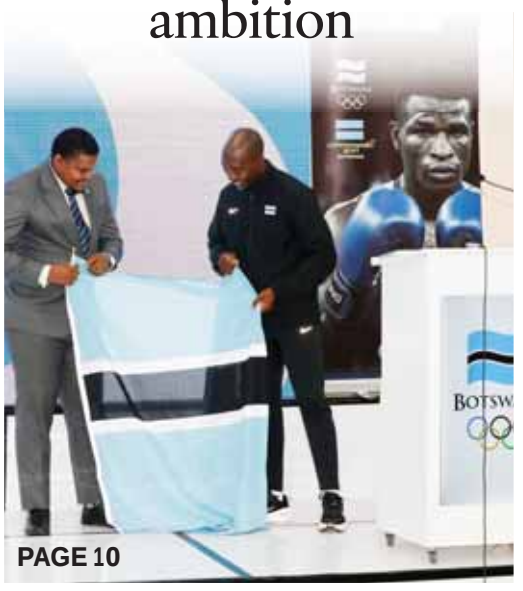
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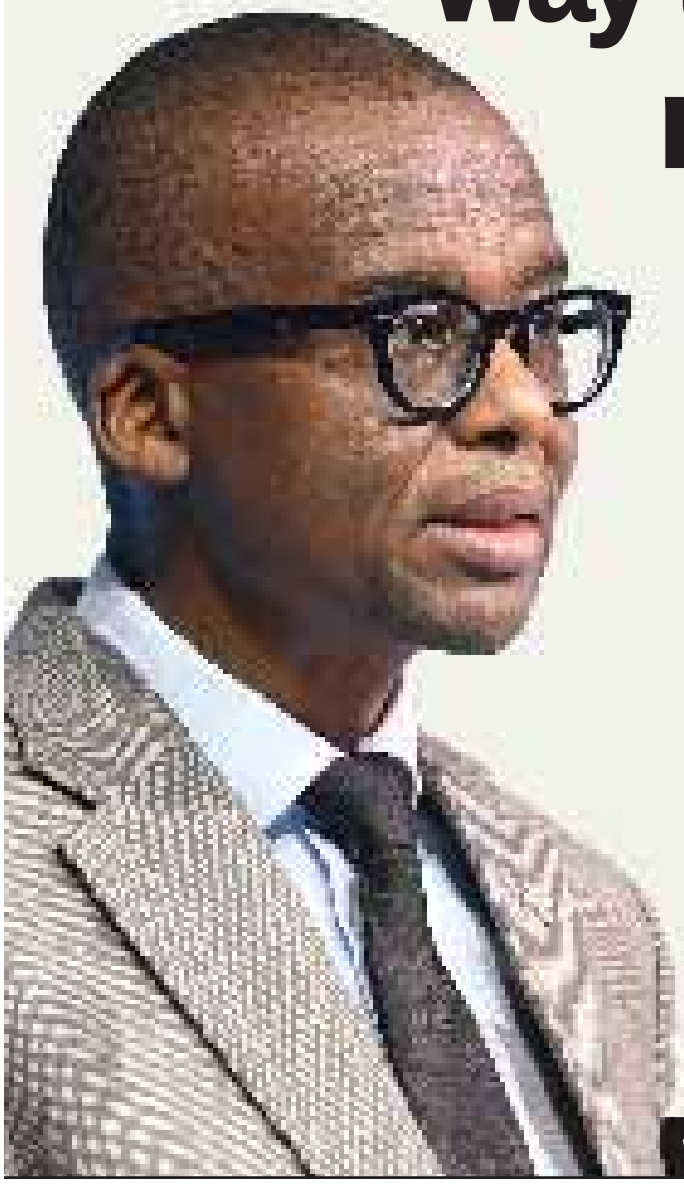
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Budget Pitso paves way to economic recovery



FIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

- Fiscal discipline
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Human capital
- Social protection
- Private sector enablement

Mpho Mosojane
GABORONE

Government has commenced preparation for the 2027/28 budget, consulting with stakeholders from the civil society and private sector with an aim to shift public fiscal flows away from diamond dependency to building a new era of domestic production and private sector-led economic growth.

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Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe



Botswana seeks support to transition from fossil fuels



ANTALYA - *Minister of Environment and Tourism, Mr Wynter Mmolotsi fielding questions from the media at the 31st Conference of the Parties in Türkiye. He said Botswana required substantial financial support to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.* Photo: Phenyo Moalosi

Ndingililo Gaoswediwe
ANTALYA

Botswana needs substantial financial support to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, given its significant investment in coal infrastructure and the high cost of moving towards cleaner energy, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Mr Wynter Mmolotsi, has said.

In an interview during the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) in Antalya, Türkiye, Minister Mmolotsi said Botswana had more than 1.66 billion metric tonnes of coal deposits and had invested heavily in existing infrastructure, including Morupule Power Station.

He said abandoning coal powered generation and shifting to renewable energy would require significant resources that Botswana could not mobilise on its own.

He added that while Botswana was committed to climate action, developed countries needed to provide financial and technical support to enable developing nations to make a just transition.

Thus, he called on developed countries to provide climate finance in the form of grants rather than loans.

He said additional borrowing would worsen the debt burden of developing countries, whose fiscal space was already constrained by competing national priorities.

"Our fiscal space is already constrained. We have to finance healthcare, infrastructure, education and the immediate needs of our people. We cannot afford to take on more debt to finance climate action," he said.

Mr Mmolotsi said developed countries should honour their financial commitments under the Paris Agreement and increase their contributions to climate funds to meet the growing demands of climate action.

The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is a legally binding international treaty aimed at limiting global warming to well below 2°C while pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre industrial levels.

It also provides for financial and other support to help developing countries address climate change.

He said funds were intended to support developing countries in adapting to climate change, mitigating its effects and transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

> "Our fiscal space is already constrained. We have to finance healthcare, infrastructure, education and the immediate needs of our people. We cannot afford to take on more debt to finance climate action."

However, he observed that the resources available remained inadequate because several developed countries had yet to fulfil their pledges.

He said African countries contributed relatively little to global emissions compared to industrialised nations, yet continued to bear a significant share of the effects of climate change.

Mr Mmolotsi said Botswana, like other African countries, was experiencing the harsh effects of climate change, including prolonged droughts, severe floods and extreme temperatures.

He said such conditions threatened agriculture, livestock, wildlife and the livelihoods of communities.

He added that water, food and energy insecurity were also becoming serious concerns.

Meanwhile, Botswana is expanding its renewable energy capacity through major solar investments.

The 100MW Mmadinare Solar Power Plant is operational, while the 100MW Jwaneng Solar Project has also been commissioned.

Government has further embarked on the development of a 500MW solar power plant in Maun, which will be supported by a 500MWh battery storage system. The development is part of broader efforts to increase domestic electricity generation and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

In the tourism sector, Botswana continues to promote environmentally responsible tourism through the Ecotourism Certification System, which encourages tourism operators to adopt sustainable practices.

The initiative also seeks to ensure that tourism development benefits local communities while safeguarding the country's natural resources.

Mr Mmolotsi also cited the introduction of TANA electric buses as an example of efforts to promote cleaner transport and reduce emissions.

He said such initiatives demonstrated Botswana's commitment to climate action, although the country needed international cooperation, technology transfer and adequate financing to accelerate the transition.

He said President Advocate Duma Boko had also made the case for grants rather than loans during his participation at the conference.

Mr Mmolotsi said Botswana would continue to use international climate negotiations to advocate for fair climate financing and stronger support for vulnerable developing countries. ***BOPA***

Partnerships key to climate resilient agriculture - Dr Nyanga

Ndingililo Gaoswediwe
ANTALYA

Strategic partnerships and collaboration are critical to building a resilient and sustainable agricultural sector in Botswana, Director of Partnerships in the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Dr Christopher Nyanga, has said.

In an interview as the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) concludes in Antalya, Türkiye, Dr Nyanga said the conference had reinforced the need for countries, governments and ministries to work together in addressing the far-reaching effects of climate change.

