

BOTSWANA Daily News

THE PAPER THAT INFORMS AND EDUCATES



Ntema redefines Botswana tourism experience

Page 9



Tsabong-Khawa Rally roars back

Page 10

NEWS

Jwaneng Technical College starts solar training August

Page 2

BUSINESS

Over 6 300 farmers enroll for Lemang Dijo in North East

Page 6

DIKGANG

Safflower e bogadi bogaufi -moitseanape

Tsebe 7

Shift to wealth creation gains momentum

“Protection alone is not transformation. There is need to move beyond consumption-based support toward systems that enable productivity, self-reliance and opportunity”

Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe

STORY PAGE 3

Botswana eyes China growth miracle

Bonang Masolotatse
GABORONE



Consular General to Johannesburg
Ms Kutlo Chelenyane

President Advocate Duma Boko has called on the newly appointed ambassador to China to unlock trade opportunities and strengthen people-to-people relations as Botswana seeks to tap into China's economic growth.

Speaking during a courtesy call by Ambassador-Designate to China, Professor Lekoko Kenosi yesterday, he said the country sought to leverage China's technical expertise, innovation, and vast market to accelerate its own economic development.

President Boko described Prof. Kenosi's appointment as a significant step towards strengthening bilateral relations, calling on him to strengthen people-to-people interaction between Botswana and the Chinese while opening markets for Botswana's goods and services.



Ambassador Designate to China
Professor Lekoko Kenosi

Cont...page 3

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Human rights concerns drive ConCourt demand

Thamani Shabani
BOROLONG

Judges play a significant role in shaping the law, says the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Nelson Ramaotwana.

Addressing a kgotla meeting in Chadibe and Borolong recently on the government's wish to introduce the Constitutional Court, Mr Ramaotwana told residents that judges were lawmakers in their own right.

"Judges can strike down laws deemed unconstitutional or interpret specific provisions,

effectively making law," he said.

He underscored that the envisaged court, with specialised judges, would focus on constitutional and human rights issues.

"The government plans to introduce the Constitutional Court before undertaking a comprehensive constitutional review, allowing the court to guide the process," he said.

Minister Ramaotwana cited Kenya's approach as a benchmark, where an independent Constitutional Court had been established to address similar issues.

He also clarified that the



Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Nelson Ramaotwana has told Chadibe and Borolong residents that the envisaged Constitutional Court, with specialised judges, would focus on constitutional and human rights issues.

government was not rushing to introduce the concourt, pointing out that the court was not even budgeted for in the 2026/2027

financial year.

He outlined a phased approach that would include consultations, a national referendum, and potential establishment in the 2027/2028 financial year if funds permit.

The minister dismissed insinuations that by establishing the concourt, government was moving towards the abolition of capital punishment.

He reminded them that the decision to establish a concourt was first mulled as far back as 1996 by the Justice Aguda Commission and in 2022 by the Dibotelo

Commission and was a formidable part of the UDC manifesto.

Residents in Chadibe and Borolong had mixed reactions, with some objecting due to financial constraints and others rooting for the setting of the same.

A resident of Chadibe, Mr Otsile Mokobela said the establishment of the constitutional court would be a luxury that the country could not afford, looking at the current financial crisis.

Mr Peter Marobela, also from Chadibe argued that the court was highly needed. **BOPA**

Jwaneng Technical College starts solar training August

Khumile Moekejo
JWANENG

Jwaneng Technical College is expected to enrol the first cohort for a solar training in August, making it the first public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institution to offer the programme.

This follows a successful retooling and graduation of 20 JTC electrical students and three lecturers undertaken in partnership with China Harbour Electrical Company, which is responsible for the Jwaneng 100MW Solar PV Plant. In addition to employing the 20 graduates as solar engineers, China Harbour also donated solar training equipment to the college.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, the acting deputy director in the Department of Skills Development, Ms Ruth Masilo said the development resonated with the country's economic transformation plans of harnessing opportunities that existed in renewable energy sub-sector.

Ms Masilo applauded the two institutions for remarkable partnership, which contributed to producing skills which are relevant to the industry.

"The retooling of electrical students into solar engineers is a powerful example of innovation and adaptability." As Botswana diversifies its economy, the renewable energy sector presents immense opportunities. These graduates are well positioned to lead this transformation and create further opportunities for others," she added.

She noted that through the National Development Plan 12 and Botswana Economic Transformation Programme, key priorities in transforming TVET included aligning training with high-growth sectors such as green energy, mining and manufacturing, among others.

Ms Masilo also noted that plans were underway to develop a national advocacy and communication strategy to enhance TVET and reposition it as a first-choice career path, while also investing in modern infrastructure and human capital for effective transformation.

She said enhancing TVET would not only create a strong skills database for driving the country's economic growth, but would also go a long way in contributing towards social development.

"As we look ahead, we are reminded that Botswana's greatest asset is its people. By investing in TVET, we are investing in the dreams and aspirations of our youth. We are building a nation of skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial individuals capable of competing on a global stage," she noted.

China Harbour Company deputy project manager, Mr Lian Xu said they were elated to contribute towards skills development and

capacity building for Botswana. He said the partnership between their company and the community within which they operated was beyond the plant construction but also the development of the solar industry in general.

"We are happy to see that the solar industry is developing rapidly in Botswana. We believe that the real development of the industry lies not only in the completion and operation of the solar power stations, but also in the growth of local solar engineers," he said.

Jwaneng deputy mayor, Mr Mothibedi Watshipi applauded the company for its investment in young people, who he said were innovative drivers of the country's economy. He said their contribution was testament that TVET was a key factor in transformation to create opportunities. He urged the graduates to go out and create their own opportunities and use the acquired skills to close gaps in the market. **BOPA**



China Harbour Company deputy project manager, Mr Lian Xu (second left) handing over solar training equipment to Jwaneng Mayor, Mr Ronica Ntsimako (second right) during Jwaneng Technical College graduation ceremony for 20 electrical students and three lecturers recently. The equipment is expected to contribute toward introducing solar training at the college, with the first intake scheduled for August. Photo: Khumile Moekejo

Youth HIV awareness gap threatens progress

Grace Sebape
LOBATSE

Despite Botswana's landmark achievements in the national HIV response, a critical gap remains in status awareness among young people aged 15-24, says the Non-Governmental Organisation Renale Seabe (RESENO) coordinator.

In an interview ahead of the Month of Youth Against AIDS commemoration scheduled for March 27, Mr Oaitse Pelaelo, revealed that while the country was hitting global targets in treatment and viral suppression, the First 90 for knowledge of one's HIV status, was lagging behind in the younger generation.

Mr Pelaelo said data from the Fifth Botswana AIDS Impact Survey (BAIS V) showed that young people were the group most likely to test positive without prior knowledge of their status.

He said the result showed that a significant number of youth aged 15 to 24 did not receive an HIV test in the 12 months leading up to the survey.

While youth struggle with initial testing, he said those who were aware of their status were successfully meeting the second and third 90 targets for treatment and viral load suppression.

Mr Pelaelo highlighted a remarkable but uneven progress, indicating that high infection rates

persisted in specific districts, with young females (15 to 24) being significantly more likely to be newly infected than males.

