo: Thuso Kgakatsi

Salakae assures residents of key roads upgrade

Thuso Kgakatsi
HUKUNTSI

The Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae, has assured residents of Kgalagadi North that they can expect significant improvements to their road infrastructure, saying that key roads in their district would eventually be upgraded to bitumen standard.

Addressing a consultative kgotla meeting in Hukuntsi recently, Mr Salakae said the government remained committed to upgrading the Hukuntsi-Ncojane and Hukuntsi-Tsabong roads, noting that the developments would enhance the transportation of goods and services while stimulating economic growth in the region.

He emphasised that the government was prioritising the construction of modern, climate-resilient roads built using new technologies to withstand current environmental conditions.

"The whole country is in dire need of roads, and as such, our ministry is committed to ensuring that this need is fulfilled," he said.

Mr Salakae highlighted that road network infrastructure remained the backbone of Botswana's economy as it connected villages and facilitated the smooth movement of goods and services.

He said though that the Hukuntsi-Ncojane road was expected to be included in the 2027/2028 financial year budget, attributing delays to prevailing financial constraints.

"Once completed, the projects would contribute significantly to job creation and revitalise the economy of the district," he stated.

Mr Salakae further noted that the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) had been designed to support such developments, alongside private sector partnerships.

In this regard, he relayed that investors had expressed keen interest in developing the Hukuntsi-Tsabong road at no cost to the government.

He noted that the arrangement would see the road operated as a

toll road, with charges primarily targeting heavy trucks.

Alternative routes will also be constructed to cater to motorists who will not be able to afford toll gates, he assured residents.

"These toll gates will generate revenue directly from road users to upgrade key national roads such as the A1 and improve road safety," he said.

Also, Minister Salakae highlighted that the construction of the Hukuntsi-Tsabong road via

fully benefit from increased trade and economic activity.

Furthermore, he informed residents that the government had resolved to partner with Namibia on the construction of the Trans-Kalahari railway line, which will create employment opportunities, connect the two neighboring states and facilitate efficient transportation of goods within the Southern African Development Community region.

He hastened to clear the air that the envisaged railway line would not pass through Kgalagadi district, it would run through Ngami district due to mining activities and greater business prospects in that area.

On public transport, Mr Salakae appealed to residents to embrace the upcoming increase in fares, which would take effect in April.

He explained that although adjustments were necessary, they had been kept minimal in light of prevailing economic challenges.

Minister Salakae also disclosed that the government intended to review the Road Traffic Act, describing it as outdated and long overdue for amendment.

For his part, Kgalagadi North Member of Parliament, Mr Reason Lekutlane, appealed for the tarring of the Lehututu-Ngwatle, Maake and Hunhukwe roads. He described their condition as poor and in urgent need of attention, suggesting that gravelling could be undertaken as an interim measure.

Mr Lekutlane welcomed the planned upgrading of the Hukuntsi-Ncojane and Hukuntsi-Tsabong roads.

Meanwhile, Kgosi Merapelo Tshweneyagae of Hukuntsi expressed gratitude to the Minister of Transport and Infrastructure for prioritising the long-awaited Hukuntsi-Ncojane and Hukuntsi-Tsabong roads.

He stated that the road projects were crucial and would go a long way at improving connectivity and boosting business opportunities for villages located along them.

He further noted that the Hukuntsi-Zutswa road also required urgent attention to facilitate the transportation of goods from the Zutswa salt Mine. **BOPA**

Government is prioritising the construction of modern, climate-resilient roads built using new technologies to withstand current environmental conditions.

the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park would ease the transportation of small stock to the Tsabong Multi-Species Abattoir.

In addition, Mr Salakae also indicated that the ministry was exploring effective dry grading methods for untarred roads in surrounding settlements such as Zutswa, Ukwi, Maake and Ngwatle.

For that, he said the government planned to procure equipment to carry out such works in-house.

He acknowledged concerns about overgrown vegetation along some roads leading to settlements, noting that tree cutting was necessary in certain areas to reduce hazards to motorists.

On others, he stressed the importance of upgrading the Trans-Kalahari Corridor, which passes through Kang Village, so that the local communities could

Gaolathe rallies envoys to support economic transformation agenda

Lesedi Thatayamodimo
GABORONE

Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe has called on members of the diplomatic corps to play a central role in advancing Botswana's economic transformation agenda, as global geopolitical and economic uncertainty reshape trade, investment flows and development finance.

Addressing ambassadors and high commissioners in Gaborone on Tuesday, Mr Gaolathe described diplomats as "living bridges" between Botswana and the international community, emphasising that trust, credibility and long-term partnerships were essential in an increasingly complex global environment.

"Diplomacy is not merely ceremonial, it is economic capital," he said.

Mr Gaolathe urged envoys to actively identify intersections between Botswana's transformation priorities and the strategic interests of their home countries.

He noted that diplomats were uniquely positioned to translate goodwill into tangible investment projects and policy dialogue into measurable outcomes.

"You understand the investment priorities of your institutions and the capabilities of your private sectors; you are uniquely placed to translate goodwill into projects and dialogue into tangible outcomes," he said.

Mr Gaolathe reaffirmed Botswana's openness to diversified partnerships grounded in mutual benefit, transparency and respect for sovereignty.

While acknowledging rising global fragmentation and strategic competition, he signalled that Botswana would maintain a pragmatic and balanced foreign policy approach.

Mr Gaolathe expressed both humility and confidence as

Botswana embarks on its next phase of development.

"Transformation is demanding; it requires adaptation and sustained effort, and Botswana has demonstrated resilience before," he said, adding that with strengthened public-private partnership frameworks and structured platforms for bilateral engagement, Botswana intended to deepen collaboration and attract investment that was commercially sound, socially responsible and sustainable.

He said Botswana was prepared, purposeful and ready to shape its next chapter of growth in partnership with the world.

Sharing similar sentiments, the Minister of Health, Dr Stephen Modise, called for bold partnerships, creative financing and innovative technologies to transform the country's healthcare sector and address persistent structural challenges.

Outlining the vision for health reforms, Dr Modise emphasised the importance of collaboration with international agencies and organisations, including the United Nations, adding that such partnerships have helped unlock critical resources and technical expertise.

"Each partner brings strength in a particular area; when real challenges arise, you can tap into something stronger than what is just on paper," Dr Modise noted.

He acknowledged that formal diplomatic processes could sometimes slow collaboration, but stressed that genuine working relationships had proven essential, particularly during periods of medicine shortages.

Reflecting on efforts to stabilise pharmaceutical supplies, he said the overwhelming good work that was put in during that period was phenomenal and urged diplomats to continue supporting such initiatives.

Among the reforms being

advanced, Dr Modise said, was the rollout of telemedicine, a technology widely established globally but still relatively new in Botswana.

"Telemedicine still sounds esoteric here, but it's old technology in many countries. The systems exist, the expertise exists; we need the partnerships to implement them effectively," he said.

Dr Modise reaffirmed his commitment to accessibility and openness to ideas from partners, stressing that innovation must be matched by responsive governance.

"As a country, we face enormous challenges in healthcare, but where others have excelled, we can learn, and with the right partnerships, we can build the future we envision," said Dr Modise. **BOPA**



Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe (right) addressing diplomatic corps during an engagement session in Gaborone on Tuesday. He said Botswana had long sought to position itself as a principled, rules-based and dependable partner. Photo: Phenyo Moalosi

Middle East volatility risk to economic growth

Pako Lebanna
GABORONE

An adverse effect on the global and domestic economy is likely to be felt from the ongoing conflict in the Middle East that has drawn the world's largest economy, the United States of America, alongside Israel into an exchange of heavy artillery with Iran, in a conflict that now engulfs top emerging markets Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and other Arabian states of the Persian Gulf.