He said no country could successfully tackle the challenges of climate change in isolation, making cooperation among governments, multilateral institutions, the private sector, development partners, technology and innovation institutions, as well as financial institutions, essential.

"For Botswana, this means embracing innovative approaches to agricultural production, sharing knowledge and technologies, mobilising resources and learning from countries facing similar



climate challenges," he said.

Dr Nyanga cited the Kabela practice, which the ministry was pursuing in collaboration with private-sector partners, as an example of the innovative agricultural approaches needed to help farmers adapt to changing climatic conditions, improve productivity and build resilience.

He said the priority following COP31 was to sustain the momentum generated at the conference and translate engagements into tangible programmes and interventions on the ground.

The ministry is therefore extending an invitation to existing and prospective partners to collaborate on projects and initiatives that could cushion pastoral and arable farmers against the harsh effects of climate change, particularly the ongoing El Niño conditions.

> Dr Nyanga cited the Kabela initiative, which the ministry was pursuing in collaboration with private-sector partners, as an example of the innovative agricultural approaches needed to help farmers adapt to changing climatic conditions, improve productivity and build resilience.

Dr Nyanga said strengthening existing partnerships and forging new strategic alliances would help Botswana navigate the challenging period more effectively and build a stronger and more resilient agricultural sector.

"No one can defeat the effects of climate change alone, our collective strength lies in working together towards a common goal," he said.

He said such efforts were essential to advancing aspirations for food sovereignty and food security, in line with National Development Plan 12 (NDP 12) and the country's broader economic transformation objectives.

Dr Nyanga said agriculture was one of the critical sectors upon which Botswana's economic diversification and transformation ambitions depended.

Statistics Botswana's 2025 annual figures showed that agriculture, forestry and fishing contributed 1.8 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), underlining the sector's position in the national economy.

He said as Botswana pursued economic and export diversification away from minerals, created more employment opportunities and stimulated rural economic development, agriculture had to take its rightful place as a key driver of growth.

Through strategic partnerships and collaborations, Dr Nyanga said Botswana had an opportunity to revitalise the agricultural sector and transition more farmers from subsistence to commercial farming despite increasingly unpredictable weather conditions.

He emphasised that climate change should not be a reason to retreat from agriculture, but rather a compelling reason to innovate, adapt and build resilience with greater urgency and determination.

Dr Nyanga said the country's ability to forge meaningful partnerships, embrace innovation and equip farmers to withstand climatic shocks, would be central to unlocking the agricultural sector's full potential and securing a more diversified, inclusive and sustainable economy for Botswana. ***BOPA***

LEA and CEDA join forces to create jobs

Gontle Merafhe
GABORONE

Both LEA and CEDA form pact to develop 1 000 sustainable and competitive enterprises to facilitate the creation of 10 000 jobs by 2029.

Speaking at the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between LEA and Citizen Enterprise Development Authority (CEDA) in Gaborone on Monday, LEA Caretaker Chief Executive Officer, Mr Thato Jensen, noted that the creation of the 10 000 jobs is their big aim as it defines their strategic direction, noting that driving the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) would require funding to ensure over 50 per cent growth to create pathways to achieving the target.

He also highlighted that the growth of a competitive SME sector required a coordinated ecosystem in which institutions worked together, leveraged their respective strengths, eliminated duplication and addressed barriers that no single institution could resolve.

"When we collaborate effectively, we create enterprises, stimulate investment, generate employment and reduce poverty. When we collaborate effectively, we create enterprises, stimulate investment, generate employment and reduce poverty and ultimately contribute to economic growth and diversification," he said.

One of the most persistent challenges facing the economy, Mr Jensen said, was access to affordable finance, noting that the prevailing economic difficulties had placed considerable pressure on business, making access to appropriate and affordable finance more difficult than ever.

As such, he underscored the need to develop bespoke products and services that advanced the growth of SMEs, acknowledging that not every business proposal would necessarily be financed.

"This is an opportunity for both institutions to work more closely together to improve the quality, the adaptability and connotation of having a business proposal to fund enterprises," he said.

"Our responsibility must go beyond pretending to work together but we must ensure that viable businesses secure appropriate financing, put that financing to productive use, grow their operations and ultimately, repay their loans," he emphasised.

Furthermore, Mr Jensen noted that for the agreement to translate into meaningful outcomes, implementation must be deliberate, coordinated and measurable.

For his part, CEDA Caretaker Chief Executive Officer, Mr Khalala Mokefane, said the MoA is designed to make the two institutions work seamlessly, reduce fragmentation and increase impact for the people they served.

He appreciated that improved cooperation aligns directly with Botswana's national priorities, economic transformation and diversification and more importantly, job creation it came with.



Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency Caretaker CEO, Mr Khalala Mokefane (left) and Local Enterprise Authority Caretaker CEO, Mr Thato Jensen during the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement in Gaborone on Monday. Mr Jensen said the agreement would help in developing 1 000 sustainable and competitive enterprises that would create 10 000 jobs by 2029. Photo: Felicity Male

The two institutions, he said, had been called to grow domestic production, strengthen value chains, support productive sectors and expand citizen participation in the economy.

"And for us to be able to achieve this, it requires enterprises that are not only registered but those that are competitive, resilient and are able to scale, create jobs and sustain them," he said.

"CEDA and LEA have long understood that enterprise development and access to finance must move together and LEA has been built on strong capacity building and entrepreneurship development," he said.

Mr Mokefane further stated that the MoA they signed was about solving the gap with a more deliberate and coordinated approach because they wanted to see a customer walk into LEA and end up with CEDA.

"We must first build capacity, finance, then support growth. When LEA says I have built confidence in this customer, I have built capacity in this customer, CEDA must have the confidence that it will get their money back because we are running a revolving fund. So, at CEDA we believe in a simple principle, we must first build capacity, finance, then support growth," said Mr Mokefane, CEDA. ***BOPA***

Budget Pitso paves way to economic recovery

...from page 1

The Ministry of Finance convened a Budget Pitso in Gaborone on Monday, a forum that builds on the nationwide consultation cycle following the youth and local authority sessions that recently took place in Selebi Phikwe and Maun respectively.

The process will ultimately conclude with a Budget Strategy Paper set for Parliament before the final 2027/28 budget is presented early next year.

Leading the consultation, Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe delivered a an analysis of the country's financial position, emphasising that the Budget Strategy Paper was more than a financial document but a tool for open, dialogue where citizens participated on how the limited public funds were used.

"We are navigating a challenging period, not merely because the pressures are heavy, but because the structure of our economy must change as government can no longer be the sole engine for growth," said Mr Gaolathe.

He stressed that sustainability depended on empowering the private sector to lead business activity and job creation, noting that government was improving management of public funds, and ensuring that every Pula spent delivered real value to households.

Ministry of Finance, deputy secretary for Macroeconomic Policy, Mr Batane Matekane, presenting the core findings of the 2027/28 Budget Strategy Paper, provided stakeholders with insights into the country's macro-economic performance and outlook, noting how economic current projections suggested signs of recovery.

"Overall, Botswana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to grow by 3.8 per cent in 2026 and accelerate to 4.2 per cent in 2027, supported by recovering mining output and non-mining activity," said Mr Matekane.



> "Economic growth must therefore, become more inclusive so that recovery translates into real paychecks and lower living costs for ordinary families."
>
> **Ministry of Finance, deputy secretary for Macroeconomic Policy, Mr Batane Matekane**

Despite improved growth figures, Mr Matekane acknowledged that everyday life remained difficult for many households, with high unemployment rates at about 27.3 per cent, and youth unemployment remaining a pressing concern at 39.8 per cent.

"Economic growth must therefore, become more inclusive so that recovery translates into real paychecks and lower living costs for ordinary families," he explained.

Mr Matekane also briefed stakeholders on the recent country's global financial ratings, stating that Moody's report slightly lowered Botswana's credit rating to Baa2 but improved its future outlook to stable.

He further explained that during the same period, S&P Global kept the country's rating at BBB, while still maintaining a negative outlook.

