

BOTSWANA

Daily News

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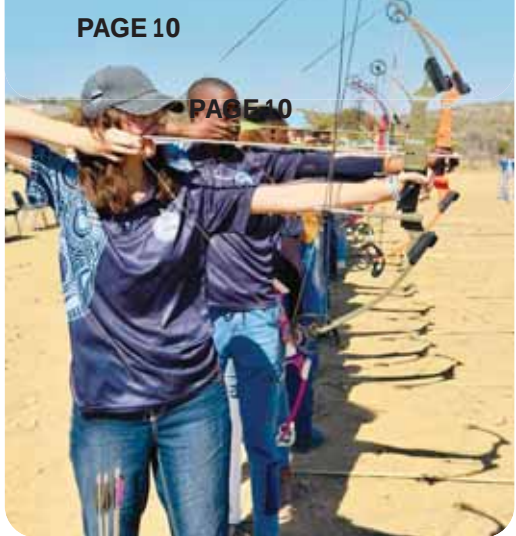


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Government commits to electoral reform



The Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa said a technical team would thoroughly evaluate the reforms, ensuring their practical implementation and legislative robustness before presentation to Parliament.

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Proposed reforms

- Voters be permitted to register only once in their lifetime
- Omang remain the principal form of identification for voting and registration, with a driver's licence or passport used where the former is not available
- Special voting arrangements for persons living with disabilities through a Special Vote Day
- Introduction of electronic voting and electronic counting of ballots
- Introduction of transparent ballot boxes
- Counting of ballots at polling stations



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Company to refurbish 22 schools for P265m

GABORONE

Education Infrastructure and Management Company (EIMC) will undertake the refurbishment of 22 public secondary schools across Botswana, from August 2026 to March 2027 at a total cost of P265 million.

A press release from EIMC says the works represent the initial phase of EIMC’s school refurbishment programme aimed at improving the safety, functionality and overall quality of public education infrastructure.

The 22 schools, as per the release, comprise 11 junior secondary

schools and 11 senior secondary schools across the country.

The junior secondary schools are; Donga in Francistown, Gobojango in Gobojango, Madikwe in Mmathubudukwane, Maiteko in Mabutsane, Makalamabedi in Makalamabedi, Maoka in Gaborone, Marakanelo in

Ncojane, Mphuthe in Letlhakeng, Patikwane in Mabeleapudi, Rakops in Rakops and Ramokgonami in Ramokgonami.

The senior secondary schools are; Gaborone in Gaborone, Lobatse in Lobatse, Lotsane in Palapye, Matsheke in Bobonong, Maun in Maun, Moeding in Otse, Molefi in Mochudi, Moshupa in Moshupa, Seepapitso in Kanye, Shoshong in Shoshong and Tutume McConnel College in Tutume.

“In line with EIMC’s commitment to collaboration, skills development and inclusive local economic development and participation, the implementation model will include the direct engagement of qualified Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates and artisans,” states the release.

The programme will also engage Ikageng Public Works Programme beneficiaries who will work with

the artisans as assistants for skills development and transfer.

In partnership with the Presidential Youth Empowerment Campaign (PYEC), the release says EIMC has also mobilised youth who have qualifications in construction-related programmes to play a role in the undertaking, creating employment for the youth population. “To promote Local Economic Development, procurement of building materials will be undertaken through vendors and suppliers located within or near the project’s localities,” adds he release. According to the release, the implementation approach is intended to ensure that investment in school infrastructure also stimulates local economic activity, supports small businesses, creates employment opportunities and enables participants to gain practical workplace experience. **BOPA**



US Ambassador to Botswana, Mr Howard Van Vracken (left) awarding certificate to the representative of the Space Operations, Mr Faith Ketshabile (right) during the closing of Botswana-United States Exercise Southern Accord 2026 in Gaborone recently. Mr Van Vracken said that the accord was not just an exercise, but an opportunity for both nations to learn from one another to effectively respond to future challenges. Looking on is Botswana Defence Force Commander Ground Forcess, Major General Simon Barwabatsile. Photo: Felicity Male

Botswana and US conclude Southern Accord 2026

Mpho Mosojane
GABORONE

Botswana and the United States, through Exercise Southern Accord 2026 (SA 2026), engaged an intensive joint military drill designed to sharpen regional security and operational readiness on multinational interoperability.

The week-long exercise hosted by Gaborone Technical College, focused on counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, cyber and space domain awareness and crisis response planning.

The joint military exercise integrated civilian departments such as the Department of Wildlife, communications sector and the Financial Intelligence Agency (FIA) alongside the Botswana Defence Force to practice a “whole-of-government” approach, ensuring coordinated responses to complex, multi-domain security and transnational threats.

Sanctioning the graduation of the 211 participants, US Ambassador to Botswana, Mr Howard Van Vracken, highlighted that the SA 2026 represented another important step to the longstanding relationship between Botswana and the US.

“The Southern Accord is more than just an exercise but represents a partnership built on mutual respect, shared responsibility

and a common interest toward a secure and stable Southern Africa, providing an opportunity for both nations to learn from one another to effectively respond to future challenges,” he said.

He further highlighted how through SA 2026, Batswana military and civilian planners worked alongside US planners and the US Space Force collaborating to communicate, share information and make sound decisions to strengthen both nations.

“The United States deeply values its relationship with Botswana and respects Botswana’s longstanding commitment to democracy, sovereignty, professionalism and regional security,” he said.

Amongst the participants were Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) officers to provide critical civilian-military and regulatory expertise in cyber defence and telecommunications.

Giving an account of the training, Mr Ratang Kabane, Incident Responder at BOCRA highlighted how the exercise expanded his focus from primarily unit level training to joint operational planning and coordination.

Their involvement supported whole-of-government coordination, aligning with a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at reinforcing national security and

sovereign capabilities in the digital and cyber fields.

Brigadier Collen Nkete, BDF Training Director highlighted the importance of SA Accord in facilitating the simulation of realistic, operational conditions to build capabilities aimed at better responding to possible security threats.

“While Botswana’s security threat level remain low to medium, the future is uncertain and interventions such as the SA Accord are crucial in helping us respond in case we encounter a sudden security incident,” he said.

He further gave insights on the significance of the flagship exercise, which evolved from 2010 as basic humanitarian and peace keeping drills to multi-domain robust exercises aimed toward building vital tactical coordination between Botswana and the US in enhancing readiness for regional domestic-led peace keeping, counter-insurgency and disaster relief operations.

As the focus shifts to the 2028 SA edition, the biennial joint military exercise, sponsored by the US Africa Command (USAFRICOM) promises to empower partner nations to evolve and better respond to disruptive regional security incidents through strengthened, long-term diplomatic and defensive cooperation and high-level defense forums. **BOPA**

FMD disrupts businesses and households

Bonang Masolotatse
GABORONE

The ongoing Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) situation has proved disruptive to both businesses and households, and has had a catastrophic impact even on businesses that are not directly linked to the beef industry.

The Department of Veterinary Services director, Dr Kobedi Segale, said this on Monday while briefing Botswana Defence Force (BDF) commander, General Mpho Mophuting at the National Emergency Operations Centre.

“The disruption caused by the disease is severe,” Dr Segale said, adding that apart from leading to the suspension of access to European markets, the disease had also affected families and small-scale businesses that were generally not directly linked to the beef industry.

However, he said there were some positives in the response effort.

“We continue to see cases, but there is a decline,” he said, adding that the construction of the disease containment zone fence was ongoing, as well as the vaccination campaign.

Other measures in place include movement controls, biosecurity measures, public awareness, stakeholder collaboration, border control, surveillance, and collaboration with neighbouring countries.

Dr Segale said the outbreak had shown how one member state could affect its neighbours.

He added that the government was collaborating with South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho to control the disease.

Despite the ongoing containment efforts, Dr Segale noted there were still challenges with compliance by farmers, and poor animal husbandry practices such as kraaling, herding and tagging, which often made efforts difficult.

Other challenges include cross-border human and animal movement, litigation, and a lack of interest from some farmers in fighting the disease.

He also noted that Botswana remained under suspension and

was surrounded by countries with an unknown disease status, according to the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Dr Segale said being surrounded by countries with an unknown FMD status posed a risk of transmission of the virus into the country.

