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Kazungula Bridge valuable asset for Africa

Esther Mmolai
KAZUNGULA

The Kazungula Bridge masterpiece towers majestically over the waters at a point where the Chobe

and Zambezi Rivers meet. Strategically located, the bridge sits at a quadripoint where Botswana, Zambia, Namibia and Zimbabwe converge on the Zambezi River. The bridge is a product of

the solid bilateral relations between Botswana and Zambia and was constructed to boost economic growth, reduce transit time as well as promote regional trade relations and

sustainable development in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

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Counselling vital for emotional healing

Lesedi Thatayamodimo
GABORONE

Counseling is a necessary restoration process for orphaned children, to help them heal emotional wounds caused by the loss of parents, abandonment or other traumatic life experiences.

Without it, they could fall into depression, anxiety, behavioural challenges and long-term social difficulties, Clicks area manager for Botswana, Ms Lebopo Bulayani has said.

"Grief does not disappear simply because a child is young. When children lose parental love and guidance, they need structured emotional support to process their pain and rebuild their sense of security," Ms Bulayani added.

She was speaking at a healing session dubbed, *Re Imetswe*, in Gaborone, with focus on the topic: *Turning Loss into Purpose*.

She noted that through counseling, hope and emotional stability of orphaned children could be restored.

Ms Bulayani described counselling as being more than just conversation since it equipped

children with coping skills, built self-esteem and fostered resilience.

"Through guided therapy sessions, group discussions and mentorship programmes, orphaned children can learn to navigate grief and develop healthier emotional responses," she said, adding that untreated trauma could manifest in academic struggles, social withdrawal, aggression or substance abuse later in life.

However, early intervention, she highlighted could reduce the risks.

"Counselling gives children permission to feel, to speak and to heal, it helps them understand that their pain is valid and that they are not alone," she said.

Ms Bulayani encouraged families and guardians to seek professional support and not assume that children would grow out of their trauma.

An orphan herself, Ms Bulayani, who is also a former beauty queen, lost her mother at the age of seven.

She has since directed her energy to being an author, motivational speaker, the director of Miss Independence Kgatleng, and philanthropy.



Author and also motivator, Ms Lebopo Bulayani engaging with audience during *Re Imetswe Healing* session in Gaborone recently. Speaking on the topic "*Turning Loss into Purpose*," Ms Bulayani said orphaned children often endure deep emotional wounds caused by the loss of parents, abandonment or other traumatic life experiences. Photo: Felicity Male

Growing up without consistent parental support exposed her to trauma, bullying and emotional isolation, experiences she believes could have been better managed with professional counseling.

"There were moments when

nobody asked if I was okay. My family knew what had happened to us, but there was no structured support, no counseling, no one guiding us through the pain," said Ms Bulayani.

Despite the challenges, she

chose to turn her loss into purpose and now shares a message of hope, that with the right support, orphaned children could overcome their past and build a future filled with purpose and confidence.

One of the attendees, Ms Keletso Gaabonwe, agreed that orphaned children were among the most psychologically vulnerable groups.

"Without intervention, these emotional wounds may follow children into adulthood, affecting relationships, education and self-esteem," she said and explained that counseling provided coping mechanisms, validation and a safe environment for children to process trauma.

Ms Gaabonwe also pointed out that many orphaned children faced stigma in addition to grief.

"Being labeled, pitied or treated differently can deepen feelings of isolation," she said, arguing that counseling, helps normalise emotions and builds resilience.

She noted that early therapeutic support could help children process grief in healthy stages, reduce the risk of long-term depression and anxiety, improve academic performance and social integration, build emotional regulation and coping skills and prevent harmful coping behaviours.

Her message to policymakers and community leaders was clear: investing in mental health support for orphaned children is not a luxury but it is a necessity.

Re Imetswe, which translates to 'we are burdened,' in English, is the brainchild of Ms Charity Masaka. It advocates for accessible mental health services. **BOPA**

Mosielele calls for swift ConCourt establishment

Marvin Motlhabane
MOSHUPA

Kgosi Kebinatshwene Mosielele of Manyana has endorsed the government's proposal to establish a Constitutional Court, calling it a long-overdue and noble step toward protecting constitutional rights.

Kgosi Mosielele showed his support for the proposed court during a kgotla meeting addressed by the Assistant Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ignatius Moswaane in Moshupa on Tuesday.

