

# BOTSWANA Daily News

THE PAPER THAT INFORMS AND EDUCATES

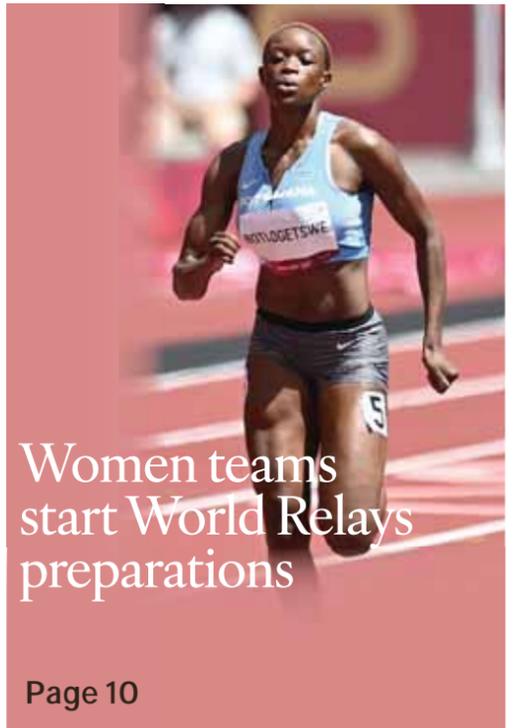
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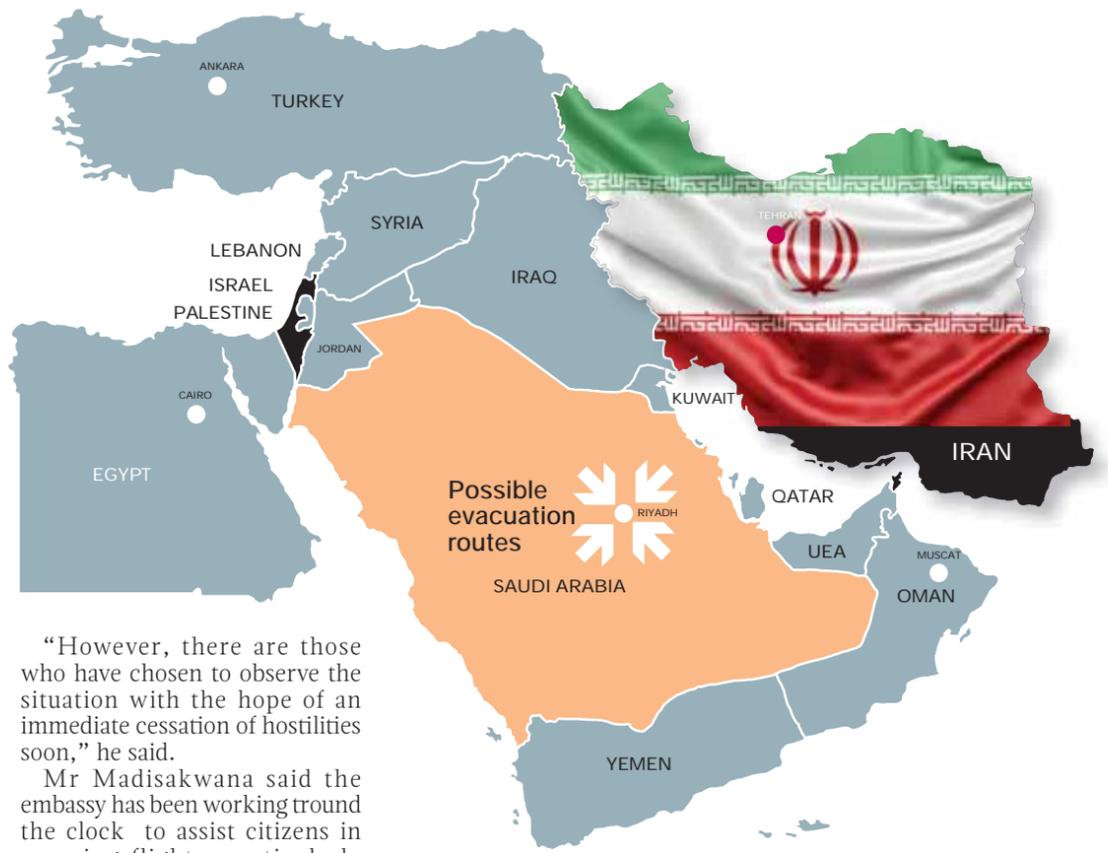
# Evacuation from Middle East commences



Mr Amangwe Madisakwana

Lesedi Thatayamodimo  
**GABORONE**

The evacuation of Batswana from the Middle East has begun, with the first group having departed on Monday. The group mainly comprises those who were caught in transit but were fortunately able to secure flights. It also includes a few Batswana who are residents of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates. In an interview, Acting Ambassador of Botswana to Kuwait, with accreditations to Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, Mr Amangwe Madisakwana, said the situation in the region remained volatile prompting many Batswana to return home.



“However, there are those who have chosen to observe the situation with the hope of an immediate cessation of hostilities soon,” he said. Mr Madisakwana said the embassy has been working round the clock to assist citizens in securing flights, particularly from areas where travel was still considered safe.

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## BILL PAYMENTS



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#### ELECTRICITY





'As Botswana navigates the complex realities of undernutrition, over nutrition and food insecurity, it must be remembered that nutrition is not just a health issue, it is a foundation for national development. Investing in better nutrition today is an investment in healthier and a more productive generations tomorrow'

University of Botswana, human nutrition  
Professor Maria Nnyepi

## Atamelang calls on constituents to spur economic revival

Keith Ketli  
**XHUMO**

Constituents have been encouraged to come up with avenues that have the potential to revive the country's ailing economy.

Speaking during a kgotla meeting in Xhumo on Friday, Assistant Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Keogile Atamelang encouraged constituents to come up with high-impact concepts to turn the economy around.

To this end, he said constituents should leverage local resources, knowledge, and assets to foster economic growth and improve quality of life.

Furthermore, he said the move would also create sustainable jobs, build resilience in communities, and reduce reliance on external aid.

He thus called for the resuscitation of cooperative societies, noting that they had the potential to transform communities by fostering economic empowerment as well as social cohesion.

"Plow a variety of crops to boost food production and self-sufficiency," he said.

He also encouraged constituents to plow fodder to help increase the declining national cattle herd, noting that agriculture is another key sector that has the potential to revive the country's economy if fully utilised.

On other issues, constituents decried that buses that ply the Gaborone-Maun route do not pass through the villages of Rakops and Xhumo despite their permits prescribing so.

According to the residents, the development poses a high risk to their lives as they are forced to embark and disembark public transport in dangerous, wildlife-animal-prone areas.

Kgosi Seikgotleng Nsombiwa of Xhumo decried the lack of road signage along Serowe - Maun road, pointing out that there must be warning signs alerting motorists to save lives where there are potholes.

He decried that the road has turned into a death trap due to lack of maintenance.

Kgosi Nsombiwa is of the view that Letlhakane should be converted into a town and a manufacturing hub for the Boteti hub, arguing the area was blessed with a lot of natural resources but that it was lagging behind in developments.

A resident of Xhumo, Mr Omphimetswe Gaboathletswe concurred with Assistant Minister Atamelang that penalties for causing death by reckless driving should be hefty to curb unnecessary deaths.

Mr Elijah Motsamai was of the view that bus fares should be increased by five per cent and that in the next 10 years there should be no increase. **BOPA**

# Rising food prices leave many in hunger

Lesedi Thatayamodimo  
**GABORONE**

Nearly one in two citizens struggles to access enough, safe and nutritious food to live active, healthy and productive lives, says University of Botswana, human nutrition Professor Maria Nnyepi.