He further noted that the country had committed P97 million towards fighting the disease.

General Mophuting appreciated the work done by the committee and noted that Batswana livelihoods were dependent on livestock, saying the frustration of farmers were understandable.

He stressed the need for inclusivity of all stakeholders in the fight, adding that the lesson from COVID-19 was that money was not the ultimate resource in fighting a pandemic.

“One of the first things when COVID started was the issue of money. We did not have a budget, and we realised that money is not everything,” he said.

He said it was all about devising strategies, communication, leadership quality and good coordination.

General Mophuting also advised the team that assignments of this national magnitude demanded sacrifice, devotion and commitment.

“I see the community out there volunteering, which is good,” he said, adding that community engagement was crucial to the ultimate defeat of FMD.

The technical committee chairperson, Mr Gordon Molefe, said the committee was established through a directive in January 2026 following the detection of FMD, adding that at the time they did not know how the disease would proliferate.

Mr Molefe added that they had a strategic framework that supported the response on the ground.

He said the response had been given maximum attention, and noted that they had 21 checkpoints.

He said the community, private sector and business community were involved in the project, and because of this, the disease had been confined. **BOPA**

UNICEF vital partner in youth empowerment

Pako Lebanna
GABORONE

With an estimated two thirds of the country’s population being under the age of 35, Botswana seeks to utilise this youth demographic dividend to propel the transformation of the economy, and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is a critical partner in that regard.

Those were the views expressed by Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa on Friday at the Office of the President, while welcoming a visiting party from UNICEF, the organ of the UN tasked with developmental needs of children across the world, particularly in developing countries.

Mr Mohwasa noted that UNICEF had been a long-standing partner to Botswana, having established a country office decades ago and collaborating with government and other development stakeholders in shaping some national policies and programmes on areas such as healthcare and child nutrition.

With government now working to train school-going children and the youth to be job ready and entrepreneurial so as to contribute towards the ambitions of the 12th National Development Plan (NDP 12) and the Botswana Economic Transformation Plan (BTEP), partnership with UNICEF continued to be vital, the minister said.

He urged UNICEF to assist Botswana in its programmes geared at not only reducing youth unemployment, but to ensure the youth became the engine of economic growth.

For her part, the Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo also reiterated that UNICEF had been a consistent partner, working closely with her ministry on the reform of policies such as the Youth Development Fund (YDF), and the National Service Programme (Tirelo Setshaba), as well as to expand mentorship and economic inclusion initiatives.

Ms Chombo said government was pleased to explore further partnerships with Generation Unlimited, the unit of UNICEF launched in 2018 with the aim to connect the world’s youth to transition from education and training to productive employment, entrepreneurship and social impact.

Generation Unlimited acting chief executive officer, who is based at the organisation head office in New York City, United States of America, Dr Nadi Albino said they worked with representatives from the public sector, technological



Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Mr Moeti Mohwasa (centre) UN president coordinator Botswana, Ms Wenyan Yang (second right), UNICEF representative Dr Kimanzi Muthengi (right), acting CEO Generation Unlimited UNICEF, Ms Nandi Albino (second left) and Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo during a courtesy call at the Office of the President in Gaborone recently. Minister Mohwasa said UNICEF’s current engagement was aligned with Botswana’s national development priorities, including National Development Plan 12, the Botswana Economic Transformation Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Photo: Phenyio Moalosi

companies and others in private enterprise, as well as young people’s representatives to offer innovative ideas on how to improve opportunities for the youth.

She lauded Botswana for already having policies that aimed to put the youth at the centre of the national development agenda, and said Generation Unlimited could assist with global best practice on availing private sector partners willing to share their research and development and technology on areas such as artificial intelligence, industrial parks, agro-processing and other commercial avenues.

UNICEF Botswana country representative, Dr Kimanzi Muthengi said they were working with multi-sector partners within government and industry to seek solutions to ensure the youth have better economic access and become key anchors that drive

the economy.

To that end, he said they worked with the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education to promote early childhood development, child welfare and justice and with the Ministry of Youth and Gender Affairs to promote Generation Unlimited programmes as well as youth and gender inclusion.

He said they candidly acknowledge the high levels of unemployment among out-of-school youth, something he said together with government and private sector partners, they were willing to tackle in order to ensure the national economic transformation envisioned by NDP 12 and BTEP, as well as the UN which has declared the decade spanning 2027-36 as the International Decade of Strengthening Peace for Future Generations. **BOPA**

Government commits to electoral reform

Ketshepile More
GABORONE

Government remains deliberate, resolute and sincere in its pursuit of electoral reform.

Delivering a statement in Parliament on Monday the Minister for State President, Defence and Security Mr Moeti Mohwasa said government recognised that the integrity of the country’s electoral system was fundamental to the strength of democracy and the stability of the nation.

He said electoral outcomes reflected the people’s will and to pave way for these reforms, government engaged with political parties, inviting them to submit proposals and convening the All-Party Conference.

The proposed reforms, Mr Mohwasa said included measures such as allowing complete one time voter registration, clearer definitions for voter registration, maintaining Omang as the primary form of ID and ensuring access to the verified electronic voters’ roll for political parties.

“Other reforms aimed to observe processes in voter registration, accommodate persons with disabilities and introduce electronic voting and counting,” Mr Mohwasa indicated.

Additionally, he said the proposals included counting ballots at polling stations, implementing transparent ballot boxes, legalising exit polling and easing the amendment requirements for election petitions.

He said a technical team would thoroughly evaluate these reforms, ensuring their practical implementation and legislative robustness before presentation to Parliament, highlighting the collaborative and meticulous approach undertaken by the government and the political

community.

Furthermore, Mr Mohwasa said government acknowledged that one political party involved in the conference had independently proposed elements of electoral reform, reflecting a shared commitment across the political spectrum.

However, he emphasised that introducing individual reforms prematurely could undermine the agreed-upon package and weaken the achieved consensus from the All-Party Conference.

Mr Mohwasa asserted that electoral reform should be approached as a coherent national initiative, supported by comprehensive technical scrutiny and broad bi-partisan cooperation.

He said the central disagreement lay not in the necessity of reform but in the sequencing and presentation of these reforms.

The minister therefore urged all parties to seize the moment and reaffirm their collective commitment to the agreements made and to continue engaging with respect and good faith.

He also called on all participants to uphold commitments made at the conference and assist the technical team in finalising a prioritised reform package for presentation to Parliament.

The electoral system, Mr Mohwasa emphasised, was a national institution, requiring collective care and inclusivity, prioritising the long-term interests of the nation over immediate political conflicts.

“We therefore carry a collective responsibility to strengthen it carefully and inclusively and working together, we can deliver reforms that deepen our democracy, strengthen public confidence and serve the interests of future generations,” Mr Mohwasa said. **BOPA**

Salakae resigns

Ketshepile More
GABORONE

The Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Mr Noah Salakae has resigned from Cabinet with immediate effect following a personal statement in Parliament yesterday. Mr Salakae said his resignation came as a result of an August 13 summons from Directorate on Corruption of Economic Crime (DCEC).

However, he said his resignation was not an admission of guilt, but rather a move to focus on a personal legal matter due in court on August 28.

According to Mr Salakae, there have been allegations concerning financial misconduct and asset ownership, particularly regarding a house linked to supposed favouritism toward a Chinese contractor.

He rejected the allegations and said he was determined to address them through the judicial system, focusing on the transparency of justice and the dangers of state overreach.

He therefore said he would fully cooperate with and allow the legal process to run its course, adding that he had fully cooperated with

the DCEC investigations since September 2025.

However, Mr Salakae raised concerns about unauthorised disclosures of information by a senior DCEC officer and the subsequent public misinformation circulated by local media.

He criticised the DCEC for allegedly misusing corruption laws, emphasising the need for a justice system that served citizens rather than power. He condemned a raid on his home by DCEC, saying they were unjust actions, which violated legal norms, were intrusive and distressing particularly to his family. **BOPA**



Mr Noah Salakae is no longer Minister of Transport and Infrastructure.

