

# BOTSWANA Daily News

THE PAPER THAT INFORMS AND EDUCATES



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Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe (second right) and acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Dr Edwin Dikoloti (left) being taken on a tour of Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI) facilities by BVI head of production, Mr Maipelo Tape (right) and CEO, Mr Andrew Madeswi in Gaborone yesterday. Mr Gaolathe said government would prioritise capacitation and resourcing of the institute as a vaccine-producing powerhouse. Photo: Gaseitsiwe Moruakgomo



## Govt to capacitate BVI as vaccine hub

Thato Mosinyi  
GABORONE

Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI) has been praised for its pioneering work in veterinary science, innovation and disease control. Speaking

during a tour of the BVI facilities, Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe

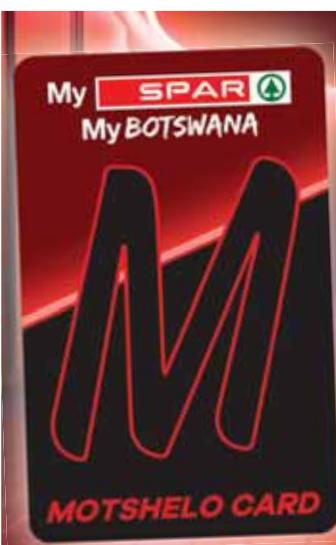
commended BVI for its commitment to advancing animal health, highlighting its role in controlling the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease

(FMD) and contributing to food security.

He emphasised the need for BVI to remain a global centre of excellence for infectious disease control, stating that the government's priority was to capacitate and resource the

institute to position Botswana as a vaccine-producing powerhouse.

BVI has proven itself as a leading producer of animal medicines, with potential to become a leading exporter across Africa. [cont... page 3](#)



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A healthcare officer spraying insecticide in Northwest District to curb malaria outbreak. North West District Council deputy council secretary for primary health, Dr Sandra Maripe-Ebutswé said the district had recorded 38 confirmed cases since November 2025, including one fatality.

## Malaria claims life as cases rise

Gaoletshoo Kgatitswe  
**MAUN**

The Northwest District has recorded 38 confirmed cases of malaria since the start of the season, November 2025 to January with one casualty of an 83-year-old, underscoring the seriousness of the outbreak in the district.

Despite that, the North West District authorities have expressed a growing challenge where nearly 1 000 households have refused indoor spraying meant to control the disease.

North West District Council (NWDC), Deputy Council Secretary for Primary Health, Dr Sandra Maripe-Ebutswé said the rising number of Malaria cases signal a pressing public health concern, particularly as nine villages have already been affected, with Botshabelo and Moeti ward among the hardest hit areas during the current peak.

From October to December alone, 964 residents refused Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS), a prevention method considered one of the most effective tools in controlling malaria transmission.

"People are refusing to open up their houses for the IRS and it is very concerning as cases continue to rise especially during this rainy season," she said.

Health teams also encountered operational setbacks, with 2,590 residents absent when spraying teams arrived and 1,013 houses found locked and inaccessible, significantly slowing containment efforts.

IRS involves spraying the inside walls of homes with insecticide to kill mosquitoes that transmit malaria, effectively reducing infection rates within households and across communities.

Dr Maripe-Ebutswé stressed that malaria control depends on collective responsibility, warning that refusal to allow spraying weakens community-wide protection.

"Spraying is a protective measure for families and neighbors alike, and without cooperation, the disease continues to circulate," she said.

Rural areas remain heavily targeted for spraying due to

their vulnerability to mosquito breeding, particularly during the rainy season when stagnant water increases transmission risks.

The Okavango Delta region, characterized by wetlands that naturally attract mosquito populations, remains another area of concern, prompting the distribution of 2 031 mosquito nets to camps to reduce exposure.

To strengthen the response, nurses are being flown into the Delta communities to provide medical attention and support early treatment, a crucial step in preventing severe illness and fatalities.

Dr Maripe-Ebutswé further urged households to maintain

clean environments, eliminate stagnant water, and consistently use mosquito nets, noting that hygiene and environmental management play a vital role in reducing mosquito breeding.

With one life already lost and dozens infected, district authorities warn that continued resistance to IRS spraying could allow the disease to spread further, placing more vulnerable residents, particularly the elderly and children at risk.

NWDC is appealing to communities to grant access to spraying teams, saying cooperation was critical defense in preventing deaths and bringing the outbreak under control. **BOPA**

## Official implores BOGA members to explore other tourism areas

Esther Mmolai  
**MAUN**

To develop a thriving and accessible tourism sector, mobile tour operators should explore other tourism opportunities and diversify products from the Okavango Delta heritage site. The delta site attracts thousands of visitors annually from all over the world and due to its economic and outstanding value, it often overshadows many of the surrounding safari destinations in the country, which offer equally interesting experiences.

However, members of the Botswana Guides Association (BOGA) who often operate in the delta; Moremi Game Reserve and Chobe National Park destinations, are encouraged to explore other tourism areas such as Makgadikgadi

Pans and the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), to reduce congestion in the delta.

Such members specialise in tailor-made, camping experiences, offering guided, immersive tours across the country's national parks.

BOGA chairperson, Kenson Kgaga, challenged operators to diversify tourism beyond the delta, by exploring rural and cultural sites.

Some sites in the Tubu area he said remained untapped but noted that the association had made a request for more sites.

Kgaga said the association continuously received applications for new memberships, resulting in increased traffic in the delta.

He touted the Makgadikgadi Pans and the CKGR as being among the best places to visit and if well marketed, could attract a lot of attention internationally.

Makgadikgadi pan is one of the largest salt pan in the world and offers good wildlife viewing in the wet season particularly when great herds of zebra and wildebeest begin their migration to the Boteti region.

This is the time when the pans fill with water, transforming

## Tension erupts at Lentswelemoriti over installation of electric fence

Chendzimu Manyepedza  
**LENTSWE LE MORITI**

In Lentswelemoriti, a Zion Christian Church (ZCC) mission village, nestled in the Bobirwa District, a brewing tension has sparked unrest among residents as a faction from the church council's decision to install a high-voltage electric fence has ignited concerns over community safety and lack of proper consultation and communication.

Villagers expressed concerns during a kgotla meeting addressed by Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ketlhalefile Motshegwa at the village recently.

Speaking on behalf of the community, the Chairperson of Lentswelemoriti Village Advisory Committee, Mr Batsidi Tsae, said villagers and the village leadership were excluded from the decisions on the installation of an electric fence that encircled their homesteads.

He expressed discontent, stating that villagers were never consulted nor informed about the installation, and to their surprise, only a small portion of the village had been encircled, leaving out the village graveyard and the water pump station.

Mr Tsae stated that the electric fence compromised the safety of the community since it was positioned close to the fences of some of the homesteads. Instead of providing security, it has become a source of anxiety for residents, who feel uneasy knowing that the high-voltage barrier now surrounds their homes.