This was said by First National Bank of Botswana (FNBB) Chief Executive Officer, Mr Steven Bogatsu during the presentation of the company's consolidated financial results for the six months that ended on December 31, 2025, in Gaborone on Tuesday.

First National Bank Botswana revealed a profit before tax of P1 billion for the six months ended 31 December 2025.

Mr Bogatsu cautioned that with the Botswana economy already facing global shocks owing to declining commodity sales, the Middle East conflict could place greater strain on the regional and global economy.

Nonetheless, he said FNBB had been committed to working towards a revival of the national economy, including through commitment to the ideals of the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP).

"Despite a tough economic climate characterised by liquidity constraints and rising costs, the bank managed to maintain its year on year profit margins," he said.

Buttressing the same view, FNBB Deputy CEO, Dr Mbako Mbo said the bank had worked on being resilient by adopting a disciplined approach towards growth, anchored in innovation, financial strength and long-term value creation.

"Despite a challenging economic environment, we remain focused on running a sustainable and well-capitalised organisation. Looking ahead, we will prioritise non-interest revenue, accelerate digital transformation and embed shared prosperity in all we do," Dr Mbo said.

He added that their strategic outlook, anchored in the bank's vision launched last year for the five years ending in 2030, would see them progressing towards modernisation and evolution into a fully integrated financial institution.

"Our ambition is to become more than a bank and evolve into a fully integrated financial institution. As we reach the final phase of our modernisation journey, our platforms are agile and ready for emerging technologies. We are re-imagining client experiences and taking the bank to our clients, not the other way around," Dr Mbo underscored.

He revealed that in future, they anticipated FNBB customers not only engaging in mobile money transfers through current facilities such as eWallet, but also enabled to access the weather and FNB Premiership football results in one consolidated app.

Dr Mbo said non-banking financial institution transactions from facilities such as those operated by mobile telephony companies had given them competition, but FNBB felt the solution lies in collaboration with NBFIs, as opposed to hostile competition.

He said their focus for the financial year 2026 would be on strengthening client trust through simplified personal experiences, enhancing operational agility and speed, accelerating digital transformation and high-performance culture, as well as continuing commitment to shared prosperity, including human and social development. **BOPA**

DailyNews

Published by: Department of Information Services
37795 Wellie Seboni Drive
Private Bag BR 139 Gaborone

Printed by: Government Printing and Publishing Services

Online Edition: <https://dailynews.gov.bw>
email: bopa@gov.bw email: dailynews@gov.bw

Circulation 20 000 per day except Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.

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PARLIAMENT 2026

Ministry approaches World Bank to fund school expansions

Mmoniemang Motsamai
GABORONE

Owing to continued shortage of educational facilities and inadequate maintenance of infrastructure, Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education is in liaison with the Ministry of Finance to approach the World Bank for funding.

Presenting the ministry's budget estimates on Tuesday for the next financial year, Minister Nono Kgafela-Mokoka, said the loan facility was targeted at funding the key ministry priorities that included rehabilitation of boarding facilities, expansion of junior and senior secondary schools as well as construction of reception classrooms. Regarding expansion of schools, Ms Kgafela-Mokoka said the ministry had eight projects of which six were implemented through the Development Manager (DM) model.

Of the eight projects, she said, four had been completed at Goldmine, Selolwe, Moeti and Chamabona Junior Secondary Schools and the remaining four at Okavango, Shanganani, Nkange and Motswakhumo JSS would be completed during the 2026/2027 financial year. She said the ministry had successfully expanded capacity at Motswakhumo JSS in Lentsweletau through the completion of 10 prefabricated classrooms.

Parliament also heard that government remained committed to revitalising educational infrastructure through a comprehensive programme of maintenance and expansion.

In that regard, she said, the ministry was implementing six maintenance projects, all of which were anticipated to reach completion by the end of the 2025/2026 financial year. Regarding teachers' accommodation, she said 20 housing units had successfully been completed at Orapa JSS and Popagano JSS at each school and that while the ministry had originally planned to construct an additional 72 staff houses, the projects were cancelled following strategic review of the DM model. The ministry's budget allocations for 2026/27 total P12.9 billion of which P11.8 would be used towards recurrent budget while P1 billion was for development projects. The school feeding programme had been budgeted P561.9 million to cover the envisaged home-grown feeding programme, while P446.3 million would cover service charges at schools, most of which were water bills in secondary schools, mainly exacerbated by leakages, owing to aged infrastructure.

The fourth largest share will go towards subservions and grants to parastatals and civil society organisations of the ministry at a cost of P331 million, while temporary teachers have a budget proposal of P212 million.

"I am aware that government's position is to create permanent positions for temporary teachers, however this needs collective efforts by entire government," she said. Orphan and care programme had been budgeted P200.1 million to pay particular focus on children's rights and welfare in order to address the challenges faced by children from diverse backgrounds. Under the development

budget, over P1 billion is requested for the implementation of various development programmes strategically directed towards improving access, quality, inclusiveness, child welfare and the modernisation of education service delivery.

A further P771 million is earmarked for school expansion, maintenance and the construction of staff houses, in order to address infrastructure gaps, reduce overcrowding and improve teacher accommodation.

Funds amounting to P445 million have been proposed for secondary education programme to undertake essential repairs, renovations and infrastructure improvements across the country while P274 million has been allocated for expansion of various secondary schools in order to align infrastructure provision with student enrolment growth and evolving curriculum requirements.

The amount of P32 million is requested for the construction of staff houses in Junior Secondary Schools across the country, as part of ongoing efforts to improve teacher accommodation, enhance deployment and promote retention, particularly in remote areas as well as P20 million allocated to Moeng College for the completion of the Alternative Pathways Project.

Other allocations are for child welfare at P20 million, learner support at P16 million, and P10 million for refurbishment of curriculum building for office accommodation and P10 million for Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) transformation project that strengthens education across all levels of education. **BOPA**



Assistant Minister of Health, Mr Lawrence Ookeditse informed Parliament on Tuesday that the prolonged delay in the refurbishment of Maun General Hospital was caused by the contractor's inadequate project management and subsequent failure to meet scheduled delivery dates.

Maun hospital set for completion next year

GABORONE

The prolonged delay in the refurbishment of Maun General Hospital was caused by the contractor's inadequate project management and subsequent failure to meet scheduled delivery dates, Parliament has heard.

Answering a question in Parliament on Tuesday, Assistant Minister of Health, Mr Lawrence Ookeditse, informed legislators that the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MTI) terminated the contract in October 2023 due to poor performance.

Mr Ookeditse said while the project originally commenced in July 2017 with a 2018 deadline, it stalled at 90 per cent completion for years. He acknowledged that the delayed completion of the project had negatively impacted access to healthcare services for the underserved communities of Ngamiland Region.

However, he said plans were underway to complete the remaining works through the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure in the next financial year (2026/27).

He said the condition audits were carried out on January 12 and 15 this year to determine the scope for the remaining works

while MTI was currently working on the tender documents which were expected to be ready this March. Also, he said awarding of the contract was anticipated by May and for the works to commence on site by June this year and completed by April next year.

"The 2026/27 budget for the Maun General Hospital project is P24 million for completion of the remaining works," he said.

He indicated that Maun General Hospital was centrally located in a densely populated area hence easily accessible by the communities within the catchment area.