Professor Nnyepi said that for the 2022/23 period, 49.4 per cent of the population experienced moderate or severe food insecurity, a figure that starkly illustrated how widespread and deeply rooted the problem had become.

"Food insecurity is not simply about the 20.2 per cent of Botswana who often sleep hungry due to lack of food, it also includes the 29.2 per cent who often worry and are uncertain of where their next meal will come from, or find themselves eating food of lower nutritional quality or quantity than they would like simply because they do not have a choice," she said.

For many households, the reality translates into smaller portions, skipped meals and diets dominated by low-cost staples, high fat and sugary foods with limited nutritional value. Over time, Professor Nnyepi explained, this undermined health, learning outcomes for children and overall productivity, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

"As Botswana navigates the complex realities of undernutrition, over nutrition and food insecurity, it must be remembered that nutrition is not just a health issue, it is a foundation for national development. Investing in better nutrition today is an investment in healthier and a more productive generations tomorrow," she said.

Highlighting Botswana's nutrition landscape, Professor Nnyepi noted that it reflected stark contrasts.

"On one hand, 28.9 per cent of children under five are stunted, indicating chronic nutritional deprivation with irreversible effects on physical and cognitive development. Wasting affects 7.3 per cent of children, a rate higher than the Southern African regional average and a marker of acute vulnerability," said Professor Nnyepi.

On the other hand, she stated that obesity had risen sharply,



Popular snacks

Persuaded by price per volume over quality, many households live from month to month on starchy food packages commonly known as 'Combo'.



Supporting smallholder farmers is an essential step toward reducing dependence on imports.

particularly among adults.

"More than one in three women (32.1 per cent) are obese, compared to 9.7 per cent of men. Diet-related non-communicable diseases now account for 46 per cent of all deaths in Botswana, with diabetes affecting 10.6 per cent of adult women and 8.8 per cent of adult men," said

Professor Nnyepi.

She attributed those trends to urbanisation, changing lifestyles and unhealthy food environments that have transformed eating habits, often at the expense of nutritional quality.

These trends she said, were not simply matters of personal choice, 'they are shaped by food systems, urban design, economic pressures and policy environments that allow unhealthy options to be cheaper and more accessible than nutritious ones.'

One of the most significant drivers of food insecurity in Botswana, Professor Nnyepi added, had been persistent food price inflation.

As the cost of basic food items continues to rise, household purchasing power has steadily eroded.

Even families with some form of income, find themselves unable to keep up with escalating prices, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, where people depend almost entirely on purchased food rather than subsistence production.

Persuaded by price per volume over quality, many households live from month to month on starchy food packages commonly known as 'Combo'.

Sharing similar sentiments, vegetable vendor, Mr Keemenao Nkgware, said Botswana's heavy reliance on food imports had compounded the challenge of food insecurity.

He explained that a large proportion of staple foods consumed in the country were sourced from outside the borders, making local prices highly sensitive to global market fluctuations, exchange rate movements and supply chain disruptions.

"When international prices rise or transport costs increase, the impact is quickly felt on supermarket shelves and ultimately on household dinner tables," he said.

Consequences are especially severe for low-income households, who spend a disproportionately large share of their income on food.

"When prices rise, these families have little room to adjust, food becomes the first and most painful compromise, often at the expense of nutrition and health care related expenses," he said.

"Bagolo ba ja di bonzi, di ice pop, just to keep energy, while the reality is that those do not provide any quality nutrients," he added.



A sample of affordable meal.

While Botswana's situation is acute, it reflects a broader regional trend. Across Africa, hunger is rising in most sub-regions, even as global hunger levels show signs of improvement.

Climate shocks, economic pressures, conflict and structural weaknesses in food systems continue to undermine food security across the continent. This contrast underscores a critical reality: global progress does not automatically translate into local resilience.

A nutritionist in the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Mr Baeng Ntime, argued that addressing food insecurity in Botswana required local and regional solutions that went beyond short-term relief.

"Strengthening domestic food production, investing in climate-resilient agriculture and supporting smallholder farmers are essential steps toward reducing dependence on imports," he said.

Equally important, he added, were social protection measures that shielded vulnerable households from price shocks, ensuring that access to food was treated not as a privilege, but as a basic right.

Mr Ntime also pointed out that nutrition education and dietary diversification played a key role.

"Access to food must be matched with access to nutritious food, particularly for children, pregnant women and the elderly. Without this, the country risks facing a dual burden of under nutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases, an outcome that strains both households and the health system," he said.

Ultimately, food insecurity is not just an agricultural or economic issue; it is a human development challenge. It affects how children learn, how adults work and how communities thrive. These have a direct bearing on our aspirations of becoming a first income country by 2036.

As Professor Nnyepi noted, the persistence of hunger amid available resources highlights the urgency of rethinking how food systems are designed and who they serve.

"Without decisive and coordinated action, food insecurity will remain the underlying crisis shaping Botswana's nutrition landscape quietly, but relentlessly," she said. **BOPA**

# Global financial reforms imperative

Thato Mosinyi  
GABORONE

Reforming global financial architecture and institutions such as the United Nations Security Council is not an abstract diplomatic ambition but rather a democratic imperative.

Speaking during the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Annual Regional Planning dinner on Monday, Vice President, Ndaba Gaolathe cautioned that the global architecture of democracy was under strain with democratic backsliding, populism, constitutional manipulation and civic space restrictions becoming distressingly familiar across regions.

In light of this, Mr Gaolathe said Africa deserved a seat at the table when decisions about the continent were made as inclusion has proven to be the heartbeat of democracy.

“Democracy support today must go beyond electoral observation. It must encompass strengthening institutions of oversight and accountability, supporting inclusive political dialogue. Building capacity for evidence-based policymaking and promoting strategic planning anchored in measurable outcomes,” Mr Gaolathe said.

He indicated that Africa needed partners who are patient and understand that democratic consolidation was incremental and sometimes fragile, and was often contested yet always worth the effort.

The Vice President stated that the African Union, at its recent 39th Ordinary Session, which President Advocate Duma Boko was a part of, expressed deep concern over persistent conflicts, unconstitutional changes of government, terrorism and humanitarian crises across parts of the continent.

The Union, he said reaffirmed zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes of government and reiterated its determination to silence the guns in Africa.

“Yet some of the forces that destabilise our continent are transnational, financed and fuelled beyond our borders. Disease, poverty, climate shocks, migration and war do not respect sovereignty lines on maps. Their solutions, therefore, must be multilateral,” he said.

To that effect, Mr Gaolathe said there was need for governments to plan strategically and articulate clear national visions, align policy instruments coherently and establish monitoring frameworks

that measured impact rather than intention.

He said public expenditure must be disciplined by evidence and programmes must be evaluated rigorously to ensure that strategic planning was not technocratic bureaucracy but a democratic accountability in action.

Additionally, Mr Gaolathe

emphasised Botswana’s commitment to democratic governance, constitutionalism and peaceful transitions of power.

Mr Gaolathe also applauded Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for playing a critical advisory role through supporting policy dialogue, strengthening progressive platforms, facilitating research and

nurturing leadership committed to equality, freedom and justice.

He highlighted that democracy was not self-executing as it required citizens who participated, institutions that upheld the rule of law, leaders who submitted to accountability and partners who walked with humility and respect.

**BOPA**

“Democracy support today must go beyond electoral observation. It must encompass strengthening institutions of oversight and accountability, supporting inclusive political dialogue.”



Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe (left), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Botswana Resident Representative, Mr Thilo Schöne (centre) and Head of the International Division of FES, Germany, Mr Michael Meier during African conference 2026 welcome reception in Gaborone on Monday. Mr Gaolathe said democracy must encompass strengthening institutions of oversight and accountability, support inclusive political dialogue and build capacity for evidence-based policymaking. Photo: Pheny Moalosi

## Flood displaces 20 households in Khwai

Esther Mmolai  
MAUN

Heavy rains have wrought havoc on Khwai, leaving 20 households displaced and struggling to cope with the aftermath.