He said contributing factors to such a trend included a steady decrease in condom use among young people, particularly females, despite high general awareness of HIV, low uptake of testing and non-adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) among young mothers as well as high unemployment and alarming rates of physical violence, affecting 28.4 per cent of females and 43 per cent of males before age 18, continued to drive the epidemic.

To address such disruptions, Mr Pelaelo said Lobatse would host the Month of Youth Against AIDS event at the Botswana Geoscience Institute under the theme, Overcoming Disruption, Transforming the AIDS Response.

He said the event aimed to target youth aged 10 to 35 to strengthen advocacy for equality and inclusion in healthcare.

The event would also focus on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as inclusive dialogue via a panel discussion which would feature a wide cross-section of society, including learners, out-of-school youth, young persons with disabilities and those from Affirmative Action areas. **BOPA**

Botswana eyes China growth miracle

from page 1

He noted that China's large population presented an unrivalled market, encouraging the ambassador to build on existing cooperation between the two countries.

He further highlighted China's rapid economic transformation, citing its ability to deliver large-scale infrastructure projects within short timeframes, produce a high number of engineers annually, and advance in technology and manufacturing.

President Boko also said that China's technology and motor vehicles were gaining acceptance and effectively taking over.

"We are looking to benefit from these skills," President Boko said, adding that Prof. Lekoko's record for the development of the country was monumental.

Prof. Kenosi thanked the President for the trust placed in him and committed to serving in the best interests of the country.

President Boko also met Botswana's Consulate General to Johannesburg, Ms Kutlo Chelenyane, where he reaffirmed the strong economic ties between Botswana and South Africa, the country's largest trading partner.

He noted, however, that there was a need to continuously align economic, social, and political interests to sustain and deepen the relationship. He tasked Ms Chelenyane with facilitating stronger bilateral cooperation and addressing barriers to trade and commerce.

The President observed that her appointment came at a time of shifting global geopolitics, underscoring the importance of proactive engagement to safeguard Botswana's economic interests.

Ms Chelenyane expressed gratitude for the appointment, describing it as a vote of confidence in both her and the country's youth. She pledged to work diligently to resolve trade-related challenges in line with Botswana's economic priorities.

BOPA

Shift to wealth creation gains momentum

Lorato Gaofise
GABORONE

The Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe has unveiled a decisive shift in Botswana's development strategy, calling for a transition from welfare to wealth creation through the full implementation of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA).

Officiating at the National Dialogue on the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in Gaborone on Tuesday, Mr Gaolathe said the initiative marked a critical turning point under the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme, aimed at accelerating inclusive growth and reducing long-standing inequalities.

The dialogue serves as a platform to explore how communities can evolve to meet the goals of Vision 2036 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on building inclusive, resilient and people-centred development while addressing factors driving vulnerability.

Despite social protection spending estimated at P9 billion annually, Mr Gaolathe acknowledged that the investment had not translated into sustainable economic inclusion. Poverty, the Vice President said remained prevalent in rural areas, whilst youth unemployment continued to pose a serious challenge.

"Protection alone is not transformation. There is need to move beyond consumption-based support toward systems that enable productivity, self-reliance and opportunity," he said, adding that a nation rises when its people were empowered to stand on their own.



Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe (left) and Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ketshalefile Motshegwa at the official opening of the National Dialogue on Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in Gaborone yesterday. Photo: Pheny Moalosi

Originally developed in 2011, Mr Gaolathe said the SLA would now be adopted as a unifying framework across government programmes, focusing on strengthening existing community assets such as skills, land and enterprise and linking them to economic opportunities.

More than 800 stakeholders, he said had been engaged in the rollout, including government officials, trainers and community representatives, with implementation already underway

in several districts and set for nationwide expansion.

Plans, he said included scaling livelihood projects, expanding access to microfinance and promoting community-owned enterprises.

Further, Mr Gaolathe said the reform centred on structured pathways to help households transition from dependency to sustainable livelihoods through skills training, entrepreneurship support, financial inclusion and

improved market access.

"Success will be measured not by the number of people assisted, but by tangible outcomes such as job creation, business development and increased participation of youth and women in the economy," he said.

The initiative, the Vice President said was aligned with the National Development Plan 12, Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP), African Union Agenda 2063 and SDGs, and sought to address inequality whilst promoting equitable access to economic opportunities.

The programme, endorsed by Khoe-Na communities, he said included representation in implementation structures and training across districts to promote inclusion and equity.

He also noted that the implementation had commenced in key districts, including; Mogoditshane, Kgatleng, Mahalapye, Tsabong, Serowe, Selibe-Phikwe, Letlhakeng, Tlokweng, Tonota, Charleshill, Northeast, Good Hope, Ghanzi, Gaborone City Council, Palapye, Chobe, Moshupa, Molepolole, Kanye, Francistown and Tutume with plans for further national scale-up to strengthen self-reliant communities.

Led by the Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, in collaboration with the BETP, the initiative reflects a community-driven approach to development and brings together key stakeholders committed to improving livelihoods and expanding sustainable economic opportunities across the country.

BOPA

Road projects set to transform Letlhakeng

Mothusi Galekhutle
LETLHAKENG

For years, the bone-jarring rattle of a vehicle hitting a pothole has been a familiar and frustrating soundtrack for motorists in the Letlhakeng District. The Letlhakeng-Mapharangwane and Letlhakeng-Morwamosu roads, once symbols of connectivity, had become casualties of time and have long surpassed their design lifespans.

However, following a recent council meeting address by Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae, the P111 million investment is expected to breathe new life into the region's crumbling infrastructure

The transformation will be two-fold, with the Letlhakeng-Mapharangwane road slated for a total asphalt overlay, a high-durability treatment backed by a P51 million budget. Further east, the Letlhakeng-Morwamosu road will see a P60 million overhaul, targeting the Ditshwegwane junction with precision repairs and fresh road markings.

Minister Salakae said the era of temporary fixes was over and the goal was to build climate-resilient roads that served as a modern foundation for growth.

While the budget numbers were impressive, the true weight of the project was felt in the reactions of the local leadership. For the councillors present, the roads represented more than just transit but a vital lifeline for a district hungry for economic transformation.

In the opening remarks,



Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae told Letlhakeng District Council that a P111 million investment would breathe new life into the district's roads. The Letlhakeng-Mapharangwane road will get a full asphalt overlay, while the Letlhakeng-Morwamosu road will undergo targeted repairs. Photo: Mothusi Galekhutle

Letlhakeng district deputy council chairperson, Mr Johane Gaosafelwe, said the Letlhakeng-Kaudwane road remained a priority despite other road needs owing to the high stakes involved. "It connects us to the game reserve," he said.

That sentiment was shared by councillors, Mr Tshokodiso Raselepe of Sesung/Metsibotlhoko, Mr Osupile Metsebeapile of Khudumelapye, Mr Tsabahule Kgotlhang and Mr Solomon Phetolo of Salajwe/Kaudwane, who described the project as a long-standing promise to their constituents, one that the community expected government to finally execute.

On one hand, Minister Salakae was sincere about why the specific

routes mattered now more than ever, saying with diamond sales, the nation's traditional economic engine, facing a decline, tourism was the new frontier.

Meanwhile, the minister said the Letlhakeng-Kaudwane road, currently under a high-stakes Development Manager (DM) model review, was the key that unlocked the potential and by smoothing the path to the game reserve, the road would become a pipeline for international revenue.