He said this situation has raised questions about the safety measures and whether the well-being of the community was adequately considered, and if this was done in

the interest of providing security from the endangered wildlife, these areas would not be left out in the encirclement, since they are an integral part of human life at the village.

"We understand the need for security, but we also have the right to be heard, our voices matter, and our concerns need to be taken into consideration. We feel this encirclement was done for some hidden agenda," he said.

Mr Tsae further said the faction from the church council obstructed the government initiatives that included connection of the village to the national electricity grid and installation of tower lights through the Community Constituency Fund, amongst others, that intend to enhance societal livelihoods in the village.

Kgosi Bethuel Machete of Motlhabaneng and Lentswelemoriti villages also expressed concern regarding the installed surveillance camera situated near the village. He explained that there had been no consultation with the community about the purpose and intended use of the camera.

Kgosi Machete said the lack of communication has left villagers uncertain and apprehensive about its function, creating a sense of distrust regarding the reasons for surveillance in their proximity.

A resident, Ms Silvia Mulaazi explained that a faction within the church has caused confusion and might lead to divisions within both the church and the village. She mentioned that some of the new, imposed church policies were making it difficult for the congregation to fully practice.

Ms Mulaazi noted that it had always been customary for ZCC prayers to be conducted three times a day, in the morning, afternoon and evening, but this faction has disrupted that tradition.

Mr Daniel Lefadola, who is also a church elder and is believed to be part of a faction, neither confirmed nor denied the concerns raised.

However, he stated that he was not assigned to address any issues; instead, he attended the kgotla meeting to listen, just like any other church member.

In addressing the concerns raised, Mr Motshegwa underscored the need for a collaborative relationship between the village leadership and the church council. He emphasised the recognition of Kgosi's authority to convene village meetings, saying communication and cooperation would make a difference in efforts to resolve the issues at hand.

Mr Motshegwa articulated that if the village fails to resolve through community dialogue, a formalised rule of law will be invoked.

In such a scenario, both the villagers and the church council will be obligated to comply with outcomes, ensuring that justice and order are maintained within the community. He further pointed out that Lentswe le Moriti is officially recognised as a village. While it predominantly operates under church policies, it is imperative to uphold and respect the human rights of all individuals residing in the area.

"Government holds a profound respect for the role of churches, as they are vital in promoting peace, unity, and social cohesion within society," Mr Motshegwa stated. **BOPA**

Minister of Higher Education, Mr Prince Maele (left), permanent secretary in the ministry, Prof. Richard Tabulawa (left), University of Botswana Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris (second right) and deputy permanent secretary, Mr Mmokoi Ralelobana during the ministry leadership retreat in Gaborone on Monday. Mr Maele said transforming Botswana's education system for economic diversification and global competitiveness would focus on key priorities, including future skills, strengthening partnerships, lifelong learning and youth development. Photo: Gaseitsiwe Moruakgomo



## Higher education engine of country economic future

Lesedi Thatayamodimo  
GABORONE

Minister of Higher Education, Mr Prince Maele, says higher education is the driving force behind Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) urging stakeholders to prioritise reforms in the sector amid declining diamond revenues and rising youth unemployment.

Speaking during the Ministry of Higher Education leadership retreat in Gaborone on Monday, Mr Maele said the tertiary sector must become 'the engine room of national transformation,' warning that without skills, knowledge and innovation, the country could not secure its long-term future.

"Higher education is the engine that powers a modern economy, if the country is to overcome economic headwinds and secure long-term prosperity," Mr Maele said. Mr Maele emphasised that higher education remained central to economic diversification, youth employment and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global economy, calling for renewed urgency in aligning education policy with national development priorities.

Framing the retreat as a turning point, the minister described education as "the great equaliser" capable of empowering every Motswana to rise above circumstance. Held under the theme: Transforming Higher Education for Economic Diversification and Skills Development under NDP 12 and BETP, the retreat highlighted economic diversification and skills

development as the core pillars of the transformation agenda.

Mr Maele explained that the national education transformation blueprint forms part of a broader nine-priority strategy aligned with Vision 2036 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

He said the priorities included reorienting education toward future-ready skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving, strengthening tertiary education and research partnerships, promoting lifelong learning, and expanding training and youth development initiatives.

"These priorities are not abstract; they are living commitments," he said, adding that the retreat should mark 'a turning point' in renewing dedication to education excellence.

The minister acknowledged persistent challenges within the tertiary sector, including slow response times to queries, weak quality-assurance processes, outdated policies, sponsorship approvals for unaccredited programmes and staff welfare concerns.

He also cited sustainability issues surrounding the Top Achievers Programme and the continued non-accreditation of institutions such as the Roads Training Centre.

To address these challenges under NDP 12 and the BETP, Mr Maele said the ministry will roll out blended learning in five public institutions to expand access, pursue full accreditation of institutions and programmes in partnership

with the Botswana Qualifications Authority, strengthen graduate employability through a Graduate Tracer System, build leadership capacity by training at least 20 institutional heads, and accelerate the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) to support a fully data-driven ministry.

He urged education leaders to align institutional strategies with national priorities and focus on delivering measurable impact.

Meanwhile, the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Prof Richard Tabulawa, called for greater efficiency and revenue diversification. Prof Tabulawa urged officials to ensure every project and budget allocation demonstrates value for money, stressing that operational efficiency must remain a top priority in 2026.

He called for stronger internal systems, improved governance, faster turnaround times and tighter compliance and risk-management controls to ensure the ministry operates effectively and sustainably.

He also emphasised the need to boost non-tax revenue through consultancy services, research commercialisation and strategic partnerships to help maintain institutional capacity and service delivery amid budget constraints.

"Efficiency means doing more with less," he said, encouraging participants to take ownership of outcomes and make the retreat a stepping stone toward operational excellence. **BOPA**

## Some livestock products excluded from FMD restrictions

Goweditwe Kome  
MASUNGA

Certain livestock products, including UHT milk, pasteurised milk, sour milk and cooked products are exempt from restrictions on the movement of products from cloven hooved animals that government imposed following the recent outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD).

National Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) coordinator, Dr Bernard Mbeha told a special full council meeting of the North East District Council (NEDC) on Friday that moving the mentioned products across disease control zones was not a violation of the restrictions which were currently in place.

Dr Mbeha noted that other products that people asked a lot about included firewood, thatching grass, sand, gravel and other aggregates, which he said were also not affected by the restrictions as they could not transmit the FMD.

"Basically, the restriction covers cloven hooved animals, products from those animals like skins, hides, fresh milk, meat, bones, cattle feed, and dikgole as they have the potential of spreading the disease," he said.

Dr Mbeha also shed light on donkey meat, saying because of the lengthy process of verifying through testing if it was indeed donkey meat, it could not be moved across zones.

However, he said restrictions and checks at disease control checkpoints would remain heavier in Zones 6b, 3c, 3b, 6a and Zone 7 where searching and fumigation were being conducted rigorously

to prevent the possible spread of FMD to disease-free areas.

"The controls are concentrated mainly on zones in the North East District and in Bobonong, Tonota, Tutume, Nata and the rest of the Zones 6 up to Thalamabele Gate," he said.