Although the Constitution guarantees every tribe the right to freely exercise its customs and traditions, he said the Tribal Territories Act, had created conflicts by subordinating minority groups to larger ones.

Kgosi Mosielele explained that some of the eight major tribes have historically prevented minority tribes from fully practicing their traditions, treating them as subordinates.

He described this as disheartening and cited a specific incident in which authorities confiscated a leopard skin intended for his chiefly installation ceremony.

"This denied the Bahurutshwe the opportunity to observe their customs, despite constitutional protections for such practices. The community was deeply aggrieved

Kgosi Mosielele urged the Assistant Minister to provide a clear timeline for its establishment. He stressed that human rights violations occurred daily and required swift action.



Kgosi Kebinatshwene Mosielele

but lacked the resources to pursue legal action at the time. Even if they had, the process would have been prolonged," he said.

Welcoming the proposed Constitutional Court, Kgosi Mosielele urged the Assistant Minister to provide a clear timeline for its establishment.

He stressed that human rights violations occurred daily and required swift action.

Every tribe, he said, for instance, deserved full recognition, including having its Kgosi acknowledged and

seated in the House of Chiefs.

In response, Assistant Minister Moswaane stated that a Constitutional Court would help protect the rights of all citizens and emphasised the government's commitment to restoring the powers of Dikgosi.

The consultations are part of the government's nationwide engagements to gather public input on establishing the Constitutional Court with a view to protect the rights of the citizenry and uphold the rule of law. **BOPA**

Tougher road traffic laws coming - Atamelang

Marvin Motlhabane
KGOMOKASITWA

In a bold move to make Botswana's roads safer and save lives, the government is set to close a dangerous loophole in the law by banning driving under the influence of drugs and other intoxicating substances, not just alcohol.

Assistant Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Keoagile Atamelang, delivered the announcement during a consultative meeting with Kgomokasitwa residents recently.

He explained that the current Road Traffic Act only targeted drunk drivers, leaving drivers impaired by drugs from recreational substances to prescription medications largely unaddressed, even though some of these also impaired judgment, reaction times, and coordination just as severely, often with deadly results.

"The government has woken up to a harsh reality, too many drivers are getting behind the wheel under the influence of drugs, putting innocent lives at risk," Mr Atamelang said.

"We cannot afford to wait while preventable accidents continue to claim lives and devastate families."

The Assistant Minister also outlined plans for significantly higher traffic fines targeting

reckless behaviours such as speeding, dangerous overtaking, and driving without a license, penalties designed to hit hard enough to make drivers stick to the set laws.

He said road crashes continued to drain the national purse through emergency medical responses, hospital care, rehabilitation, and lost productivity.

With accidents still claiming hundreds of lives and injuring thousands annually despite a gradual decline in total incidents over recent years, the financial and human toll remains heavy.

As such, Mr Atamelang urged every motorist to take personal responsibility.

"Obey the rules. Every single time. Lives depend on it."

Residents welcomed the focus on safety but many voiced worries about the affordability of any upcoming adjustments to public transport fares, stressing that changes must reflect the tough economic realities most families faced today.

They called for a balanced approach that protected road users without adding undue pressure on household budgets.

Assistant Minister Atamelang's visit to Kgomokasitwa underscored a hands-on approach to addressing both legislative gaps and the real-world challenges drivers and passengers encounter. **BOPA**



Kazungula Bridge valuable asset for Africa

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Since its opening in May 2021, it has been reported that the number of trucks crossing through the bridge had increased from an average of 214 to 491 per day.

At the launch of the Kazungula Bridge Authority (KBA) on Tuesday, Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Noah Salakae described the bridge as a valuable asset, not only to our Botswana and Zambia, but to Africa as a whole.

Mr Salakae said after nearly five years waiting for the commissioning and operationalisation of the KBA, ultimately launching it, marked an enduring inclination that would see the Authority transform into a globally-renowned institution and become the groundwork for the long-term prosperity of the

economies of the two nations.

Its impact, he said, would see the economies of the two countries grow and thrive at home and also expand beyond the borders to promote the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.

He said the uniquely designed 923-metre-long road and rail bridge replaced the ferry pontoon system, which had proven not only inefficient but very slow and highly unreliable. Minister Salakae appreciated that the bridge stood not only as a physical link between the two countries, but also as a key component of the North-South Corridor (NSC), a vital trade route within the SADC region and an important conduit for regional integration and economic development, benefiting countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania

as well as Zimbabwe.