"To international investors, these ratings signal that the country remains a reliable, well-governed place for business although with caution because lower diamond revenues have widened budget deficits and pushed public debt toward 45 per cent of GDP. Therefore, borrowing money internationally could become more expensive if government does not control spending and rebuild its financial savings," said Mr Matekane.

To protect stability while nurturing growth, the 2027/28 strategy prioritises five key areas: fiscal discipline, infrastructure maintenance, human capital, social protection and private-sector enablement.

He further cautioned that economic recovery faced several threats spanning from a volatile trade landscape, geopolitical tensions and growing competition from lab-grown diamonds all creating an unstable environment for mineral revenues.

Locally he cited climate risks, particularly recurring drought threaten agriculture as well slow job creation caused by delays in implementing government projects.

Outlining the nation's detailed strategy to diversify the economy away from diamonds, Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) secretariat, Ms Shelter Sheleni deliberated on how the programme was designed to end the culture of government ministries working in isolation, instead coordinating 186 high-impact projects over the next decade, turning plans into real jobs and diverse industries, with 60 per cent led and funded by the private sector and 40 per cent supported by government.

"Diversification needs to be activated. We intend to achieve our aspiration with project funding rations at 60 per cent private sector led and 40 per cent government supported.

By focusing on six core economic sectors, BETP aims to remove obstacles such as slow land approvals and outdated regulations, ultimately doubling the size of the economy and generating over meaningful jobs," she highlighted. ***BOPA***

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PARLIAMENT 2026

Moalosi proposes reforms targeting disability support

Lindi Morwaeng
GABORONE

Members of Parliament have called for reforms to social welfare programmes to ensure persons with permanent disabilities receive timely assistance and that their primary caregivers are also recognised and supported.

The debate followed a motion by Nkange MP, Mr Motlhaleemang Moalosi, urging government to provide unconditional and expedited financial and material assistance to persons with permanent disabilities based on medical evidence, without income or living-standard means-testing.

The motion also proposed a dedicated stipend for primary caregivers, recognising the financial challenges they face when full-time care-giving limits their ability to engage in income-generating activities.

Motivating the motion, Mr Moalosi said people with confirmed permanent disabilities should not endure lengthy social welfare assessments before receiving assistance.

He said some applicants waited up to a year for assessments, only to be disqualified based on their living standards or financial circumstances, despite having acquired disabilities that significantly changed their lives.

He argued that medical confirmation of permanent disability should be sufficient to trigger consideration for support, adding that low-income public officers should not be excluded from assistance simply because they were employed.

Mr Moalosi also proposed support programmes to help caregivers establish small businesses, such as tuck shops, to sustain themselves while caring for their dependents.

Contributing to the debate, MPs called for greater attention to children with disabilities, particularly learners with special educational needs who require appropriate facilities and individualised support.

Kgatleng West MP, Ms Unity Dow, highlighted challenges facing visually impaired children at specialised facilities, including Pudulogong Centre in her constituency, where resources were reportedly inadequate.

Ngami MP, Mr Phillimon Aaron, also called for home-based caregivers to be included in the proposed reforms and asked the Assistant Minister to provide a timeframe for concluding consultations.

Responding, Assistant Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ignatius Moswaane, said government recognised the additional lifelong costs associated with permanent disabilities.

He said assistance was currently provided through the Disability Cash Transfer Programme, while the Persons with Disabilities Act No. 6 of 2024 provided a legal framework for protecting their rights and promoting inclusion.

Mr Moswaane said social protection programmes, including the Social Cash Transfer Programme, were undergoing review under the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme's social protection transformation agenda.

The process would inform the development of a comprehensive National Social Protection Policy, which would guide beneficiary identification, benefit adequacy and improved service delivery.

He said the Ministry was open to reviewing eligibility and assessment criteria to distinguish medical confirmation of impairment from the legal and social support required.

However, he noted that reforms would have to balance wider coverage with fiscal sustainability while ensuring that no one was unfairly excluded solely because of household income.

He also acknowledged the need to explore targeted support for full-time caregivers, including a possible caregiver allowance and respite care services, through consultations with affected groups and civil society. *BOPA*

CKGR land return victory for indigenous people - Salakae

Bonang Masolotate
GABORONE

The return of the 52 000-square-kilometre Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) to its indigenous inhabitants is a long-awaited victory for its historical residents, says Ghanzi MP, Mr Noah Salakae. Contributing to the State-of-the Nation Address (SONA) debate, Mr Salakae said he hoped the return would be accompanied by compensation for those who were forcibly relocated from the reserve.

He also appealed to government to consider turning CKGR into a constituency, rather than having it remain a ward under Ghanzi Constituency, saying its vast size warranted independent representation.

On concerns about wildlife conservation following the proposed return, Mr Salakae said history had shown that indigenous communities were among the best conservationists.

Turning to other constituency issues, he said Ghanzi township's growth was constrained by private farms surrounding it. He appealed to government to consider allocating part of Tautona Lodge to the township to enable it to generate its own revenue. He also cited water shortages and limited access to Radio Botswana in some parts of the constituency. On agriculture, Mr Salakae said beef remained central to the country's economy, with Ghanzi making a significant contribution.

However, farmers were concerned about low prices. He commended the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture for its efforts to address Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), but said farmers had other concerns they wished to discuss with the ministry to improve the sector.

Mr Salakae also expressed support for the establishment of a Constitutional Court, describing it as a source of hope for people seeking protection of their rights. NHe said no law should be ultra vires the Constitution and noted that communities in his area were looking to the proposed court to address what they considered unequal tribal representation in Ntlo Ya Dikgosi.

He further called for increased powers for school teachers and the appointment of school boards of directors, saying the measures could improve school management and help address challenges facing institutions. Meanwhile, Okavango MP, Mr Gabatsholwe Disho, said Botswana was endowed with minerals, water and wildlife that attracted tourists and investors, yet continued to face challenges that those resources could help resolve. He called for a change in mindset to ensure the country derived maximum benefits from its natural resources. Mr Disho observed that Moremi Game Reserve, CKGR and Chobe National Park had relatively few lodges, limiting opportunities for communities to benefit economically from tourism.

On the return of CKGR to its indigenous inhabitants, he questioned whether other communities that had been relocated across the country would receive similar consideration. He also appealed to President Advocate Duma Boko to visit communities, saying residents wanted opportunities to interact with him directly.

On security, Mr Disho said cross-border crime was a major concern in his constituency, warning that drugs could be smuggled across the border. He called for intensified efforts to combat the crime. He further said Okavango needed more schools and clinics to address shortages of essential services in the constituency. ***BOPA***

Ghanzi MP, Mr Noah Salakae said the return of the 52 000-square-kilometre land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve to its indigenous inhabitants was a long-awaited victory. He expressed hope that the return would be accompanied by compensation for those who were forcibly relocated from the reserve.

Gobotswang questions CCA effectiveness over high prices

Bonang Masolotate
GABORONE

Tswapong South MP, Dr Kesitegile Gobotswang, has questioned the effectiveness of the Competition and Consumer Authority (CCA) in protecting consumers against high prices.

Contributing to debate on the State-of-the-Nation Address (SONA) in Parliament on Monday, Dr Gobotswang said the CCA, which falls under the Ministry of Trade and Entrepreneurship, was failing to protect consumers from exorbitant prices.

He said despite the existence of the Price Control Act, consumers continued to be exploited, urging the authority to step up efforts to regulate prices and safeguard consumers. On healthcare, Dr Gobotswang acknowledged challenges in the public health sector but questioned whether financial constraints were the main cause.

He said if funding was the problem, Government should prioritise critical projects and redirect resources towards the health sector to save patients' lives.

He also urged MPs to partner with the private sector in supporting health outreach programmes, noting that the situation was too precarious for government to address alone. Turning to education, he decried the dilapidated state of schools in his constituency, saying projects earmarked for Ramokgonami and Chadibe had been suspended with the Development Manager model. On land management, he raised concern that the tenure of the Land Board had expired on November 6, disrupting services such as land transfers.

Dr Gobotswang also called for an explanation on how Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) was detected at the Ramatlabama Artificial Insemination Centre, saying there was no clear strategy for containing and controlling the disease.