He further told Parliament that Maun General Clinic, located in the hospital vicinity and operated on a 24-hour basis, continued to service the nearby communities and the community could also seek access to health care services at Letsholathebe II Memorial Hospital, which was about 10km from Maun General Hospital.

Maun West MP, Mr Caterpillar Hikuama, had sought an update on the refurbishment and maintenance backlogs. Mr Hikuama expressed concern over the impact the delays had on healthcare delivery in the region, given that the project was nearly eight years behind its original schedule. **BOPA**

Ntsima requests P1.5bn for trade and entrepreneurship ministry

Tebagano Ntshole
GABORONE

Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship has requested Parliament's approval for P331 million in development expenditure and P1.2 billion for recurrent expenditure for the 2026/27 financial year.

Presenting the proposals on Tuesday, Minister Tiroeane Ntsima outlined several legislative updates and policies slated for the upcoming financial year which included initiatives aimed to ease business operations and improve government efficiency.

He said the ministry was working to introduce the Regulatory Guillotine, a mechanism designed to systematically review existing regulations for relevance and efficiency.

He noted that the move would reduce the costs and risks of doing business in Botswana, thereby improving competitiveness and

facilitating job creation.

He also told Parliament that the ministry had also initiated reviews of several key Acts, including the Trade Act, Liquor Act, Gambling Act and Regulations and the Cooperative Societies Act.

"These reviews aim to address Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) concerns while aligning Botswana's legal framework with international best practices," he said.

He further reported significant progress on a new investment incentives framework.

"The proposed incentives represent a departure from profit-based to cost-based incentives, targeting the renewable energy, manufacturing, and services sectors," he stated.

Furthermore, he said the ministry was developing an Investment Law to provide legal protections for investors, alongside a revised National Investment Strategy to serve as a blueprint for increasing investment

flows into the country. In the realm of digital transformation, he said government had allocated P40 million toward developing a home-grown Company Registration System.

"This project aims to support citizen-owned ICT companies, stimulate skills transfer and eliminate the current P8 million annual system support costs," he added.

The minister also shared updates on the Wealth Creation Programme, which had funded 41 869 enterprises since its inception.

He said currently, 73 per cent of the enterprises were operational, providing jobs for 34 731 people. "The programme is now being reviewed to align with the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) and the twelfth National Development Plan (NDP 12)," he said.

Despite the proposed advancements, the minister acknowledged challenges faced during the 2025/26 financial year, including tariffs recently imposed on Botswana by the US government. **BOPA**

Minister unveils strategy to combat smuggling

GABORONE

The digital tax stamp system for alcohol and tobacco products, known as the Track and Trace solution, is a technology-driven regulatory mechanism designed to uniquely mark, monitor and authenticate products throughout the supply chain.

This was said by Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe, in response to a parliamentary question on Monday.

Minister Gaolathe explained that the system, provided government with real time visibility over production, importation and distribution activities. He said by enhancing oversight and enforcement capability, the

substantially reduced opportunities for smuggling, counterfeiting and under declaration.

He added that Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) and the solution provider finalised an agreement this year in February, which outlined the detailed technical specifications of the system.

"The project has now progressed into the development phase. Implementation will commence with the tobacco sector, with rollout scheduled to begin in the second quarter of the 2026/2027 financial year. Deployment of the solution for alcohol products will follow thereafter," said Mr Gaolathe. Regarding the project expenditure, its value to the country and the expected return

on investment, he pointed out that the system had been designed as a self-liquidating model.

Under such an arrangement, he said, government did not incur the capital cost associated with system development, deployment, or maintenance nor did it assume operational risk.

He mentioned that instead the private sector service provider finances and implements the solution, while government exercised full regulatory oversight.

Accordingly, he noted that government had not incurred any direct capital expenditure for the development of the system.

"This approach ensures that the fiscus is not burdened with upfront costs during a period of fiscal constraint. It is also fully aligned

with the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) which promotes private sector led investment while government concentrates on governance, regulation and oversight," he said.

On the alcohol and tobacco products, Mr Gaolathe said they attracted a very high effective tax burden in Botswana citing that when excise duty, value added tax and the relevant levies were combined, the total tax payable was often close to the factory price of the product.

He indicated that while the tax structure was justified on both revenue generation and public health grounds, it also created a strong financial incentive for smuggling, counterfeiting and

under declaration. "Criminal operators exploit these tax differentials by introducing untaxed or falsely declared products into the market at significantly lower prices.

The revenue losses associated with illicit trade in alcohol and tobacco are significant.

Preliminary estimates in these industries range between P500 million and P1 billion annually," he said.

Mr Gaolathe further told Parliament that The Track and Trace solution was designed to address the structural vulnerability directly. Meanwhile, Mr Gaolathe indicated that Authentix, an American company with well-established international track record in authentication and traceability solutions in excisable products, was a successful bidder which was given the tender with a contract duration of 10 years, which he said aligned with international practice in jurisdictions that had implemented similar systems.

"The system has been implemented worldwide and in Africa, BURS has benchmarked with countries like Kenya, Cameroon and Tanzania.

This duration allows sufficient time for system development, integration with industry players, stabilisation and the achievement of measurable enforcement outcomes," he said. Furthermore, he said the 10-year tenure, was consistent with the self-liquidating model under which the service provider recovered its investment through the sale of digital tax stamps over the life of the contract.

A shorter contract period, he said would risk fragmented implementation, reduced sustainability and inadequate recovery of private sector investment. As for the BURS, in relation to the project and the involvement of the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC), Mr Gaolathe said no such forensic investigation had been instituted.

The procurement process, he said, was conducted through an open, transparent and competitive procedure in full compliance with applicable procurement laws and governance frameworks. Additionally, he said standard audit, compliance and oversight mechanisms continued to apply, as was with all public procurement processes.

To date, he revealed that no evidence, findings or circumstances had emerged that would justify the initiation of a forensic investigation. Member of Parliament for Serowe South, Mr Leepetswe Lesedi had asked the minister for an update on the digital tax stamp for alcohol and tobacco products.

Mr Lesedi also wanted an update on how much was spent for the project, its value for the country and its return on investment as well as the company which was awarded the tender and the duration of the agreement.

Furthermore, he wanted an update on the results of the forensic investigation that was instituted by BURS on the project and why it was carried out and also the involvement of DCEC in the investigation. **BOPA**

MPs approve Ministry of Lands and Agriculture budget

Tebagano Ntshole GABORONE

Parliament has on Monday approved a total budget of P5.322 billion for the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture for the 2026/27 financial year.

Presenting the budget proposals, acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Dr Edwin Dikoloti, stated that the amount included P2.885 billion for development and P2.437 billion for the recurrent budget.

Dr Dikoloti told Parliament that 44 112 plots were surveyed across the country during the 2025/26 financial year, out of which 12 416 plots had been approved, while the remaining 31 696 were currently undergoing

examination and quality control.

For the upcoming financial year, he said the ministry planned to commence surveying land parcels to facilitate private sector investment and socio-economic development. He highlighted a significant disparity in land documentation indicating that only 19 621 Secure Land Titles (SLT) had been issued against 68 190 plots captured through Registered General Plans.

He explained that while production peaked at 7 655 titles in 2023/2024 following legislative amendments, output declined to 3 126 in 2025/2026, attributing the drop to budget constraints and outdated equipment, incomplete ICT integration as well as technical hurdles such as the mandatory registration of Certificates of Registered Title under Section 46 of the

Deeds Registry Act.