The NSC accounts for approximately 84 per cent of regional freight traffic, primarily driven by trade activities in Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa.

Mr Salakae highlighted that a significant portion of the traffic originated from the Port of Durban, which handled nearly 64 per cent of all container movements within the region, and from the Gauteng Province of South Africa, encompassing Johannesburg and Pretoria, which served as the region's principal centre for manufacturing, warehousing and distribution.

"The NSC therefore remains the corridor of choice for the mining, agriculture and manufacturing sectors in the region owing to its balanced import-export flow, competitive costs, and overall

efficiency," he said.

In addition, he pointed out that bridge served as a catalyst for economic transformation, unlocking new investment opportunities and reinforcing the Kazungula One Stop Border's position as a key gateway for regional trade and connectivity.

The latter, Mr Salakae said had helped streamline cross-border procedures, resulting in reduced clearance times and lower trade costs and enhanced competitiveness of Botswana's exports and imports.

He also announced that the KBA Board of Directors was inaugurated during the last session of the Joint Ministerial Committee meeting held in Kasane on September 18 last year as a key milestone towards the operationalisation of the KBA.

He said the KBA Board

of Directors held its first extraordinary meeting last year on October 8 during which the appointment of the executive director was approved and subsequently endorsed by the Council of Ministers.

The minister said on Monday they witnessed the signing of the hosting agreement between the host country, Botswana and the KBA, and said the move was a great milestone that signalled the beginning of the six months' transition period from the Kazungula Bridge project office to the Kazungula Bridge Authority.

During this period, the project office staff and the executing ministries will work in collaboration with the executive director in order for the KBA to take over the management and maintenance of the Kazungula Bridge infrastructure. **BOPA**

Tshere urges compliance to Digital Services Act

Bonang Masolotatse
GABORONE

The country's private and public sectors have less than 24 months to digitalise their services under the Digital Services Act.

This is part of the government's drive to push for digital transformation to modernise operations, boost efficiency, and enhance user experience.

The Minister of Communications

and Innovation, Mr David Tshere, said this at the beginning of the Botswana Cyber Drill, organised by the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA), that the 24-month grace period, which started in November last year, gave the private and public sectors an opportunity to prepare for the transition.

"The Digital Services Act gives us a 24-month grace period to prepare and put together all necessary enabling infrastructure and to roll out digitalisation," Minister Tshere said on Tuesday.

"The private and the public sectors will be required to offer their services digitally; that is what the law says," he added.

He said the government had moved from a reactive posture to a proactive structure and a unified national framework, adding that a digital nation could not be built on a weak foundation, as it required trust, security, and the rule of law.

The government last year passed the Cyber Security Act, which was subsequently signed into law and is waiting to commence by April.

The key output of the law is the establishment of the National Cybersecurity Authority, which will provide strategic oversight, coordination, and policy direction for cybersecurity across all sectors of the country's economy.

The Act also formally

strengthened the mandate of the National Computer Security Incident Response, he added.

Minister Tshere further told stakeholders that cybersecurity threats were no longer abstract and distant technical concepts.

"They are here, prevalent, and

increasingly sophisticated," the minister warned, stressing that cyber threats distracted essential services, compromised sensitive information, and caused tangible economic and operational harm, resulting in loss of business and customer confidence.



Minister of Communication and Innovation, Mr David Tshere said the private and public sectors had less than 24 months to fully digitalise their services under the Digital Services Act. Photo: Gaseitsiwe Moruakgomo

He said some businesses had been attacked locally, adding that the cybersecurity drill provided a safe and structured environment to learn from global experts, shared experiences, and developed critical skills to handle real-world cybersecurity crises.

He pointed out that while the government could pass laws and Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) could provide technical leadership, but security was a shared responsibility.

BOCRA chief executive officer, Mr Martin Mokgware, said the stability of the nation rested on the resilience of digital foundations, noting that the cyber drill was a powerful demonstration of safeguarding the economy.

"Therefore, a cyber incident is not just an IT problem; it is a national problem that affects citizens, businesses, and how our country functions," he said.