Meanwhile, Takatokwane MP and Minister of Sport and Arts, Mr Jacob Kelebeng, decried the low prices farmers in his constituency received for their cattle. He said despite farmers investing in livestock production, the returns remained low, calling for interventions to address the challenge.

Mr Kelebeng welcomed planned developments in his constituency, including a district hospital and community stadium, saying they would address some of the community's longstanding needs. He also welcomed the planned maintenance of the A1 road but said the Motokwe-Letlhakeng road also deserved attention.

On his ministerial portfolio, Mr Kelebeng said the sports and creative industries had significant potential to create employment and contribute to economic growth.

He noted that Botswana continued to produce athletes who competed on the international stage and hosted international sporting events in disciplines such as athletics, tennis, table tennis and boxing.

He said the country aspired to become a premium destination for international sporting events.

Mr Kelebeng further said Botswana was doing more than most countries to support its athletes, adding that some countries had started benchmarking against its approach.

He said the ministry would introduce sustainable programmes aimed at developing the creative sector and ensuring returns on investment. *BOPA*



Assistant Minister of Child Welfare and Basic Education,Mr Justin Hunyepa informed Parliament that the ministry, in collaboration with UNICEF Botswana was developing an Alternatives to Discipline Manual to equip educators with non-violent approaches to managing learner indiscipline. He said the manual was being developed following consultations with parents and learners.

Legislators differ on government performance

Lindi Morwaeng
GABORONE

Serowe South Member of Parliament, Mr Leepetswe Lesedi has called for urgent intervention in the health and education sectors and measures to ease the cost of living.

Contributing to the debate on the State-of-the Nation Address (SONA) in Parliament on Monday, Mr Lesedi welcomed the planned opening of Sekgoma Rehabilitation Centre to the public, but urged the Minister of Health to ensure that the facility was adequately resourced to provide quality services.

He said although Government continued to report high medicine availability percentages, the situation on the ground painted a different picture, with patients still experiencing severe shortages of essential medicines.

"Let us talk about what is on the ground," he said, questioning the gap between reported medicine stock levels and the experiences of patients seeking treatment.

Mr Lesedi also expressed concern over long waiting periods for patients booked for specialised medical procedures, saying delays in accessing treatment could have serious consequences.

He urged Government to prioritise healthcare by addressing medicine shortages in hospitals and other health facilities to prevent avoidable deaths.

The MP further raised concern over the transfer of clinics in Serowe to the Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs without corresponding budget allocations, saying the facilities lacked adequate resources to provide essential services.

He cited shortages of personnel, including staff to conduct blood tests, as some of the challenges affecting service delivery.

On education, Mr Lesedi described the state of school infrastructure in his constituency as an eyesore, saying many schools required urgent maintenance. He called for the construction of a second primary school in Mogorosi to address the community's educational needs.

He also questioned the availability of sanitary pads in schools, reminding government of its commitment to provide them to learners. Mr Lesedi further raised concerns about teachers' safety following the discontinuation of corporal punishment in schools, asking what measures were in place to protect educators from unruly learners.

On agriculture, he said the President's address had not adequately addressed the impact of El Niño or government's state of preparedness, particularly in providing farmers with guidance on what to expect and how to prepare for possible adverse conditions.

He said farmers needed clear information and support to make informed decisions about their agricultural activities. Mr Lesedi also highlighted the pressure on households from the rising cost of living, citing high food prices, fuel costs and levies among the factors affecting Batswana. He questioned how ordinary citizens were expected to cope with rising expenses when many were already struggling financially. The MP called for price-control measures, particularly on basic food commodities, saying people in the informal sector were among those bearing the greatest burden of the economic challenges.

He further expressed concern that locally owned small businesses were facing competition from foreign nationals, including in small-scale business activities reserved for citizens. Mr Lesedi said Government needed to protect and support citizen-owned enterprises to ensure that Batswana benefited from economic opportunities.

Meanwhile, Palapye MP, Mr Onneetse Ramogapi said Government delivered on several of its manifesto commitments , Mr Ramogapi commended President Advocate Duma Boko for what he described as an address packed with key result areas, saying approximately 25 areas of delivery had been highlighted.

He said the UDC government had made progress in implementing commitments contained in its election manifesto, particularly in strengthening institutions and promoting economic diversification. Mr Ramogapi said government had committed to strengthening institutions such as the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) and the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS), adding that steps had been taken towards transforming the institutions.

On agriculture, he said government had prioritised improving productivity, with more farmers producing greater quantities from relatively small portions of land. He urged Batswana to recognise government's efforts to promote local milk production as part of a strategy to reduce the country's dependence on imported milk. Mr Ramogapi also highlighted the establishment of a special purpose vehicle and a company to address the maintenance of school infrastructure, saying the initiative was intended to improve the upkeep of schools.

He cited the introduction of the Metro Bus service and the commencement of pilot hemp production as other government initiatives. He said government was also working towards local medicine manufacturing to reduce expenditure on imported medicines. On energy security, Mr Ramogapi said Botswana had secured 20 million litres of petrol from Oman, while the first batch of medicines from the country was also expected to arrive.

He further pointed to the reported P25.5 billion investment in Airport City, saying the development would contribute to economic growth. Mr Ramogapi said major infrastructure projects, including the Chobe-Zambezi Water Transfer Scheme and Trans-Kalahari Railway, were expected to create much-needed employment opportunities.

He also highlighted progress on the Molepolole water scheme, saying tenders had been advertised, and described the proposed increase in Government's stake in De Beers as an achievement worth celebrating. He added that Botswana had signed an agreement to secure oil from Angola as part of efforts to strengthen the country's energy supply.

Mr Ramogapi further referred to a 50 per cent debt amnesty introduced through his ministry, describing it as part of government's efforts to ease financial obligations. He maintained that the initiatives demonstrated government's commitment to fulfilling its promises and addressing the country's development priorities. ***BOPA***

Ministry develops alternatives to corporal punishment

GABORONE

The Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education, in collaboration with UNICEF Botswana, is developing an Alternatives to Discipline Manual to equip educators with non-violent approaches to managing learner indiscipline. Assistant Minister of Child Welfare and Basic Education, Mr Justin Hunyepa, said the manual was being developed following consultations with parents and learners.

He acknowledged the growing incidents of indiscipline in schools, including towards the end of school terms, saying the manual would guide educators on safer disciplinary methods.

The manual will cover behaviour modification, emotional regulation and problem-solving techniques to help educators manage learners' behaviour without resorting to corporal punishment. Mr Hunyepa said although corporal punishment remained legally regulated in Botswana, government had taken a decision to suspend its use following cases of excessive punishment that resulted in some learners sustaining serious injuries.

He said the ministry was also encouraging the revival of clubs and movements such as Scouts, Girl Guides, 4B and Scripture Union to promote discipline and character development among learners.

In addition, the ministry is piloting Positive Parenting Guidelines aimed at empowering parents to promote healthy child development, strengthen parent-child relationships and create safe and supportive home and community environments.

The Minister said addressing indiscipline required a collective effort from parents and educators, noting that the foundation of discipline and child upbringing was established at home.

He called on parents to take responsibility for instilling good behaviour in children to minimise indiscipline in schools. Mr Hunyepa was responding to a question from Lentsweletau/Lephepe MP, Mr Tshenolo Bogatsu, who had asked what measures the ministry had put in place to assist school leadership in managing learner indiscipline following the suspension of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure. ***BOPA***

Maun-Khwai road reconstruction on the cards

GABORONE

The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure has outlined immediate interventions and medium-term plans to address the deteriorating condition of the Maun-Khwai road, a key tourism route providing access to Moremi Game Reserve and Chobe National Park.

Responding to a parliamentary question from Maun North MP, Mr Dumelang Saleshando, on Monday Assistant Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Letlhogonolo Barongwang said the road comprised two sections: the tarred Maun-Shorobe stretch and the gravel Shorobe-Mababe-Khwai section.