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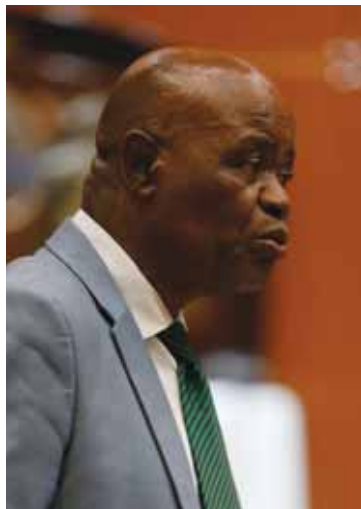
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PARLIAMENT 2026

Ministry loses 13 cases in two financial years



Minister of Labour and Home Affairs
Major General Pius Mokgware

GABORONE

The Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs has lost 13 cases in the last two financial years, with a total of over P27.2 million paid to employees.

Answering a question in Parliament on Monday, the Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Major General Pius Mokgware said the total number of disputes concluded by the Dispute Resolution Bodies in the last two financial years was 25, of which 13 were in 2024/2025 and 12 in 2025/2026.

The ministry, he said, lost eight cases in 2024/2025 and five in 2025/2026, which was a total of 13 cases.

Major Gen. Mokgware said four of the cases, were at the High Court, two at the Industrial Court, two at the Office of the Ombudsman and five at the Commissioner of Labour.

The minister said the breakdown of payment on the cases, per department, was eight cases for Labour and Social Security, with over P2.3 million paid, two cases for Immigration and Citizenship, with no payment, and three cases for Civil and National Registration, with more than P24.8 million paid.

He further noted that the total number of affected employees for the 13 cases was 98, adding that payments for 42 employees had been processed, whilst 56 were pending.

Of the 56 pending payments, the minister said calculations for 19 payments had been completed and were still waiting for verification to enable payments processing.

The remaining payments, he said would be processed once the appeal processes had been

concluded at court.

Maj. Gen. Mokgware said payments would be subject to availability of funds and efforts would continue to be made through identified savings as and when available.

Additionally, the minister said the ministry had recorded a total of 95 grievances over the past two financial years, with 68 grievances recorded in 2024/2025 and 27 in 2025/2026. Of the 95 grievances, he said only five were pending.

He said the significant reduction in resolution of the grievances emanated primarily from capacitation of the Employee Relations Function and strengthening monitoring mechanisms for resolution of the grievances.

On measures to improve labour relations and reduce employment disputes involving its employees, the minister said the ministry was undertaking a number of initiatives.

He said there were quarterly meetings with some trade unions to resolve the grievances and disputes, which had borne fruit in concluding most of the cases.

In addition, he said departments had also been encouraged to undertake quarterly staff welfare meetings aimed at addressing and resolving employees' issues raised in the forums. Maj. Gen. Mokgware said his office had also been instrumental in facilitating the progress through an open door policy to staff.

He explained that, in total, the ministry had 26 pending dispute cases, with 13 at the High Court, one at the Industrial Court, nine at the Ombudsman and three at the Commissioner of Labour.

The minister was responding to a question from the MP for Serowe South, Mr Leepetswe Lesedi, who wanted to know how many cases of employee grievances had been recorded by the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs over the past two financial years and how many cases the ministry had lost at the Ombudsman, Commissioner of Labour, Industrial Court and High Court and the total value of money paid out.

Mr Lesedi also wanted the minister to state the breakdown of payment on the cases per department, how many cases were currently pending at the Ombudsman, Commissioner of Labour, Industrial Court and High Court per department and what measures the ministry was implementing to improve labour relations and reduce employment disputes involving its employees.

BOPA

Esther Mmolai
PARLIAMENT

Parliament has unanimously adopted a motion calling for the introduction and adoption of sign language as an official language in Botswana.

The motion was tabled last week by Kgatleng Central MP, Mr Mpho Morolong, and was passed on Monday.

Debating the motion, Assistant Minister for State President, Defence and Security, Ms Maipelo Mophuting-Dikoloti, who is also MP for Gaborone Bonnington North, said government was already moving to strengthen sign language to break communication barriers and ensure equal rights for deaf persons.

She told Parliament that sign language was not simply a collection of gestures but a fully developed language with its own grammar, structure and cultural significance.

“For the deaf and hard of hearing community, it is how they express themselves, learn and participate in society,” Ms Mophuting-Dikoloti said.

She noted that the motion spoke to the formal recognition of sign language in its own right and to giving it a proper place within the national framework adding that government had made progress through the Persons with Disability Act of 2024 and through the Botswana Languages Policy in Education, which provided for sign language as well as training and development of Botswana Sign Language.

While acknowledging gaps in access, capacity and availability of sign language services, she said having a policy was already an achievement.

Ms Mophuting-Dikoloti said the main challenge was not the ability or willingness of deaf communities to participate, but the systems around them that limit full participation. She gave examples of a deaf child who cannot fully follow a lesson, or someone who needs to understand proceedings in court, or simply access services at a government office.

“This motion is an opportunity to build on what we have already started and we need to take it further. We appreciate the international position as the United Nations recognises sign language as a fully-fledged and equal natural language and emphasises the importance of sign language rights as enabling people to enjoy their human rights fully,” she said.

She recommended a phased and practical implementation approach focused on areas where communication was most critical, such as education, health care, justice and frontline government services. She also called for increased training and accreditation of sign language interpreters, stronger Botswana Sign Language training opportunities, and basic training for public officers who regularly interact with the public.

Minister of Environment and



Tourism and MP for Francistown South, Mr Wynter Mmolotsi, backed the motion. He said over 70 countries worldwide had recognised sign language as an official language alongside other languages.

“It would be a major achievement for the country to recognise sign language as it helps secure human rights and improve access to education, healthcare and public life for the deaf community,” Mr Mmolotsi said.

The deaf persons, he said, were struggling as they could not clearly express themselves at health facilities and were excluded from the public, hence all countries left behind should adopt sign language as an official language to ensure social inclusion.

He cited South Africa, Uganda and New Zealand as examples of countries that have adopted sign language as an official language, and said that with sign language as an official language, the deaf community would enjoy equal rights like any other Motswana.

MP for Maun East, Mr Goretetse Kekgonegile, also welcomed the motion. He said recognising sign language was a vital step toward inclusion and equity, and would make access to information, programmes and livelihoods easier for deaf individuals.

Mr Kekgonegile raised the need to decide which sign language to adopt, asking whether government would use a regional or continental

standard. “We need to set the programme rolling. By next year we should see progress in action and we also need a sign language policy and legislation that will enforce this agreement,” he said.

In Maun, some schools offer special education, but it was not useful if those around the children are left behind. We need to go further in mainstreaming this sign language agenda into policies, programmes and the broader perspective of our everyday lives,” he said.

Assistant Minister of Child Welfare and Basic Education, Mr Justin Hunyepa, MP for Tati West, said sign language was a human right that ensured dignity and equality.

“This motion is in line with Umbrella for Democratic Change manifesto, which promotes social justice, equality and inclusion. We cannot speak of inclusion while the deaf people face communication barrier. The language should also be taught in all schools, including teaching institutions like Teachers Training Colleges to prepare teachers to support deaf and hard of hearing learners,” he said.

He added that a deaf person should not face a second barrier and should be able to access services easily everywhere.

With Parliament’s backing, the call now turns to government to develop an implementation plan, policy and legislation to give sign language formal status in Botswana. **BOPA**

MP calls for special fund to combat GBV

Ketshepile More
GABORONE

Tati East MP Mr Tlhabologo Furniture on Monday called on government to establish a special fund for Gender-Based Violence (GBV), saying the crisis continues to undermine gender equality and strain the country’s health, social and justice systems.

Presenting a motion in Parliament, Mr Furniture said GBV remains ‘a pressing human rights and public health issue’ in Botswana, with 37 per cent of women experiencing it in their lifetime.

“The fund would provide immediate, targeted financial resources for prevention, survivor support and legal redress for the victims of GBV. It will strengthen the national response to GBV and advance gender equality, complementing legislative reforms already in place.”

Mr Furniture said the social and economic costs of GBV demanded dedicated resources. He proposed that the fund cover prevention initiatives, emergency shelter, medical care, legal assistance, and economic empowerment programmes to help survivors rebuild their lives.