Dr Mbeha stressed that the whole of the country was still locked because there were some animals that moved from Zone 6b where FMD outbreak was detected to other parts of the country.

"These includes Masunga, Tutume, Lobatse, Palapye, Letlhakane and Selebi Phikwe," he said, explaining that the Department of Veterinary Services was still tracing the livestock in question to examine and inspect it for possible FMD infection.

Dr Mbeha highlighted that at the moment, the examination of animals that has been moved into Zone 6a was yet to be conducted as farmers were reluctant to bring their animals over, adding that their lack of cooperation delayed the process which was targeted to have been completed last week.

He nonetheless stated that once the process was eventually completed, the Director of Veterinary Services would make a decision regarding whether the movement restrictions would be relaxed.

As for the ongoing surveillance exercise, Dr Mbeha said it would continue in Zone 3b, 3c, 6a, 6b and Zone 7 to try and determine how far the disease has spread.

On the other hand, he updated the meeting about vaccination of cattle, saying at Zone 6b covering the Matsiloje area the turnout for vaccination was low with only 4 000 of the expected about 6 000 cattle having been vaccinated.

He said after the completion of the primary vaccination, a booster vaccination would follow after 28 days to ensure that the disease was exterminated.

In response, councillor for Themashanga Mr Kudzani Tobokwani said there was need to educate officers manning the disease control gates on items prohibited to cross from FMD suspected zones as they disallowed and confiscated items not covered by the restrictions such as peanuts and ice-cream.

Mr Tobokwani also indicated that resource constraints such as shortage of fencing materials and lack of transport hampered the work of the mephato that residents had assembled in Zone 6a and 6b to mend the disease control fences.

Cllr for Zwenshambe/Gambule/Gungwe, Mr Tumelo Mhlambi urged fellow councillors to advise farmers to herd and kraal their livestock and to avail their cattle for vaccination.

Cllr for Letsholathebe/Masunga Mr Shandulani Maunge had asked if donkey meat was allowed to cross zones since some would resort to it following the moratorium on the slaughter of cloven hooved animals.

Another councillor Mr Vincent Mooketsi of Kgari/Moroka said farmers and people in the FMD affected areas wanted to defeat the disease but that government was working in isolation and not providing the necessary support such as the fencing materials required by the mephato. **BOPA**

## Government to capacitate BVI as vaccine hub

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He said the institute's strict adherence to international vaccine standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), together with a sound quality management system and customer-centred approach, enabled it to break into international markets, a development he described as commendable.

"From its humble beginnings, the BVI of today is a company that has grown in leaps and bounds and has positioned itself as a force to be reckoned with in the fight to unlock Africa's vast livestock potential by producing livestock disease vaccines that for many years have contributed towards

food production," he said.

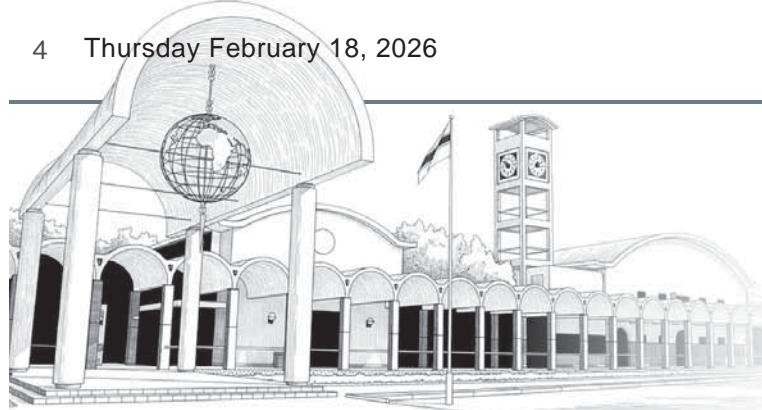
Mr Gaolathe further said BVI had expanded its mandate to transform into a national, regional and global player providing sustainable animal health solutions, and that it takes pride in leading efforts to unlock Africa's livestock potential by preventing diseases that have long hampered growth in the sector.

Meanwhile, BVI Chief Executive Officer Mr Andrew Madeswi said the institute remained steadfast in its commitment to the highest standards of quality, safety and regulatory compliance in pharmaceutical manufacturing, both regionally and internationally.

"As part of our ongoing commitment to innovation and

excellence, Botswana Vaccine Institute is excited to introduce the new look and feel of our vaccine product labels. This initiative aims to enhance brand recognition, improve clarity and ensure consistency across all our product lines," he said.

Mr Madeswi said that during its 40 years of operation, BVI had produced high-quality vaccines meeting industry standards, with a strong focus on safety, effectiveness and livestock well-being, promoting healthier herds and communities across Africa and beyond. He reaffirmed BVI's commitment to safeguarding regional animal health amid the escalating FMD outbreak in the region. **BOPA**



## PARLIAMENT 2026

# Legislators divided on austerity measures



Legislators held different views on government's new austerity measures during their contributions to the 2026/27 proposed budget. While some MPs hailed the fiscal tightening as a necessary 'bitter pill' to rescue an economy characterised by empty coffers, others viewed the cuts as a threat to essential service delivery, arguing that the burden of recovery was being placed on the nation's most vulnerable.

Tebagano Ntshole

### GABORONE

The National Assembly remains divided as lawmakers differ on government's newly unveiled austerity measures for the 2026/27 financial year.

While some MPs hailed the fiscal tightening as a necessary 'bitter pill' to rescue an economy characterised by empty coffers, others viewed the cuts as a threat to essential service delivery, arguing that the burden of recovery was being placed on the nation's most vulnerable.

Debate on the budget proposals continued Monday, with MP for Okavango West, Mr Kenny Kapinga, advising government to remain financially prudent during this period of budgetary constraints.

Mr Kapinga noted that the current administration inherited an ailing economy and maintained that austerity was essential for recovery.

However, he stated that the budget speech, presented by Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe a week ago, failed to convince him that the economy had stabilised.

He criticised what he described as lack of prioritisation and spontaneous spending, citing the introduction of English breakfasts in schools while institutions struggled to provide

basic meals.

The legislator also questioned the increase of Village Development Committee (VDC) and Ikageng allowances to P2,500 despite the economic climate.

Furthermore, he called for the conclusion of the pending forensic audit, noting that the public was losing trust in the investigation process.

Kgatleng Central MP, Mr Mpho Morolong, argued that neither the budget speech nor the National Development Plan (NDP) 12 earmarked projects for his constituency or the wider Kgatleng area.

He proposed that MPs should have direct control over Community Constituency Project (CCP) funds and suggested the allocation be doubled from P10 million to P20 million.

Additionally, MP Morolong called for the former leader of the Botswana National Front (BNF) to be honoured with a portrait on the P10 banknote.

**While acknowledging that reducing overtime pay is unpopular, it is a necessary cost-saving move.**

MP Gabatsholwe Disha of Okavango East said the budget offered no solutions and lacked original programming.