He pleaded with the councillors to exercise patience and faith, explaining that the road was one of 132 DM model projects currently under review, with results expected in July.

However, the plea for

infrastructure extended beyond the tourism corridor.

Councillor Kolana Kolana of Botlhapatlou, appealed for the Botlhapatlou-Hatsalatladi-Diphuduhudu road. He urged government not to abandon the route during its current review, stating that its completion was essential to ease mobility and improve economic conditions for his villagers.

Letlhakeng South Councillor, Mr Opaletswe Mogolwane suggested toll gates as a practical solution to prevent future deterioration by raising tariffs for heavy trucks, arguing that the frequent heavy traffic caused the rapid destruction of the current roads.

Even so, government's new approach is not just about laying tar but about accountability. Minister Salakae said the ongoing investigation into the DM model would ensure that every Pula spent translated into quality work and free from the rip-offs of the past.

He told the council meeting that out of 148 DM model projects, only 16 were allowed to continue because contractors had already started work when the decision was made to review the model for potential corruption.

Meanwhile, the envisaged road projects slated for the next financial year are poised to offer Letlhakeng residents more than just smoother commutes. Residents are looking forward to shorter travel times for farmers, safer routes for school buses and an open door for the world to visit their natural wonders.

BOPA

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PARLIAMENT 2026

Ministry channels P145m toward Nata senior maintenance

GABORONE

The Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education is expected to spend P145 million on major restoration works at Nata Senior Secondary School during the second quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.

Minister Nono Kgafela-Mokoka informed Parliament on Monday that the ministry intended to tackle both the infrastructure damage caused by fire and the general dilapidation of the aging facility.

Minister Kgafela-Mokoka said the planned works included the reconstruction of burnt hostels, refurbishment of mechanical and

electrical installations as well as installation of a desalination system to address hard water issues currently affecting the school's hot water supply.

She added that to address the school's damaged state, about P40 million would be required to restore functionality to the hostels gutted by fire which provided housing for 900 learners as well as P105 million to cover the extensive wear and tear and also replace aging assets across the campus.

Minister Kgafela-Mokoka acknowledged that maintenance at the school was overdue.

She attributed previous delays to a combination of national financial

constraints and a major setback during the planning phase, when a fire destroyed the hostels just as maintenance was being organised.

"Plans had previously been made, but they never saw the light of day due to unforeseen circumstances," the minister explained, noting that the fire had altered the scope and cost of the required work.

Member of Parliament for Chobe, Mr Simasiku Mapulanga, had sought clarity on the progress of maintenance, the total value of the damages incurred and a timeline for when operations at Nata SSS would return to normal.

BOPA



Minister of Child Welfare and Basic Education, Ms Nono Kgafela-Mokoka said the ministry would spend P145 million on major restoration works at Nata Senior Secondary School in the second quarter of the 2026/27 financial year to address fire damages and the facility's aging infrastructure.

Human capital development catalyst to transformation

Thato Mosinyi
GABORONE

Government places human capital development at the centre of the country's economic transformation agenda, recognising higher education, technical training and skills development as critical enablers of productivity, innovation and sustainable job creation.

This was revealed by Minister of High Education, Mr Prince Maele while presenting the ministry's budget request for the 2026/2027 financial year. Minister Maele said the budget estimates reflected the ministry's desire, commitment and responsibility to transform the country from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy through educational transformation, particularly the revitalisation of Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET).

"Botswana has made notable strides in terms of its vision of having an educated and informed nation however, there has been stagnation in productivity of these skills hence the need for a transformative and supportive higher education and skills development system that is responsive and globally competitive," Mr Maele said.

Minister Maele said it was important to enhance the national education blueprint, transform the teacher education as well as to upgrade and rationalise the Institute of Health Sciences (IHS) to up skill industry-led skilling and staff-welfare.

Such initiatives, he said directly supported NDP12 objectives of addressing skills mismatches, enhancing employability and promoting economic diversification.

"It is against this background that the 2026/27 budget made provision for the development of a tertiary education financing policy which will guide how tertiary education will be funded in a

sustainable, equitable and efficient manner," he said.

In line with NDP 12's emphasis on fiscal consolidation, Mr Maele said the ministry was implementing measures to enhance cost containment, promote third-stream income generation and ensure value for money in the utilisation of public resources.

He said in order to achieve the ministry's transformative agenda, it was paramount to reform the learning institutions and transform the quality of education throughout the brigades, technical colleges, institute of health sciences, colleges of education and universities.

Additionally, Minister Maele said the Construction Industry Trust Fund (CITF) had been transformed into a Rapid Skills Development Centre (RSDC).

That, he said was done through legislative review in order to align RSDC programmes with the new government's vision to prioritise of TVET.

He stated that the transformation would ensure that the RSDC now trained for all sectors of the economy, as opposed to only construction and allied trades as it was previously the case.

"As part of the transformation, the RSDC footprint around country is being expanded to support and sustain rural economies with the intention of mitigating against rural-urban migration by supporting and strengthening sustainable jobs in the rural areas," he said.

To that effect, Mr Maele highlighted that the ministry was proposing over P7 billion for the 2026/2027 financial year recurrent budget and over P154 million for the development budget.

The bulk of the development budget, he said would be channelled towards maintenance, expansion and equipping of tertiary institutions in order to create a conducive learning environment that can accommodate the growing number of learners. **BOPA**

Maintenance of education facilities priority

Thato Mosinyi
GABORONE

Government has prioritised maintenance and refurbishment of existing education facilities across all levels of education in line with the twelfth National Development Plan (NDP 12) and Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP).

Presenting the Ministry of Higher Education's 2026/2027 financial year budget proposals, Minister Prince Maele noted that maintenance of education facilities remained a priority for government, hence the over P154 million development budget proposal.

Minister Maele said well-maintained infrastructure was fundamental to the delivery of quality education, learner safety,

staff welfare as well as optimal utilisation of public investment in the education sector.

He said focus of the maintenance programme would be on rehabilitation, upgrading and life-cycle preservation of existing infrastructure rather than extensive new construction. That approach, he said supported government's fiscal consolidation agenda while ensuring that learning environments remained safe, functional and conducive to teaching, learning and skills development. He noted that funds had been provided for the maintenance and upgrading of facilities at universities, technical colleges, brigades, colleges of education and institutes of health sciences.

"As a cost-containment and skills development measure, the

ministry will utilise students and trainees from technical colleges and brigades to undertake selected maintenance works as part of their practical training," he said.

He said institutions offering automotive trades would conduct minor servicing and selected repairs on government vehicles under supervision, adding that the 'Training-with-Production' approach enhanced hands-on learning, reduced maintenance costs and accelerated the acquisition of employable skills while ensuring value for money.

With regard to tertiary education financing, Mr Maele stated that the ministry continued to facilitate access to finances for students to study in Botswana and abroad.

He said currently, 44 506 students were being sponsored and 11 761 had started to benefit during

the financial year 2025/2026.

He added that out of the 44 506 students, 43 732 were enrolled in local institutions while 774 were in external institutions. Additionally, Minister Maele noted that the ministry had made considerable efforts to improve service delivery in line with government digitalisation agenda through implementation of the on-line services platform to facilitate on-line application and automatic processing of tertiary education financing requests. That, he said had reduced service turnaround time and improved access to tertiary financing services.