He noted that despite existing legal and institutional frameworks, financial constraints continue to limit prevention and support services.

“Costs related to medical examinations, accommodation and legal representation often deter survivors, particularly those who are unemployed or live in rural areas. Inadequate financing leads to case withdrawals and sustained abuse. There is an urgent need for a dedicated budget to enhance Botswana’s response to GBV, to ensure survivors receive essential support and justice, he said.

To ensure sustainability, the MP suggested the fund be financed through a mix of public resources and in-kind contributions.

These could include annual budget allocations, revenues from levies linked to social harm such as the Alcohol and Tobacco Levy Funds, court-imposed fines, development partner contributions, voluntary donations, and infrastructure support from corporations.

“A diversified financing model is essential for the fund’s long-term sustainability, with an initial anchor grant from the state to demonstrate political will and

support,” he said.

Mr Furniture argued that a dedicated fund would improve access to services, remove financial barriers to justice, and facilitate coordinated interventions. He said it would also bolster prevention programmes aimed at changing harmful social norms and raising public awareness, ultimately encouraging more reporting.

“The fund would reflect Botswana’s commitment to gender equality and fulfilling obligations to combat GBV, contributing to stronger families, safer communities and sustainable development,” he added. **BOPA**

Old Age Pension remains universal and requires no assessment

GABORONE

Batswana who turn 65 years automatically qualify for the old age pension, regardless of whether they are employed or receive other income, Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ketlhalefile Motshegwa has told Parliament.

Answering a question in Parliament on Monday, Mr Motshegwa said the scheme was a universal social protection programme designed to provide basic income to all citizens who reach the qualifying age.

“Eligibility is not subject to means testing and therefore currently beneficiaries are not

required to demonstrate that they are employed, have no other source of income, or are not receiving a pension from another institution,” Mr Motshegwa said.

He added that receiving a salary, private pension, or any other income does not constitute “double dipping” under the current rules.

“The fact that an old age pension beneficiary might also be receiving a salary, private pension, or another form of income does not, in itself, constitute double dipping under the current eligibility framework,” he said.

The minister told MPs that government did not keep a separate database of so-called double dipping beneficiaries because the



Botswana’s old age pension scheme is a universal social protection programme. According to Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ketlhalefile Motshegwa, eligibility is based solely on attaining the qualifying age of 65 years, with no additional means testing required.

pension is non-means-tested.

Mr Motshegwa revealed that total expenditure on the old age pension scheme for the 2024/25 financial year was P1,348,841,490.

He said government continued to review and strengthen the social protection system under the transformation agenda.

This includes rolling out a single social registry and an integrated

beneficiary registry to improve coordination, data integration and evidence-based policy decisions.

“Any future review of the old age pension eligibility criteria would therefore be undertaken within a broader social protection agenda and government policy framework,” the minister said.

The response followed a question from Kgatleng Central MP, Mr Mpho Morolong, who

asked whether the minister was aware that some beneficiaries may be earning salaries or receiving other public and private pensions at the same time.

Mr Morolong also asked if government intended to review the criteria to target the most vulnerable, and requested the number of double dipping beneficiaries and total spending for 2024/25. **BOPA**

Parliament passes two key amendment bills

Esther Mmolai
GABORONE

Parliament has passed both the Gambling Amendment Bill of 2026 and the Proceeds and Instruments of Crime Amendment Bill of 2026, with lawmakers backing moves to close legal loopholes and bring Botswana’s gambling regulations in line with international standards.

The Proceeds and Instruments of Crime Amendment Bill seeks to address strategic deficiencies in the existing Act. The Gambling Amendment Bill targets the Gambling Authority Act of 2012, aiming to modernise the regulatory framework, resolve implementation challenges, and align local laws with current national priorities and global best practices.

Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Tiroeane Ntsima, told Parliament that the gambling industry had changed significantly over the years, creating both new opportunities and new regulatory risks.

“The industry has evolved considerably over the years presenting new opportunities as well as new regulatory challenges. It is therefore necessary that our legislative framework keeps pace with this development to ensure that the industry remains transparent, accountable and effective regulator whilst regarding the public interest,” Mr Ntsima said.

He said the Bill also strengthened the financial integrity of the sector by aligning the Gambling Act with the Financial Intelligence Act of 2022 and international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force [FATF].

A key proposal in the Gambling Amendment Bill is to reduce the minimum legal gambling age from 21 to 18. Mr Ntsima said the change was informed by research showing significant participation by 18 to 21-year-olds, a group he described as particularly vulnerable to gambling-related harm.

The minister argued that including them in the legal

framework would allow for proper protection and support.

“Failure to include them... means they cannot participate in the million-dollar industry nor own businesses. You should understand that the issue of age goes beyond gambling,” he said. He added that maintaining the age at 21 would not stop 18-year-olds from gambling online and across borders, and that bringing them under regulation would make it easier for the Authority to intervene when there are signs of addictive behaviour.

Mr Jeremiah Frenzel, MP for Shashe West, said 18-year-olds were still learners at secondary and tertiary level and lacked mature decision-making.

“Those at tertiary will waste their monthly stipend on betting and end up failing to complete their studies,” he warned, adding that gambling could lead to criminal behaviour, substance abuse, and financial stress.

Mr Galenawabo Lekau, MP for Mogoditshane West, said most

people currently betting were young and that 18-year-olds were highly susceptible to impulsivity and addiction. He feared lowering the age would expose them to fraud and other criminal activities.

Mr Philemon Aaron, MP for Ngami, said while he supported compliance with international standards, the 18-21 age group were the highest risk takers and were already hard hit by unemployment. He noted poverty and desperation in areas like North West and Ghanzi were driving people into gambling.

Mr Kenny Kapinga, MP for Okavango West, called gambling ‘evil and harmful,’ recalling cases from his time in the Botswana Police Service where officers stole exhibit money to gamble.

“We should be worrying of the consequences that will follow in our society if we come up with such bills and no one here would allow his/her 18-year-old to gamble,” he said.

Some MPs backed the Bill’s broader regulatory aims. Mr

Tshenolo Bogatsu, MP for Lentsweletau/Lephephe, described gambling as a multi-million-dollar industry that could grow the economy.

He supported stronger control measures, proposing heavy fines, jail terms, or licence revocation for non-compliant operators.

Mr David Tshere, Minister of Communications and Innovation and MP for Mahalapye West, said gambling was a business and laws should ease operations. He noted many parents had complained about online gambling, and said the ministry would place an obligation on parents to monitor their children. He defended 18 as the common age of majority, saying young adults could make sound decisions.

With Parliament’s approval, both Bills will now proceed for presidential assent before coming into effect. The Gambling Authority is expected to roll out new regulations, including responsible gambling interventions aimed at protecting young adults. **BOPA**

DailyBusiness

BUSINESS SERVICES

China and Egypt firms sign trade deals

CAIRO - China and Egypt companies signed a number of trade deals worth nearly US\$170 million on Monday during the “Export to China” trade matchmaking event in Cairo. Egypt hopes to build on the event to foster longer-term cooperation with China, strengthen economic and trade exchanges and further advance bilateral trade relations, said Sayed Fouad, commercial minister plenipotentiary and director of the Asia Department at the Egyptian Commercial Service, affiliated with Egypt’s Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade. “At a time when protectionist measures are increasing worldwide, China has chosen, in a bold step, to continue opening its markets to Africa,” said Mohamed Kassem, chairman of the Egyptian Exporters Association, adding that the move creates a real opportunity for Egyptian exporters to strengthen their competitiveness in the vast Chinese market. **Xinhua**

Partnership key to employment

NAIROBI - Kenya-China vocational education cooperation has evolved into a strategic and long-term partnership that is driving the African country’s industrialisation and strengthening its technical workforce, a senior official has said. In a recent interview with Xinhua, Esther Thaara Muoria, principal secretary of the State Department for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Kenya’s Ministry of Education, noted that the state-of-the-art equipment supplied by China enabled trainees to practice with technologies widely used in modern local and international industries. Launched in 2010, the Kenya-China TVET project has now entered its third phase. About 70 TVET institutions across eight disciplines are expected to receive equipment, with 1190 trainers and technicians to receive training in Kenya and China. **Xinhua**