He highlighted the dilapidated and porous state of the national border fence, which posed a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) threat.

MP Disha argued that the economy had worsened under the new government, saying unemployment in his constituency stood at 98 per cent.

As the shadow tourism minister, he expressed disappointment over the lack of a clear development plan for the tourism sector.

On the other hand, Kgalagadi South MP, Mr Tokyo Modise, welcomed the austerity measures, noting that the moratorium on Government Purchase Orders (GPOs) helped save funds without hindering service delivery.

While acknowledging that reducing overtime pay was unpopular, he argued it was a necessary cost-saving move.

Corporation, the company previously tasked with developing the Bonno National Housing Scheme in the Gamalete constituency.

This was said by Water and Human Settlement Assistant Minister, Mr

Motsamai Motsamai in response to a parliamentary question on Monday.

Mr Motsamai said the decision to rescind the award was driven by the developer's failure to meet specific contractual obligations.

"The ministry had to rescind that decision because the company failed to fulfill the written agreements provided to them," the assistant minister stated.

He added that while the 9.81-hectare site remained vacant for now, a procurement process was already underway to identify a new developer to take over the project.

He further indicated that the setback in Ramotswa came amid a massive nationwide rollout of the Bonno programme, under which to date, a total of 19 344 plots had been allocated to independent developers across Botswana.

He said the ministry noted that the figure remained fluid, as government maintained zero-tolerance policy for developers who failed to perform.

"Land is frequently reallocated to newly vetted companies when original partners withdraw or fail to meet standards," he said.

Again, he said to ensure affordability, the ministry leased the land to successful developers at no cost, an arrangement under which he said the land remained registered under the Ministry of Water and Human Settlement.

"Developers are strictly required to develop the land and sell the completed units without including the land value in the final house price," he said.

Consequently, he said buyers only paid for construction and related costs given that land was not part of the pricing structure and no formal valuation of the land had been conducted.

"To ensure Bonno houses remain affordable, buyers only pay for the construction, excluding land costs," he said.

Meanwhile, he assured Gamalete residents that the programme remained a priority and that the search for a reliable partner to develop the nearly 10-acre site in Ramotswa was being treated with urgency.

Gamalete MP, Mr Boniface Mabeo had asked the minister to state the name of the company, which had been awarded the tender to construct Bonno National Housing Scheme houses in Gamalete Constituency and the number of plots or land which would be given to the said company.

He also wanted to know the number of plots which had been given to all private property developers (companies) that were constructing Bonno National Housing Scheme throughout Botswana as well as the estimated cost of all the land that had been given to the said property developers. **BOPA**

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# Chukumuchu electrification project at tender stage

## GABORONE

The electrification project at Chukumuchu is currently at tender procurement stage, while a similar project for Tsodilo was completed in November 2025 and the village connected to the national grid, Minister of Minerals and Energy, Ms Bogolo Kenewendo has told Parliament.

Answering a parliamentary question

on Monday, Ms Kenewendo said both projects were part of the current Village Electrification Programme through which government was targeting 112 villages under its rural electrification initiative.

She noted that following the conclusion of the procurement and contract awarding processes, project implementation at Chukumuchu would commence as per the approved schedule.

She further said while electrification of additional villages in the district remained government's priority, expansion to other settlements would be considered in the future, owing to budgetary availability and competing national infrastructure demands.

She acknowledged that lack of access to grid electricity in remote villages in the broader constituency had adverse impact on service delivery and quality of life for public servants.

However, she noted that the Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs would be in a better position to respond on the issue of solar power plants in primary schools.

The minister was responding to a question by Okavango West MP, Mr Kenny Kapinga, who had asked when the reticulation of electricity to Tsodilo and Chukumuchu villages would be completed.

Mr Kapinga had further asked the minister if she was aware that public servants in a number of villages in Okavango West were living without a basic necessity such as electricity and that this terribly degraded the quality of their lives.

The MP had also wanted to know if she was aware that most of the solar power plants built in primary schools were unserviceable due to failure to solve the battery problems, and how she would address the problem. **BOPA**

# Budget puts MPs at loggerheads

Mmoniemang Motsamai

## GABORONE

The 2026/27 budget continues to spark mixed reactions, with opposition legislators dismissing it as uninspiring, while those on the ruling aisle view it as comprehensive and impactful.

On Monday, Letlhakeng MP, Brigadier Domeaza Mokgwathi argued that an export-led economy required concerted efforts to foster industrialisation.

He said infrastructure integration should be the starting point, thus called for improved aviation hubs to connect towns and cities, alongside enhancements to logistics businesses.

"To improve our economy, there must be a deliberate effort to intensify infrastructure development," he stated.

Regarding fiscal policy, Mr Mokgwathi advocated for an up-to-date digitalised tax system.

He noted that integrating all existing tax platforms would enhance collection and ensure every thebe was accounted for.

He also advocated human capital investment as low-hanging fruit, suggesting short-term strategies to encourage graduates to pursue postgraduate degrees to enable them to compete for international jobs.

On healthcare, he cited Sustainable Development Goal 3, noting that curbing economic hemorrhage was essential to redirecting resources toward medical systems.

Locally, he advocated for the tarring of the Letlhakeng-Kaudwane road, which he said was a gateway to development, as well as improvements to the Hatsalatladi and Diphuduhudu roads to assist the farming community in transporting goods.

Kgatleng East MP, Mr Mabuse Pule called for a systemic overhaul of the budget process.

Mr Pule proposed that the Parliament Estimates Committee received the draft budget before its formal presentation to ensure better oversight.

He argued for greater transparency to prevent legislators from being kept in a state of 'speculation or anxiety' regarding their constituency wish-

lists.

While he lauded the budget for aligning with the Botswana Economic Transformation Plan (BETP) and welcomed cost-savings from the suspension of Government Purchase Orders, he expressed disappointment in the Umbrella for Democratic Change, saying the party had failed to realise the ambitious pledges that originally earned the voters' trust.

Lentsweletau/Lephepe MP, Mr Tshenolo Bogatsu suggested that an inventory of range resources and other local initiatives should be exploited to create employment.

He called for the opening of the Medie Mine to spur coal beneficiation and the construction of power stations as well as investment in pharmaceutical manufacturing, utilising indigenous plants like Sengaparile (Devil's Claw).

Mr Bogatsu also highlighted deteriorating school infrastructure, noting overcrowding at Kopong JSS and the need for the refurbishment of Matsheng Boarding School.

He expressed hope that the Ikageng programme (the successor to Ipelegeng) would move Batswana

away from a dependency syndrome and toward economic empowerment.

Molepolole North MP, Mr Arafat Khan supported the budget, particularly the prioritisation of water projects in Molepolole.

He demanded a clear timeline for such developments.

However, he expressed concern over the P4 million bus rank budget.

He suggested that UDC cadres should be deployed to implement the party manifesto, hinting at potential 'sabotage' of progress.

He also highlighted inefficiency at Kweneng District Ventures, noting that despite a payroll exceeding P100 000, development at the Kweneng District Council remained stagnant.