According to North West District Commissioner, Mr Thabang Waloka, the District Disaster Management Team is on high alert, working tirelessly to assess the situation and provide relief supplies to those affected.

Five families have been temporarily housed in tents at evacuation sites, while others have received essential relief items. However, the situation remains precarious, with water levels continuing to rise.

The floods, caused by the overflowing Khwai channel, have rendered roads and homesteads inaccessible, and led to the closure of the local primary school.

Mr Waloka expressed appreciation for the swift response of the disaster management team, noting that affected families have lost valuable possessions,

including beds, blankets, and food, due to the submersion of their mud houses.

“We are currently monitoring the river levels as the situation still persists, posing threat to villagers. We have also found that some houses are cracking particularly those build with traditional bricks and we are still assessing whether to relocate the owners,” he added.

Mr Waloka also highlighted that they have engaged the village leadership together with the community trust on how best to assist the affected families and the 12 standard seven learners to focus on their studies.

He said an air boat will be used to transport learners staying on the other side of the river, while equally monitoring the situation at school.

Mr Waloka also appreciated some members of the business community, who have pledged to assist the affected families with food hampers.

The disaster committee has issued a public notice informing the public that the Shorobe-Sankoyo-Mababe-Khwai road

was currently flooded and unsafe for travel due the heavy rains experienced in the district.

Meanwhile, an expert from Okavango Research Institute, Dr Oliver Moses stated that the flood experienced at the Khwai were due to the torrential rains experienced in the delta and the region at large.

“We learnt that water levels has also increased at Mohembo River and this is good for the ecosystem as increased local rainfall, enhances vegetation growth leading to more green spaces and supporting healthier animal population,” he said

He said Angola was also reported to be experiencing more rains anticipating early flow of the seasonal rivers as the flow originates in Angola entering Botswana at Mohembo River, Okavango Delta and normally reaching Maun around May to June.

Dr Moses said if the local rains continued, there was a possibility that the water flows could reach Lake Ngami. The lake last experienced significant flooding in 2011 and 2021. **BOPA**

## Evacuation from Middle East commences

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“In some areas people have had to drive to neighbouring countries in order to catch flights back home. We had to explore other avenues and some had to travel to Oman to catch flights there as fighting intensifies and security conditions continue to be unpredictable,” he said.

However, he said some Batswana remained stranded, particularly those in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, where persistent airspace closures have resulted in grounded flights. “There are those who currently have no way out as the airspace remains closed.

The embassy is working on plans to move them out, possibly through Saudi Arabia, he said. Mr Madisakwana added that contingency planning was ongoing, including coordinating evacuations through neighbouring countries as direct departures from some locations had become impossible.

He also noted that some embassy staff members based in Kuwait and other Batswana nationals working there had already departed and were expected to arrive back home on Tuesday.

Additionally, he said some Batswana who had been stranded while in transit had managed to secure flights and had already returned home. Despite the difficult circumstances, Mr Madisakwana said some citizens had chosen to remain in the region for various reasons. “Some have indicated that they recently secured employment and feel they cannot leave immediately, while others are classified as essential service providers and unfortunately could not be granted permission to leave, such as firefighters, medical personnel and those working in the hospitality sector. Others are students who said they do not want to fall behind in their studies,” he said.

Meanwhile, he urged Batswana who were still in the Middle East to remain calm and vigilant.

“They should remain positive and avoid falling into traps that could lead to human trafficking or abduction out of desperation,” he cautioned. The conflict currently affecting parts of the Middle East has entered its ninth day and involves the US, Israel and Iran.

Mr Madisakwana assured Batswana that the embassy was monitoring developments and assessing safe safe evacuation options. **BOPA**

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## PARLIAMENT 2026

# NHI to expand health services



Assistant Minister of Health, Mr Lawrence Ookeditse has called on Members of Parliament to embrace the envisaged National Health Insurance as an initiative aimed at improving healthcare delivery.

Mmoniemang Motsamai  
GABORONE

Assistant Minister of Health, Mr Lawrence Ookeditse, has called on Members of Parliament to embrace the envisaged National Health Insurance (NHI) as a vital initiative aimed at improving healthcare delivery.

Replying to a debate on the Ministry of Health's 2026/27 budget request on Monday, Mr Ookeditse said MPs should prepare to contribute to the NHI Bill. He described the bill as a strategic reform designed to advance universal health coverage and reduce waiting times for patients requiring specialised services.

He noted that the NHI was also designed for all citizens to ensure that the less privileged could access private facilities.

Mr Ookeditse also refuted allegations that the NHI was a move to privatise public clinics, clarifying that it would instead help government expand existing services. "Of course, some private facilities registered with government will benefit from the NHI," he added. Regarding malaria in the Ngami region, the assistant minister stated that government had made significant strides through consistent provision of mosquito nets.

He also assured MPs that the availability of medicine would improve through modernisation of procurement value chains.

He further acknowledged the importance of insourcing critical services in the country's most remote areas. During the budget debate, several MPs raised localised concerns with Mr Phillimon Aaron of Ngami highlighting challenges in primary healthcare, particularly lack of ambulances in areas such as Gumare, Xangwa, Chukumuchu, Gudigwa and Mogocho. He urged government to expedite the fight against malaria. He also wanted to know when the long-promised Gumare District Hospital would be built. MP for Boteti West, Mr Sam Digwa complained that despite

having 14 health facilities, the region had only three clinics with maternity wings.

He called for the upgrading of the Kedia health facility into a full clinic. Letlhakeng MP, Brigadier Domcaza Mokgwathi, called for special dispensation for his constituency, which he argued was disadvantaged in healthcare delivery.

He advocated for a primary hospital in Letlhakeng to serve Kweneng West and suggested integrating traditional medicines to boost health and the economy. Serowe North legislator, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe hailed government's move toward direct medicine purchasing. He expressed satisfaction with the Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital services but called for a dialysis unit at Sekgoma Memorial Hospital.

MP Jeremiah Frenzel of Shashe West, reported that laundry machines at the Mabesekwa health post had remained non-operational since installation.

He requested that health posts be open for at least half a day on weekends and receive adequate staffing. Charleshill MP, Mr Motsamai Motsamai noted steady improvement in healthcare but raised concerns regarding professional conduct and ethics (Botho) among some health sector employees.

Kanye East legislator, Mr Prince Mosanana called for the upgrading of the Molapowabojang clinic and lamented that Kanye's single 24-hour clinic was overwhelmed. He also highlighted shortage of doctors and pharmacists at the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Hospital. MP for Moshupa-Manyana, Mr Karabo Gare, supported the budget but urged for better ambulance provision in difficult terrains.

He emphasised that primary healthcare must be prioritised to ensure that hospitals had basic supplies for common illnesses before expanding elsewhere. Subsequently, Parliament approved the budget estimates for the Ministry of Health amounting to P8.1 billion and P653.9 million under the recurrent and development budgets respectively. **BOPA**

# Govt on path to restore public health

GABORONE

Government has implemented a comprehensive package of corrective measures to restore stability and strengthen resilience with the supply chain in the health sector.

Responding to a parliamentary question on Monday, Assistant Minister of Health, Mr Lawrence Ookeditse noted that the ministry had strengthened strategic collaboration with the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) to provide operational and logistical oversight to stabilise procurement and distribution functions.

Mr Ookeditse said a national logistics task force was established, supported by the Presidential task force and BDF, to oversee strategic planning, emergency procurement, inventory management and coordinated nationwide distribution of essential medicines.