Oman prepares oil transfer from grounded vessel

MUSCAT - Oman is preparing to transfer oil from the grounded vessel Caroline Bezengi off its southern coast to another vessel as part of efforts to contain the spill, the Oman News Agency reported Monday. Preparations include installing power sources and equipment, assessing damaged tanks, and conducting marine surveys to identify safe routes for salvage vessels, the agency reported, citing Oman’s ministry of transport, communications and information technology. According to the ministry, technical teams were also considering transferring oil internally from damaged tanks to intact ones to reduce further leakage. **Xinhua**

Botswana Energy Regulatory Authority CEO Dr Never Tshabang (left) and Botswana Unified Revenue Services, acting commissioner general, Mr Phodiso Valashia, during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in Gaborone on Monday. Dr Tshabang said the agreement was to address a number of issues in petroleum trade including combating illicit trades. Photo: Washa Bofelwang



BERA and BURS join forces to curb illicit fuel trade

Tumisang Moilwa
GABORONE

The Botswana Energy Regulatory Authority (BERA) and the Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aimed at strengthening collaboration in the fight against illicit fuel trade, revenue leakage and the entry of unsafe petroleum products into the country.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, BURS acting commissioner general Mr Phodiso Valashia said the agreement would create a formal framework for the two entities to align their complementary mandates and work together to protect public revenue, consumers and Botswana’s energy security.

Mr Valashia said the partnership was particularly important as it came at a time when Botswana needed to safeguard the revenue that sustained essential public services.

“Every Thebe that is not paid means somebody somewhere has not received required medicine or education,” he said.

He noted that while Botswana had historically relied heavily on mineral revenues to drive the economy, the country could no longer afford to overlook revenue leakages.

According to Mr Valashia, the MOU would facilitate coordinated enforcement across the petroleum value chain, strengthen information sharing and improve the technological systems used by the two organisations to identify and manage risks.

He said combining the intelligence and expertise of BURS and BERA would help close gaps through which revenue could be lost, unsafe products could enter the market and unlawful trade

could flourish.

“This MOU is intended to coordinate enforcement across the petroleum value chain,” he said.

BERA chief executive officer Dr Never Tshabang said the collaboration was also intended to address the economic impact of illicit fuel trading and help ensure fuel security in the country.

Dr Tshabang said revenue lost through illicit trade was estimated at about P4 billion, stressing that the figure highlighted the need for stronger measures to protect the economy.

“We used to live in the world of plenty but today it’s no longer the same. The economy is bad, so the little that we can save goes a long way,” he said. He said the agreement would also assist in ensuring that businesses operating

in the fuel sector complied with the law and that activities within the petroleum industry were conducted above board.

Dr Tshabang further raised concerns about sophisticated forms of illicit trade, including the movement of fuel across borders and alleged fuel dumping.

He said BERA did not have the same level of expertise as BURS in monitoring border related activities, making collaboration between the two institutions important in tackling such practices. “We need this MOU to combat this as we are dealing with sophisticated traders,” he said.

Beyond the revenue implications, Dr Tshabang said illicit fuel activities could also pose risks to consumers if poor quality or contaminated fuel entered the

market.

He warned that substandard fuel could damage vehicles and potentially put lives at risk, making fuel quality and consumer protection another important component of the collaboration.

The two organisations said the agreement would allow them to pool their resources, expertise and intelligence to strengthen enforcement and promote fair trade within Botswana’s petroleum market. The signing therefore marked a formal commitment by BERA and BURS to work as partners in protecting government revenue, strengthening fuel security and ensuring that petroleum products entering and circulating within the country meet the required standards. **BOPA**

Jwaneng council proposes P173.8 million recurrent budget

Kelesitse Motshwanaesi
JWANENG

Jwaneng Town Council has presented a proposed P173,8 million for recurrent expenditure and P20,1 million for development projects for 2026/2027 financial year.

In his presentation during the Jwaneng Budget Pitso on Monday, chief finance officer, Mr Thobo Kgabo stated that the recurrent budget was 4 per cent higher than the P147,7 million allocated in 2025/2026.

Revenue Support Grant will fund 89.9 per cent of the budget at P138.1 million, while own source revenue was projected at P15,5 million or 10,1 per cent.

Main own income sources for the council according to Mr Kgabo included rates, projected at P7.1million, sanitation fees at P2 million and staff houses rentals at P1,8 million. Some revenue streams declined, with interests on investments falling to P18,000.

Personnel costs remain the biggest expense at P127,4 million or 82,9 per cent of the recurrent budget. Salaries will increase by 41,5 percent to P107,8 million, while gratuities reach P1,2 million.

Mr Kgabo noted that growing own revenue was key to reduce dependence on government grants.

Moving on to the development budget, council economist, Mr Bakang Molefi said the P20,1

million budget would target schools, roads, clinics and waste management.

He noted that the 2025/2026 completed projects included the paving of Tshimologo clinic road and delivery of a refuse compactor truck. He said the proposals for 2026/2027 budget were maintenance of Kgalagadi Primary school at P3,86 million, Ditsweletse clinic at P1,18 million, road works at P4,32 million, landfill design at P2 million, Ikageng Public Works Programme at P3,73 million and P5 million for school kitchens and public toilets.

Mr Molefi said the budget aimed to balance service delivery and infrastructure development. **BOPA**

Dikgang

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Rre Kedidimetse Sehunelo wa Palapye a supa diphafana le digo tse a di dirang. A re tiriso ya sego le phafana e nyelela ka monokela. Senepe: Portia Rapitsenyane

Tiriso ya sego le phafana e nyelela ka monokela

Portia Rapitsenyane
PALAPYE

Phafana le sego, tse di kile tsa bo di tlotlwa mo malobeng, go lebe ga di nyelela ka iketlo ntateng ya ditlhabololo. Bogologolo, phafana e ne e dirisiwa thata go nwa bojalwa jwa setswana fa sego sone se ne se dirisiwa go nwa metsi mme mo nakong eno, tsotlhe ga di sa tlhole di bonala jaaka pele. Mo gongwe di bonala kwa manyalolong kana mo meletlong fa go dirilwe bojalwa jwa setswana, kana mo mafelong a bojanala go kgabisa kana go ruta bajaranala ka ditso tsa Botswana, mekgabisa mo matlong kana kwa meletlong ya ngwao. Le fa go ntse jalo, go na le bangwe ba ba sa eletseng go bona didirisiwa tsa mofuta o di nyelela. Rre Kedidimetse Sehunelo wa dingwaga tse masome a marataro, ke mongwe wa batho bao. O dira mofuta e e farologaneng ya digo le diphafana, kwa kgotleng ya Boikago kwa Palapye. Rre Sehunelo a re o gwehlilwe ke go bo a ne a na le nako e ntsi mme go se sepe a se dirang go dira madi, kakanyo ya mo tlela go dira diphafana le digo. A re o ne a tlhobaela gore a mme batho ba tlaa kgatlhegela dilwana

tse gagwe, a simolola ka go sega diphafana le digo di se kae, tsa rekwa, batho ba kgatlhega ba tla kwa go ene gore a ba direle. Fa a tlhalosa tiro ya gagwe, a re lerotse le le dirang digo le diphafana o le tlogela le gola mo tshimomg le bo le butswa le omelela, morago a le phunye a bo a le apaya. Go tsweng foo a re o le ntsha dithotse le gotlhe mo go mo teng a bo a le omisa gore le nne thata. A re o tlaabo a le gotlha mo teng gore le nne borethe. O tlhalositse fa marotse a a dirang digo le diphafana a farologana ka dipopego. “Le lengwe le kgona go tsaya popego e nka segang sego mme le lengwe le kgona go tsaya popego e nka segang phafana ka lone,” Rre Sehunelo a tlhalosa. A re o kgona go direla bomme mo ba tsenyang manyena kana tse di kgabisang mo teng le go direla borre ba ba gogang motsoko mo ba latlhelang molora mo teng. Digo le diphafana tse, a re bangwe ba di rata di kgabisitse ka kwa ntle fa ba ba bangwe ba di rata di rethefaditse, di sena mekgabisa. Rre Sehunelo a re botsipa jo, o bo ithutile mo go nkukuagwe, yo a neng a le setswerere sa go dira dinkgwana. **BOPA**