On unemployment, Mr Khan suggested that 30 per cent of government procurement should be reserved for SMMEs and that public works programmes should be expanded to absorb unemployed youth.

Under vocational training, the legislator proposed turning the Kweneng Rural Development Administration into a dedicated vocational training centre. **BOPA**

**Ministry creates career pathways for reception class teachers**

## GABORONE

The Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education has established dedicated positions for reception class teachers with the aim provide a clearer path for career progression and salary growth.

Answering a question in Parliament on Monday, Minister Nono Kgafela-Mokoka outlined the entry-level requirements and the multiple grading system designed to prevent career stagnation.

Ms Kgafela-Mokoka explained that new teachers entered at the C4 salary scale under the title assistant teacher-early childhood and after one year of satisfactory service, teachers were upgraded to the C3 scale.

She added that teachers progress to C2 after serving one year at the C3 level while progression to the C1 scale occurred after two years of service at the C2 level.

"Because these positions are multiple-graded (C4/3/2/1), officers can reach the C1 scale within a single post, effectively avoiding the stagnation often seen in fixed-scale roles," she said.

She also said the head of department-infant (D4 Scale) was the primary promotional goal for reception class teachers.

However, she clarified that promotion to such level was competitive and depended on vacancy availability where positions must be open within the establishment while all teachers at C1 level, including those in other portfolios like senior teachers (Maths, Science, languages, among others), were eligible to compete for the roles.

Currently, she said the ministry maintained a total establishment of 1 083 reception class positions across all regions.

She explained that the criteria used to evaluate candidates for advancement included qualification minimum of a Diploma in Early Childhood Education, date of first appointment and the date the qualification was obtained as well as consistent results from performance appraisal reviews.

Tati East MP, Mr Tlhabologo Furniture, had sought clarity on the progress made regarding promotions and the specific criteria used to determine teacher advancement. **BOPA**



Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa has told Parliament that 350 cattle were rustled from Botswana through Namibia into Zambia along the border covering the Okavango East Constituency between 2022 and 2025.

# More than 350 cattle rustled across borders since 2022

## GABORONE

Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa has told Parliament that 350 cattle were rustled from Botswana through Namibia into Zambia along the border covering the Okavango east constituency between 2022 and 2025.

Answering a question in Parliament on Monday, Mr Mohwasa indicated that the intelligence and arrests made revealed that foreign nationals were

mostly responsible for the rustling.

He said 83 cattle were recovered and 82 were identified by their owners and auctioned after their cases were completed while one was still awaiting to be identified and in police custody.

The minister said nine culprits were arrested and eight of them were charged while one was not prosecuted as there was insufficient evidence.

He said to ensure the security of the area and to protect property, the

Botswana police in conjunction with Botswana Defense Force conducted regular patrols in the area.

Mr Mohwasa further said the key strategy to curb cross border theft was to strengthen cooperation of law enforcement and communities across borders, adding that five chiefs from Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa would, on February 24-26, meet to deliberate on strategies to curb cross border crime.

The minister was answering a

question from Okavango East MP, Mr Gabolshwe Dishes who had wanted to know the number of animals stolen and taken across the border from his constituency in the last four years and whether government had intelligence indicating who was responsible.

Mr Dishes had also wanted to know the number of cattle being recovered and where they were secured as well as the number of culprits being arrested and successfully prosecuted during the period. **BOPA**



# DailyBusiness

## Experts urge govt to review subsidies and boost tax collection

Bonang Masolotate

**GABORONE**

**Now is the time for government to review subsidies and improve tax collection to boost revenue as the country grapples with a dwindling revenue base and youth unemployment.**

Experts at the University of Botswana (UB) Budget Dialogue reasoned that subsidies are not reaching intended beneficiaries, resulting in revenue losses.

They warned that increasing the debt ceiling could lead to higher interest rates, while advocating for investment in the creative sector to drive job creation and economic growth.

UB academic, Dr Jonah Tlhalefang pointed out that existing subsidies were missing the intended beneficiaries, hence should be reviewed to ensure targeted beneficiaries benefitted.

Taking the electricity subsidy as an instance, Dr Tlhalefang said it was intended to enable the poor access to electricity, but the underprivileged were not necessarily connected.

He said the subsidies were only serving as a revenue loss to the economy, and reviewing them could save government money.

Also, to increase revenue mix, the government should ensure efficiency in tax collection as well as reduce tax expenditure.

With regard to increasing the country's debt ceiling, Dr Tlhalefang said, "adjusting the debt ceiling upwards is not a good thing, it is a surprise to the market. Such a move could lead to high interest rates, increasing the cost



*University of Botswana Chancellor, Ms Tebello Seretse posing a question to panelists at the UB Budget Dialogue in Gaborone recently. With her are Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae (right) and Ambassador at Large, Professor Oathokwa Nkomazana. Ministry of Higher Education permanent secretary, Professor Richard Tabulawa said the 2026/27 National Budget was clear, as its focus was pivoting the country toward a diversified, export-driven, digitally enabled and skills-rich economy. Photo: Felicity Male*

of borrowing."

Before an increase, there is a need to address how the country reached the 40 per cent debt ceiling, and if the debt is under 60 per cent of the country's GDP, it would be prudent to increase the ceiling with caution, Dr Tlhalefang said.

The Department of Visual and Performing Arts', Professor Connie Rapoo, said the country was wrestling with the crisis of youth unemployment, and that the creative sector offered employment opportunities.

"And I want to say very confidently and broadly that the creative industry sector creates jobs better than any other

economic industry," she said, adding that there were several industries within the sector.

Therefore, intentional investment and policy framework in the sector could help reduce the burden of unemployment.

The Ministry of Higher Education permanent secretary, Professor Richard Tabulawa, said the 2026/27 National Budget was clear, as its focus was pivoting the country towards a diversified, export-driven, digitally enabled, and skills-rich economy.

"This pivot is informed by youth demographics, our competitiveness ambitions, and our national conscience," said Prof Tabulawa.

He said that the country faced real fiscal pressure and diamonds had dwindled, a situation that called for bold choices for the country to invest strategically, modernise institutions, support innovation, and mobilise societal efforts for jobs, productivity and inclusive prosperity.

Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae said government was prioritising toll gates as another revenue source.

UB Chancellor, Ms Tebello Seretse stated that the issue of toll gates to expand government revenue sources had been mooted, but nothing had thus far been done.