He added that international orders which were secured during the state of public health emergency had commenced delivery and they had significantly stabilised the stock levels. He said government was also at an advanced stage of finalising a government-to-government credit line facility with the government of United Arab Emirates (UAE) which would strengthen long term sustainability and maintain buffer stocks. He

said in order to address immediate shortages, loans of medicines were sought through bilateral arrangements from neighbouring countries to ensure continuity of care while awaiting international consignments. He added that supply of Antiretroviral and other chronic medicines had been secured and were currently improving for ensuring continuity of treatments.

Mr Ookeditse said while the crisis presented significant challenges the decisive declaration of the emergency combined with coordinated national and international support had placed the country firmly on a path towards recovery.

He said focus was geared towards consolidating the gains, institutionalising structural reforms and building a resilient and transparent medical supply chain system capable of preventing such recurrence. Mr Ookeditse further said on August 25 last year, the President officially declared a nationwide state of public health emergency following a catastrophic disruption of the national medical supply chain.

He said the decisive action was taken after noticing the warning signs in August as clinics and hospitals were experiencing critical shortage of life saving medicines and essential health commodities.

He said at the onset of the emergency availability of highly critical medicines particularly those required for resuscitation

and post-resuscitation management had fallen to alarmingly low levels to 17 per cent.

Mr Ookeditse said through intensified emergency procurements, coordinated distribution and strengthened monitoring their availability improved to 32 per cent by the end of the emergency period. He highlighted that major improvements in availability were only realised in the post-phase of the emergency period when the procured goods were delivered resulting in a further recovery of medicines availability now standing at 64 per cent at health facilities. He said with respect to ARVs, government prioritised uninterrupted access to ARV treatments as a matter of national importance.

He said 12 months' supply of all ARV regimens had been secured through international suppliers and multilateral partners. He noted that at the start of the emergency period, the average availability for ARVs was 71 per cent and due to the procurements undertaken during the emergency period, sustained deliveries of ARVs contributed to an availability of 73 per cent by end of February this year. Mr Ookeditse said similar arrangements had been secured for medicines to safeguard continuity of care for cancer and other chronic illnesses. He said supplies secured through UAE comprising of 338 different products for a coverage of over 7.5 months

had begun arriving from the third week of February.

"These include medicines for hypertension, diabetes, epilepsy, infectious diseases and other chronic and acute conditions that would provide much-needed relief across the health system," he said. He added that the medicine stock-out crisis exposed systemic operational vulnerabilities within the healthcare sector as supply disruptions resulted in delays for some elective and urgent surgical procedures as well as interruptions in treatments.

He said the strain extended beyond the normal functions such as forecasting, procurement, logistics and distribution underscoring the need for structural reforms for the supply chain system.

Tswapong South MP, Dr Kesitegile Gobotswang had asked the minister to appraise on the state of public health emergency that was declared by President Advocate Duma Boko last year.

Dr Gobotswang had also asked the minister to state the baseline of essential and non-essential drugs as well as ARVs at the time the public emergency was declared and the levels of the same supplies at the time the state of emergency ended.

He again, asked the minister to state operational failures that were documented during the emergency and corrective measures that were put in place and resultant improvements observed. **BOPA**



Assistant Minister of Water and Human Settlement, Mr Motsamai said government continued to engage with potential investors to promote balanced development across all identified areas and to ensure equitable distribution of Bonno housing opportunities nationwide.

## Government targets equitable housing distribution

### GABORONE

Government continues to engage with potential investors to promote balanced development across all identified areas and to ensure equitable distribution of Bonno housing opportunities nationwide.

Assistant Minister of Water and Human Settlement, Mr Motsamai told Parliament on Monday that the primary reason

for the imbalance in distribution was that investors tended to show preference for certain locations over others largely influenced by factors such as proximity to established infrastructure, market demand, access to services, anticipated return on investment and overall commercial viability.

Mr Motsamai said Botswana Housing Corporation (BHC) had been allocated 10.9 hectares in Kazungula with 212 housing units

all under construction.

He said the total number of housing units earmarked for development in the area was 1 427 made up of 712 plots in Kazungula, 355 in Kachikau, 255 in Kavimba and 105 plots in Satau.

He noted that not all land secured for the programme had been allocated to investors but only Kazungula had been fully allocated while the remaining areas were still available for

investment.

He was responding to a question from Chobe MP, Mr Simasiku Mapulanga who had asked the minister to state the size of land in hectares government had secured in Chobe for Bonno project and the number of houses earmarked to be built in the same space.

Mr Mapulanga had also asked the minister to state the names of villages where land had been secured. **BOPA**

## Case disposal rate increases across justice system

### Tebagano Ntshole

### GABORONE

Minister of Justice and Correctional Services has reported a significant increase in the disposal of cases across the country's judicial system. Presenting the 2026/27 budget proposals for the Administration of Justice on Monday, Minister Nelson Ramaotwana told Parliament that disposal rates for the 2025 calendar year reached 40 per cent at the High Court and 54 per cent at the Magistrate Court for criminal matters.

Minister Ramaotwana added that civil case disposals were even more robust, standing at 50 per cent and 77.3 per cent respectively.

He credited the opening of the Mahalapye High Court with significantly improving access to justice and noted that the establishment of specialised courts would further accelerate such improvements.

However, he regretted that a moratorium on recruitment remained a major hurdle. "We must work with limited resources and rationalise existing positions to address critical manpower needs," he added. He further told legislators that the current priority projects included restructuring the Magistracy and Registrarship, delinking the Master's office to improve administrative efficiency as well as addressing shortage of personnel to adapt to modern legal challenges.

Following the minister's presentation, Members of Parliament called for a return to traditional judicial strengths to handle specific local issues, particularly stock theft.

MP for Okavango West, Mr Kenny Kapinga argued that customary courts were marginalised by the introduction of Roman-Dutch law and should

be restored to prominence.

He also advocated for civil imprisonment for those who circumvented justice. Specially elected MP, Major Gen. Pius Mokgware argued that stock theft cases belonged in customary courts where officers understood traditional livestock branding, marks and colours.

He also called for specialised courts for rape and maintenance. Mmopane-Metsimotlhabe MP,

Ms Helen Manyeneng proposed increasing the jurisdictional limit of customary courts to P10 000 and urged the courts to consider all forms of income, not just basic salaries, in maintenance cases to prevent hidden assets. Dr Kesitegile Gobotswang of Tswapong South decried the overwhelmed state of Legal Aid, noting that justice currently favoured the privileged.

He called for a new Magistrate Court in Tswapong and argued that

the burden of proof in stock theft cases should shift to the suspects.

MP Arafat Khan of Molepolole North highlighted the backlog in maintenance cases in Molepolole and called for more personnel to speed up family law conclusions.

Meanwhile, Parliament approved a total of P459 million for the ministry, comprising P435 million for recurrent expenditure and P24 million for the development budget. **BOPA**

## Ministry unveils strategy to tackle shortage of midwives

### GABORONE

The Ministry of Health has launched some targeted interventions to address shortage of midwives in the Boteti West constituency and across Botswana, including new training intakes, direct-entry degree programmes and recruitment drives for former public servants.

Answering a question in Parliament on Monday, Assistant Minister of Health, Mr Lawrence Ookeditse said the ministry was prioritising strategies to bridge the current gap, indicating that a cohort of 47 general nurses currently undergoing midwifery training was expected to complete their studies in May this.

"These graduates will be strategically deployed to the most severely constrained areas, such as Boteti West," he said. He added that in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, the Ministry of Health had scheduled a new intake of general nurses for midwifery training starting in July through the

Institute of Health Sciences (IHS) under the Ministry of Higher Education.

"To create a sustainable pipeline of professionals, IHS is developing a direct-entry Midwifery degree programme. This qualification has already been submitted to the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) for approval," he added. He further said the ministry was also recruiting midwives who previously exited the public service. However, the assistant minister bemoaned a challenge where many candidates declined offers to serve in remote or critically understaffed regions.