Tirisanyo mmogo phunyeletso ya temo-thuo

Keamogetse Setilo
SEROWE

Tirisanyo mmogo gareng ga balemi go ka godisa dipolelo tsa bone le go ba bulela dikgoro go phadisana le dikhamphane tse di kgolwane. “Balemi ba le fano le balemi ba tlhwatlhwa, thobo ya lona ke ya maemo a a kwa godimo, mme le tlhoka gore le ikgobokanye le neelane maele. Phomelelo e ka bonala fela fa lo ka dirisana mmogo, gagona yo o tlaa phunyeletsang a batla go bereka a le esi,” mookamedi wa tsa temo kwa kgaolong ya Serowe, Rre Kenneth Mabote, a kgothatsa. O ne a bua kwa ditshupong tsa balemi barui ba kgaolo ya Serowe bosheng, a tlhalosa fa seemo kwa kgaolong eo se nametsa. Moono wa ditshupo e ne e le go lemotsha balemi barui gore ba na le bokgoni jwa go jesa setshaba, le go ba ruta mosola wa go dirisana mmogo le go ikopanya mo mererong ya temo ya kgwebo. Rre Mabote o gakolotse balemi barui go sa kgobiwa marapo ke bolwetsi jwa tlhako le molomo, mme ba dirise nako e go kabakanya thuo, ba akanye go ruwa mebutla, sika loo nonyane jaaka dikoko, kalakuma le thuo ya dinotshi. Mookamedi wa Foods Botswana, Rre Oaitse Goitsemanang, e ne o tlhalositse fa mo nakong ya gompiano, mabele le mmidi o o mosweu di rekwa kwa ntle ga Botswana ka balemi ba sa kgone go

ntsha thobo e e ka jesang lefatshe. A re Botswana o iphitlhela e reka mabele kwa Ukraine mme se, se ngomola pelo ka gore Batswana ebile ba na le bokgoni, bothata e le go tlhoka tirisano mmogo ga balemi, le go lemela go jela mo ganong. Rre Goitsemanang o kopile balemi go itshekatsheka le go simolola go itsaya tsiya, a bolela fa nako e gorogile ya gore temo thuo e supe gore ke yone pinagare ya setshaba. Fa a tswa la gagwe, modulasetilo

wa komiti e tona ya balemi barui, Rre Lerothodi Baruti, o kgothaditse balemi barui go dirisa mananeo a a leng teng go tokafatsa temo thuo, a bo a ba rotloetsa go dirisana le balemisi gore ba kgone go kala gore thobo ya bone e mo selebegong se fe, a ke e e ka phadisana le tse di rekisiwang mo mmarakeng. Mofenyi wa letsatsi mo go ba ba neng ba tseletse ditshupo, Mme Elizabeth Mabaila, a re bopelotelele le go batla go ithuta di mo rotloetsa go sa ineela. **BOPA**



Thobo ya balemi ba kgaolo ya Serowe le tikologo kwa ditshupong tse di neng di tshwerwe ke lephata la temo-thuo kwa Serowe bosheng. Moono wa ditshupo e ne e le go lemotsha balemi-barui gore ba na le bokgoni jwa go jesa setshaba, le go ba ruta molemo wa go dirisanysa mmogo le go ikopanya mo mererong ya temo ya kgwebo. Senepe: Baldwin Nyamande

Ba kopiwa go ema kgatlhanong le kgokgontsho ya bong

Tebogo Masuruke
TUTUME

Tharabololo ya dikgang tsa kgokgontsho ya bong e tlhoka tshwaragano ya boeteledipele jwa motse le setshaba ka kakaretso. Seo se builwe ke mookamedi wa KDM Global, Dr Koziba Malibala morago ga mogwanto o kgatlhanong le kgokgontsho ya bong kwa Tutume bosheng. Dr Malibala a re tshwaragano e ka dira gore go lemogwe se se bakang kgokgontsho le go tswa ka metlhale ya go e lwantsha. O tseletse a re tshwaragano ya bana-le-seabe e ka thusa thata mo kgodisong ya ngwana wa mosimane, gore a kgone go ntsha matshwenyego kana sepe se se mo tshwenyang le go mo ruta go laola maikutlo. Dr Malibala a re tshwaragano e ka thusa banni gore ba kgone go thusa ope yo o ikuelang ka kgang ya kgokgontsho ka go ntsha bogakolodi, go reetsa batswa-setlhabelo le bakgokgontshi go sa tsewe letlhakore. A re kgokgontsho e ama mongwe le mongwe, ka gore borre bangwe ba kgokgontshiwa ke baratani kana

basadi ba bone, fa basimane le bone ba kgona go dirisiwa botlhatswa mo go tsa tlhakanelo dikobo. Dr Malibala a re manokonoko a kgokgontsho ga a tlaale batho ka bong, ka jalo a ama batswa-setlhabelo ka go tshwana. A re botlhe ba ba kgokgontshitsweng ba tlhoka pabalesego le tshidilo maikutlo. Dr Malibala a re bana ba basimane ba gola ka kitso ya gore ngwana wa mosimane ga tshwanela go lela, ke monna tia, kana mogaka ka jalo ga tshwanelwa go itshupa bokoa e bile ga tshwanela go lesa ope a mo gataka. A re thuto e basimane ba golang ba e rutwa e ba bolaya ditlhaloganyo mo ba sa kgoneng go tswela kwa ntle fa ba na le mathata. O boletse fa go swela mo teng ga ngwana wa mosimane go felela go tsala tshakgalo e ntsi mo go ene, a felele a kgokgontsha ba a tshelang le bone. Dr Malibala a re thuto e e fiwang bana ba basetsana ya gore mosadi o tshwanetse go babalela lelwapa ka go bipa diphiri tsa lelwapa e ba sira tlhaloganyo go dibela kgokgontsho. A re gape batho ba tshwanetse go thusa batswa-setlhabelo go re

ba kgone go ikamogela, ba kgone go tshela ba sena poifo le go tsewedisa botshelo ba sena letshogo ka se se kileng sa ba diragalela. Dr Malibala are fa mongwe le mongwe a ka fetola tlhaloganyo le boitsholo, mmaba yo go tweng kgokgontsho ya bong o ka fenngwa. A re seo se ka diragala fela fa batsadi, boeteledipele jwa motse le banni ka kakaretso ba ka godisa bana ba bone sentle, mo lefelong le le babalesegileng go sena kgokgontsho, ebile ba tsaya ditshwetso tse di tla sireletsang batswa-setlhabelo. Mokhanselara wa Tutume botlhaba, Rre Dema Thani, o lebogetse boeteledipele jwa motse go bo ba tsibogetse dikgang tsa kgokgontsho ya bong ka go dira mogwato go tsibosa setshaba. Rre Thani a re kgaolo ga ya robalelwa ke ditlhokwa ka dikgang tsa kgokgontsho ya bong tse di golelang pele tsatsi le letsatsi. A re go botlhokwa gore ba ba kgokgontshang ba amogele thuto e ba e fiwang, ba ikage sesha mme a rotloetsa batswa-setlhabelo ba ba ntseng ba tshaba go ikuela go tswela kwa ntle gore ba bone tshireletso e e maleba. **BOPA**

Men lead conversation on GBV root cause

Gaolethoo Kgatitswe
MAUN

In the fight against gender-based violence (GBV), much of the conversation has understandably centred on protecting women and children, but at Riverside Ward in Maun, the conversation took a different turn where men were brought together and given a space to speak, reflect and confront issues that may lie beneath violent behaviour.

The engagement convened by the Department of Gender Affairs, sought to move the discussion beyond condemning violence after it has occurred, but toward understanding what drove it and what could be done to address it.

District coordinator in the Ministry of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Tshoganetso Mahupe said creating such spaces was an important part of confronting GBV at its roots.

She said men needed an environment where they could openly deliberate on issues affecting them, allowing interventions to respond not only to the consequences of violence but to the circumstances and attitudes that may contribute to it.

“There is need to facilitate and create a safe space for men to deliberate on the issues as part of efforts to do away with GBV in our communities,” she said.