He said the Maun-Shorobe road had reached the end of its design life and was deteriorating rapidly, with reconstruction scheduled to begin in the 2027/28 financial year. In the short term, the ministry was relying on routine pothole patching. The last repairs were undertaken in September 2026 but were suspended due to a shortage of patching material.

Mr Barongwang said the process of securing the required supplies was at an advanced stage. He said maintenance of the gravel sections between Shorobe and Sankoyo and Mababe and Khwai had also been suspended since March 2025 due to equipment breakdowns.

He said repairs to the graders were expected to be completed by December 2026, allowing maintenance to resume. "Funds for repairing the two graders serving the North West District were approved for Government Fleet Management on November 3, 2026. In the medium term, the Ministry plans to re-gravel the affected sections and introduce new technologies to improve road durability and reduce deterioration. The work is also expected to commence in the 2027/28 financial year."

Mr Barongwang said the Sankoyo-Mababe section had already undergone re-gravelling and dry grading, which commenced on September 15, 2025 and was completed on November 14, 2026.

He said the stretch was now in good condition and would be maintained alongside the other sections once the equipment was restored.

He added that the Shorobe-Sankoyo road was last graded in February 2025, while the Mababe-Khwai section was last graded in August 2023. Mr Saleshando had asked whether the Ministry had short-term plans to improve the road during the current financial year, given its importance to tourists accessing Moremi Game Reserve and Chobe National Park. ***BOPA***



DailyBusiness

Collaboration fundamental to SMMEs success

Michelle Mosebiwa
BOKAA

Local businesses have been encouraged to strengthen collaboration and pool resources to drive private-sector-led growth and economic diversification.

Speaking at a recent Business Conference and Expo in Bokaa, Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe, warned against operating in isolation, noting that cooperation among Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) reduced operational costs, boosted competitiveness and created jobs.

As an example, he cited Oriental Plaza as a model, which he said highlighted how sharing expenses like shipping and collaborating within sectors like textiles improved efficiency and market access.

The assistant minister acknowledged that reliance on diamonds had slowed diversification, thus emphasised the untapped potential of the informal and creative economies, urging entrepreneurs to develop competitive products and protect their intellectual property.

He also revealed that government was facilitating cement manufacturers in exploring local raw materials, such as limestone and gypsum believed to exist in Bokaa, to support industrial growth and reduce import reliance.

On local infrastructure, Mr Mathoothe assured participants that road network concerns would be resolved to ease logistical challenges.

Kgatleng West MP, Dr Unity Dow, noted that better local roads were vital for both business development and easing congestion on the A1 Highway.

Both leaders supported plans to establish a Kgatleng West development trust, an initiative earlier introduced by Kgosi Botshelo Mosenyi of Bokaa to attract investors and mobilise local funding. Dr Dow pledged her support for the trust as a unifying vehicle for regional development and commended the expo organisers for fostering stakeholder engagement.

The Eyes for Africa director, Mr Rebana Mmereki, explained that the expo was created to bridge the gap between small-scale enterprises and established industries by formalising local value chains.

He lamented that local entrepreneurs still faced hurdles, including rigid financing systems, slow administrative processes, communication gaps and the impact of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD).

He told participants that the event would become an annual fixture, with the next edition set for November next year.

Meanwhile, businesses showcased their products and commitment to turning the expo's networking opportunities into tangible economic benefits for Kgatleng West. ***BOPA***



Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe (second left), Kgatleng District Deputy Council Secretary, Mr Solomon Letshwiti (third left) and other dignitaries touring the e-Mobility stall during the Kgatleng West Business Expo in Bokaa recently. Mr Mathoothe urged small businesses to capitalise on emerging industries. Photo: Michelle Mosebiwa

Kgalagadi North seeks to attract investment

Samantha Gabaeme
KANG

The drive to position Kgalagadi North as an emerging investment destination took centre stage on Friday as stakeholders gathered for the Kgalagadi North Business and Development Forum, seeking to explore opportunities to accelerate economic growth and promote sustainable development in the region.

Held under the theme: Catalysing Growth, Building a Sustainable Future, the forum provided a platform for engaging on strategic initiatives aimed at unlocking the region's economic potential and translating development aspirations into tangible opportunities.

Addressing the gathering, Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr. Ketlhalefile Motshegwa, challenged stakeholders to move beyond repeated discussions and commitments, emphasising that the time had come for decisive action and implementation to translate development aspirations into tangible results.

He observed that the country had hosted numerous forums, conferences and development engagements over the years, where various strategies and proposals had been discussed, but the impact on the ground remained limited.

Mr Motshegwa said the priority should no longer be on holding more meetings and delivering speeches, but on implementing resolutions and ensuring that they yielded measurable outcomes.

He further pointed to the country's education system as an area requiring urgent reform, expressing concern over what he described as inadequate emphasis on vocational and technical training.

Mr Motshegwa noted that the system continued to produce graduates in fields where the labour market was already saturated, resulting in a mismatch between graduates' qualifications and the skills required by employers and industry.

He stressed the need for an education system that was responsive to the country's economic priorities and labour market demands, saying training programmes should equip young people with practical skills that corresponded with available opportunities and the needs of different industries.

The Minister also underscored the importance of strengthening investment in Ikageng programmes, particularly in rural communities, noting the need to direct development interventions towards areas where they could create meaningful opportunities and improve livelihoods.

He said affirmative action was another important avenue through which government could accelerate economic development, particularly in districts that were lagging behind in development.

Mr Motshegwa added that deliberate interventions were necessary to address regional development disparities and ensure that all districts benefited equitably from national development initiatives.

He noted that Botswana's commitment to human rights and an inclusive economy called for an approach that placed people at the centre of development planning, adding that communities should be consulted and involved in identifying their needs and priorities.

Involving residents in development processes, he said, would enable government to implement projects that responded to their actual needs, rather than imposing interventions that might not address their priorities.

He said his ministry, through local government structures, had a responsibility to ensure equitable distribution of development across the country, while strengthening community participation in decision-making.

The minister urged councils to work closely with residents and ensure that they were actively involved in determining development priorities, noting that local authorities served as an important link between government and the people.

On his part, Kgalagadi North District Council Chairman, Mr Stephen Lekgobero said the district was often perceived as remote, with many people unaware of its vast economic potential, particularly in livestock farming, natural resources and tourism.

He said the district's tagline, District of Utmost Uniqueness, reflected its distinctive attributes and the opportunities available for economic development.

Mr Lekgobero urged young people to take advantage of the district's resources and explore opportunities that could enable them to create sustainable livelihoods.

He said the district had identified various economic pathways through which residents could make a living, but noted that this required an enabling environment that encouraged investment, supported innovation and strengthened enterprise development and growth. ***BOPA***

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Botswana and Cote d'Ivoire boost economic cooperation

ABIDJAN - Cote d'Ivoire and Botswana agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation, particularly in mining, energy, agriculture and trade, after talks between the country's President Alassane Ouattara and his Botswana counterpart, Advocate Duma Boko, here on Monday. Ouattara described the talks as "fruitful and fraternal," noting that the current level of trade between the two countries did not reflect their economic potential. He called on Botswana's private sector to increase investment in Cote d'Ivoire, especially in mining, petroleum and major development projects. Boko, who is on a state visit from Sunday to Wednesday, stressed the importance of diversifying both economies by better utilising natural and mineral resources, agricultural land and young populations. The two countries also signed several memorandums of understanding on Monday covering mining, energy, economic affairs, diplomacy, and human and animal health. ***Xinhua***

Ramaphosa calls for homegrown AI innovation

JOHANNESBURG - South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has called for greater domestic artificial intelligence (AI) development, urging the country to become a technology creator rather than a foreign tech consumer. Addressing a high-level South African delegation in Silicon Valley, California, on Sunday, Ramaphosa said the country must develop its own AI technologies, enterprises, and intellectual property, and seize the opportunities presented by rapid technological advances to strengthen its standing in the global digital economy. Ramaphosa said South Africa's established universities, research institutions, financial services sector, and burgeoning tech industry were strong foundations for local innovation, as well as existing data centers and cloud infrastructure investments. ***Xinhua***

Agreement to improve food emergency responses

WINDHOEK - Namibia and the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) signed an agreement on Monday to strengthen school meal programmes, help smallholder farmers and improve the country's response to food emergencies. I-Ben Natangwe Nashandi, executive director of Namibia's National Planning Commission, and James Kingori, head of the WFP office in Namibia, signed the letter of understanding in Windhoek to implement the WFP's 2025-2029 country strategic plan. At the signing, Nashandi said community and household gardens could supply vegetables to schools and local markets, creating a source of income for growers. He said some school meal programmes still faced basic problems. ***Xinhua***

Dikgang
PAMPIRI YA THUTO LE DIKITSISO

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261 0480 | 241 3402 | 365 3500



Mookamedi wa lephata la taolo matlhoko a leruo, Dr Kobedi Segale a re bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo bo tshwerwe mo dikgomong dingwe kwa kgaolong ya Zone 7, e e akaretsang metse yotlhe ya Bobirwa, Mmadinare, Robelela, Tshokwe le Tobane. A re tsamaiso le melao di tshwanetse go salwa morago fa bolwetse bo tlhagogile, go tlhomamisa gore bo a laolesega.