"To address this, a proposed amendment to waive this requirement for built-up areas is expected to unlock a large volume of pending titles. Additionally, under the Twelfth National Development Plan (NDP 12), the ministry will upgrade the Land Information System and the Integrated Geographic Information System (IGIS)," he said.

Dr Dikoloti also announced plans for the Electronic Deeds Registration Systems Act, which would provide a legal framework for digital registration. "It is key to have the land registration system digitized to address not only systematic deficiencies but also the technical shortcomings associated with manual processes," he said.

Regarding land servicing, he noted that while the ministry used full and bulk servicing models, current liquidity challenges had necessitated a shift to minimal land servicing, which included bush clearing,

access road construction and water trunk main installations for standpipe connections.

Furthermore, he outlined ongoing projects for 2026/27 financial year which included Ghanzi Block 1-6 and Ghanzi Block 1, Botshabelo Infill and Metsimothabe Block 4 (Package 1), Mmankgodi-Tloaneng-Gabane Road and Sir Seretse Khama International Airport Special Economic Zone. Acknowledging the cultural importance of land, Dr Dikoloti said, "Land to a Motswana is a means of production, a family property, a source of identity and a capital asset to unlock potential."

Despite long waiting lists due to resource scarcity, the minister promised progress, saying 877 residential plots in Selebi Phikwe and Francistown would be allocated by the first quarter of 2026/27 while 212 residential plots (200 in Lobatse and 12 in Gaborone) were slated for allocation this fiscal year.

On the Bonno Housing project, he said 168 hectares had been reserved for a potential yield of 150 000 residential units, with an additional 281.5 hectares reserved across all Land Boards for a further 15 872 plots. **BOPA**



Acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Dr Edwin Dikoloti says plans are at an advanced stage to operationalise Botswana Meat Commission Francistown abattoir by December, dedicated exclusively to Kosher slaughter to diversify export channels.



Daily Business

IFAD partnership to commercialise smallstock and poultry

Tebagano Ntshole
PARLIAMENT

Government, in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has proposed US\$86.84 million (over P1.15 billion) project targeting 50 000 households to commercialise smallstock and poultry enterprises.

Presenting the 2026/27 budget proposals for the Ministry of Lands

and Agriculture in Parliament on Monday, acting minister, Dr Edwin Dikoloti said the Botswana Livestock Commercialisation Project (BoLCOP) was expected to reduce reliance on subsistence farming and expand access to local and regional markets.

“By strengthening smallstock and poultry enterprises, the project will contribute to job creation, household food security and increased cash earnings, while supporting Botswana’s broader goal of raising agriculture’s contribution

to GDP from two per cent to six percent in the short term and 10 per cent in the long term,” Dr Dikoloti said.

The minister stated that in its quest to increase the national herd from 1.7 million to five million by 2030, government had introduced several key initiatives, which included the A Di Tsale programme, intended to boost reproductive efficiency and calving rates and the upgrading of the Ramatlaba National Artificial Insemination Laboratory into a Centre of Excellence and export hub

for superior germplasm.

However, Dr Dikoloti noted a recent setback in performance saying ‘in 2025/2026, performance declined to 3 622 cows from 6 522 cows in 2024/2025, against a target of 7 500, largely due to financial resource constraints’.

The minister further announced a partnership with the Green Climate Fund and Conservation International to implement a Rangeland Restoration Project, an initiative he said aimed to restore 46 000 hectares across the Kgalagadi, Ngamiland and Bobirwa landscapes, encompassing 104 villages.

He added that the initiative also aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve livelihoods and create 6 000 green jobs through enhanced livestock management practices. Additionally, he said the ministry was jointly implementing the Growing Greener Project with GIZ and Conservation International under the International Climate Initiative (IKI).

“With a funding allocation of approximately EUR 5 million, the project focuses on the restoration and sustainable management of agro-pastoral systems in open arid landscapes,” Dr Dikoloti explained.

The minister highlighted that the Tsabong and Gaborone Multi-Species Abattoirs would expand national processing capacity and stimulate rural economies.

Conversely, he said the dairy sub-sector continued to struggle, with local production meeting only 13 per cent of national demand.

“To mitigate this, government has imported 150 dairy goats from Australia,” he said.

He further told Parliament that the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) and the Milk Valley initiative under the Botswana Development Corporation (BDC) were also being leveraged to stimulate private investment, with the latter holding the potential to contribute 12 per cent to local production.

He further indicated that poultry remained a pillar of food security, producing over 52 000 tonnes of broiler meat and 14 million dozen eggs annually, sustaining nearly 7 000 jobs. Regarding animal health, Dr Dikoloti expressed concern that while Botswana had a strong record of controlling Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), anthrax and rabies, there was a rising prevalence of Bovine brucellosis and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) in cattle, Gumboro and Newcastle disease in poultry as well as Heartwater and pasteurilosis in smallstock.

However, he said to manage such risks, government had invested in over 10 000 kilometres of cordon fences.

“Through vaccination, quarantine and strict movement controls, Botswana has preserved disease-free zones covering 60 per cent of our national territory, sustaining access to premium export markets. These measures underpin the national target of expanding the herd to five million cattle while advancing agriculture’s contribution to GDP under NDP12,” the minister said.

BOPA



Acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Dr Edwin Dikoloti told Parliament that the poultry sub-sector had achieved self-sufficiency in chicken meat and table eggs, with its value rising from P1.7 billion in 2022 to P3.5 billion in 2025.

Poultry sector value doubles as Botswana attains self-sufficiency

PARLIAMENT - Botswana has achieved self-sufficiency in chicken meat and table eggs, with the poultry subsector value increasing from P1.7 billion in 2022 to P3.5 billion in 2025.

Responding to a question in Parliament on Tuesday, Acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Dr Edwin Dikoloti, said the subsector remained pivotal to the agriculture industry and was transitioning toward an export-led, value addition-focused model with significant job creation potential.

Dr Dikoloti said the Botswana Livestock Commercialisation Project (BOLCOP) would support 50 000 households, translating to about 200 000 people, through strengthening commodity clusters and facilitating market access.

On parent stock ownership, he said there were four Botswana-owned parent stock chicken rearing businesses, three operating in partnership and one fully citizen-owned.

“Broiler hatcheries currently have 310 000 parent stock while layer hatcheries have 12 146 parent stock with hatcheries for broilers and layers having a production

capacity of 3 000 000 and 60 000 day old chicks respectively,” he said.

Regarding import permits, the minister said five applications were received during the reporting period, three of which were approved and sourced from Zambia. He said two applications seeking to import from South Africa were declined due to an outbreak of avian influenza in that country, adding that the last importation from South Africa was in 2019.

He said citizens were allowed to import fertile eggs subject to meeting biosecurity requirements, including proof of ownership of an incubator and production rearing site. He acknowledged supply constraints of day-old chicks affecting small and medium-scale farmers, stating that 38 890 722 broiler chicks were produced between January and December 2025, with 35 per cent allocated to small-scale producers.

He said the ministry would not hesitate to report any supplier found engaging in anti-competitive practices to the Competition and Consumer Authority.

He further revealed that the ministry had, in 2014 established a multi-stakeholder committee called Poultry Liaison Committee (PLC) made up of all the stakeholders including Botswana Poultry Association (BPA), a body that represented the interests of small and medium scale farmers.

Member of Parliament for Nkange, Motlhaleemang Moalosi, had sought clarity on the number of Botswana owned businesses in the parent stock chicken rearing industry.

Mr Moalosi had also asked of the number of Botswana who applied for permits to import parent stock, those who were approved, denied and the reason for denial.