The approach does not absolve perpetrators of responsibility, rather it recognises that preventing violence required communities to understand why violence continued

to find its way into families and relationships.

Delivering the discussion topic, representative at Vows and Bells, Mr Jerry Pearce told participants that the foundation of healthy relationships began with how individuals understood and valued themselves. He said violence was often intertwined with intimate and sexual relationships, making it important for people to understand love, commitment and self-worth before attempting to build healthy relationships with others.

Mr Pearce also challenged men

to reconsider the idea that seeking help was a sign of weakness and encouraged them to speak to social workers, professional counsellors or trusted friends when confronted by personal difficulties, saying keeping grievances buried could leave individuals overwhelmed.

“It is okay for men to seek help,” he said, calling for communities to establish safe spaces where men could also speak openly about their struggles.

Riverside Ward VDC chairperson, Mr Kautjukwa Tjihambuma acknowledged that

women and children remained frequent victims of GBV, but said men who experienced abuse should not be invisible in community interventions. He said some men also suffered abuse at the hands of women and argued that failing to provide avenues for them to seek help could leave problems to escalate, with potentially devastating consequences.

Mr Tjihambuma said communities needed organisations and support structures that could assist men just as there were structures established to support women facing violence.

His remarks pointed to a difficult reality in the fight against GBV where creating safer communities may require creating spaces where everyone could speak about violence, including those often expected to remain silent.

For Riverside resident, Mr Mopandeka Ndonda, public education could help break that silence to enable men to be able to recognise abuse and, importantly, where to turn to when they found themselves in difficult circumstances. **BOPA**

Delays push school project completion to December

Thandy Tebogo
KANYE

Initially planned for completion by November 2025, the Losabanyana Primary School project in Kanye fell behind schedule, dealing a blow to plans for the school to open in January this year.

In an interview, Kanye District Council deputy council secretary Mr Masiela Mandoze revealed that the project, particularly classrooms had fallen behind schedule due to various reasons and that completion had now been moved to December.

Mr Mandoze indicated that the staff houses were nearing completion, currently at 97 per

cent, whilst the educational facilities were at approximately 60 per cent completion stage.

He said the project, located at Mhiko Ward in Kanye, was awarded at a combined contract amount of P69 million and to date, P44 million, had been paid to the contractors.

Mr Mandoze noted that the project remained within the cumulative contract sum, although one package had exceeded its original contract sum by 25 per cent due to variations encountered at the beginning of the project, including hard rock and challenging topography.

The school is fully-fledged comprising facilities that support

education at elementary level, which among others included 22 double storey classroom blocks, 24 double storey staff houses, a staff room, a resource centre, a kitchen and a dining area, and four blocks of toilets, each comprising nine cubicles.

The project provides for external works including paved and covered walkways, an assembly area internal paved roads serving the staff houses, plumbing works and storm water reticulation.

The works have been packaged and awarded to two citizen contractors. Mr Mandoze said the main challenges encountered during the implementation of the project included discrepancies

in the original technical documentation, which resulted in numerous variations.

He indicated that more than 85 per cent of the project site was rocky, resulting in additional time and costs overruns during substructure works.

In addition, the project encountered delayed payments to contractors due to the late disbursement of funds from the parent ministry as well as contractual disputes that had resulted in various court cases.

The project is anticipated to be completed on time for the school to open in January 2027, despite the fresh contractual challenges being experienced. **BOPA**





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Conservationist explores community-based wildlife area

NAIROBI

As dawn breaks over Ol Kinyei Conservancy in Kenya’s Maasai Mara ecosystem, rangers are already combing the grasslands for signs of unauthorised entry and poaching while keeping a close watch on wildlife.

Among them is Chinese conservationist Zhuo Qiang, nicknamed ‘Simba,’ the Swahili word for lion.

For him, the early-morning routine is driven by a broader mission to achieve human-wildlife coexistence. In 2010, Zhuo left his job in China at the age of 37 and embarked on a less-traveled path: pursuing wildlife conservation in Kenya.

Without professional training in wildlife conservation, he found himself in a territory then dominated by Western organizations and local practitioners. But Zhuo decided to stay.

“I wanted to prove that Chinese people could also do wildlife conservation, he said.

Initially, Zhuo saw conservation largely through the lens of wildlife science: working in the field, studying animals and collecting data.

Living and working with Maasai communities changed that perspective.

“The fate of wildlife was closely tied to the people sharing the same land. In the Maasai Mara ecosystem, livestock grazing is deeply connected to the livelihoods of pastoral communities. If local people are asked to stop grazing but are given no alternative source of income, conservation cannot be sustainable,” Zhuo said. That principle laid the foundation for his work with the local community in establishing the Ol Kinyei Conservancy.

The area had suffered from prolonged overgrazing, with plants

and the land itself deteriorating.

Under the conservation model, local grazing land was leased and gradually restored, allowing vegetation to recover and creating a more suitable habitat for wildlife, said Zhuo.

Meanwhile, households participating in the scheme receive land-rental income and have access to jobs such as wildlife rangers and tourism workers. Their average annual income has increased from around US\$500 to about US\$3,700 dollars, according to Zhuo. Some residents from surrounding communities also learned from the experience and brought the approach back to their own grazing areas.

Nowadays, 26 private conservancies have been established around the Maasai Mara National Reserve, covering about 1 600 square km, according to Zhuo. He believes the network of community conservancies



NGOSWANI - Zhuo Qiang (left) with Simon Msago, a Maasai community leader in Ngoswani, Narok, Kenya recently. Photo: Xinhua

provides additional safe space for wildlife to move and survive, extending conservation efforts beyond the boundaries of a single national reserve and into surrounding communities. Simon Msago, a Maasai community leader in Ngoswani, said Zhuo’s work encouraged more residents to take an active role in conservation.

In the past, many residents saw few direct benefits from wildlife conservation and had limited awareness of its importance.

Today, community members are increasingly willing to work as rangers and protect wildlife, creating an effective layer of protection around the conservancies, Msago said.

“Human-wildlife conflict cannot be solved simply through

restrictions and prohibitions. The key is to create alternative sources of income so that residents can gain tangible benefits from conservation. That is what makes community-based conservation sustainable -- allowing local people to become part of wildlife conservation rather than bystanders with no stake in it,” Zhuo said.

While continuing his work in the Maasai Mara, Zhuo has also sought to strengthen exchanges between China and Africa in wildlife conservation.

In recent years, he has visited more than 30 nature reserves and national parks in China, sharing his experiences of community-based conservation in Africa with Chinese counterparts. **Xinhua**

Taste of Africa Saturday Ballads returns

Ketshepile More
GABORONE

The Taste of Africa Saturday Ballads returns to Avani Resort and Casino this Saturday, bringing together thousands of attendees for a day dedicated to soulful music, wellness and peer connection.

Through sponsorship and partnerships from AVANI, Sunbet Botswana, Coca-Cola, Amarula, BTV and Mercy Mure, the event has in the past experienced rapid growth, with ticket sales increasing

from 800 in its inaugural event to over a thousand attendees in subsequent gatherings.

With a dynamic and expanding audience from various locations even beyond Botswana, the Saturday Ballads’ aim is to showcase the soul genre’s beauty, rhythm and passion where attendees can relax, reconnect and enjoy a day centred on an enjoyable atmosphere.

Themed: Denim and White, the event’s intended selection of soul ballad acts such as Resego Motlhokathari, Dj Obza, Osi

Lashani, Lawry-T, DJ Mo-Gee, JazzyPete as well as South Africa acts Koki Molf, Dj Kgantsho and Charles Matlou, also incorporates elements of fashion and wine tasting.

“The initial concept was to bring Radio soul ballads presenters to the people and it worked very well but we keep adding those that are strictly playing soul ballads in different gigs,” the event curator, Kennedy Ramojela said in an interview.

The venue choice, AVANI also aligns with the event’s upscale image,

emphasising safety and elegance which patrons appreciate.

Again, with an expanding audience from even outside the country, the event is a boost to the country’s tourism while also putting Gaborone on the map as a lifestyle event city.