"To encourage nurses to specialise, the ministry currently offers a 10 per cent post-basic allowance in addition to overtime and existing benefits. In the interim, midwives are conducting regular outreach services and needs-based antenatal care visits to ensure expectant mothers in the nine health posts across Boteti West receive essential monitoring," he stated. Currently, the assistant minister said the Boteti West constituency faced significant

deficit owing to a population of 37 000 residents across 12 villages, with only 19 midwives currently serving 13 health facilities.

He added that nine midwives were stationed at Rakops Primary Hospital and seven at Mopipi Clinic, both 24-hour facilities, leaving only three midwives to cover the remaining clinics in Motopi and Xhumu. He also indicated that Kumaga, Moreomaoto and Toromoja had on-call arrangements after 1630 hours to handle emergencies, while eight health posts in Xere, Mmadikola, Kumaga, Rakops, Moreomaoto, Makalamabedi, Toromoja and Kedia, currently operated without resident midwives.

Member of Parliament for Boteti West, Mr Sam Digwa, had expressed concern regarding shortage of midwives at facilities in his constituency, particularly Rakops Primary Hospital.

Mr Digwa had also asked if the ministry would consider upgrading midwives to attract more general nurses to enroll in midwifery. **BOPA**

## Mohwasa explains eligibility for RASA allowance

### GABORONE

The Remote Area Service Allowance (RASA) is paid as an inducement for public service employees to work in rural areas characterised by limited social amenities, poor facilities and general inconvenience, Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa, told Parliament recently.

Minister Mohwasa explained that RASA served to compensate officers for the varying degrees of hardships experienced while stationed in such locations.

He added that government periodically reviewed designated RASA areas, criteria and payment rates, after which the Public Service implemented any approved changes to developments or rates. He added that the primary criterion for determining a RASA-designated area was its distance from a service centre, the nearest district headquarters where public service employees accessed essential amenities.

He said the areas were divided into category one which included all Remote Area Dweller Settlements, as well as veterinary and wildlife camps, excluding those in non-remote areas as well as category two which entailed other designated remote areas that met the hardship criteria.

Mr Mohwasa noted that relief employees and those on temporary employment were currently ineligible for the allowance.

"RASA serves a dual purpose, as an inducement to attract permanent and contract employees to remote areas, and as compensation for the deprivation they face. In most cases, these areas experience high vacancy rates due to a general reluctance to work in such locations," he said.

He further explained that temporary and relief workers were usually hired for specific projects or assignments with timelines typically not exceeding 12 months. Unlike permanent staff, he said such workers were paid subsistence allowances for the duration of their stay to acknowledge their service outside their primary duty station and therefore did not meet the specific requirements for RASA.

Despite the current exclusions, Mr Mohwasa told Parliament that government intended to conduct a comprehensive review of the allowance during the 2026/27 financial year, which would take all factors into account. Member of Parliament for Maun West, Mr Caterpillar Hikuama had requested an update on the administration of RASA as a retention tool and questioned why temporary staff, who faced the same high cost of living and lack of amenities, were excluded.

The MP also inquired about potential plans to amend Public Service Management Directive No. 10 of 2014 to extend benefits to all cadres, regardless of employment terms. **BOPA**



# Daily Business

## Puso challenges leaders to drive transformation

Keetile Bontsibokae  
TLOKWENG

The annual Tlokweng budget review has been described as democracy in action and a clear example of putting people at the centre of transformation.

In its second year running, the budget review, a brainchild of Tlokweng Member of Parliament Mr Pheny Segokgo, has entrenching itself as a key platform through which the national budget is dissected for better understanding by residents of the village.

Speaking at the review held in Tlokweng recently, Kgosi Puso of Batlokwa called for local leaders to be at the forefront of driving transformation, saying such action would see Tlokweng transform into a smart model village that was not only inclusive but one that also created opportunities for present and future generations.

Quoting Jon Schubert's remarks at the 2019 World Governments Summit, Kgosi Puso emphasised that leaders of transformation must 'live and breathe the journey,' spending time face-to-face with communities both to inspire and listen.

He praised Mr Segokgo for spearheading the budget review, and observed how his routine engagements with residents through various platforms strengthened bonds between the village's leadership and the community.

He also encouraged residents to own the national budget as it spoke to the aspirations of the nation.

"The budget is not just figures and numbers, it is an expression of values, priorities, and aspirations. It is a seed planted by government, and we as residents are the soil in which it grows," he said.

He further urged residents to take responsibility for bringing about sustainable developments to the village and also highlighted the role of the bogosi institution in guaranteeing the welfare and prosperity of all.

Despite limited farming land, he stressed that agriculture remained possible in Tlokweng through technology and innovation. Calling food security a national priority, he warned that reliance on diamonds had proven unsustainable.

Giving a background of the Tlokweng budget review, Mr Segokgo explained that it was introduced to simplify the complexities of the national budget speech, which was often laden with technical jargon.

In simplifying the national budget speech, he said the focus was on identifying as well as creating new opportunities that Tlokweng residents could tap into.

Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa echoed similar sentiments, stressing that the budget reflected everyday realities such as job availability, road conditions and

household livelihoods.

Mr Mohwasa noted that as Botswana faced tighter finances, declining diamond revenues and global uncertainty, transformation built on productivity, innovation and private enterprise could turn the tide for the country's economy and future.

"Fiscal discipline is not about cutting hope but about protecting the future. Every Pula mismanaged is a lost opportunity," he cautioned.

Mr Mohwasa emphasised inclusive growth, warning that exclusion bred frustration and



Minister for State President, Defence and Security  
Mr Moeti Mohwasa



Tlokweng Member of Parliament  
Mr Pheny Segokgo

instability.

He highlighted unemployment as a pressing challenge, with government focusing on skills development, vocational training, and empowerment rather than dependency.

Mr Mohwasa further encouraged dialogue between the business community, traditional leaders and

youth, describing the Tlokweng budget review as a partnership in action.

He said the outcome of such dialogue would be measured not only in national statistics but in whether families felt progress, businesses gained confidence, and young people saw a future worth striving for. **BOPA**

## 'Trusts must partner with government in driving development'

Esther Mmolai  
MAUN

While the partnership between the public and private sector is essential in driving developmental projects, it is also critical that communities are effectively included in the development drive.

The assertion was made by some stakeholders during a district leadership conference to reflect on development plan and strategies to collaborate in development implementation to improve livelihoods.

The stakeholders appreciated the move by the North West District to pursue corporate partnerships and community driven funding initiative to complement government budget allocations and improve financial independence.

The basis of their argument was that strong community engagement can also reduce contentious priorities during formal adoption of development plans.

**'This is a welcome development move for community trust to augment government coffers particularly for projects which have been not funded'**

Stakeholders also stated that community based organisations like community trusts were important partners for government in driving infrastructure developments and supported the idea to involve them in project implementation.

Some community trust in natural resource rich areas, generating millions in revenue annually, but failing to venture into meaningful developmental projects have welcomed the strategy by the district, calling for each trust to put aside 40 per cent

of their revenue and channel it into developmental projects.

"This is a welcome move for community trust to augment government coffers particularly for projects which have been not funded. The arrangement will also motivate trusts to do things right and ensure successful execution of projects," said Kgosi Gokgathang Moalosi of Sankoyo.

He said some community trust were generating between P12 million and P15 million annually, but failing to implement noticeable development projects to benefit their communities.

Furthermore, Kgosi Moalosi noted that for collaboration to genuinely drive community development, the lines of communication must be open and all parties embrace the standards of transparency.

He said government must also remove legal bottlenecks to increase investor confidence citing that no investor will wait for some months for approval of permits or licences.