He called for an investigation into the poultry industry, alleging that dominant, vertically integrated suppliers were using import restrictions and seasonal chick shortages to gatekeep the market. He was also seeking transparency on citizen permit denials and demanding that the Competition and Consumer Authority address such barriers to ensure that local farmers can compete during the lucrative Christmas period. **BOPA**

BUSINESS BRIEFS

US threatens to ‘cut off all trade’ with Spain

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to ‘cut off all trade with Spain’ for Spain’s refusal to allow the US military to use its base for attacks on Iran, while saying he is not happy with Britain either. “We are going to cut off all trade with Spain. We do not want anything to do with Spain,” Trump told reporters at the beginning of his talks with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in the Oval Office. “By the way I am not happy with the UK either,” Trump said. “This is not Winston Churchill that we’re dealing with.” British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told Parliament on Monday that Britain is not joining the US-Israeli ‘offensive strikes’ on Iran. Merz is the first foreign leader to meet Trump in person since the US administration launched large-scale airstrikes against Iran on Saturday. **Xinhua**

Zimbabwe bans raw minerals exports

HARARE

The Zimbabwean Cabinet on Tuesday approved a ban on raw minerals and lithium concentrates exports, following an announcement by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development in late February. Speaking at a post-Cabinet media briefing, Mines and Mining Development Minister Polite Kambamura said the indefinite ban was imposed in the national interest to promote local value addition of minerals. He said the government previously announced a ban on lithium concentrate exports for January 2027, but reversed the decision after observing malpractices in the lithium mining industry. notice period,” he said. The ban will remain until government conditions or expectations are met. Zimbabwe has seen significant investment in its lithium sector in recent years. **Xinhua**

Africa Energy Indaba 2026 opens in Cape Town

CAPE TOWN

The Africa Energy Indaba 2026 opened Tuesday in Cape Town with a focus on advancing Africa’s industrial transformation through energy reform, infrastructure expansion, and regional integration. In his opening address, South Africa’s Minister of Electricity and Energy Kgosientsho Ramokgopa said the global energy system was being reshaped by geopolitical competition and industrial policy. “We assemble here at a moment of profound historical consequence,” he said. Ramokgopa argued that while Africa was structurally central to the global energy transition because of its critical mineral resources, it must avoid repeating a pattern of exporting raw materials without building domestic value chains. “If minerals are the inheritance of our geology, electricity is the instrument through which we convert that inheritance into enduring industrial strength,” he said. **Xinhua**

Dikgang

PAMPIRI YA THUTO LE DIKITSISO

Ipapatse Fa Leletsa

659 6315 | 625 0353 | 533 0379 | 297 8237
261 0480 | 241 3402 | 365 3500



Kgotla ya molao -motheo ga e na go emisa ditlhabololo

Kefilwe Selotlegeng
MAHALAPYE

Banni ba Mookane ba lekodisitse ka kakanyetso ya go tlhomiwa ga Kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo.

Ba lekodisitse jalo ke mothusa tona wa lephata la dikgalo le tsa Ngwao, Rre Ignatius Moswaane, yo o neng a ba tlhalosetsa maikaelelo le ditiro tsa kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo e e akanyediwang go tlhomiwa.

Rre Moswaane o tlhalositse gore kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo ke kgotla ya ditsheko e e faphegileng e bile e le yone e e kwa godimo thata, e e nang le maikarabelo a go toloka molao motheo.

A re maikaelelo a yone ke go sireletsa ditshwanelo tsa batho, go balelwa le go rarabolola dikgotlhang tsotlhe tse di amanang le molao motheo.

Rre Moswaane o gateletse gore kgotla tshetlo e, e tlaa nna botlhokwa thata mo go nonotsheng puso le go netefatsa gore ditshwanelo tsa batho di a tlotliwa le go sirelediwa, go sa kgathalesege letso, morafe kgotsa mmala wa motho.

Le fa banni ba supile kgatlhego mo go tlhomiwang ga kgotla ya molao motheo, ba supile matshwenyego ka mathata a a ba amang e le setshaba letsatsi le letsatsi.

Ba boletse gore puso e tshwanetse go tsibogela go rarabolola mathata ao, jaaka tlhalelo ya melemo mo dikokolong, go aga le go baakanya ditsela, go tlhokomela dikolo, gammogo le ditlhabologo tse dingwe. Fa a ba araba, mothusa tona Rre Moswaane o ne a tlhomamisetsa banni gore go tlhomiwa ga kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo ga go kitla go kgoreletsa mananeo a ditlhabololo tsa maphata a mangwe a puso ka gore lephata lengwe le lengwe le dira kabotekanyetso ya madi ya lone.

Fa a bua ka tlhalelo ya melemo, Rre Moswaane o tlhalositse gore bothata ga bo bakwe ke go tlhoka madi, mme bo bakwa ke dikgwetlho tse di amanang le theko le dithendara. Rre Moswaane o boletse gore mo kabo-tekanyetsong ya madi a setshaba e e sa tswang go fetisiwa, Lephata la Botsogo le abetswe madi a go reka melemo e mentsi.

A re Lephata la Tlhokomelo ya Bana le Thuto ko moding le lone le abetswe madi a a magolwane a go tlhokomela le go baakanya dikolo. **BOPA**



Tona wa lephata la ditsela le dikago, Rre Noah Salakae (molemeng), mothusa tona wa lephata la metsi le bonno, Rre Motsamai Motsamai (fa gare) le baeteledipele ba kgaolo ya Charleshill ba goroga kwa phuthegong ya kgotla bosheng. Rre Salakae o tlhaloseditse morafe fa puso e lebanwe ke kgwetlho ya seemo sa ditsela tse di mo seemong se se sa itumediseng. Senepe: Malebogo Lekula

Puso e tlaa dirisa methale e mesha ya kago ya ditsela

Malebogo Lekula
CHARLESHILL

Seemo se se sa itumediseng sa ditsela se gwetlhile lephata la dipalamo le dikago go batla methale e e tlhabogileng ya go di tlhabolola, go tokafatsa mesepele ya dithoto le batho. Tona wa lephata la dipalamo le dikago, Rre Noah Salakae, a re seemo sa ditsela tse di tona le tse di mo gare ga metse ga di mo seemong se se jesang diwelang mme dingwe tsa tse ditona jaaka ya Trans Kalahari Corridor (TKC) di gokaganyang mafatshe.

O tlhalositse se mo phuthegong ya kgotla kwa Charleshill fa a ne a rolela banni molao kakanyetso wa go tlhabolola ditirelo tsa lephata, go itepatepanya le phetogo ya seemo sa ditlhabololo, le molao kakanyetso wa go oketsa ditlhotlha tsa dipalamo tsa setshaba.

A re seemo se tlama puso go tlhabolola ditsela mme maitemogolo ke gore, go ne go dirisitse metswako e e sa kgoneng go itshwarelela mo seemong sa go fetoga ga loapi.

Rre Salakae a re puso e dira

maiteko a go tla ka methale e e tlhabolotsweng go dira ditsela tse di ka kgonang go emelana le go fetoga ga seemo sa loapi mme di kgone go itsetsepela lobaka di sa tlame puso go di baakanya kgapetsakgapetsa ka ditshenyegelo tse di kwa godimo.

O tlhalositse fa puso e lebanwe ke kgwetlho ya tlhalelo ya madi, a supa fa lephata le abetswe P3.3 billion, mme a re ditshekatsheko tsa go baakanya ditsela go ralala lefatshe leno, di ka lopa P103 billion.