He said the ministry, for the 2025/26 financial year, had budgeted to collect P20 million towards student loan recoveries. "As at December 2025, collection stood at over P6.9 million or 34 per

cent against an annual target of P20 million," he said.

Minister Maele attributed the under-collection of student loans to high unemployment rate, challenges experienced in tracking and tracing of beneficiaries, particularly in the private sector which severely limited the ministry's ability to recover from beneficiaries.

This is a serious challenge contributing to budget shortfalls as the ministry continues to experience budget shortfall both in the student training budget and operational budget due to the limited ceiling," he said.

However, he said in the ministry intended to develop a department of tertiary education financing policy aimed at better facilitating sponsorships, improve sustainability and cost recovery. **BOPA**



Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo said the ministry was collaborating with a multi-sectoral team to establish One-Stop Service Centres for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors to address the gap between reporting GBV and accessing justice. She said victims would receive integrated medical, legal, counselling and psychosocial support in a single location.

Govt adopts One-Stop Service Centre for GBV survivors

Marvin Motlhabane
GABORONE

The Ministry of Youth and Gender Affairs is collaborating with a multi-sectoral team to establish One-Stop Service Centres for GBV survivors to address the gap between reporting gender-based violence (GBV) and accessing justice.

Presenting the ministry's budget estimates for the 2026/27 financial year on Monday, Minister Lesego Chombo said the initiative marked a significant shift toward a comprehensive, survivor-centred approach, enabling victims to receive integrated medical, legal, counselling and psychosocial support in a single location.

Minister Chombo emphasised that such a model was essential for a coordinated national response and ensured that survivors did not navigate a fragmented system alone.

She also indicated that women's economic empowerment was a key defence against vulnerability and violence.

To tackle the link between economic disempowerment and GBV, she said the ministry was accelerating women's economic participation through programmes such as EntreprenHER and a major milestone was the Memorandum of Understanding signed between government and Stanbic Bank.

"This partnership aims to remove financial barriers, deliver dedicated business development support for women-owned enterprises

and promote greater financial independence and decision-making power," said Minister Chombo.

She also observed imbalance in programming between women and men, leading the ministry to incorporate the men's sector into its mandate.

"Although this shift lacks dedicated personnel or budget in the current financial year, provisions will be made in the upcoming year.

The ministry will adopt a deliberate and structured approach to ensure inclusive programming responsive to both genders' needs," she added.

Again, the minister highlighted that integrating a gender perspective across government and society was not optional but a strategic imperative for effective governance and sustainable development.

"To institutionalise this, key measures include advancing GBV legislation, revitalising the Inter-ministerial Committee on GBV, strengthening the National Gender Commission and embedding gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors," she said.

Also, she said the ministry continued to mainstream youth and gender issues across sectors, guiding other ministries on incorporating gender and youth responsive programmes, policies and legislation for systemic inclusion.

On youth development, Ms Chombo outlined plans to

strengthen the ministry's coordination role in mainstreaming youth issues to ensure that youth priorities were integrated into sectoral legislation, programmes, policies, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

That, she said, would be achieved through the Revised Youth Policy and implementation plan, which would guide the development and operationalisation of youth sectoral interventions for greater inclusion.

Regarding job creation, she said the forthcoming Youth Employment Strategy would provide tools for a cohesive ecosystem to enable efficient collaboration between government and partners to support young people's economic development and enhance accountability.

Recognising challenges in accessing start-up capital and sustaining enterprises, she noted that the ministry was remodelling the Youth Development Fund for greater sustainability and efficiency.

She said the revamped programme would improve financial and operational sustainability, automation, governance and accountability.

"It is expected to generate decent employment for youth, alongside mentorship, post-funding support and market access facilitation," she said.

Meanwhile, Minister Chombo requested over P686 million for the recurrent budget and P5 million under the development budget for the 2026/27 financial year. **BOPA**

MPs root for radical reforms in education sector

Thato Mosinyi
GABORONE

The implementation of Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) reforms remains key in enhancing the quality of education and ushering in a new dawn with renewed hope to transform the education system.

Debating the Ministry of Higher Education budget proposal for the 2026/2027 financial year on Monday, Maun West Member of Parliament, Mr Caterpillar Hikuama said attaining a diverse economy depended on the effectiveness of the country's investments in education, learning and training.

He said government should, in its effort to transform the education sector, embark on an ambitious project to broaden the digital and innovation ecosystem.

Such digital transformation, Mr Hikuama said, would encompass curriculum reforms with the aim to enhance the learning process and make education more attractive and appealing to learners.

He cautioned that a transformed economy demanded the adjustment of the curriculum to fit the desires of the global economy.

Kgalagadi North MP, Mr Reason Lekutlane, further said Botswana was faced with education inequalities, stating that all too often, children who were born poor or in rural regions faced extreme disadvantage in education. He called for the

improvement of education facilities in rural areas.

"When all children have an equal chance to obtain quality education, learning drives economic growth, fuels innovation and creates jobs. It equips countries and people with the skills they need to escape from poverty and build shared prosperity," he said.

He also called for the ministry to consider establishing an institution of higher learning at Ngwatle settlements due to its proximity to Ncojane, citing that the institution would serve Ghanzi South and Kgalagadi North constituencies.

Shoshong MP, Mr Moneedi Bagaisamang, was optimistic of the Umbrella for Democratic Change-led government to turn around the fortunes of the country's ailing education system, stating that Botswana's education crisis demanded urgent attention of political leaders and their aid partners.

Mr Bagaisamang commended government for reviewing and increasing tertiary allowances for TVET students, saying the move was ideal to de-stigmatise the stereotypes aligned with TVET enrollment.

Mogoditshane West MP, Mr Galenawabo Lekau, pleaded for the construction of a brigade in either the Mogoditshane or Mmopane area. He said there was a need to promote vocational training courses that were designed to prepare individuals for a vocation or a specialised occupation and were

directly linked with the nation's productivity and competitiveness. He noted that Mogoditshane was slowly transforming into an auto-mechanical hub, hence the need to establish an institution that would supply the industry with market-ready graduates. He highlighted the need to promote the importance of blue-collar jobs through launching a TVET revitalisation campaign.

For his part, Kgatleg Central MP, Mr Mpho Morolong,

cautioned that vocational training had, since its inception, struggled to gain the recognition it deserves, which had led to a wide gap between the supply and demand for skilled manpower across various industries.

He also decried the underutilisation of the Kgatleg brigade main campus, saying the campus should rather be availed for the extension of Linchwe Junior Secondary School.

Thamaga/Kumakwane MP, Mr

Palelo Motaosane, stated that TVET was crucial in equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in today's rapidly changing world, as it provided practical hands-on training for the labor market.

He said one of the key strengths of TVET, even from the previous administration, was its focus on developing and sharpening practical skills in order to produce highly competent individuals.

BOPA

Salakae refutes multi-million Pula contract allegations

GABORONE

Botswana Railways has not awarded any multi-million Pula contract and no procurement process has occurred requiring the involvement of the Project Office within the Office of the President, Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae has said.

Answering a question in Parliament, Mr Salakae stated that since no such contract existed, there had been no instances of secrecy or the exclusion of the board or the ministry.