He highlighted that they once had an investor who showed interest in renovating their clinic, only to wait for three months before the project was given a go ahead.

Kgosi Merafhe Motlhalo of Khwai concurred with Kgosi Moalosi that for the district to be more attractive and ready for collaboration, government should get rid of barriers hindering investors.

For his part, North West District Commissioner, Mr Thabang Waloka emphasised that the district will be strict in monitoring to ensure villages with Community Trusts benefit from the generated revenue.

Mr Waloka said Community Trusts were capable of boosting the economy through infrastructure development, implementing sustainable income generating projects to improve local livelihoods.

He added that Community Trusts generated enough money to be injected in projects such as construction of roads, streetlights, health facilities and others that have direct economic impact on the community. **BOPA**



Some of the goods at the Samochima Fishing Syndicate shop under the Pabalelo Trust. North West District Commissioner, Mr Thabang Waloka said community trusts were capable of boosting the economy through infrastructure development and implementing sustainable income generating projects.

### BUSINESS BRIEFS

#### Infrastructure Fund to drive economic growth

NAIROBI

Kenya president William Ruto on Monday signed the National Infrastructure Fund into law to drive economic growth, describing the establishment of the fund as the most consequential initiative in the country's development history. "Mobilising domestic capital will help us solve major challenges that arise when development depends excessively on foreign financing," he said in Kenya. "The fund marks a new chapter in financing our transformation, making us the architects of our own future." He said the expansion of Jomo Kenyatta International Airport would be the first project to be financed under the fund, structured with approximately 20 billion Kenyan shillings (about US\$155 million) in equity participation from the fund and domestic institutional investors. **Xinhua**

#### Airport expansion project boosts passenger flows

ZIMBABWE

The passenger throughput of Zimbabwe's Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport has recorded growth, especially following a China-financed expansion project commissioned in 2023, reaching about 1.65 million in 2025, according to the Airports Company of Zimbabwe (ACZ). ACZ Chief Executive Officer Tawanda Gusha told Xinhua in an interview that the country was excited about the modern project financed by the Export-Import Bank of China (China EximBank), which played an important part in the passenger flow increase. "We have seen improved passenger flows within our airports, and we have also received very positive comments from the users of our airports. According to him, the project is significantly boosting the aviation industry and would assist the government in achieving its objectives of Vision 2030. **Xinhua**

#### Bridge improves access to tourism island

MAPUTO

Mozambique President Daniel Chapo on Friday attended the inauguration ceremony of a jetty bridge on Inhaca Island in Maputo Bay, a project built by China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC). Located about 30km from Maputo, Inhaca Island has around 6,000 residents and is known for its tourism resources. Previously, shallow waters around the island prevented large passenger boats from docking directly, forcing passengers to transfer to smaller boats and wade ashore. The newly completed jetty bridge, with a total length of about 1.3km, allows passenger vessels to dock under different tidal conditions. Visitors can now reach the island directly via the jetty, improving the safety and efficiency of passenger transport. **Xinhua**

# Dikgang

PAMPIRI YA THUTO LE DIKITSISO

## Ipapatse Fa Leletsa

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261 0480 | 241 3402 | 365 3500

## Moruti o rotloetsa bomme go ineela mo Modimong

Kefilwe Selotlegeng  
**MAHALAPYE**

Bomme ba  
thapelo ba lekgotla  
la Batswana  
Christians Women  
Fellowship (BCWF)  
ba rotloeditswe go  
ineela mo Modimong  
ka tihomamo le  
boammaruri.

Ba rotloeditswe jalo ke Bishop  
Dr Lebo Rathedi wa kereke ya  
Redeemers Voice Ministries kwa  
bokopanong jwa thapelo ya bomme  
ba BCWF mo Mahalapye bosheng.

Dr Rathedi o kgothatitse bomme  
go ineela mo thapelong, a tihalosa  
fa e na le maatla a go aga mowa, go  
alafa mewa ee tshwenyegileng le go  
rola merwalo.

A re ntswa batho ba le bantsi  
ba rapela, ba rwele mewa e e ba  
imelang, gape ba kotlometse mewa.

A re le fa bomme ba rwele  
dikgwetlho tsa botshelo le tsa  
malwapa a bone, ebile ba imelwa,  
ba dire jalo ka tidimalo ka jaana e  
le bone thari ya setshaba.

Dr Rathedi o gakolotse bomme  
go ikanya thapelo a supa fa thapelo  
e le neo e Modimo a e nneetseng  
batho.

O tihalositse fa thapelo e se go  
bua fela, a re e golaganya motho  
le Modimo.

A re setlhogo sa letsatsi se se reng:  
Tlang Lona Ba Le Imelwang Ke Tla  
Lefa Tapologo, se lebaganye thata  
le seemo se bomme ba tsheleng  
mo go sone ka jalo se supa fa go  
ikanya Modimo e le karabo ya  
matshwenyego a bone.

Dr Rathedi a re batho ba ikanya  
dilo tsa lefatshe gona le Modimo  
a tihalosa gore go botlhokwa gore  
batho ba nne le kamano le Modimo,

ba mo ikanye.

Dr Rathedi a re o tshwenngwa  
ke gore ga gona lorato la Modimo  
mo dikerekeng, a tihalosa gore go  
tlhoka gore motho a nne le pelo e e  
phepa eseng fela go apara seaparo  
o bo a ya kerekeng.

Dr Rathedi a re go botlhokwa  
gore bokopano jwa bone bo jwale  
dilo tse di molemo.

Modulasetilo wa lekgotla la  
BCWF, Mme Monica Modise a re  
maikaelelo a bokopano jwa bone ke  
go rapelela masula aa diragalang mo  
lefatsheng.

Mme Modise a re ba kopana  
ngwaga le ngwaga ka beke ya ntlha  
ya kgwedi ya Mopitlo.

A re thapelo e e gwetlhlwe ke go  
bona masula aa diragalang lefatshe  
ka bophara.

O kopile bomme ba mokgatlho  
wa BCWF go tshwaragana ba  
nna seopo sengwe gore ba godise  
mokatlho.

Mme Modise a re ba eletsa  
go bona mokgatlho o anama le  
dikgaolo tsotlhe tsa lefatshe leno.

A re dikereke tsotlhe di golosegile  
go ka nna maloko a BCWF, ka jalo  
a kopa bomme go ngokela banana  
ka bontsi mo mokgatlhong gore o  
kgone go gola. **BOPA**



Ba sepodise sa Botswana ba ipela morago ga go tshwara segopotso sa go tlotla mapodise a a tlhokafetseng a le mo tironong ka Matlhatso mo Gaborone. Mookamedi wa sepodise, Mme Dinah Marathe a re ba ipelela segopotso se, go gopola ka fa mapodise ao, a neng a dira ka botswapelo le bopelokgale mo tironong ya bone. Senepe: Felicity Male

## Ba Mogobewakgomo ba tlhophha Sebetlela kgosi

Aobakwe Molefhi  
**MOGOWAKGOMO**

Banni ba Mogobewakgomo  
mo kgaolong ya Good Hope/  
Mmathethe ba tlohphile Rre John  
Sebetlela go nna kgosi.

Rre Sebetlela o tlohphilwe ke  
batho ba le 156, fa yoo mo salang  
morago, Rre Mokganedi Maseng,  
a tlohphilwe ke ba le 117, Rre  
Keorapetse Kedikilwe ene a bone

batlhophi ba le 33 fa Rre Tumelo  
Bosilong a tlohphilwe ke ba le  
barataro.

Motse oo, o nale lebaka o sena  
kgosi morago ga loso la ga Kgosi  
Kopano Maseng ka 2022.

Morago ga tlhopho eo ka Matl-  
hatso, Rre Sebetlela yo o supileng  
fa amogela maduo, o tihalositse fa a  
tla tlhoka thotloetso ya botlhe gore  
a kgone go tsamaisa motse sentle.