Tlhako le molomo e tlhagogile gape kwa Zone7

Gaboselwe Olesitse
MMADINARE

Go tshwerwe bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo mo dikgomong dingwe kwa kgaolong ya Zone 7, e e akaretsang metse yotlhe ya Bobirwa, Mmadinare, Robelela, Tshokwe le Tobane.

Mookamela wa lephata la taolo mathoko a leruo, Dr Kobedi Segale o buile se, kwa phuthegong ya kgotla kwa Mmadinare, Robelela, Tshokwe ka Mosuplogo.

Dr Segale o tlhalositse fa e le lekgetho la boraro bolwetse bo tshwarwa kwa kgaolong eo mme go tlhoka tshwaragano ya bothe go bo lwantsha.

O supile fa bolwetse bo tshwerwe kwa merakeng ya Robelela morago ga gore morui mongwe a bege fa kgomo nngwe e lebega e na le bolwetse, kgwedi e no e le lesome.

Dr Segale o tlhalositse fa kgaolo ya Robelela e tshabelelwa ke go tlhagoga ga bolwetse ka jalo, go tlhoka gore go ya pele go dirwe sengwe go thibela bolwetse.

Kgaolo ya Zone 7 ke kgaolo e tona ka e ama di kgaolo tsa Sefhophe, Serule le Mmadinare mme se, se raya gore di kgaolo tseo le tsone di a amegile,

Dr Segale a supa.

A re badiri ba lephata ba ne ba tsaya matlhasedi go ya go tlhatlhobiwa mme ga itshupa fa e le bolwetse jwa thako le molomo.

Dr Segale a re lephata la matlhoko a leruo le na le tsamaiso le melao e e tshwanetseng go salwa morago fa bolwetse bo tlhagogile, go tlhomamisa gore bolwetse bo a laolesega.

Ka ntata ya madupo a re, go raya gore metsamao yotlhe ya leruo la tlhako e e maphata e emisitswe go simolola Mosupologo go fitlha seemo se siama.

Le fa go ntse jalo o tlhalositse fa dikgomo tse di setseng di le kwa matlhabelong di tlaa tlhabiwa le nama e e kwa marekisetsong e tlaa rekisiwa.

Dr Segale o kgothaditse barui go sa kgojwa marapo ke go tlhagoga ga bolwetse ka seo se ka ba diya go laola bolwetse. A re lephata le ipaakantse go ba thusa go laola bolwetse.

Dr Segale o tlhalositse fa go tlaabo go kentiwa dikgomo tsothe tse di mo Zone 7 mme go tlaa kentiwa go ya ka dithota, go tlhomamisa gore dikgomo tsothe di a kentiwa.

Barui ba kopilwe go baakanya masaka le megotlha ka go kenta go tlaa simolola mo nakong ya beke.

Dr Segale o tlhalositse fa lephata le tsere tshwetso ya gore kgaolo ya 6B, e nne e e sireletsegileng mme se se raya gore ga go na go letlelela dikgomo go fula mo kgaolong eo mme fa go ka fitlhelwa dikgomo mo go yone, di tlaa bolawa.

O rotloeditse barui go rwesa leruo manyena le gore le bo le kwadisitswe mo maranyaneng. Modulasetilo wa mophato wa Bobirwa,

Kgosi Gabana Mooketsi, o tlhalositse fa maiteko a go kganela bolwetse a ne a tswa maduo mme go kgaolwa ga terata ke ditlou, go dirile gore seemo se tswe mo taolong.

Kgosi Mooketsi a re go tlhomamisa gore bolwetse bo a laolesega, dikgomo tsotlhe tsa Zone 7, ga di na go letlelelwa go ya go nwa metsi kwa letamong la Dikgatlhong.

A re go tlaa nna le dipuisano gore letamo la Dikgathong le agelelwe. ***BOPA***

Bogodi ga se bogole - mogolwane

Grace Sebape
LOBATSE

Kereke ya Pentecostal Holiness kwa Lobatse e tlaa tshwara moletlo wa ditebogo le go lemoga bagodi ba kereke eo kgwedi eno e tlhola malatsi a le masome a mabedi le bobedi.

Mongwe wa bagodi ba kereke eo, Mme Lorato Moseki, o buile jalo le BOPA mo potsolotsong, a bolela gore e le bagodi ba kereke ba dingwaga tse di masome a marataro le botlhano go ya kwa godimo, ba tshwara moletlo o go lemoga seabe sa bone, botlhale, bogakolodi, boleng jwa bone le ditiro tse ba di direlang kereke ka kakaretso le go itumelela bogodi jwa bone le ba malwapa a bone jaaka Modimo a tsweletse ka go ba segofatsa ka botshelo.

Mme Moseki a re bogodi ga se go tlhoka bokgoni. A re mo dingwageng tsa bogodi ke gone motho a berekang thata, ka jaanong o itebaganya le ditiro tsa selegae letsatsi le letsatsi, go dira ditiro tsa boithaopo kwa mekgatlhong e e farologanyeng, a tlatsa ka go kgothatsa bagodi go re ga baa tshwanela go nna ba itlhobogile jaaka o kare ga bana bokgoni le thata ya go ka dira sepe.

O tsweletse a kgothatsa bagodi ka kakaretso gore ba nne ba dira sengwe le gone go dirisa ditalente gore ba seka ba nna ba didimetse, ba ntse bale nosi nako e ntsi.

Mme Moseki o boletse gape gore ka letsatsi leo phuthego ya kereke e tlaa tlotla Moruti wa kereke eo ka mowa wa tebogo, go lemoga boineelo jwa gagwe, boeteledipele, bogakolodi le go nna boikanyego mo go direleng Modimo.O boletse gore moletlo o, ba o tshwara ngwaga le ngwaga mme monongwaga, ba tlaa o tshwara mo go faphegileng ka ba gopotse ba ba tlhokileng lesego mo botshelong gore ba ba abele dimpho, e le go ba fa lorato le go supa gore kereke e kgathala ka bone.

Mme Moseki a re ka dimpho tse, ba batla go nna sekao mo bananeng ba kereke ya bone ka jaana bagodi e le boeteledipele jo bo ba bontshang tsela e ba tshwanetseng go e ithuta gore e tsamaiwa jang, go dirwa dilo jang, le go ithuta dilo tse di siameng. Moletlo o tlaa tshwarwa ka setlhogo se se reng: Re serwalo sa kgalalelo mo tseleng ya tshiamo. ***BOPA***

First Lady calls for collective responsibility

Esther Mmolai
MAUN

Addressing issues affecting children requires a coordinated and collective effort across all sectors of the society.

First Lady, Ms Kaone Boko made the remarks during the Mpepu Programme Pitso held in Maun on Friday, challenging the participants to explore opportunities for a more integrated response to the needs and issues of children in the North West district.