Le fa seemo sa madi se sa letle, Rre Salakae a re ba tlaa dira maiteko a go itebaganya le paakanyo ya ditsela tse di kgolwane ka di tlaa thusa puso go kgobokanya madi ka dituelo tsa metsamao ya dithoto go ralala lefatshe leno go babalesegile.

A re puso e tlaa tswelala ka go dira ditsela tse di sa tshelwang seknotere ka go nna di gopiwa go tokafatsa mesepele gammogo le tse di gokaganyang metse le meraka le masimo.

Rre Salakae o tlhalositse fa puso e dira maiteko a go atolosa ditsela tsa go tokafatsa mesepele ya dithoto ka go dira ditshekatsheko tsa go oketsa kago ya diporo tsa terena jaaka sa

Namibia le Botswana. A re seporo seo, se tlaa thusa go tsamaisa dithoto tse di bokete di tshwana le lookwane le magala mme seo se babalele botshelo jwa ditsela tsa seknotere.

Modulasetilo wa komiti ya ditlhabololo tsa motse, Rre Obediah Mokonyane, o ikuetse mo go tona ka tiego ya go thiba mahuti mo tseleng ya TKC, loruo lo lo gobeyang mo tseleng, tiego ya go kgaola ditlhare mo thoko ga tsela, bogodu jo bo ileng magoletsa jwa terata le diheke tsa go kanela loruo go ya kwa tseleng.

O buile gape ka tiego ya go gopa ditsela tsa lokgarapana tse di gokaganyana Makunda-New Xanagas, Karakubis-New Xanagas, Charleshill-New Xanagas le Ncojane-Metsimantsho.

Rre Mokonyane o kopile tona go bula ofisi ya lephata la ditsela le dipalamo kwa Charleshill go ba atumeletsa ditirelo go na le go di latela bokgala kwa Ghanzi.

Fa a ba kgwa dikgaba, Rre Salakae, o tlhalositse fa ba le mo thulaganyong ya go bona gore ba tlhabolola ditirelo tsa bone, go di tsenya mo maranyaneng gore bontsi bo kgone go di akola gongwe le gongwe kwa

ba teng ba sa tlamege go ya go kgobokana mo meleng e meleele kwa diofising.

A re gape ba mo thulaganyong ya go bula diofisi kwa Charleshill e le maiteko a go atumetsa ditirelo kwa setshabeng.

O ne a supa fa ba lephata la ditsela ba tlaa nna ba ntse ba thiba dikhuti mo tseleng go fokotsa tshenyego ya yone. Rre Salakae o tlhalositse gape fa go ile ga nna le makgwere mabapi le madi a phimolo dikeledi ka jaana bangwe ba ba saletseng kwa morago go ne go tlhalela masupi mangwe mme go tswelletswe go bona gore ba a thusiwa.

Mopalamente wa kgaolo ya Charleshill e bile e le mothusa tona wa lephata la metsi le bonno, Rre Motsamai Motsamai, o supile fa go tlhalelo ya mesele ya kgopo ya metsi a leswe, e beile banni ka fa mosing ka jaana, ba tsenelwa ke merwalala ka nako ya dipula.

O ne a gwetlha tona go sekaseka melao ya pele ya go ema kgalhanong le go tsenya terata mo tseleng ya TKC, a supa fa tsela eo, e sa babalesega ka ntata ya go saila ga loruo le diphologolo tsa naga. **BOPA**

Constitutional Court panacea for human rights violation

**Keetile Bontsibokae
and Booster Mogapi
MOLEPOLOLE**

Some residents of Gabane, Thamaga and Mmankgodi believe that the proposed establishment of the Constitutional Court (ConCourt) comes at the right time when many of their rights have been trampled upon.

Others said it was a misplaced priority as there were other burning issues that needed attention.

Speaking at a kgotla meeting addressed by the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Nelson Ramaotwana recently, Gabane South councillor, Mr Ntuka Moumakwa

noted that the announcement came at a time when residents were still dealing with the grief of losing land rights to the Mogoditshane Land Board.

He said many wondered whether the ConCourt could reverse their ordeal, as parents in the area remained landless and trapped in poverty.

In contrast, Mr Kenosi Rantlole voiced skepticism, arguing that Botswana's history showed persistent friction favouring wealthy elites, and feared the ConCourt might further suppress the rights of ordinary citizens.

He is worried that the institution could open the door to practices he considered immoral, such as same-sex

marriage.

Mr Rantlole questioned the relevance of the ConCourt for Botswana's relatively small population and suggested that the funds allocated could be better spent on improving welfare programmes like Ikageng.

Other residents in Thamaga echoed concerns about the timing and cost of the initiative, while also hoping it might eventually strengthen land rights.

Mr Onthusitse Motsumi

The proposal comes at a time when residents are still dealing with grief of losing land rights to the Mogoditshane Land Board.

expressed hope that the ConCourt would reduce presidential powers. However, he was worried that since the President would appoint top judges, the court might be filled with loyalists.

"We fear these people will pledge allegiance to the President. My

plea is that presidential powers be reduced so the ConCourt can operate independently," he said.

Mr Sekao Mpusetsang supported the idea in principle but highlighted mismatched priorities.

He pointed to the economic crisis

and constitutional issues, warning that once the ConCourt idea passed, there may be complaints about insufficient funds to build its premises.

Mr Mpusetsang also shared personal frustrations with the current judicial system, which he described as lengthy, costly and prone to disadvantaging ordinary citizens.

Several residents emphasised the need for more public education on the role and implications of the ConCourt before its full implementation.

While in Mmankgodi, Mr Mozambisa Dibe asked government to stop ConCourt and review the whole constitution, adding that he feared that the speed at which government was moving to establish the court might come with unfavourable decisions like abolishing the death penalty.

He said in Africa, there were countries that have ConCourt and were supposed to be protecting human rights but they were the ones that had worst scenario cases of human rights harassment and even death.

Mr Onkabetse Morebodi shared the same sentiments with Mr Dibe that the address by minister Ramaotwana did not necessarily need any response as a decision had already been made.

Even though he believed that they did need ConCourt, he said it was not a priority right as there were other important issues that must be addressed.

Mr Jerry Tau said he believed that as people, they would think differently and that was a welcome development but they should bear in mind that some people have had their human rights violated with nowhere to appeal while others were in jail but have not committed the alleged crimes. ConCourt, he said would come in handy in giving them a chance to consider their judgments.

Mr Kaelo Nkai also believed that those who did not see the need for ConCourt should not deny those who wanted it, as it was a specialised court that would address fundamental human rights violations that he had seen for both individuals and communities.

He said he agreed with the establishment of the court as they were pending issues concerning their lives that the court could assist with.

Earlier when addressing the different communities, Mr Ramaotwana said the introduction of ConCourt could not be done without first amending the Constitution (Chapter 6) to cater for the ConCourt in the hierarchy of courts.

He said the amendment was made to allow ConCourt to attend to cases of fundamental human rights and also to determine and decide on constitutional matters.

Mr Ramaotwana said ConCourt shall be an independent arbiter on issues of the constitution and would be important during the process of the constitutional review.

He brought understanding to the residents that the Court of Appeal and High Court were courts of general jurisdiction that dealt with criminal and civil matters but ConCourt would be a specialised court that focused on constitutional matters and fundamental human rights.

Mr Ramaotwana said the court would help attend to gaps and limitations and accord Botswana an opportunity to launch their cases where they could be assisted without having to wait for case queues that could take about 3-4 years to be attended.