A re botlhe ba baneng ba emetse

dilhopho le banni ka kakaretso ba  
botlhokwa, mme a re o kopa gore  
go nne le mow awa poelano gore ba  
kgone go tlhabolola motse wa bone.

Rre Bosilong, yo e leng mongwe  
wa ba ba latlhegetsweng, o supile  
fa tomgano e le botlhokwa ka e ka  
thusa go isa motse kwa pele.

Motsamaisi wa ditlhopho, Kgosi  
Aobakwe Phetlhu wa Hebron, o  
supile fa itumeletse tirisanyo mmo-  
go ya morafe wa Mogobewakgomo.

A re ditlhopho tseo di tsamaile  
sentle go sena makgwere ape e bile  
morafe o ne o itshwere ka setho se  
se eletsegang.

“Re ne re ba letleletse gore ba ip-  
eele ditsamaiso tsa go tlohphha mme  
ba dumalana gore e nne tlhopho ya  
sephiri”, ga tihalosa Kgosi Phetlhu.

O supile fa bontlhopheng ba  
ne ba na le balebeledi ba bone go  
tlhomamisana gore go tlohphha batho  
ba ba maleba. **BOPA**

# DailyNews

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# Illegal sand mining on the rise in Ntlhantlhe

Marvin Motlhabane  
NTLHANTLHE

**Kgosi Malepa Orekeng of Ntlhantlhe has warned community members about the serious dangers posed by illegal sand miners in the village, many of whom carry arms and operate aggressively.**

Speaking in an interview during a recent taking services to the people event hosted by Moshupa District Council in Ntlhantlhe, Kgosi Orekeng advised residents to never confront these operators directly.

He stressed that anyone encountering illegal sand mining activities should report them immediately to the police for safe handling.

Kgosi Orekeng identified illegal sand mining as one of the persistent criminal issues affecting the village.

He explained that Ntlhantlhe was historically rich in sand resources, which played a key role in retaining water for the community.

In the late 1990s, the village imposed strict regulations to preserve this resource, allowing only residents to collect sand manually using wheelbarrows for personal building purposes while banning larger-scale operations involving tipper trucks or other heavy vehicles.

Despite these longstanding rules, Kgosi Orekeng reported a sharp rise in illegal sand loading operations involving trucks, particularly across the Molopye River, reaching unprecedented levels in recent times.

To address the ongoing problem, the village depends on patrols by the Badisa-Kgomo cluster. However, the local police

station remains under-resourced, lacking sufficient vehicles and facing other operational challenges that hinder effective monitoring and patrols along the Molopye River, the main hotspot for these activities.

Kgosi Orekeng appealed to the government to undertake thorough surveillance in the village to properly assess the scale of illegal sand mining and identify effective, targeted interventions to stop its expansion across the settlement.

He noted that the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) previously deployed troops from the Glen Valley Garrison for patrols, but this approach proved ineffective. Perpetrators would simply resume operations once the soldiers returned to their camp, highlighting the need for a more permanent presence.

Kgosi Orekeng advocated for the establishment of a continuous, dedicated special operation by the government to ensure round-the-clock patrolling and sustained deterrence against illegal mining.

Chairperson of Badisa-Kgomo, Mr Thapelo Radimo, echoed concerns about the issue, describing the illegal sand mining in the region as deeply disheartening.

He pointed out that if managed properly through the Village Development Committee (VDC), the village could turn this resource into a legitimate economic opportunity by strategically investing in controlled sand sales, generating greater returns for the community.

Illegal sand extraction continues to pose significant environmental risks, including reduced water retention in rivers, ecosystem damage, and threats to community safety across parts of Botswana. Authorities and local leaders are calling for stronger, sustained action to protect these vital natural assets while exploring sustainable development alternatives. **BOPA**



*Kgosi Malepa Orekeng of Ntlhantlhe has warned community members about the dangers posed by illegal sand miners in the village, many of whom he said operated aggressively.*

## Madikwe Community Care Group appeals for wheelchair donations

Booster Mogapi  
MOCHUDI

Madikwe Community Care Group is appealing for wheelchair donations to support individuals with limited mobility.

Speaking at the commemoration of International Wheelchair Day at in Mochudi recently, Madikwe Community Care Group coordinator, Dr Lillian Moremi said besides shortage, wheelchairs were expensive for many individuals.

She therefore, called on companies and individuals to reach out to the organisation through donations, saying the gesture would go a long way in offering recipients ability to navigate surroundings with greater ease.

Dr Moremi added that some of the people with disabilities had severe health complications, which rendered them wheelchair bound.

And if they do not have one (wheelchair), they are stuck without hope to mobility, she said. She further said they have observed that many wheelchairs in use need to be refurbished, hence appealed for those who could assist to extend a helping

hand.

She said 80 per cent of people with disabilities in Kgatleng had severe cases that warranted the use of a wheelchair all the time.

For her part, guest speaker and Member of Parliament of Kgatleng West, Dr Unity Dow said International Wheelchair Day championed dignity, mobility, independence, inclusion and equal opportunities for all members of the community.

She credited said Steve Wilkinson, for having founded Wheelchair Foundation, which led to the establishment of International Wheelchair Day on March 01, 2008. She said Wilkinson's vision was to create a day dedicated to acknowledging the role wheelchairs played in enhancing the quality of life for people with mobility challenges.

Dr Dow said the purpose of the day was to raise awareness and advocacy for promotion of equal rights for wheelchair users.

Thus she said to date, inclusion remained paramount in the community as wheelchair users now had access to different facilities to acquire services.

She added that in most cases when planning was done, wheelchair users were not catered

for, resulting in challenges when accessing some buildings.

Therefore, Dr Dow said the day highlighted the ongoing need for accessibility for the people using wheelchairs and recognised the tireless work of those who provided solutions, support and care. She said the theme: Unstoppable, shone light on resilience, strength and power of accessibility and served as a reminder that access to appropriate mobility was not a privilege but a necessity.

Dr Dow further said statistics had shown that of the 2.5 million people in Botswana, 55 000 people were living with some form of disability.

Therefore, she said legislators had to go beyond making legal frameworks and come up with programmes and funding geared at helping people with disabilities to earn a better life.

When giving a testimony about his disability, Mr Kebonyekgotla Modimothebe confessed that despite the difficulties, their disabilities do not push them to give up in life.

He further said they were by far largely discriminated with little to no representation in leadership. **BOPA**

## Magistrate grants Bluthorn Fund executives bail

Ndingililo Gaoswediwe  
GABORONE

Two South African nationals and four Batswana appeared before Broadhurst Regional Magistrate Mareledi Dipate on Friday, each facing eight counts of theft by agent.

Bluthorn Fund Managers' management, Eune Engelbrecht, Motlamedi Matome, Jeffery Sibisibi, Joseph

Mosimane, Shirley Kamodi, and Joseph Batsalelwang, acting as agents, are alleged to have defrauded councils and a land board of P102 million that was intended for investment purposes.

The accused are alleged to have obtained P40 million from Ghanzi District; P2 million from Hukunsi Sub-District; P15 million from Letlhakeng

Sub-District; P10 million from Southern District; P10 million from Mahalapye Sub-District; P10 million from South East District; P5 million from Tlokweng Sub-District councils; and P10 million from Tlokweng Land Board.

The state did not oppose granting the accused persons bail.

Mr Dipate granted each

accused persons' conditional bail, binding themselves with the sum of P10 000 bail, with each required to provide two sureties of the same amount.

The accused persons were also advised not to interfere with state witnesses. The case will mention on May 19.

In another matter, CMB directors Rapula Okaile and Gordon Marsland, who was

not present in court are facing 61 counts, which included theft by servant.