Abaricom managing director, Mr Neo Ngwako, said from a local industry perspective, there was a need to safeguard the economy from criminal activities, adding that threats were coming at a time when the economy was ailing and faced with a foot-and-mouth disease threat.

The first Botswana Cyber Drill was held under the theme: Cyber Resilience in Action. **BOPA**

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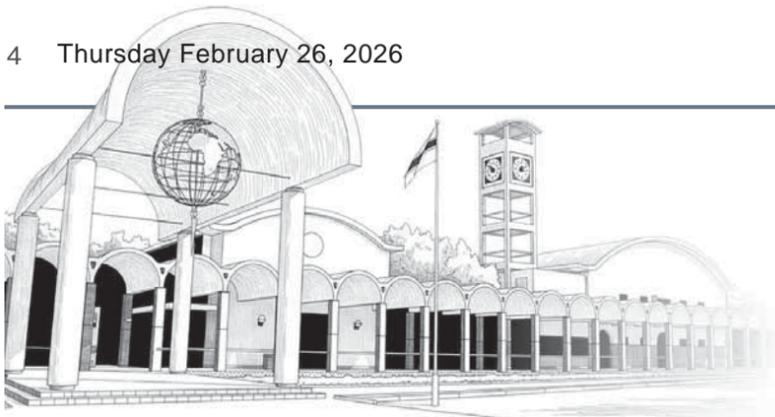
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Minister clarifies Khoemacau regulatory status

GABORONE

Government has no negotiated agreement with MMG Limited but has instead granted Khoemacau Copper Mining (KCM - Khoemacau) with a Mining Licence.

Answering a parliamentary question on Tuesday, Minister of Minerals and Energy, Ms Bogolo Kenewendo said the licence was granted in 2015 and valid for 20 years in accordance with Section 39 of the Mines and Minerals Act and therefore the conditions of the mining licence were aligned with the legislation.

Minister Kenewendo also told Parliament that agreements were negotiated for diamonds as required under section 51 of the Mines and Minerals Act, however for other minerals government had the option to acquire up to 24 per cent shares as per section 40 of the same Act.

Additionally, she said in the case of Khoemacau mining, government had forgone their option to get a stake at the time as it was not favourable to invest in the business.

"Khoemacau does not export raw materials or ore but exports copper concentrate, which is at 30 per cent copper, from 1.8 per cent copper in ore.

The next stage of beneficiation is normally refinery or smelter which requires a business case and a totally different set of capabilities, and therefore the Khoemacau in partnership with International and Local Institutions will be undertaking a full feasibility study," she said.

She added that Khoemacau exported copper contained in concentrate and since opening of the mine 587 526 tonnes of concentrate containing 177 446 tonnes of copper had been exported to date, while 40 176 tonnes of copper had been exported annually since the mine started operations.

Furthermore, she indicated that government, through the Ministry of Minerals Energy had seen the need for value addition in minerals, hence

amendments to the Mines and Minerals were recently enacted.

She said the ministry had also developed a strategy for beneficiation and value addition (MRDEEV).

"While there is appreciation that refinery or smelter project are very capital intensive and cannot be done on a loss, companies and investors also need to be given the opportunity to carry out bankable feasibility studies to determine the business case," she said.

Again, the minister told Parliament that Khoemacau Copper Mining had spent over P1 billion on citizen contractors in 2025, having signed a Citizen Economic Empowerment Policy (CEEP) in January this year and employed a dedicated CEEP coordinator to show committed efforts in empowering citizens.

She said the company continued to train citizens through their mining contractors, who were also utilised by other local mining companies.

"The company currently employs 3 200 people including contractors. At the peak of their expansion project, which I recently officiated its groundbreaking, the mine will employ 5 500 employees. Concentrate produce annually is 146 000 tonnes and given the Khoemacau exploration programme, we expect a mine life beyond 2050," the minister said.

Serowe South MP, Mr Leepetswe Lesedi had asked the minister to state the specific terms of the government's agreement with MMG Limited for the Khoemacau Copper Mine.

Mr Lesedi also sought clarity on the financial payments made to the state, the total volume of copper exported since operations began and the projected lifespan of the mine.

Additionally, the MP wanted to know why copper was exported for refining elsewhere and what steps were being taken to ensure citizen participation and local value addition through beneficiation within Botswana. **BOPA**

Govt injects about P13.2bn into diamond marketing

Tebagano Ntshole
GABORONE

Government has launched a P13.2bn (US\$100million) marketing and consumer education campaign to distinguish natural diamonds from lab-grown synthetics.