He assured residents that the ConCourt was not something that would begin tomorrow, as all the processes had to be followed until a national referendum was reached that would pave way for its establishment. **BOPA**

Serowe faces infrastructure challenges



Serowe District Council chairperson, Mr Atamelang Thaga told council that the A14 Road between Boiteko Mall and the old transport turnoff had been closed following the collapse of a culvert. He urged all road users to observe road signs and comply with safety measures as the council was working toward restoring and maintaining the damage.
Photo: Baldwin Nyamande

**Tshiamiso Moseitha
SEROWE**

Aging and deteriorating structures, compounded by repeated floods and hailstorm have left infrastructure development in Serowe in critical condition.

The situation disrupts education, health services and roads, thereby hindering service delivery.

Speaking during Serowe District

full council meeting on Monday, Council Chairperson Mr Atamelang Thaga said the A14 road between Boiteko Mall and the old transport turnoff had been closed following the collapse of a culvert near Farmers Brigade.

"I am deeply concerned by the disregard shown by some members of the public who ignore closure signage, thereby exposing themselves and other road users

particularly those unfamiliar with the area to serious danger," he said.

He urged all road users to observe road signs and comply with safety measures as council was working toward restoring and maintaining the damaged infrastructure.

Mr Thaga also told Councillors that some gravel and dirt roads which included Topisi-Majwanaadipitse, Mmashoro-Dimajwe, Serowe-Moiyabana, Serowe-Radisele and

Moiyabana-Kalamare have been severely affected.

He noted that the roads were characterised by extensive black cotton soil and sandy sections which led to water ponding, muddy conditions and in some cases complete impassability. Mr Thaga said flooding had damaged spot improvements, washed away road sections, silted up culverts and disrupted drainage systems. **BOPA**

Chickenpox outbreak hits Kgalagadi north schools

**Thuso Kgakatsi
HUKUNTSI**

Kgalagadi North District has recorded an outbreak of chickenpox, with confirmed cases reported at Tshane Prison, Lehutshelo Primary School and Lehututu Junior Secondary School.

Officially opening the five-day full council session on Monday, Kgalagadi North District Council chairperson, Mr Stephen Lekgobero, said the District Health Management Team (DHMT) had responded swiftly by implementing supportive case management and isolation protocols to curb transmission.

"It is important to note that chickenpox is a highly contagious viral infection. It spreads rapidly through respiratory droplets or through direct contact with the fluid from the characteristic itchy blistering rashes. Congregate or crowded settings such as schools and prisons are particularly vulnerable to such outbreaks," he said.

Mr Lekgobero urged intensified public education and advised parents and guardians to separate infected children from others until all blisters had formed crusts.

"I urge everyone to remain vigilant and cooperate with our health officials during this critical time,"

he said.

He reiterated that access to health care services remained a deliberate priority under his roadmap to ensure vulnerable members of the community accessed essential services.

Further, he noted that following a rigorous assessment, Maake Cattle Post and Kang Catchment Area Cattle Post had qualified as new mobile health stops to improve outreach services.

"For now, mobile stops offer the best opportunity for ensuring that vulnerable populations in the district have access to essential health care services," he said.

On health infrastructure, Mr Lekgobero announced that installation of an oxygen plant container at Hukuntsi District Hospital was completed last year in December.

"The plant has enhanced the hospital's capacity to generate medical-grade oxygen locally, reducing dependence on external suppliers. All relevant hospital units are now connected to the system, improving access to oxygen across wards," he said.

Regarding drug supply, he acknowledged that the country's health system continued to face challenges.

"The overall average Vital, Essential and Necessary (VEN) drug availability declined to 66 per cent during the third quarter compared to 76 per cent in the previous quarter. However, district availability improved slightly to 68 per cent in January 2026. Shortages of antibiotics and eye medication remain a concern," he said.

On community development, Mr Lekgobero said government had transformed the Ipelegeng Programme into Ikageng Public Works Programme, shifting to a results-oriented model aimed at skills development and improved access to the labour market.

He added that revised Village Development Committee (VDC) guidelines would soon come into effect to enhance accountability and professionalism.

Mr Lekgobero further said the INAPHU Community Farm would be handed over to the communities of Inalegolo and Phuduhudu on March 19, 2026. Maintenance of its perimeter fence had been completed, while installation of a 90,000-litre water reservoir was ongoing.

Preparations for restocking the farm with breeding stock were underway, with consultations being held with local farmers.

He said the council had also

handed over the Ausinyana Community Shop at Hunhukwe and the Ukhwi Community Shop as part of community empowerment efforts.

Additionally, he said, the district received P686,000 to establish a toilet paper manufacturing project at Hukuntsi West under the Rehabilitation of Destitute Persons Programme, benefiting seven former destitute programme beneficiaries.

Another P986,000 has been allocated for establishment of an automotive workshop in Hukuntsi for four Rural Area Community graduates trained at Kitsong Centre.

Mr Lekgobero noted that the district was facing increasing pressure in solid waste management due to rising household waste generation.

"Waste collection has been outsourced to contractors in Hukuntsi, Lokgwabe and Lehututu at a cost of P809,670, while Tshane and Hunhukwe continue to be serviced by contracted donkey cart operators at P186,960," he said.

He noted that, the district has also acquired a compactor truck with six skips to improve waste management and enhance revenue collection.

Meanwhile, the Kang Communal Dumpsite was officially handed over to the community on February 13, 2026, with the old dumpsite closed and awaiting rehabilitation. **BOPA**

Arts & Culture

EquipHer hosts transformative summit



Organisers of EquipHer Summit, Kaone Ramontsho (left) and Naomi Tese. Tese said the summit, scheduled for Saturday would include leadership conversations and stories of hope.

Keetile Bontsibokae
MOLEPOLOLE

EquipHer Summit 2026, an initiative in response to the growing social challenges affecting women and girls across communities will be held at Kgari Sechele Senior Secondary School in Molepolole on Saturday.

The founder of EquipHer, Naomi Tese said the transformative summit would be held under the theme: A Healed Generation Builds A Healed

Nation. "We are bringing together voices that will challenge, heal and activate women and girls across generations, she said.

She also noted that the event would feature stories of survivors, leadership conversations, worship and artistic expressions.

On the mandate of their organisation established in 2025, she said EquipHer was born out of compassion, awareness and commitment to finding meaningful solutions that promoted healing, dignity and empowerment for

women.

"I have walked closely with the realities many women face... While I have not personally experienced abuse or violence, I have witnessed its impact on families and communities. Women cannot remain silent while others suffer," she said.

She said the organisation was driven by a small but dedicated team, supported by volunteers, partners and community stakeholders.

"EquipHer is intentionally collaborative and impact-focused, rather than numbers-driven. We

want to see women and girls change their mind-sets, stand with one another and foster a society that truly cares," she said.

Tese said their vision was to build emotionally strong, informed and empowered women and girls who could navigate life with confidence, resilience and purpose. Additionally, Tese said the organisation seeks to create spaces for prevention, healing, mentorship, and growth, while acknowledging that hardships should not define or destroy the future of women and children.

"We wish for a society where mothers are not blamed when their children struggle and where victims' families are helped back on their feet. EquipHer aims to provide support before harm occurs, equipping women to become agents of change," she said.

Tese added that EquipHer also draws inspiration from established organisations such as Emang Basadi and Women's Shelter, while distinguishing itself through a preventive, holistic and community-based approach. **BOPA**

Africa favourite destination for young travellers

QINGDAO

For Li Qiaoyang, a young travel enthusiast from east China's Shandong Province, a dream vacation isn't museum hopping in Europe or a beach break in Southeast Asia. Instead, he's dreaming of the wild African savannah.