They are accused of stealing over P42 million entrusted to them for investment purposes in December 2017 in Gaborone, acting as agents of BPOPF.

Okaile's next appearance before court is on May 14, when he will be arraigned for all 61 counts. **BOPA**

# Arts & Culture

## Chinese tradition takes centre stage at Berlin tourism fair

### BERLIN

From an expanded visa-free transit policy to broader unilateral visa-free access, a series of measures is making China increasingly attractive to international visitors, who love to explore Chinese culture, scenery and new experiences.

China's growing appeal was showcased at ITB Berlin 2026, the global tourism trade fair that wrapped up its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary last Thursday. The event once again drew tourism professionals from around the world, with the "Nihao China" pavilion generating strong interest among a steady stream of visitors throughout the fair.

"May I take a photo here?" a young blonde woman asked at the China pavilion, standing before a bamboo installation evoking the charm of a classical Chinese garden.

Carefully adjusting her Chinese-style outfit, she smiled at her companion and said, "It feels like I've really stepped into an ancient Chinese painting."

Behind her, the pavilion unfolded in soft blue-green hues, echoing the elegance of classical Chinese aesthetics.

Translucent hanging decorations, calligraphic design elements, and touches of bamboo gave the space a light, flowing feel.

"Traditional Chinese culture is one of the strongest draws of travel to China," Jack Pinnick, an American who has lived in China for 16 years, told Xinhua.

This year, representing central China's Hubei Province, he performed a Wudang martial arts routine at the China pavilion, drawing a steady crowd of onlookers.

Pinnick believes that interest in China among international visitors is changing in noticeable ways.

"In the past, many foreign visitors came to China with a fascination for kung fu," he said.

"Now, more and more are being drawn by the depth and diversity of traditional Chinese culture. Many come the first time out of curiosity, but after experiencing it for themselves, they return because of its lasting appeal." *Xinhua*



**BERLIN** - China's growing appeal was showcased at ITB Berlin 2026, the global tourism trade fair that recently wrapped up its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Germany. Photo: Xinhua

## Canadian entrepreneur uses virtual reality to bring culture to global audience

### HANGZHOU

A Peking Opera performer, clad in embroidered armor, raises her spear as gongs reverberate through a studio in Hangzhou in eastern China.

There is no traditional stage or theater audience, only a green screen and a ring of specialised cameras capturing each posture. Later, through a virtual reality (VR) headset, the same scene unfolds again.

But this time, the viewer appears to be standing inside the performance rather than watching from afar.

The VR project was created by FXG, a VR production company based in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province. "We're capturing reality and allowing it to be entered again," Nikk Mitchell, FXG's founder and CEO, said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

"The goal is to take what's meaningful and valuable about the world and make it accessible in immersive form."

For Mitchell, who was born in Kenya and raised in Canada, much value lies in traditional Chinese culture.

His curiosity about martial arts films, tea rituals, and ancient history drove him to arrive in China for the first time at the age of 18.

"I found infinite stories in China's traditional culture, which is a rich treasure trove to me," said Mitchell, who has lived in China for nearly two decades. While paper-cutting and Dunhuang murals offer rich creation possibilities, it was Peking Opera that left him the deepest impression.

"I never had an interest in Peking Opera before I came to China. But I was fascinated by it when I experienced the sounds, movements and outfits personally," he said. However, he recognised that for those unfamiliar with it, the intricate art form may feel inaccessible. He sought to change the situation with the VR technology.

In 2012, a VR short film, though technically rudimentary by today's

standards, revealed to him a new way of storytelling: not observation, but presence.

"Photos and videos may fail to capture its essence. I knew the technology would change the way we experience art," said Mitchell. In 2017, he co-founded FXG in Hangzhou, drawn by the city's deep cultural heritage and technological dynamism.

His company focuses on the research and development of immersive technologies and content production.

"It is really meaningful to capture stage plays with VR so that anyone in the world can experience them," he said.

Mitchell believes that his work resonates with a broader trend in China and aligns with a national policy direction.

"Younger audiences are rediscovering traditional arts with great cultural confidence, and institutions are exploring digital formats," he said.

The Communist Party of

China Central Committee's recommendations for formulating the 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) stressed the need to further integrate culture and technology, to empower cultural development with digital and intelligent technologies, and to shift to an IT-based development model, while fostering new forms of cultural business.

"I feel almost destined to be in this place," Mitchell said, while citing the recommendations.

He even adopted a Chinese name, Li Wenlong, in which "Wen" signifies culture and knowledge, while he chose "long," meaning dragon, because he was born in the Year of the Dragon.

"My dream is that one day, a kid in rural China or a student in Paris can put on a headset and stand in front of a master performer without any time or space limits," Mitchell said.

"It's such an exciting vision of the future, where anything beautiful and meaningful that humanity has created can be preserved." *Xinhua*

# DailySport

## Women teams start World Relays preparations

Anastacia Sibanda  
**GABORONE**

Botswana women relay teams have reported for camp on Monday to prepare for the World Athletics Relays slated for Gaborone on May 2-3. The team is expected to compete in the 4x100m, 4x100m mixed, 4x400m mixed and 4x400m relays. According to the Botswana Athletics

Association acting president, Oabona Theetso, the team would be based in Francistown, before moving to Gaborone on March 15, to participate in the Lefika International Relays 2026 at the National Stadium on March 28. He said the women's team would be joined by the men's team at the Gaborone camp and fully prepare for World Relays as a unit. He said foreign-based athletes amongst them Sethunya Majama, Motlatsi Ranti

and Tlhompang Basele were yet to report for camp. Theetso said they were in contact with their respective coaches to organise a camp for the said athletes. However, he said they were happy with some of the relay team members, who competed at the Botswana Tertiary Student Sport Association Track and Field event, which was held in Francistown on Sunday. **BOPA**



Thomphang Basele



Galefele Moroko



Christene Botlogetswe

## Hockey icon turns focus to development

**WINDHOEK**

Namibia's female hockey icon, Magreth 'Magy' Mengo is shifting from international competition to grassroots development, as Women's Month gains momentum following International Women's Day.

The former national captain, recently launched and hosted the inaugural Magy Mengo Hockey Tournament in Windhoek, drawing 53 teams and over 800 high school players from March 4 to 7.

Mengo, who earned 61 caps for Namibia and retired after the 2023 Indoor Hockey World Cup, was also the first Namibian to play professional hockey in Europe.

She said she now wanted to give back to the community.

"I was just an ordinary girl playing netball and athletics. The next thing, I found myself on a hockey pitch. Within eight months, I was selected for the senior national team to represent Namibia at the All Africa Games at just 14 years old," she told *Xinhua*.

"After school, I had the honour of becoming Namibia's first and only professional hockey player, competing in the Netherlands in one of the best leagues in the world." But, she said, the journey was difficult.

"There were tears. There were moments of wanting to quit. There were trips that almost did not happen because the means were not there. My faith anchored me, and my family stood firmly behind me."

Mengo said the event was designed to create opportunities for young talent. "Why I'm having this tournament is to create a platform for talent and to showcase talent. This is a reflection of me."

I once played at a tournament like this that really opened doors for me to be where I am today as a hockey player," she said.

Mengo said she hoped to bridge the gap between public and private school learners and help grow field hockey in Namibia. "I really want to work with the Namibia Hockey Union to explore how we can establish our own facilities and host international test series for both youth and senior teams. The goal is to elevate Namibian hockey and put the country on the map as a venue capable of hosting international field hockey matches," she said.

The tournament is set to become an annual event, with Mengo looking to include more regional schools from 2027. "For all the schools that have travelled far, this is a great opportunity to showcase what they have and to build a bit of structure going forward into their leagues. Hopefully next year this will be bigger and will have more schools here, and hopefully the tournament will be even bigger," she said. *Xinhua*

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