“Our vision is to see this event growing to the extent that we can host it in different locations in Botswana monthly,” Ramojela noted, adding that funding and partnerships remained essential for future growth. **BOPA**



Ringo performing during a previous Taste of Africa Saturday Ballads. The event returns to Avani Resort and Casino this Saturday, bringing together thousands of attendees for a day dedicated to soulful music, wellness and peer connection.



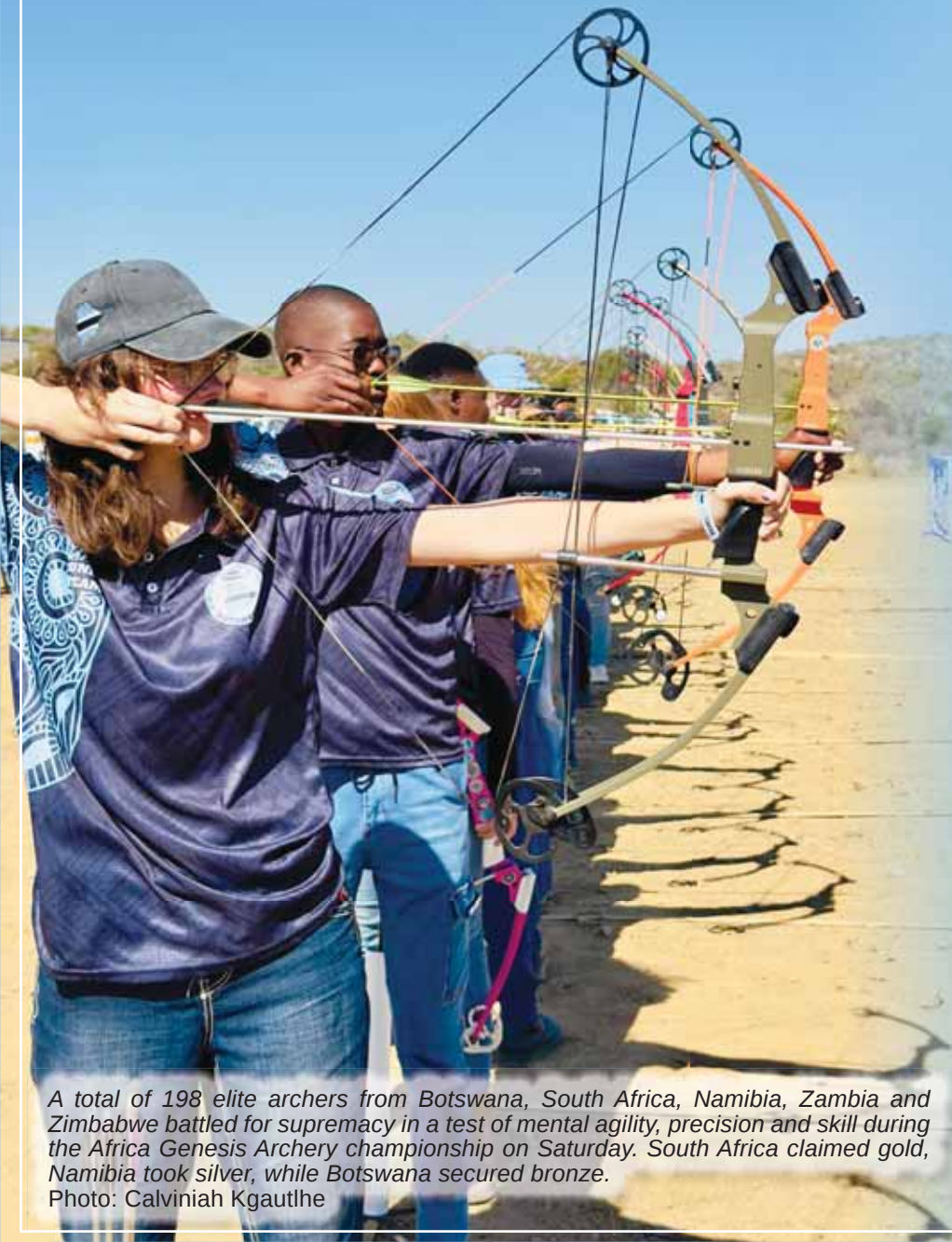
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Africa Genesis Archery Federation lauds Botswana



Calviniah Kgautlhe
LOBATSE

For the first time, Botswana, hosted the 2026 Africa Genesis Archery (AGA) championship which attracted 198 archers from Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The event held at Big Valley Game Lodge, near Lobatse on Saturday saw South Africa emerging victorious, receiving the golden trophy of the championship while Namibia came second, attaining silver and Botswana settled for bronze.

With fingers locked on their bowstrings with firm and unyielding determination, contestants showed their mental agility and precision.

Team Botswana had sent 48 archers who competed under the Bulls Eye category where they shot three ranking flights to determine the winner.

They also competed under the 2D Animals on targets category where competitors shot two 2D flights.

“I feel proud of myself and my team. This is what I came to get and I am happy that I managed to achieve it. I will not give up,” said 17-year-old Caden De John of Botswana who won the overall bulls eye Junior category.

He appreciated the support and the mentoring he attained from his Valley Academy coach and expressed his wishes to see the

sport grow. AGA Botswana president, Leslie Bezuidenhout said archery was one of the amazing sports that brought people together and must therefore be developed in the country.

He highlighted that the sport had shown growth, adding that Botswana started with three archers in 2017 and now had over 80.

“We started from nothing to build a family of archers and we want to do more to build this sport,” he said.

Meanwhile, AGA Federation president Wilhelm Greeff appreciated that archers had improved their performance and thus enhanced intensity of competition.

He said the first archery competition started at Limpopo province in South Africa in 2013, and appreciated Botswana for taking it a notch higher in hosting what he termed ‘a great tournament’.

Additionally, Greeff said the sport, which uses the standard bow and arrow, was all inclusive and had developed over the years.

“South Africa has dominated the medal table over the years and we see that other countries are showing tremendous improvement. Every second year we hold the Africa tournament and in between we have the world tournament where other countries including Canada participate,” he said.

“The tournament was held in Namibia last year. This year is Botswana then next year we will go to Canada to give equal opportunity for all participating countries,” he added. **BOPA**

A total of 198 elite archers from Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe battled for supremacy in a test of mental agility, precision and skill during the Africa Genesis Archery championship on Saturday. South Africa claimed gold, Namibia took silver, while Botswana secured bronze.
Photo: Calviniah Kgautlhe

Stadium upgrade to ease financial burden

Anastacia Sibanda
GABORONE

Upgrading the National Stadium to Confederation of African Football (CAF) Category 3 status will save the Botswana Football Association (BFA) approximately P800,000 per match in unbudgeted travel, security and accommodation expenses.

By eliminating the forced 400-kilometre trek to Francistown’s Obed Itani Chilume Stadium, a detour required when the capital city’s venue failed to meet

CAF regulations, BFA can now redirect the funds directly to grassroots academies, long-term player pathways and financial support for local clubs competing on the continental stage.

With the facility upgrades complete, Gaborone will soon reclaim its hosting status as the National Stadium gates swing open to bring elite continental football back to the heart of the capital city.

For years, hosting international fixtures meant embarking on that costly journey to the north. While

visiting squads flew comfortably into Gaborone at their own expense, the financial burden of shuttling them across the country fell entirely on the BFA, a logistical marathon that bled the association dry with every single international match.

Speaking on the development, BFA president, Tariq Babitseng, welcomed the end to the geographic detour and also appreciated Francistown’s passionate crowds during the displacement.

“We are happy because that alone will reduce our expenditure,” Babitseng said.

The transformation of the National Stadium required meticulous and multi-faceted work. Refurbishment crews worked tirelessly to cultivate a pitch worthy of international competition, modernise media facilities for global broadcast standards and re-engineer stadium security protocols to protect families and athletes alike.

Babitseng emphasised that the partnership across sport entities remained vital as the nation aimed for full and permanent CAF accreditation in the future.

On the other hand, while

the provisional approval allows the BFA to immediately utilise the venue for official senior international matches and intercontinental club games, victory lies in where the savings go next.

Every P800, 000 saved per match is money that no longer disappears into transport charters and extra hotel rooms. Instead, funds will be poured straight back into the essence of Botswana football to nurture young talent in grassroots academies and lift the financial weight off local clubs competing on the continental stage. **BOPA**