Held under the theme: Mpepu first year anniversary; Strengthening collaboration in child protection and early childhood development, uniting in commitment, driving collective action, the forum brought together all stakeholders with mandates and interest in the early childhood development and children protection to strengthen their collaboration and improve coordination.

While she appreciated efforts made by some organisations, Ms Boko emphasised the need for all to work as a unified team to significantly increase positive outcomes for children, citing that coordinated collaboration builds a stronger safety net around both the child and the family.

In addition, she said combining efforts ensured a safer, more inclusive environment for all children, fostering their development and safeguarding their rights.

Ms Boko reiterated that children continued to experience all forms of abuse despite frequent conversations towards their protection.

She also expressed concern about defilement cases perpetuated by old men who enticed young girls with money, highlighting that it was disturbing as violence and abuse amongst children happened in the places they should be most protected, citing homes, schools and communities and at the hands of people they trust.

Some, she said are abused by their family members or relatives and hence challenged all to look at the issue, noting that societal silence on child sexual abuse protected perpetrators and enabled abuse to continue.

"Children protection is everyone's responsibility and we need to get to a point where we stop talking and act. We should have hard conversations, change the assumptions about child sexual abuse, victims and perpetrators. I recently had an interaction with a 12-year-old girl who has a one-month old baby and you can tell that some people are doing terrible things to our children and we should speak out on their behalf," she added.

Ms Boko pledged to continue advocating for children to protect them from harm and eventually raise a generation that would speak up. She explained that Mpepu Programme was designed to safeguard children's well-being, support vulnerable families and promote early childhood development and child protection nationwide.

For her part, the assistant minister for State President, Defence and Security, Ms Maipelo Mophuting-Dikoloti underscored the need for all to build a Botswana where no child had to suffer in silence, denied an opportunity because of their circumstances and where every child knew that they matter.

She said through the Mpepu initiative, Ms Boko has embraced the responsibility of keeping the needs of children close to her heart.

"As a mother and like every mother, I want to see our children grow up healthy, safe, confident and with the opportunity to fulfil their dreams.."

She said giving a child a good start in life must go hand in hand with ensuring that the child grew up in a safe and nurturing environment.

She said Ms Boko has consistently brought attention to the challenges affecting children and encouraged all to look beyond good intentions towards practical ways of improving their lives.

"There are many dedicated people and organisations doing important work for children. But we must ask ourselves whether all these efforts are connecting as effectively as they should., " she said. ***BOPA***



First Lady Kaone Boko (left) being welcomed by North West District Commissioner, Mr Thabang Waloka at Mpepu Programme Pitso in Maun on Friday. Ms Boko called for stronger collaboration among stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, saying a united approach would strengthen the support and protection provided to children and their families. Photo: Esther Mmolai

DPP underscores need for juvenile justice system

Esther Mmolai
MAUN

The Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) has underscored the need for government to establish a separate justice system for children, distinct from adult courts, complete with its own Chief Magistrate and Chief Justice, prior to implementing a child-friendly justice framework.

Speaking at the recent Mpepu Programme Pitso in Maun, DPP director, Mr Kgosietsile Ngakayagae noted that the current legal framework did not favour minors.

"If we are serious about a child-friendly justice system, children's courts should be courts of equity as opposed to courts of law. If we cannot have a completely different jurisprudence based on a completely separate substantive and procedural law philosophy, we must construct a hybrid system that is child-specific," he said.

He emphasised that the current system required innovation and complete rethink, noting that the goal extended beyond merely making courtrooms welcoming to minors. Rather, he said, the objective was to develop a new and child-specific jurisprudence, as legal procedure was not just a means to an end and the child must be that end.

Justice, he argued, encompassed not only how children were treated as they interacted with the system, but also their ultimate outcomes.

Mr Ngakayagae further stated that reform must span the entire justice value chain, from investigation and prosecution to adjudication and rehabilitation.

"Establishing a separate justice system is the only proper way, as the system can run on a child-specific philosophy of justice, as opposed to customised principles fashioned for adult offenders and then panel-beaten for application to children," he said.

Again, he argued that children deserved an entirely distinct legal regime rather than amendments to a defective system owing to the unfairness of pitting the mind of a law graduate against that of a five-year-old.

He proposed a dual approach saying where children had been wronged, the structure must sit as a court of law while where children were in conflict with the law, it must sit as a court of equity to ensure that the child's best interests were never discarded.

Additionally, he called for juvenile convictions to expire automatically after a set period, highlighting the contradiction of assigning children adult criminal responsibility, sentencing them as minors and then burdening them with lifelong adult records.

"As a first step towards a child-friendly justice system, I ask that we pardon all juveniles who fell from grace, those who have shown reform over time and never reoffended and dangle the hope of a pardon to those still going through the system. I ask that they be given a clean slate so they can pursue careers and get jobs," he urged.

Providing an overview of child welfare and protection in the North West District, deputy council secretary, Ms Kebalepile Horatius warned that many children were exposed to harm when left unsupervised by parents searching for employment.

To address such challenges, Ms Horatius also called for a dedicated court division for children's cases to make legal proceedings less intimidating, reduce delays and minimise the distress children experienced in ordinary courts.

She further indicated that a specialised court would significantly strengthen the protection of children's rights and best interests. ***BOPA***

Mpepu Programme marks one year milestone

Esther Mmolai
MAUN

> It takes a village to raise a child and if the first anniversary of the Mpepu Programme is anything to go by, that village is finally coming together under one roof.

Recently, leaders, law enforcement and community stakeholders gathered to mark a major milestone of one year since First Lady Kaone Boko, launched the Mpepu Programme.

Throughout the commemoration, speakers applauded the First Lady's visionary leadership, praising her for building a collaborative platform that reminded the nation that safeguarding its youngest citizens was not just a government mandate, but a shared societal responsibility.

Permanent secretary in the Ministry for State President, Defence and Security, Ms Goitsemang Morekisi said the programme's greatest strength lay in its ability to unite diverse sectors.

Ms Morekisi said by bringing stakeholders together, Mpepu had helped expose gaps in individual service delivery while opening the door to meaningful collaboration.

"Through this programme, we need to explore practical partnerships, because we believe a child is raised by a community," she said, underscoring the spirit of collective action that defined the initiative.

That call for hands-on unity was echoed by Member of Parliament for Maun East, Mr Goretetse Kekgonegile, who commended the initiative for placing children's welfare squarely on the national agenda.

As such, he urged leaders and citizens to move beyond rhetoric and take practical steps to dismantle the barriers hindering child protection, noting that government could not win the fight alone.

Nowhere is the urgency of that partnership clearer than in the sobering realities shared by Commissioner of Police, Ms Dinah Marathe, who pleadged Botswana Police Service's (BPS) full support for the programme.

Ms Marathe committed to fostering a child-friendly policing environment nationwide and ensure that Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child abuse cases were handled with the utmost professionalism.

"The safety of children is inseparable from the safety, stability and future prosperity of the nation," Ms Marathe told the gathering, warning that failing to protect youth compromised both their present well-being and the foundations of the future.

While overall crime figures offered a glimmer of hope, a closer look reveals a troubling paradox. Across six selected categories of serious and violent offences, the BPS recorded 9 085 cases last year, a drop from 9 828 in 2024.

Even more startling, child victims recorded under common assault nearly tripled, soaring from 110 in 2024 to 324 last year and the takeaway for the police boss was that a dip in general crime did not automatically mean that children were safer.

Rather than facing threats from strangers, many children are being harmed in the very spaces meant to shelter them.

"Equally troubling is the nature and context of the violence confronting our children. Our operational experience continues to reveal sexual offences committed by individuals known to victims. This betrayal of trust is particularly devastating because it transforms the home and familiar environments, which should provide security and nurturing, into places of fear and vulnerability," Ms Marathe lamented.

As the Mpepu Programme enters its second year, the message is that protecting children required vigilance, compassion and unity across society to ensure that every child grew up in an environment defined not by fear, but by promise. ***BOPA***

Arts & Culture



RnB and The People returns for second edition

The second edition of RnB and The People scheduled for November 22 at the Grand Aria will feature artistes such as Han C, Thabang 'DJ Frostbite' Kwapa, Macx Wa Bana, Fauz and Neo P.