He emphasised that all procurement activities undertaken by Botswana Railways were conducted in strict adherence to the Public Procurement Act, guided by

the principles of transparency, fairness and accountability.

He further told Parliament that no directives had been issued by any authority, including the project office, to secure the engagement of any specific company.

As a result, the minister confirmed that no letters of complaint had been sent to his office or any government official.

Consequently, he said, there were no grievances to report or actions necessitated.

Regarding the approach to infrastructure, the minister noted that projects were implemented using various methods, including Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), depending on their nature and strategic requirements.

He dismissed claims of a policy shift, stating that PPP project proposals had not been redirected from the Ministry of Finance to the Office of the President.

Selebi Phikwe East MP, Mr Kgoberego Nkawana had sought clarity on whether a multi-million Pula contract had been awarded and the specific amount involved, the level of involvement of the project office in the Office of the President as well as reasons behind the alleged secrecy of the deal and the reported sidelining of the board and the minister.

Mr Nkawana also wanted to know if any government officials had received formal complaints regarding the procurement process. **BOPA**



Daily Business

BUSINESS BRIEFS

China-Kenya business forum strengthens trade

NAIROBI

The China-Kenya Business Forum was held on Monday in Nairobi, bringing together more than 350 representatives from the government and business sectors of both countries to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral trade and investment. Themed around China's zero-tariff policy for 53 African countries with diplomatic relations with China, the forum was jointly organised by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency. CCPIT Chairman Ren Hongbin said China would implement zero-tariff treatment for the 53 African countries starting May 1, which would provide more opportunities for African exporters to access the Chinese market. He called on businesses from both sides to seize opportunities, strengthen exchanges and achieve tangible results. *Xinhua*

Ivory Coast economy shows resilience

ABIDJAN

The Ivorian economy continues to demonstrate resilience despite an uncertain international environment, the country's Director General of the Treasury and Public Accounting Arthur Ahoussi said Monday in Grand-Bassam. Speaking at a workshop on harmonising economic and financial data for the 2025-2031 period, he highlighted several positive indicators in an uncertain international environment marked by geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions and the effects of climate change. "Real GDP growth is projected at 6.5 per cent in 2025, inflation is under control at 0.1 per cent after averaging 4.3 per cent between 2021 and 2024, and the budget deficit remains in line with consolidation targets," he said. Externally, the country registered a record trade surplus of more than US\$8.8 billion as of end-December 2025, up 165 per cent from a year earlier. *Xinhua*

Mideast conflict hurts economic recovery prospects

JOHANNESBURG

The South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SACCI) on Monday warned that the conflict in the Middle East has increased instability in global financial markets and could weigh on economic recovery prospects in South Africa and beyond. Alan Mukoki, the chief executive officer of SACCI, said in a statement that disruptions to major supply routes and supply chains were likely to negatively affect the business cycle and lead to a clear deterioration in inflation, interest rates, economic growth, exchange rates and commodity prices. "This does not bode well for any prospect of recovery that we would have anticipated as South Africa. There are multilateral institutions that have been built over the years to resolve conflicts, he said. *Xinhua*

North East District Council chairperson, Mr Mbaakanyi Smart has told a full council session in Masunga on Monday that over 6 300 farmers in the district had registered for the ongoing Lemang Dijo Crop Management System with about 2 300 farmers having received grants on various packages so far.



Over 6 300 farmers enroll for Lemang Dijo in North East

By Goweditswe Kome
MASUNGA

Over 6 300 farmers in the North East district have registered for the ongoing Lemang Dijo Crop Management System with about 2 300 farmers having received grants on various packages so far.

North East District Council (NEDC) Chairman Mr Mbaakanyi Smart said when Addressing NEDC full council on Monday, adding that in terms of ploughing this season, the district stood at an estimated ploughed area of about 1 322 hectares by 759 farmers with cereals being the most dominant crops at about 622 hectares.

He said the programme uptake was progressing well as many farmers registered but only a few had benefitted as indicated by the number of grants received and estimated low area planted.

"A lot of factors contributing to low uptake was the issue of coordinates requirement as per the guidelines from the service providers," he said.

While farmers took an initiative to register for Lemang Dijo System, he said the district was experiencing a serious crop damage particularly millet by Quelea birds.

He however said plant health teams had long been dispatched to do surveillance with the aim to control them, but the exercise proved futile due to various factors such as difficult terrain and absence of breeding colonies.

Regarding school feeding programme, he noted that the package was progressing well and

delivery of milk by Food Botswana was ongoing. He said the district council had also credited schools with funds to procure breakfast food items.

In addition to the normal food items, he said council had also credited all the 43 primary schools in the district with funds amounting to P400,000 for procurement of lethafula from local farmers.

He indicated that evaluation of Expression of Interest for milling companies on supply of sorghum meal was ongoing and would be completed before end of March this year, saying in the meantime, schools had

"A lot of factors contributing to low uptake was the issue of coordinates requirement as per the guidelines from the service providers."

been advised to procure sorghum meal from local milling companies using the funds credited into their accounts.

On the issue of health, Mr Smart said the country recently experienced Malaria outbreaks in some districts including Tutume.

He said due to heavy rains experienced this year disease outbreaks were expected and the district should remain vigilant of any cases of Malaria let alone polio that might be introduced into the region.

"In that regard, I would like to urge our communities to clean their surroundings, cut grasses and empty any standing waters so as to prevent breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Anyone with signs of malaria is encouraged to seek medical attention immediately," he said.

He indicated that the Ministry of Health recently released a press release on the outbreak

of vaccine derived polio virus in neighbouring counties of Zambia, Namibia and Malawi adding that although Botswana had not isolated any case yet, it remained vigilant.

He encouraged everyone to seek medical attention if they suspected or saw a weakness of limbs in their children and also to ensure that their children were vaccinated against polio.

Regarding shortage of doctors, Mr Smart said the procurement for telemedicine equipment was underway and at a final stage with the expectation that by beginning of this coming financial year it would be operational.

Mr Smart highlighted that government was still experiencing temporary medicine shortages, but

indicated that decisive government action and ongoing reforms were steadily restoring drug availability and strengthening the national health supply system.

He noted that the ARV situation had stabilised in the district with patients going back to normal multi month dispensing of three months while the current supply of anti-hypertensive and anti-diabetics was limited in some facilities adding that measures were underway to replenish stocks and stabilise availability.

However, he said, Anti-hypertensive availability was at 64 per cent while anti-diabetics was at 90 per cent with below optimal stock for eye drops and oral antibiotics for both adults and pediatrics. **BOPA**



North East District Council chairperson, Mr Mbaakanyi Smart (left) and council secretary, Mr Lebuile Israel (right) during a full council session on Monday. Mr Smart encouraged farmers to continue registering for Lemang Dijo Crop Management System. Photo: Goweditswe Kome

Dikgang

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Kgaoganyo ya Zone 11 e botlhokwa go laola malwetse

Calviniah Kgauthe
LOBATSE

Lephata la taolo matlhoko a leruo le tswelletse ka go loga maano a go kganela bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo go tsenelela mo kgaolong e bophara ya Zone 11.