The initiative, arriving after a 10-year hiatus, is designed to protect Botswana's primary export.

This was revealed in Parliament on Monday by Minister of Minerals and Energy and Specially Elected Member of Parliament, Ms Bogolo Kenewendo, during the 2026/27 budget debate.

Minister Kenewendo stated that the campaign aimed to reclaim the narrative of the diamond industry.

"This is a major strategic move that has begun to bring stability to how we produce, sell, and attract value.

We were intentional and deliberate in managing the industry to ensure we retain as much value as possible within Botswana," she said.

The minister added that government was now mandating that lab-grown stones be strictly disclosed as "synthetics" or "lab-grown." She emphasised the importance of storytelling to highlight the distinction between stones formed over billions of years and those manufactured quickly in factories.

She noted that such efforts had already yielded significant shifts in the Indian market.

"Following the Indian President's visit and engagement with President Advocate Duma Boko, the Indian government decided that the 'diamond' designation will be reserved exclusively for natural diamonds," Ms Kenewendo informed the house.

The minister further noted that government had engaged the GIA to ensure that the 4Cs

-colour, clarity, cut and carat, grading system remained exclusive to natural diamonds. She indicated that the campaign, conducted in partnership with Angola and Namibia, with South Africa expected to join soon, was reportedly already stabilising the sector.

Despite production dropping from 17 million carats in 2024 to 15 million in 2025, the Minister indicated that government successfully cleared older stock from 2023 and 2024.

"This stock balancing has been vital in maintaining mine operations and preparing for market rebounds," she said. Additionally, she said the government-run Okavango Diamond Company (ODC) began selling 25 per cent of Botswana's stock in 2025, successfully pivoting from auctions to contract sales.

"This shift included a significant investment in diamond traceability to ensure every stone sold carries the Botswana story," she added. Minister Kenewendo endorsed the 2026/27 budget, supporting the transition from mono-commodity dependency to a capability-based economy.

She noted that the budget aligned with global best practices in economic transformation, resonating with the principles of development economics, competitiveness and evidence-based policy.

Acknowledging the structural crossroads facing the nation, characterised by weakening diamond growth, narrowed fiscal buffers and high youth unemployment, she remained optimistic.

She said while GDP contracted by 2.8 per cent in 2024 and 0.4 per cent in 2025, a rebound was expected in the coming fiscal year.

"The budget's diversification entails transforming the micro-economic outlook from dependency to a capability-building framework, supported by careful fiscal planning and targeted investments," she said. **BOPA**



Minister of Minerals and Energy, Ms Bogolo Kenewendo told Parliament on Monday that government had launched a P13.2 billion (US\$100 million) marketing and consumer education campaign to distinguish natural diamonds from lab-grown synthetics.

Over 600 000 await land allocation

GABORONE

Parliament has been informed that the Land Information System shows that 687 486 people eligible in accordance with Botswana Land Policy of 2019, are awaiting land allocation, indicating the magnitude of national demand for serviced and titled land.

Responding to a question in Parliament on Tuesday, on behalf of acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe said the ministry was aware of the significant backlog in allocation of residential plots.

Mr Mathoothe said the 100 000 plots campaign revealed that the challenge was not simply the number of plots allocated but the structural misalignment between allocation, surveying, servicing and Secure Land Title (SLT)

production. He said sustainable land delivery required that allocations were supported by surveyed, infrastructure aligned and legally registrable land capable of unlocking household and economic value.

He added that to deliver immediate improvement, on February 16 this year, the ministry operationalised the Secure Land Title War Room, bringing officers from Surveys and Mapping, Town and Country Planning, Deeds Registry, Geospatial Information Centre, land boards and the Department of Lands together.

He said the war room was actively monitoring end-to-end SLT processing, accelerating submissions to the Deeds Registry and solving workflow bottlenecks in real time.

"It is mandated to deliver 48 569 Secure Land Titles within three months, beginning with high pressure areas such as

Mogoditshane, Ramotswa, Tlokweng, Palapye, Maun and Oodi.

Parallel with these rapid-response measures, the ministry is establishing the Land Lab under the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) to redesign the entire land administration ecosystem," he said.