**BOPA**

**BUSINESS BRIEFS**

**Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline to resume after Ramadan**

**ALGIERS**

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and Nigerian leader Abdourahamane Tiani pledged Monday to deepen strategic ties, signaling a detente to 10 months of diplomatic friction with the re-launch of the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline. Following talks in Algiers, Tebboune confirmed that work on the 4,100-kilometer pipeline will resume after Ramadan. The project is designed to carry 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from Nigeria through Niger to Algeria's Mediterranean coast for export to Europe. **Xinhua**

**UK unemployment to hit the highest in 5 years**

**LONDON**

Britain's unemployment rate rose to 5.2 per cent in the three months to December 2025, the highest level in nearly five years, official data showed on Tuesday. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the unemployment rate increased by 0.2 percentage points from the previous quarter. The number of unemployed people reached 1.883 million during the period. Employment rate stood at 75.0 per cent, economic inactivity was 20.8 percent, indicating continued softness in labour market conditions. Total employment reached 34.244 million. The Bank of England warned that labour market conditions have loosened. **Xinhua**

**Ethiopia host 22<sup>nd</sup> African Fine Coffees Conference, Exhibition**

**ADDIS ABABA**

**ADDIS ABABA**

African leaders on Monday issued a unified call to transform the continent's vast economic and demographic potential into bankable projects at scale and speed, aiming to power development ambitions

The urgent call came at the 9<sup>th</sup> Africa Business Forum 2026 at the UN Conference Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, under the theme "Financing the Future of Africa: Jobs, Innovation and Creative Capital."

The two-day forum, convened annually by UNECA in collaboration with AU and other partners, is a premier platform for high-level engagement among

African heads of state, private sector leaders and investors. This year's forum centered on fostering partnerships and leveraging blended finance to advance Africa's youth economy. Addressing the forum, Ethiopian President Taye Atske Selassie emphasised the crucial importance of harnessing the potential of Africa's youth.

Noting that the AU's 50-year continental development blueprint, Agenda 2063, designates the youth as the primary drivers of Africa's renaissance, he said with over 70 per cent of the continent's population under the age of 30, Africa is yet to exploit its "immense" demographic potential. "This demographic

reality can become Africa's greatest strength if we succeed in turning our youth into productive capital and our innovation into scalable enterprises." Atske Selassie said.

Experts and policymakers stressed that while global capital has become more selective, Africa's demographic and market fundamentals make it an "irresistible frontier." They highlighted the need to address the existing gap between available funds and viable projects.

Emphasising that transformation is already underway in multiple sectors across Africa, UNECA Executive Secretary Claver Gatete said that despite these successes, the pace

of transformation remains below potential.

"Africa faces a huge infrastructure financing gap and further loses billions annually to illicit financial flows. Even so, the continent holds over US\$1.1 trillion of domestic institutional capital in pension funds, insurance pools and sovereign assets."

Gatete proposed four strategic measures for collective action, which are scaling up domestic capital, deploying innovative financing instruments, stronger credit ratings and more credible African capital markets, full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and investing in innovation, skills, and data systems. **Xinhua**

Ethiopia is one of Africa's largest producers and exporters of coffee regarded as the origin of Arabica coffee. Coffee production is seen as the backbone of the country's agriculture-led economy. Widely recognised for its quality and rich flavors, ranging from winy to fruity and chocolatey, the country's coffee has been in great demand across the globe. **Xinhua**

# Dikgang

PAMPIRI YA THUTO LE DIKITSISO

## Bagwebi ba tlaa aga matlo a le 19 344 ka lenaneo la Bonno

PARLIAMENT

Ditsha tsotlhe tse di abetsweng bagwebi ba ba ikemetseng mo lenaneong la Bonno di dikete tse di lesome le boferabongwe, makgolo a mararo, masome a mane le metso e mene (19 344).

Se se builwe ke mothusa tona wa lephata la Metsi le Bonno, Rre Motsamai Motsamai, a araba potso ya palamente, e mo go yone, Mopalamente wa Gamalete, Rre Boniface Mabeo a neng a batla go itse palo tsotlhe tsa bagwebi ba ba ikemetseng ba ba thapilweng ka fa tlase ga lenaneo la Bonno.

Rre Motsamai o supile fa kabo ditsha e, e le bontlha bongwe jwa maikaelelo a puso a gore dikgwebo tse di ikemetseng di nne le seabe le go gefosa kago ya matlo a lenaneo la Bonno.

A re palo e ga e a ema golo gole gongwe fela, ka jaana bagwebi ba etla ba ikogela morago kgotsa ba palelwa ke go kgona ditumalano tse di beilweng, selo se a supileng fa se baka gore ba boele kwa morago.

Le fa gontse jalo, o supile fa lephata Metsi le Bonno le tsweletse pele ka go abela bagwebi ba basha ba ba kanokilweng, go netefatsa gore lenaneo le tswelela pele.

O supile fa khamphane e e abetsweng lefatshe go aga

matlo a lenaneo la Bonno kwa Ramotswa e le GAP Infrastructure Corporation.

A re le fa go ntse jalo, lephata la Metsi le Bonno le ne la tlamega go boela morago tshwetso ya lone ka khamphane eo e ne e sa kgona go diragatsa ditumalano tse e neng e di beilwe pele ka mokwalo.

"Ke netefatsa fa lefatshe le le abetsweng lenaneo la Bonno kwa Ramotswa le santse le le teng, mme ebile thulaganyo e tsweletse go batla khamphane e e ka abelwang lefatshe le go tswedisa lenaneo," a supa.

Rre Motsamai o supile fa lephata la Metsi le Bonno, mo boemong jwa puso e le lone le abetsweng lefatshe ka fa tlase ga lenaneo la Bonno.

"Go netefatsa gore theko ya matlo a Bonno ga a turele Batswana, ga mmogo le go tsaya taolo, lephata le hirisetsa bagwebi ba ba atlegileng lefatshe mme ba sa duele sepe," a tlhalosa.

Ka jalo, a re bagwebi ba tshwanetse go tlhabololo lefatshe le go rekisa matlo a a fedileng ba sa tsenye madi a lefatshe mo tlhatlheng ya ntlo, a tlatsa ka gore ba ba rekang matlo ba duela kago fela le tse dingwe go sena madi a lefatshe mo teng.

"Ka tsamaiso e ga gona tshekatsheko ya tlhatlhwa ya lefatshe e e dirwang ka e se bontlha bongwe jwa lenaneo," a tlatsa.

Mopalamente Mabeo o ne a kopile mothusa tona go bua leina la khamphane e e abetsweng go aga matlo ka lenaneo la Bonno kwa Ramotswa, le go itse gore khamphane eo e abetswe ditsha di le kae.

O ne gape a kopile mothusa tona go supa palo ya ditsha tsotlhe tse di abetsweng bagwebi bothle ba ba ikemetseng mo lenaneong la Bonno, le go tlhalosa tlhwatlwa ya lefatshe le le abetsweng magwebi

**BOPA**

matlo a lenaneo la Bonno kwa Ramotswa e le GAP Infrastructure Corporation.

A re le fa go ntse jalo, lephata la

Metsi le Bonno le ne la tlamega go

boela morago tshwetso ya lone ka

khamphane eo e ne e sa kgona go

diragatsa ditumalano tse e neng e

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le abetsweng lenaneo la Bonno

kwa Ramotswa le santse le le

teng, mme ebile thulaganyo e

tsweletse go batla khamphane

e e ka abelwang lefatshe le go

tswedisa lenaneo," a supa.