Morago ga go tswa ka metlhale ya go gagamatsa itshireletso mo molelwane gore bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo jo bo tthagogileng kwa South Africa bo seka jwa tsena mo Botswana,

go simolodisitswe ditherisasanyo mabapi le kgaoganya kgaolo ya taolo matlhoko a leruo ya Zone 11 ka dikarolo go laola kanamo ya malwetse a leruo.

Fa a rerisa baeteledipele

jwa Lobatse, motshwarelela moeteledipele wa lephata la taolo matlhoko a leruo, Dr Kobedi Segale o tthalositse gore lefatshe leno le tswa kgakala le laola kanamo ya bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo

le malwetse a mangwe a leruo ka go dirisa meelwane ya taolo matlhoko a leruo.

Ka jalo, a re mogopolo wa go kgaoganya kgaolo ya Zone 11 ka dikarolo, ke tsela nngwe ya go laola kanamo ya bolwetse mme seo e le go tlaletsa mo maitekong a puso a a tswelletseng a akaretsa go tshwaragana le barui le gone go tsosa terata ya molelwane.

O supile gore kgaolo ya Zone 11 e bophara, ka e tsaya sephato sa lefatshe la Botswana se se akaretsang kgaolo tsa Kweneng, Gamalete, Borolong, Kgatleng, Ngwaketse, Kgalagadi le Ghanzi, ka jalo e tlhoka go kgaogangwa.

A re bontsi jwa barui mo Botswana ba fudisa mo mafulong a a tlhakanetsweng ka selekanyo sa 80 per cent fa ba palo e e potlana ya 20 per cent e le ba ba ruetseng mo dipolaseng.

Dr Segale a supile gore se se raya gore fa bolwetse bo ka tthagoga mo mafulong a a tlhakanetsweng a Zone 11, bo ka anama ka lobelo le le kwa godimo mme go seke go nne bonolo go bo laola, ka jalo go botlhokwa go kgaoganya kgaolo e ka dikarolo.

A re bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo bo tthagogile kwa South Africa ngogola mme bo setse bo amile dikgaolo tsa lefatshe leo tsothle, ka jalo seo se baya Botswana mo boraing bogolo jang kwa dikgaolong tsa thuo tsa Zone 7, 9, 10, 11 le 13 tse di mo molelwane wa lefatshe leno le la Afrika Borwa.

Dr Segale o tthagisitse gore kgaolo ya Zone 11 ke nngwe ya tse di iseng di amiwe ke bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo gotlhelole, ka jalo e rekisa nama kwa mmarakeng o nonneng wa Europe.

Ka jalo a re fa bolwetse bo ka tthagoga mo mafelong a, go ka tsisa selelo le khuranyo ya meno ka go ama letseno la itsholelo ya lefatshe ka bokete.

Dr Segale, a re le fa ba dira maiteko a go laola malwetse a leruo, ba tshwenngwa ke tsheny e dirwang ke batho mo diterateng tsa taolo matlhoko a leruo, ka jalo a gaketse Batswana go emisa tsheny eo.

A re seemo sa bolwetse kwa South Africa se tswelletse ka go bifela pele ka jalo barui ba tshwanetse ba ema ka dinao go tlhokomela leruo lwa bone.

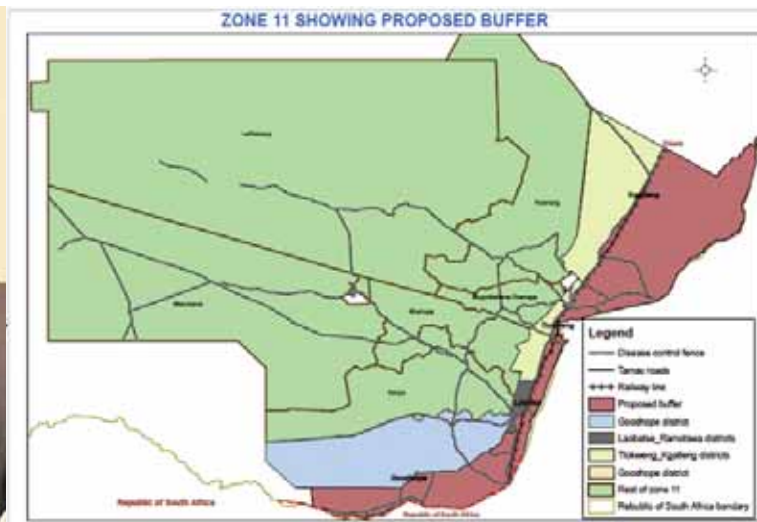
A re itsholelo ya lefatshe leno le ya Lobatse di ikaegile ka temo thuo, ka jalo go botlhokwa gore seabe sa toropo eo mo go kganeleng kanamo ya bolwetse jwa tlhako le molomo, se oketsege.

Mokhanselara wa Tsopeng Borwa, Rre Moalosi Rasesia a re itsholelo ya Lobatse e ikaegile thata ka thekiso ya kgomo, ditswakgomong le tshugo ya matlalo ka jalo sepe fela se se ka amang mohama wa thuo ya kgomo se tsile go ama toropo eo fela thata.

BOPA



Dr Kobedi Segale



Moalo kakanyetso o moshwa wa kgaoganyo ya molelwane wa taolo matlhoko a leruo wa kgaolo ya Zone 11.

Safflower e bogadi bogaufi-moitseanape

Thokozani Matiha
MAHETLWE

Fa go na le sejalo se se tshwanetseng go rotloediwa ke Safflower ka se na le bokgoni jwa go itshwarelela mo maemo a bosa a a sa iketlang, gape se ditiriso dintsi e bile se le bogadi bo gaufi.

Senole se boletswe bosheng kwa Mahetlwe ke Moitseanape wa tsa temo kwa sekolong sa ithutela dithuto tsa Temo-thuo sa Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN), Professor Vallantino Emongor.

Prof. Emongor a re Safflower e ka dirisiwa ka mekgwa e farologanyeng, jaaka go dira mafura a apayang, ditlolo, dipilisi, tee le dijo tsa leruo

O tthalositse gore mo bekeng tse nne go ya kwa go tse thataro, matlhare a Safflower a ka dirisiwa jaaka morogo, medi e ka omisiwa ebo e silwa go dira molemo fa dithunya tsa teng di thusa go laola malwetse a tshwanang le jwa sukiri, madi a matona, a amanang le pelo le go thuba bothole mo mading a mmele.

Prof. Emongor a re go botlhokwa go inakanya le temo ya Safflower ka gore ke motswedi wa go dira dikgwebo ka go farologana tse di ka tokafatsang itsholelo ya malwapa.

O kaile fa ekere ele nngwe ya temo ya Safflower e ntsha thobo ya ditone tse nne tsa peo e ka dirang dipoelo tsa P1.2 million.

O supile fa go le botlhokwa gore balemi ba ikopanye ka gantsi go rekisa kwa ntle ga lefatshe go

batla selekanyo se se kwa godimo sa dithoto.

A re mo bogompionong lefatshe la Amerika le batla go rekisitswa ole ya safflower ka USS30 litara ka jalo go tlama balemi gore ba ikopanye go fitlhelole selekanyo se se batlegang.