Furthermore, he said the Land Lab held its first coordination meeting on February 23 during which it reviewed the proposed terms of reference, aligned expectations, clarified institutional roles, considered technical feedback and defined short-term action items with assigned person-in-charge.

"The Land Lab will produce a fully costed and executed reform blueprint, covering end-to-end process redesign, digital integration, governance strengthening, investor facilitation

and performance accountability," he said.

He further said the ministry remained committed to reducing the clean waiting list, restoring predictability in SLT production and delivering a fair, transparent and efficient land administration system for all Botswana.

He indicated that the Land Boards were empowered to allocate tribal land while the deeds registry was responsible for registering all forms of land tenure including tribal, state and freehold as well as other non-land transactions that legally required registration.

He said the current arrangement where Land Boards prepared and submitted registration documents and the Deeds Registry executed the legal registration remained the most appropriate model by preserving institutional integrity while ensuring that land registration remained uniform,

secure and legally sound across all tenure categories.

He said decentralising the deeds registry in isolation would not achieve the intended improvements unless all institutions within the land registration ecosystem were equally aligned and adequately.

Member of Parliament for Serowe West, Mr Onalepele Kedikilwe had asked the minister to state the specific tangible strategies beyond standard policy announcements that could accelerate land allocation including measurable targets and timelines if he was aware of the significant backlog in the allocation of residential plots.

Mr Kedikilwe also asked if it was not viable for every Land Board to have a Deeds Registry to streamline registration process, reduce reliance on a centralised deeds registry and improve efficiency as well as the security of land tenure for citizens. **BOPA**

Strategy aims to boost food security

GABORONE

The Ministry of Lands and Agriculture has adopted robust and multi-faceted strategies aimed at achieving food security and self-sustainability, Parliament heard on Tuesday.

Responding on behalf of acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe told the Parliament that the ministry was intensifying efforts to enhance food security and reduce the country's reliance on food imports.

He said food security was anchored on four key pillars: food availability, access to nutritious and quality food, proper food utilisation, and consistent access at all times.

Mr Mathoothe explained that the ministry was currently implementing programmes such as the Lemang Dijo initiative and the Horticulture Impact Accelerator Subsidy Scheme, adding that those programmes were designed to increase productivity within the arable subsector by boosting crop yields and promoting sustainable and efficient production systems.

He said the initiatives were supported by a well-developed agricultural extension service system, which provides technical advice, facilitates farmer training and encourages technology adoption.

He said through those programmes, farmers were cushioned with production capital and subsidised inputs and enhancing their adaptive capacity to climate change.

He said although the subsector had not yet reached full food security stability, he noted that production had significantly improved.

"This progress demonstrated that sustained support would steer the country towards food sufficiency and ultimately meet its food security requirements," he said.

He further pointed out that the ministry had also invested in infrastructure development in commercial arable farming areas such as Pandamatenga and Mosisedi as well as irrigation schemes across the country.

Meanwhile, he said to safeguard local production, import restrictions were imposed on commodities that were in excess supply locally.

Mr Mathoothe said the deliberate move was intended to secure the domestic market for Botswana-produced agricultural goods.

He added that Botswana was a signatory to trade agreements, including the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), which played a pivotal role in supporting local food production by providing market certainty for domestically produced commodities.

He further said the ministry also assisted farmers in controlling pests of economic importance such as fall armyworm, locusts and quelea birds, thereby enhancing crop yields and promoting food security.

Furthermore, he said the ministry had introduced crop insurance initiatives to cushion

farmers against the impacts of drought, floods, frost, diseases and pest outbreaks.

Recognising research and development as critical to increasing agricultural productivity, he said government had established institutions such as the National Agricultural Research and

Development Institute (NARDI).

Member of Parliament for Selebi Phikwe East, Mr Kgoberego Nkawana had asked the minister to outline steps being taken to promote food security and reduce reliance on imports, including support for local farmers and agricultural development. **BOPA**



Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe, has told Parliament that since 2019 a total of 591 farmers in the Okavango District had benefited from government-provided artificial insemination services.

Sport tourism key to economic diversification

GABORONE

Government is committed to stimulating economic diversification through sport tourism, including the hosting of international sporting competitions, Minister of Sport and Arts, Mr Jacob Kelebeg has said.