Rre Motsamai o supile fa

lephata la Metsi le Bonno, mo

boemong jwa puso e le lone le

abetsweng lefatshe ka fa tlase

ga lenaneo la Bonno.

"Go netefatsa gore theko

ya matlo a Bonno ga a turele

Batswana, ga mmogo le go

tsaya taolo, lephata le hirisetsa

bagwebi ba ba atlegileng

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a tlhalosa.

"Ke netefatsa gore theko

ya matlo a Bonno ga a turele

Batswana, ga mmogo le



SPAR representative, Mr Kemiso Gotewang (centre) handing over groceries to Francistown Centre for Deaf Education head, Ms Changu Munyadzwe (third right) after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in Francistown recently. Under the partnership, SPAR will donate P10 000 worth of groceries each month for a year, while the centre provides free sign language training to six SPAR employees. With them is the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education north east regional director, Mr Labane Mokgosi (second right) and Kgosi Thomas Mpenya of Donga. Photo: Ogopoleng Kgomoethata

## Retail group supports deaf education with grocery gift

Providing an environment where teaching and learning can thrive means ensuring that essential items like food and toiletries are also available to learners to enhance their learning experience.

Kelebogile Taolo  
FRANCISTOWN

Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education's regional director for the North East region Mr Labane Mokgosi said this recently when Tsetseng Retail Group donated groceries to the Francistown Centre for Deaf Education (FCDE).

Commending Tsetseng Retail Group for its collaboration with FCDE, Mr Mokgosi said reducing their partnership into writing through the Memorandum of Understanding that the two entities signed at the donation ceremony marked the unwavering commitment of the retail group to supporting deaf education.

"We are truly grateful for this partnership, and the Memorandum of Understanding is a source of great pride for us" he remarked, highlighting how the 12-months donations by the Tsetseng Retail Group, the parent company for Spar supermarkets, will positively impact the work of the Francistown School for the Deaf.

He also pointed out that Spar's initiative serves as an excellent example of a public-private partnership, which they aspire to expand. Spar community project coordinator, Mr Kemisetso Gotewang noted that Spar's partnership with FCDE started when they first visited the school in 2024 to assess its needs and determine how they could assist.

"We discovered various issues, among them the need for food and toiletries. As Tsetseng Retail Group, we recognised that students need proper sustenance in order to perform well academically," he stated, giving a background of why they chose to support the centre through providing groceries and toiletries.

With regards the Memorandum of Understanding, Mr Gotewang said Spar committed to providing a monthly

sponsorship of P10 000 over 12 months to cover food and toiletries.

FCDE school head Ms Changu Munyadzwe expressed appreciation for the generous grocery donations that Spar has been providing since 2025.

She noted that the contributions have greatly aided in supplying daily meals for their learners, ensuring dignity, nourishment, and stability for children who depended on the centre for education and care.

Ms Munyadzwe highlighted that FCDE was a unique institution offering sign language-based education to deaf students from the northern region of Botswana.

She further indicated that the school relied on collaboration with government and private partners like Spar.

She also mentioned that the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education supported their operational budget and provided teaching staff, while the City of Francistown offered additional assistance.

FCDE representative, Mr Pako Modise shared that FCDE would enrol six Spar employees from the three Francistown stores in basic sign language training.

The initiative, he said, would enhance accessibility, improve customer relations with deaf clients, and support compliance with the Botswana Disability Act. **BOPA**

## Scientists discover new insect species in South Africa

CAPE TOWN

Scientists have identified several insect species previously unknown to science in South Africa's Richtersveld National Park, South African Government News Agency (SA News) reported on Monday.

According to SA News, the discovery was made by Dr Massimo Meregalli from Italy and Dr Roman Borovec from the Czech Republic. These respected entomologists recently published their research on flightless weevils found in remote parts of the park.

These tiny insects live in the soil, hidden under shrubs, and mostly come out at night, making them very hard to find and study. Therefore, their discovery required meticulous fieldwork in the Richtersveld's

challenging environment.

SA News quoted a statement by South African National Parks (SANParks) as saying, "With the support and guidance of Richtersveld National Park Nursery Curator Pieter van Wyk, the researchers explored the remote Armmanshoek Valley, an area not previously surveyed for soil insects. Their efforts resulted in the identification of multiple new species, further confirming the Richtersveld as a hotspot of endemism and scientific importance."

To honor the park's importance for conservation and SANParks' support for research, the scientists named a newly found group and species "Richtersveldiella sanparkensis."

This is the first insect species to be officially named after SANParks and

## Masetsebi warns against indiscriminate nappies disposal

Marvin Mothabane  
MOSHANA

The Kanye Clean Up Campaign continued its momentum in the district, with a notable event held in Moshana on Friday.

Bangwaketse Queen Masetsebi Gaseitsewe, patron of the Kanye Clean Up Campaign urged participants during the clean-up drive to avoid indiscriminate disposal of nappies, highlighting the serious health and environmental risks involved.

She explained that improper nappy disposal could contaminate water sources, potentially leading to the spread of diseases. She also pointed out dangers to livestock, noting that cattle and goats may ingest discarded nappies, resulting in health issues for the animals, reduced beef quality, and eventually lower prices at the Botswana Meat Commission.

In his remarks, Kanye District Commissioner, Mr Mompoloki Mochanang commended residents of Moshana for maintaining a high standard of cleanliness, attributing it to their positive response to ongoing calls for environmental responsibility.

Kanye District Council Chairperson Mr Morapedi Kgosithebe linked the initiative to Pillar 4 of the Council's roadmap, which focuses on climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

He stressed that a clean environment was essential for mitigating negative climate impacts and called on every citizen to take personal responsibility for their surroundings.

He expressed gratitude to the large turnout in Moshana and encouraged continued efforts across the district to preserve local wildlife and ecosystems.

For his part, Kgosi Seate Marumo of Moshana expressed appreciation for his community's consistent upkeep, noting that positive feedback on the village's cleanliness had been received from various stakeholders, including the District Commissioner, even before the campaign.

He highlighted the honour of Moshana being selected as the first among Ngwaketse villages to host the event, describing it as a rare privilege. While proud of the village's reputation as one of the cleanest in the district, Kgosi Marumo emphasised that sustained effort is required to maintain this status.

The event forms part of broader district-wide clean-up activities under the Kanye Clean Up Campaign, promoting community involvement in environmental care and sustainability. **BOPA**

Richtersveld National Park. The researchers have also previously honored the local culture by naming other groups, Khoisan and Nama, recognising the long history of connection between the communities and this unique land.

"These discoveries highlight the importance of continued scientific exploration within protected areas and reinforce SANParks' commitment to conserving not only iconic wildlife and landscapes, but also the often-overlooked species that form the foundation of healthy ecosystems," SANParks said.

"The naming of Richtersveldiella sanparkensis stands as a lasting scientific tribute to the Richtersveld and SANParks' ongoing dedication to biodiversity conservation," it added. **Xinhua**



# Big T takes love to next level in new disco sounds

Baleseng Batlotleng  
GABORONE

Self acclaimed and award winning disco artiste, Morapedi Nkhukhu, fondly known as Big T in the music circles has dropped a new single track dubbed, *Moratiwa*.