Ketshepile More
GABORONE

The second edition of RnB and The People promises a day filled with soulful melodies, immersive art and cultural expression when it takes place at the Grand Aria on November 22.

Celebrating rhythm, soul and artistic fusion, the upcoming showcase will feature local RnB sensation Han C alongside a line-up of DJs including the man behind the concept, Thabang 'DJ Frostbite' Kwapa, as well as Macx Wa Bana, Fauz and Neo Played It, among others.

The event will also host South African RnB maestro, Kagiso 'DJ Cheezy27' Seerane.

Reflecting on the upcoming show following an intimate inaugural edition in August, DJ Frostbite said the goal was to maintain the close-knit atmosphere.

"The first edition was just after winter and the ambience was limited because of that, but now that it is summer, we intend to have more of an open space while still keeping it intimate through the production," DJ Frostbite said in an interview.

To preserve the connection with the audience, the second edition will feature a song request segment, an element DJ Frostbite describes as central to the show's identity.

"It is one key element that speaks to 'the people' in the brand name," he explained, echoing sentiments previously shared by the late A.T.I regarding the importance of audience engagement. He added that any additional special elements would be unveiled on the day of the event as a surprise for attendees. When curating the line-up, DJ Frostbite noted that several factors guided his booking decisions, including technical skill on the decks, professionalism and budget alignment.

"We look at whether they are easy to work with because we want an environment that is conducive for all parties involved," he said, adding that booking fees must also align with the event's overall budget.

Meanwhile, RnB and The People serves as a commercial platform for local creatives and entrepreneurs.

"We always ensure that we give creatives a platform to showcase their work and build a network from this event," DJ Frostbite said, noting that the event's value chain, spanning decor, sound, stage and lighting, security, branding, videography, photography and catering, were entirely locally sourced.

Tickets for RnB and The People are available online via Webtickets, at selected SPAR outlets nationwide and through DuelaEasy for Orange subscribers. ***BOPA***

BnR looks beyond entertainment as festival marks 10 years

Tumisang Moilwa
GABORONE

A decade of music, culture and entertainment is what Born and Raised (BnR) Festival is celebrating as it prepares for its 10th edition, continuing its journey of showcasing local creative talent while contributing to the country's creative and tourism sectors.

The festival, which brings together local and regional artistes and audiences, is using the milestone edition to strengthen partnerships, improve the event experience and create opportunities for businesses within the entertainment industry.

Speaking at the festival's launch recently, one of the BnR founders, Molatedi Kgotla, said staging a successful music festival required more than bringing artistes together and selling tickets, highlighting the business operations and planning involved behind the scenes.

He said organisers had learnt over the past decade that the entertainment industry required a balance between creativity and sound business decisions, including negotiating artiste agreements and ensuring that partners honoured their contractual obligations.

Kgotla said the festival was also placing greater emphasis on the overall experience offered to attendees, rather than relying solely on its performance line-up.

He said organisers were exploring ways of improving the experience for the 10th edition, including the possibility of introducing two stages, while also paying attention to security, VIP services and other event arrangements.

Beyond the entertainment on offer, Kgotla said the festival generated business opportunities for vendors, while hotels and lodges also benefited from visitors travelling from neighbouring countries to attend.

He called for greater recognition, particularly from government, of the festival's contribution to tourism and the wider economy, saying there was a need to assess the business activity generated around such events. In strengthening its partnerships, Orange Money Botswana had come on board as the festival's official payment partner, bringing its Duela Easy payment solutions to the event.

Orange Botswana public relations and communications manager, Tebogo Nadisah, said the partnership reflected the company's commitment to using technology to connect people and create opportunities.

She said Orange Money was excited to support a platform that celebrated Botswana's music, culture and creativity, while helping local businesses benefit from convenient digital payment options.



Serowe District Council chairperson, Atamelang Thaga (left), Born and Raised legal representative, Njiramanda Mbewe Boatey (centre) and director, Molatedi Kgotla during the 10th edition of the Born and Raised Music Festival launch in Gaborone recently. The festival is celebrating a decade of showcasing local and regional musical talent while creating business opportunities and contributing to Botswana's creative and tourism sectors. Photo: Washa Bofelwang

The solutions are expected to facilitate convenient and secure transactions for festival goers and participating vendors, allowing attendees to spend less time worrying about cash and more time enjoying the event.

The festival's impact is also expected to extend beyond entertainment, with organisers partnering with Serowe District Council as part of efforts to give back to the people of Serowe and surrounding communities.

The partnership is intended to strengthen the festival's relationship with its host community and ensure that its contribution was felt beyond the event itself.

Kgotla also encouraged sponsors to support the festival, noting that financial partnerships enabled organisers to negotiate artist fees, deliver the event and create value within the entertainment sector.

Looking beyond the 10th edition, organisers indicated plans to explore opportunities to expand the BnR brand beyond its current location by sharing their event-management experience and operating procedures with interested young people who could stage similar events in other parts of the country.

As it marks a decade, BnR is seeking to consolidate its place in the entertainment calendar while using its platform to connect creative talent, businesses and audiences across the region. ***BOPA***

DailySport



Minister of Sport and Arts, Jacob Kelebeng (left) receiving the National Flag from Chef de Mission, Lechedzani Luza during the welcome ceremony for Team Botswana following its participation at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games. Kelebeng said government would strengthen elite athlete development programmes and provide targeted support to promising young athletes as Botswana prepares for the 2028 Los Angeles and 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games. Photo: Phenyo Ramatu

Dakar performance spurs Olympic ambition

Anastacia Sibanda
GABORONE

Team Botswana's performance in Dakar, Senegal has prompted government and sport officials to fast-track elite development support as the country sets its sights on the 2028 Los Angeles and 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games.

Speaking at the team's welcome ceremony on Monday, Minister of Sport and Arts, Jacob Kelebeng said the athletes' efforts reinforced the ministry's strategic mandate to build a seamless and well-funded high-performance pathway from school sport to the senior Olympic podium.

To achieve this, Kelebeng added that government remained committed to strengthening grassroots systems by revitalising early talent identification, in partnership with national federations and local education authorities, to ensure that no raw gem remained undiscovered.

Regarding high-performance infrastructure, Kelebeng noted that expanding investments in modern sport science, conditioning, nutrition and mental health support was essential so that local athletes did not fall behind their international peers technically or physically.

He said government would work closely with both the Botswana National Olympic Committee (BNOC) and Botswana National Sport Commission (BNSC) to immediately absorb athletes who demonstrated elite potential in Dakar into targeted development grants and preparation frameworks.

The programmes would gear the athletes toward the upcoming Senior African Games, the Commonwealth Games and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"We cannot afford to let this talent disappear, as has often been the case. The ministry will hold both the BNOC and BNSC accountable to ensure that every finalist and personal-best achiever from Dakar is systematically monitored and supported," he said.

Kelebeng commended the athletes for representing the country well, noting that while some judged sporting success solely by a podium finish, government took a broader view.

"We, on the other hand, as government, take a holistic, long-term and developmental view of youth sport.



Team Botswana and officials during the team's welcome ceremony in Gaborone on Monday, following its participation at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games.

At youth level, which is the level at which you compete, competition is an assessment of growth, character and potential," he said.

BNOC president, Tshepo Sitale, said they were proud of the team's performance and emphasised the need for increased backing ahead of future competitions.

Although the contingent returned without podium hardware, Sitale maintained that the campaign yielded critical breakthroughs.

"This campaign was a definitive technical success. Across multiple sporting codes, our young ambassadors shattered their previous limitations to register multiple personal bests (PBs), fought their way through gruelling preliminary rounds to secure berths in global finals and proved that Botswana's youth talent ranks firmly among the world's elite," he said.

He described the cohort as a pipeline to both Los Angeles 2028 and Brisbane 2032, hence the need for sustained investment.

"If we nurture them, if we protect them and if we invest in them systematically, the finals they contested in Dakar will convert into podium finishes on the senior global stage," Sitale said. ***BOPA***