"I have been to Egypt and Morocco in North Africa, and I want to travel to Tanzania this year to photograph animals," said Li, who was born in the 1990s.

Having explored the pyramids and the Luxor Temple in Egypt in 2016, and taken a road trip through Casablanca and the Sahara Desert in Morocco in 2020, Li is captivated by the African continent.

"Africa's unique natural landscapes and cultures are highly attractive. Many young Chinese are curious and drawn to it," he explained.

Li is among a growing wave of young Chinese globetrotters turning their gaze toward the African continent, which boasts spectacular savannahs, sprawling deserts, abundant wildlife, and rich natural and cultural heritage. This trend is further fueled by favorable entry policies, such as visa-free and visa-on-arrival access in several African nations.

Unlike older generations who often prefer rigidly scheduled tour groups, this new demographic, averaging in their 30s, craves independent exploration and unconventional itineraries. Africa, which is often deemed distant and mysterious, holds immense appeal for those seeking adventures off the beaten path.

This shift in travel philosophy is clearly visible online. On lifestyle app Rednote, searches for "Africa travel" yield posts that have easily drawn more than 100 comments. Netizens actively discuss pricing and routes, often demanding highly personalised experiences in Africa.

The tourism market has quickly felt the heat of this enthusiasm. Manager at a travel agency based

in the coastal city of Qingdao in Shandong, Xie Ran, noted a consistent rise in Africa-bound travelers over the past few years. The agency's clientele for African tours climbed from about 100 in 2023 to 180 in 2024, and reached around 240 in 2025.

GZL International Travel Service, a travel agency in Guangzhou in south China's Guangdong Province, said overall

inquiries for African destinations rose by 50 to 60 per cent in recent months, while bookings for routes involving South Africa and the "Vanilla Islands" jumped by nearly 40 per cent.

A professor with the China Academy of Culture and Tourism at Beijing International Studies University, Wu Liyun, said Africa's natural and cultural beauty possesses a unique charm

that captivates Chinese visitors. Witnessing the spectacular Great Migration, in particular, has become a major draw for many.

"China's outbound tourism has been developing rapidly," Wu said. "For frequent travellers who have already explored neighboring countries, venturing to more distant destinations like Africa is a natural choice as they gain more travel experience." **Xinhua**



QINGDAO - Chinese tourists in Kenya. Manager at a travel agency based in the coastal city of Qingdao in Shandong, Xie Ran has noted a consistent rise in Africa-bound travellers over the past few years. Photo: Xinhua

DailySport



Ticket Prices

GENERAL STAND

Day 1 – \$25
(approximately BWP 331)

Day 2 onwards – \$35
(approximately BWP 463)



Ikgopoleng allays fears amid Middle East conflict

Baleseng Batlotleng
RAMOTSWA

Decorated former national team boxer and two-time Olympian, Khumiso Ikgopoleng first landed in Bahrain in 2018.

He had established himself a reputable force to reckon with inside the ring during his illustrious amateur boxing days and when he transitioned to coaching career, he wanted to share the experience with the world while shaping the future of developing and elite boxers.

Coach K, as Ikgopoleng is fondly called in Manama, never imagined he would soon have to

be concerned about surface to air missiles flying over his head.

He now describes frightening scenes of having to experience explosions from intercepted missiles amid the conflict involving military strikes by the United States of America and Israel and subsequent retaliation from the Iranian military.

Speaking from the scenic residential town of Saar on the western outskirts of Bahrain's capital Manama, Ikgopoleng said explosions from intercepted missiles overhead caused shockwaves so strong that he could feel buildings vibrating slightly.

Bahrain and Qatar said this

week their air defense systems intercepted and destroyed a total of more than 170 missiles and dozens of drones launched from Iran over the past three days as Tehran continues attacks on US-linked sites in the region in response to the ongoing Israeli-US military campaign.

“What people see on TV and describe on social media is a far cry from what we experience on the ground. We are only feeling frightened because it is natural to feel so, but we feel safe as we receive constant warnings to stay away from danger.”

“What people see on TV and describe on social media is a far cry from what we experience on the ground. We are only feeling frightened because it is natural to feel so, but we feel safe as we receive constant warnings to stay away from danger,” he said.

He explained that there were targeted areas and they had been receiving early warning signals about incoming missiles and they take cover.

Ikgopoleng is one of the only two Batswana living in Bahrain.

He said despite the ensuing conflict, which seemed to be escalating on a daily basis, he did not feel unsafe in the city as everybody went on about their daily duties as usual.

Ikgopoleng allayed fears of any casualties so far in Manama despite the military assault over the past days.

Ikgopoleng said he had been in contact with other Batswana living in Dubai, which had also been targeted.

On Saturday, Israel and the US launched an attack against Iran's leadership reportedly killing supreme leader, Ali Khamenei and since then, Iran had responded with attacks on Bahrain, United Arab Emirates



Former national team boxer and two-time Olympian, coach Khumiso Ikgopoleng (left) who resides in Saar on the outskirts of Manama, Bahrain said he felt safe as they received constant warnings to stay away from danger.

Photo: Courtesy of Khumiso Ikgopoleng

and Cyprus.

Iran had targeted the US navy base in Bahrain and videos had been circulating showing missiles and drones striking the vicinity of the US fifth fleet headquarters in Bahrain.

Nine Arab countries including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, have reported damage over the past three days, as Iran responds to the Israeli and American aggression.

Ikgopoleng made a mark on the international front especially the Middle East where he now works and resides as head coach of the Bahrain boxing club.

He has frequently visited other Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar to offer his technical expertise.

Ikgopoleng's journey inside the boxing ring started in 1997 as a learner at Lobatse Secondary School where he took part in the

school sport programme and the early exposure laid the foundation for his illustrious career.

He transitioned to coaching after retirement in 2009 and earned the coveted three-star International Boxing Association's qualification and led the Botswana team to Olympic qualification among the man-zIkgopoleng took part in the 2004 Summer Olympics where he was eliminated in the second round of the men's featherweight by Nigerian Muideen Ganiyu.

He also took part becoming the first ever Motswana to reach that feat in the 2008 Beijing Olympics before hanging his gloves the following year.

He was recruited by the Colorado boxing club in the United States of America and was soon scooped by the Bahraini club where he doubled as a member of the national team technical committee. **BOPA**



Brazil football team manager Carlo Ancelotti

Ancelotti up Brazil World Cup preparations

RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil manager, Carlo Ancelotti is said to be assessing players and organising logistics ahead of this year's FIFA World Cup in North America. The five-time champion will begin its Group C campaign against Morocco on June 13 before facing Haiti on June 19 and Scotland on June 24.

“It is a joy to have time to prepare for this important event for Brazil,” the 66-year-old Italian said in an interview published on the Brazilian Football Confederation's website on Tuesday.

“It is a great motivation and a great responsibility to try to do the best possible. I am sure that we will have a World Cup of a very high level.” The CBF announced in January that Brazil would use the Columbia

Park complex in Morristown, New Jersey, as its main training facility during the tournament.

Ancelotti said he and his staff were continuing to monitor players ahead of friendlies later this month.

The Selecao will meet France in Boston on March 26 and Croatia in Orlando five days later.

“We have been planning the logistics, organisation, the training centre, the hotel, so now we have to evaluate the players who are playing, those who are injured and those who are recovering,” he said.

“It is a moment of observation. Obviously we have to do well in the friendlies with France and Croatia and observe the matches of the players who could be at the World Cup in June.” **Xinhua**