Fa a tlaletsa mafoko a ga Prof Emongor, Rre Bamphitlhi Tiroesele, le ene a tswa kwa BUAN a re mahura a safflower a na le tatso ee rileng, lenko le le boleng, dikotla gape boleng jwa yone bo tshwana le jwa mahura a motlhwane (olive oil)

Rre Tiroesele a re mahura a Safflower ga a gatsele, a ka dirisiwa go apaya, go nowa, go fokotsa mmele gape a siametse pelo.

A re karolo nngwe le nngwe ya Safflower e mosola, a tlatsa ka gore moroko o o salang fa go tlhotlhiwa mahura wa jewa.

Rre Tiroesele a re o ka dirisiwa jaaka sejo sa go fitlhola, a tlatsa ka gore gape o na le menontshane e e kwa godimo fa o dirisiwa jaaka sejo sa diphologolo.

A re morago ga go photlha, letlhaka la safflower le ka dirisiwa jaaka sejo sa diphologolo.

“Go ka se nne le lehuma fa re ka fetola megopolo ya rona,” ga tlhalosa Rre Tiroesele.

Mogolwane wa ofisi ya temothuo mo kgaolong ya Kweneng, Mme Motlakatlala Thukwi o tthalositse fa maikaelelo magolo e le go tsibosa balemi ka temo ya Safflower, go rotloetsa balemi go dira temo e le kgwebo le go tsaa malebela mo mo baleming ba bangwe. A re balemi ba tshwanetse go itse metlhale ya go somarela thobo, gore ba kgone go nna le peo e tla dirisiwang mo pakeng ya temo e latelang.

Moitseanape wa tsa temo kwa sekolong sa Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Professor Vallantino Emongor a re temo ya Safflower e tshwanetse go rotloediwa ka sejwalo se, se na le bokgoni jwa go itshwarelela mo seemong sa bosa, gape se ditiriso dintsi e bile se le bogadi bo gaufi.





Minister of Child Welfare and Basic Education, Ms Nono Kgafela-Mokoka said the ministry was currently conducting a learner profiling exercise, which would be followed by placement to senior secondary schools.

Learner profiling exercise to facilitate placement

GABORONE

Registration for students seeking admission to senior secondary schools after failing to meet initial cut-off points closed on March 11. Minister of Child Welfare and Basic Education, Ms Nono Kgafela-Mokoka, confirmed the deadline while responding to a parliamentary question on Monday.

Minister Kgafela-Mokoka explained that the registration process was conducted primarily online through the ministry's application portal.

To ensure accessibility, the minister noted that registration services were also made available at Choppies stores, local Kgotla offices and various education centres.

“Our out-of-school officers are stationed across the country to facilitate the process in areas where connectivity challenges might exist,” she added. She added that the ministry was currently conducting a learner profiling exercise, which would be followed by placement of students.

Regarding new educational initiatives, Minister Kgafela-Mokoka informed Parliament that the first class of Bula Buka project was scheduled to commence on April 13, targeting learners supplementing their Junior Certificate Examination

(JCE).

She said the second phase, focusing on vocational and technical skills, was set to launch on May 4.

On one hand, she said unlike the Bula Buka project, which utilised existing structures, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) programme had not yet been rolled out to institutions.

Member of Parliament for Maun West, Mr Caterpillar Hikuama, had sought a definitive timeline for the placement of thousands of learners who fell

short of the 2025 JCE admission requirements.

Mr Hikuama also requested for clarification on the procedures for accessing the Bula Buka project and asked whether satellite centres and partner institutions were adequately equipped with STEAM resources and trained personnel. The MP further inquired about the ministry's immediate measures to communicate with affected learners and their guardians to alleviate uncertainty and prevent social exclusion during the transition period. **BOPA**

Mochudi

- Malolwane route registers 22 new applications

GABORONE

The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure has issued 12 passenger permits to 10 operators for the Mochudi-Malolwane route.

Answering a question in Parliament on Monday, Minister Noah Salakae said five of the permits had since expired.

Minister Salakae added that no permits had been issued for the Malolwane-Oliphant's Drift or Modipane-Mabalane routes, as the ministry had not yet received any applications for them.

He emphasised that his office was ready to process applications for such routes, or any others, should there be interest from the public.

He pointed out that the ministry had already received 22 new applications for the Mochudi-Malolwane route.

“Following the adjudication process, these are expected to increase the existing quota,” he said.

The minister was responding to a parliamentary question from Member of Parliament for Kgatleng East, Mr Mabuse Pule, who had sought clarity on the number of permits issued for the Malolwane-Oliphant's Drift and Modipane-Mabalane routes.

Mr Pule also inquired whether government intended to increase the permit quotas for such routes and when such increases might take effect to allow for new applications. **BOPA**

Ministry undertakes review of National Policy on Destitute Persons

GABORONE

The review of the Revised National Policy on Destitute Persons of 2002, is currently ongoing to ensure a comprehensive social protection system, Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Kethalefile Motshegwa has said.

Minister Motshegwa revealed this when responding to a parliamentary question from Mogoditshane West legislator, Mr Galenawabo Lekau, on Monday.

The minister explained that the current National Policy on Destitute Persons was last reviewed in 2002 following the 1980 destitute policy.

He said the review formed part of government's broader efforts to strengthen and modernise the social protection framework in order, to ensure that support to

the vulnerable individuals and households remained relevant, efficient and responsive to the changing socio-economic realities.

He however, noted that due to the scope and technical nature of the work, the review of the policy would extend into the 2026/27 financial year and it would require extensive consultations with stakeholders and assessment of programme implementations to ensure that it aligned with national priorities and international practices.

“Most importantly, the review will inform the development of a comprehensive social protection policy for Botswana,” he said.

Mr Lekau had asked the minister to state when the National policy on Destitute Persons was last reviewed and if there were any plans to review the policy. **BOPA**

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Arts & Culture

Ntema redefines Botswana tourism experience

Keetile Bontsibokae
MOLEPOLOLE

Onalethuso 'Mambo' Ntema, a musician, traditional percussionist and cultural heritage management practitioner, is redefining Botswana's tourism experience through innovative cultural ways.

Through his enterprise, Africanites, Ntema has pioneered a creative cultural tourism model that offers alternative safari activities, aimed at extending visitor stays and diversifying the Kasane tourism experience.

"I blend arts, culture, tourism and massage therapy to enrich the visitor's journey in Kasane," he said.

At 41, the Matsaudi-born entrepreneur has carved out a niche market that fuses artistic, cultural and wellness experiences tailored for tourists, corporates, families and events.

Working in collaboration with partners such as Big Tim Arts and Kitto's Beauty Spa, and hosted at Rustiek Hotel along the Chobe River in Kasane, his offerings have expanded to include camping equipment hire, cultural tours, drum circles, live Afro-jazz performances and unique packages such as Drums, Paints and Massage.

Currently, visitors to Kasane spend an average of two nights.

His target market includes tourists, students, corporates and families, with tour operators and hospitality establishments serving as key partners in delivering these experiences.

A University of Botswana alumnus with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, Ntema has dedicated much of his life to advancing cultural tourism. His travels across Africa and beyond have inspired him to integrate community lifestyles into the tourism value chain.

Since establishing Africanites in 2012, he has published poetry, including Soul Seeds (2014, UK), performed internationally at Germany's Markt der Voelker, and earned several accolades.

These include being a Top 3 finalist at the Botswana Youth Awards in 2017, winner at the Botswana Travel and Tourism Awards in 2020, and a Top 5 finalist at the Africa Tourism Leadership Forum in 2023.