*Moratiwa* loosely translated to "My Lover" comes hot on the heels of the much fancied and celebrated month of love February, released February 1, to reflect the cultural and commercial celebration of love and romance.

He calls for true love in his single track, a stance that resonates deep in a country that is battling the tight grip of love gone sour in countless gender-based violence incidents.

His new song reflects his persona deeply rooted in his true love for his lover characterised by intense lyrical content showing deep emotions. *Moratiwa* is a testament to such joy and undying love.

The Etsha native Nkhukhu has taken the noble idea of love to the next level in his new infused disco sounds he calls reverse disco.

Influenced by other disco legends like Brenda Fassie and Dan Tshanda of Splash fame, Nkhukhu admits that his talent and ability to write songs is influenced by everyday life experiences.

In *Moratiwa*, Big T expresses his undying commitment to the love of his life.

The new song is a fusion of whistles, piano log drums combining both traditional and urban sounds.

Nkhukhu, a former law enforcement officer, traded his handcuffs to pursue the love of his life, composing music especially resuscitating the now defunct disco sounds by infusing what he calls reverse disco.

Quizzed on what drew him to the old sounds Big T explained that it was the strong message often associated with the genre that endeared him to many people.

His musical journey started at a tender age of 13 in his native Etsha village before he moved to Francistown and as they always say the rest was history.

Despite the popularity of other emerging music sounds such as Amapiano among others, Big T has managed to make waves with his new sounds and engraved his name to many of his diehard fans.

Driven by passion and ambition, Big T has been able to push beyond the limit and now looking for collaborations with other big star names in the showbiz industry and inspire other emerging talent. **BOPA** Amo 14/2/26



Morapedi Nkhukhu aka Big T

## American tourists look forward to Spring Festival experience

### LOS ANGELES

More than 100 American tourists recently departed from Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. for trips to China during the Spring Festival holiday, as part of a Chinese New Year cultural exchange program organised by Air China.

The tour groups will travel to multiple destinations across China, experience traditional Spring Festival customs and gain firsthand exposure to Chinese culture and life.

Joe Jackson, a Los Angeles resident preparing to board at Los Angeles

International Airport, told Xinhua that this would be his first visit to China.

He said he chose to travel during the Chinese New Year with the hope of experiencing the festive celebrations and learning more about the country's traditions.

Jackson is scheduled to visit Shenyang with his wife during the trip. Among the participants is a delegation of 45 teachers and students from Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland, who departed from Washington, D.C. for Beijing on a pickleball-themed exchange tour.

During the visit, they will visit Beijing and

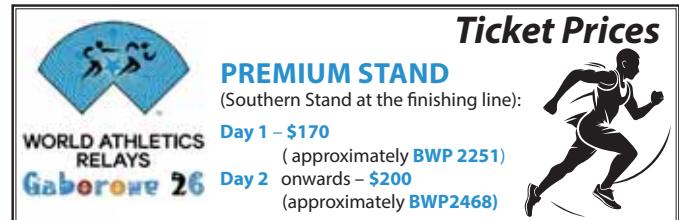
Shenzhen, and engage in pickleball friendship matches and cultural exchanges with local students.

Peng Lei, general manager of Air China North America, told Xinhua that people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States continued to expand in recent years.

He noted that Spring Festival-themed activities serve as important platforms for cultural engagement and offer international visitors valuable opportunities to understand China better and experience its vibrant development. **Xinhua**



LOS ANGELES - A tourist holding a gift presented by Air China at Los Angeles International Airport in California, United States. Photo: Xinhua



# Tennis star Tinashé secures scholarship

Anastacia Sibanda  
**GABORONE**

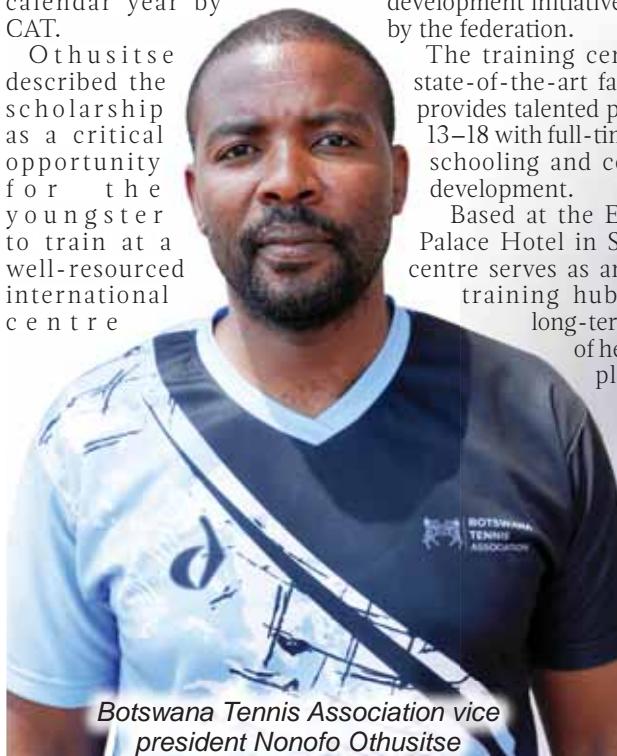
One of Botswana's promising young tennis stars, Tinashé Phatshwane, has secured a one-year scholarship at the African Regional Training Centre in Sousse, Tunisia, courtesy of the Confederation of African Tennis (CAT).

The 14-year-old's move to North Africa comes just weeks after another young Botswana ace, Malak Macheng, enrolled at the same facility.

While in Tunisia, Phatshwane will pursue his studies online and compete in both local and international tournaments.

Botswana Tennis Association vice president Nonofo Othusitse said in an interview that Tinashé was selected as one of the beneficiaries for the 2026 calendar year by CAT.

Othusitse described the scholarship as a critical opportunity for the youngster to train at a well-resourced international centre.



Botswana Tennis Association vice president Nonofo Othusitse

where he will receive top-tier coaching and regular competition.

He added that the Francistown-based athlete, who trains at Banana Tennis Club, currently holds an impressive number six ranking in Africa in the Confederation of African Tennis Under-14 boys' category.

Othusitse said Tinashé would be joining Malak at the centre, noting that their familiarity with each other would help them settle in quickly.

Meanwhile, according to the International Tennis Federation (ITF), the African Regional Training Centre is a regional development initiative supported by the federation.

The training centre offers state-of-the-art facilities and provides talented players aged 13-18 with full-time training, schooling and competitive development.

Based at the El Mouradi Palace Hotel in Sousse, the centre serves as an intensive training hub with the long-term objective of helping more players from

the region and across Africa progress to the sport's highest levels.

**BOPA**



**Tinashé Phatshwane** has secured a one-year scholarship at the African Regional Training Centre in Sousse, Tunisia, courtesy of the Confederation of African Tennis.