Responding to a parliamentary question on Monday, Minister Kelebeg said Botswana Football Association (BFA), on behalf of the country, successfully hosted the U17 CAF Youth Championships in 2007. He said the CAF U17 Championship comprised of 16 countries while Botswana also hosted Council of Southern Africa Football Association (COSAFA) U20 Championship in 2010 and 2011. He added that Botswana continues to host other international sporting competitions.

This year, Botswana hosted the All-Africa Badminton Championships from February 9-15, at the Royal Aria indoor-facility in Tlokweng. Furthermore, he said the country would host the World Athletics Relay Championships, in Gaborone on May 2-3 this year.

Again, he said Botswana would also host the Confederation of Universities and Colleges of Southern Africa (CUCSA) games in July, as well as the Africa Aquatics Zone 4 championships in September this year.

"I must inform the House that hosting the COSAFA tournament requires two stadia that conform to CAF category 2 or 3.

Both the National Stadium and the Lobatse Sport Complex fulfil CAF category 2 requirements,

while Obed Itani Chilume conform to CAF category 3 requirements, with five training football pitches needed for the tournament.

The stadia facilities we have in the country are adequate to host the COSAFA Tournament Cup," he said. He added that compared to the COSAFA Cup, the most expensive football tournament requiring a higher budget and greater logistical preparations was the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) finals.

"Botswana made a bid to host the AFCON 2027 finals, but the bid was unsuccessful. Efforts will be made to host other international tournaments in the future, subject to budget availability," he added.

He further indicated that the ministry, with the support of other relevant stakeholders, was planning to develop a hosting strategy, which would provide strategic guidance on hosting international sporting events.

In addition to adequately preparing to host regional and international sporting events such as COSAFA, during the twelfth National Development Plan (NDP 12), he said government, through the Ministry of Sport and Arts, had plans to build a 40 000-capacity national stadium.

Molepolole North MP, Mr Arafat Khan, had wanted to know when Botswana would begin to host international football tournaments such as the COSAFA Cup.

Mr Khan also wanted to know the measures the ministry was putting in place to ensure that the country was adequately prepared to host such regional and international sporting events. **BOPA**

Artificial Insemination services benefit 591 farmers in Okavango

GABORONE

Since 2019 a total of 591 farmers in the Okavango District have benefited from government-provided artificial insemination services through the Nokaneng Artificial Insemination (AI) Camp.

This was said by Assistant Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Baratiwa Mathoothe, on behalf of acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture, in response a question in Parliament on Tuesday.

"I acknowledge that the vastness of the Okavango District, limits farmers' access to artificial insemination services provided at the Nokaneng AI Camp.

To address this, the ministry intends to use part of the Kgomokgwana Quarantine Camp to boost provision of AI services subject to availability of funds," Mr Mathoothe said.

In the meantime, he said the ministry continued to maintain the Nokaneng AI camp, in spite of the intense wildlife damage, to ensure the continued implementation of the AI programme in the district.

"I absolutely foresee Okavango region contributing meaningfully towards the President Advocate Duma Boko vision of increasing the national cattle population to five million. I want to highlight some of the initiatives specifically targeting the Okavango region and aiming to

support livestock livelihoods and its increasing agriculture contribution to the economy," he added.

He indicated that the Okavango would benefit from initiatives like A-Di-Tsale and on-farm artificial insemination (AI) programme which were aimed at boosting cattle production by enhancing reproduction, genetics and extension support for farmers.

"These programmes improve reproductive efficiency through targeted AI services, including AI and by fostering private sector involvement in on-farm services," he said.

He further said the Okavango was the beneficiary of the Communities Living Amongst Wildlife Sustainably (CLAWS)-supported Herding 4 Health (H4H) project that aimed to promote sustainable livestock management, reduce human-wildlife conflict and improve rangeland health.

Through the programme, he said community livelihoods would be enhanced through better market access for beef and reduced livestock diseases, predation and improved rangelands.

Also, he said the Green Climate Fund (GCF) supported a US\$98 million project, co-financed by government with US\$54 million (about P712m), with GCF grant at US\$44m (about P580m).

"The programme aims to

restore, manage and rehabilitate communal rangelands in Okavango (Ngamiland), Kgalagadi and Bobirwa regions," he explained.