Known in artistic circles as Mambo Ntema, he describes himself as an advocate for self-reliance and sustainability.

His mission is to build a cultural enterprise that drives local economic development while preserving authenticity.

He emphasised that although cultural tourism remains a niche market, it holds significant potential if packaged strategically around unique selling points. "The cultural sector is a green diamond that must

be mined carefully, avoiding over-commercialisation," he said.

Ntema further called on government to establish clear policies on arts, culture and sustainability, and to harmonise efforts across

ministries and tourism stakeholders.

He said stronger collaboration among institutions such as the National Arts Council of Botswana, Botswana Tourism, and relevant ministries could elevate culture into

a key socio-economic asset.

Ntema believes integrating participatory cultural activities into travel itineraries could encourage longer stays and deeper visitor engagement. **BOPA**



A massage therapist soothing a tourist as the rhythmic beat of live drums fills the air, creating a vibrant and relaxing cultural experience.



A musician, traditional percussionist and cultural heritage management practitioner, Onalethuso 'Mambo' Ntema said he blended arts, culture, tourism and massage therapy to enrich the visitors' journey. Photos: Courtesy of Kitto's Beauty Spa

Makase preaches teamwork among artistes

Keetile Bontsibokae
MOLEPOLOLE

Reflecting on his music journey, Orapeleng Lesole, known as Makase in the entertainment fold, acknowledges the challenges of breaking through in the embryonic, yet competitive and talent jam-packed local music scene.

"With so many artistes emerging, success requires uniqueness and creativity," he explained.

Yet, he remains optimistic, noting that his strategy of collaborating with other artistes has helped grow his art and supporters base, catapulted by the use of social media platforms.

Therefore, Makase encourages artistes to persevere, hold each other's hand, despite encountering obstacles. "Success is not gained overnight.

Serve the industry with dedication and patience, God sees your struggles," he advised.

He also emphasised on unity. "If we support each other, we can grow and be recognised both locally and internationally.

United we stand, divided we fall," he said.

Born and raised in Shoshong,

27-year-old artiste, cherished his upbringing as foundation to his love in disco rhythms, as they dominated both the airwaves and everyday life. "It was a typical disco everywhere phenomenon," he said.

Among the many styles, Makase found his heart drawn to the afro-disco sounds of the late Donald 'Don B' Botshelo and the Zangwana Band.

Makase's career began in 2017 as a dancer, performing alongside seasoned artistes such as Sielaneng Dr. Zillas Smart, Kabonna Sub-K Sabata, and Machaba Kachana.

By 2021, he transitioned into singing, releasing his debut single named *Dumelang Batswana*, produced at Sub-K Entertainment in Maun.

In 2025, Makase expanded his debut single into a full album, also titled *Dumelang Batswana*.


The project brought him respected collaborations including Sub-K, Tumelo Eureka Samuel Mlotshwa, the late Simon Tshenolo and Michael Monnapula of the Tween Brothers crew.

For Makase, collaborations marked the gradual realisation of his dream to work with industry heavyweights. **BOPA**



Orapeleng 'Makase' Lesole, who has released a disco album titled *Dumelang Batswana*, encouraged unity among artistes. Photo: Courtesy of Orapeleng Lesole

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Yaros Olympic Club's Philip Machira (left) spiking against Spiking Stars Volleyball Club players during the National Volleyball League encounter in Tlokweng on Saturday. Yaros won 3-1.

Photo: Phenyto Ramatu

Teams delight fans with thrilling wins

TLOKWENG

The third round of the Botswana Volleyball Federation National Volleyball League served up some exciting thrillers at the state-of-the-art Royal Aria Indoor Hall in Tlokweng on Saturday.

The high-octane action, which was played late into the night, saw Police VI outclass Spiking Stars 3-1 in their first fixture of the day before wrapping up with an emphatic 3-0 against the hapless Itekeng club.

Against Itekeng, Police stayed well in control of the scoreboard the entire sets and the visiting side mounted a furious comeback in the last set but to a bitter end.

Spiking Stars, who struggled against Police in their opening encounter, suffered their consecutive loss at the hands of Yaros who went on to beat Prisons club 3-1.

Prisons dusted themselves up and recorded a sweet 3-1 victory against Kalavango who entered the match as favourites following their resounding victory against Itekeng in a five-set thriller in the opening round.

In the final men's round Yaros completed their onslaught for the night with a 3-1 scalp of Prisons.

In the women's matches played in court two, Dynamites beat Kalavango 3-0 before wrapping up their assignment of the day with the same score line against Dikwena.

Yaros ladies team beat Prisons 3-1 while Kalavango suffered an embarrassing 0-3 defeat at the hands of Spiking Stars.

Meanwhile at the Serowe College of Education multipurpose hall, three men's teams and two ladies' teams battled it out in week three of the league competition.

The headline clash in the men's division saw BDF VI pushed to the edge by underdogs Blockbuster before the army men dusted themselves up to secure victory in a five-set showdown.

BDF VI carried the momentum into their next fixture whipping Sebokeng of Francistown 3-0. The Francistowners bounced back overpowering Palapye-based Motlakase in straight sets 25-20, 25-18 and 25-18.

Blockbuster recovered from their earlier loss to score 3-0 against Mag Stimela.

In the ladies' category, BDF VI were dominant as they beat Sebokeng and Mag Stimela 3-0 each. Focus now shifts to the mining town of Jwaneng where week four of the league will be staged this weekend. **BOPA**

Tsabong-Khawa Rally roars back

Naomi Leepile
TSABONG

The silence of the Kgalagadi Desert is set to give way to the thunder of high-performance engines as the Botswana Off-Road Racing Championship (BORRC) launches its 2026 season with the highly anticipated Tsabong-Khawa Rally this coming weekend.

The event marks a dramatic return to the dunes and promises a thrilling showcase of speed, endurance, and technical mastery.

Affectionately dubbed the

'Mantshwabi' of the south by locals, the rally will traverse the demanding corridor between Tsabong and Khawa; a route renowned for its deep, shifting sands and unpredictable terrain, which presents a true test of both machine reliability and driver skill.

Race Director for the Botswana Racing Championship, Moin Ahmad, confirmed in an interview that the opening round would take place from March 27 to 28.

Ahmad noted that this year's entry list was already generating excitement, with expectations of renewed rivalry between dominant off-road marques, particularly

the Toyota Hilux and Ford Ranger contenders.

Beyond the powerful T1 class trucks, spectators can also look forward to a fleet of agile buggies and side-by-side vehicles. Often referred to as 'sand flies', these lighter machines are crowd favourites, celebrated for their ability to glide over terrain that typically bogs down heavier vehicles.

While the rally promises adrenaline-fueled action, Ahmad emphasised that precision and strategy would be crucial, as performance in this opening round, was likely to influence the overall

championship standings.

For the communities of Tsabong and Khawa, the rally represents more than just motorsport.

It is a major cultural and economic event, expected to draw spectators from across the country and stimulate business activity.

With teams finalising preparations for this Botswana Motorsport sanctioned event, anticipation is building nationwide, all eyes are now on the Kgalagadi as engines rev and the dust prepares to rise on another defining chapter in Botswana's off-road racing legacy. **BOPA**