He indicated that the project which was launched in May 2025 by the President, was implemented by Conservation International, on behalf of the GCF, and the lands and agriculture ministry on behalf of government and complemented the CLAWS supported Herding for Health (H4H) programme.

He said the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) had introduced the Direct Cattle Procurement Scheme to improve market access and stimulate production in the Okavango and North West regions.

Okavango West legislator, Mr Kenny Kapinga had asked the minister how many cattle farmers in Okavango had benefited from artificial insemination services provided by government and if he would acknowledge that the ministry had since 2019, not demonstrated any drive or intention to ensure that farmers in Okavango enjoyed the benefits of artificial insemination.

Mr Kapinga also asked if he expected any significant contribution by the Okavango region to the wish by the President to increase the cattle population to five million, in the absence of access to artificial insemination. **BOPA**



Daily Business

Council introduces App to tackle low collection rate

Calviniah Kgauthe
LOBATSE

Lobatse Town Council has introduced an FNBB App to maximise on digital technologies and tackle low rates collection.

Speaking during a Full Council meeting on Monday, Lobatse town mayor, Mr Aron Ganakgomo said the council continued to deploy efficient solutions for revenue maximisation to enhance efficiencies as Lobatse Town Council had been uploaded as a Public Recipient with First National Bank of Botswana (FNBB).

Property owners would have to log into the app, pay rates to council through cell phone banking or online transaction.

He said the move was opportune given that FNBB held about 60 to 65 per cent of property market share adding that the development would enable most of rates debtors and the community at large to pay the Council conveniently at the comfort of their homes.

Additionally, Mayor Ganakgomo said the council was in the process of increasing remote payment access through the Payment Gateway to further widen the revenue pool to allow both FNBB and non FNBB customers to pay at their convenience.

He thus implored customers to use the payment platforms to pay debts.

He said that council in collaboration with FNBB shall embark on public education and rates collection campaign through various social media platforms to raise awareness and motivate property owners to make enquiries and remit rates.

The move, Mr Ganakgomo said was devised against the backdrop that as at the beginning of the 2024/2025 financial year, Lobatse Town Council was owed rates amounting to over P23 million but collection stood at slightly above P3 million on outstanding arrears.

This he noted, was a serious concern adding that collection for this financial year stood at slightly above P1 million which was 20 per cent against the targeted P5 million.

He therefore anticipated that the FNBB App would enable real-time payment, yield higher collection rate and improve customer compliance.

Furthermore, mayor Ganakgomo highlighted that the tight fiscal environment at national and local level demanded more proficiency and prudence in managing the limited resources as underscored during 2026 Budget Speech.

Nonetheless, he said even



Lobatse mayor, Mr Aron Ganakgomo (right) and town clerk, Ms Lenamile Taolo during a full council meeting on Monday. Mr Ganakgomo said the council had introduced an FNBB App to maximise on digital technologies and tackle low rates collection. Photo: Calviniah Kgauthe

though the council was faced with financial challenges in the previous quarters, they had been able to execute their core mandate, owing to austerity measures they undertook in managing cash flow and strengthening revenue base.

He announced that this year, Lobatse Town Council performed well in revenue collection as of January 2026 to date as collection stood at P151 million against the targeted income of P165 million; a 92 per cent collection rate. The excellent performance, he said reflected confidence in the council's ability to continue delivering essential services effectively.

With regards to the introduction of an FNB App for revenue collection, Peleng Central Councillor Mr Stephen Mpfu welcomed the development.

In an interview on the side-lines of the full council meeting, he said the App would make payment easier for customers and reduce long queues which wasted valuable time and travel costs.

He noted that the digitisation of the payment would also reduce too much paperwork and save government some costs.

In addition, Councillor Mpfu buttressed that customers had the option of selecting fixed online deposits which would enable them to better budget.

Nominated councillor Mr

Gofaone Kedise, said Lobatse Town Council was owed over P35 million in property rates.

"We are talking digitisation of government services and therefore, anything credible that can help us to collect rates is a welcome initiative. The people must not fail to pay rates because we have not availed payment platforms," he said. He highlighted that

councils which were funded by government through the revenue support grant and were required to sustain itself through generating Own Revenue Source must deliver quality services to the people.

He said such finances covered statutory services which the council must offer which include infrastructure development, waste management, and social services, highlighting that if property rates were not paid it could affect service delivery.

Thus, he emphasised that it was important for customers to pay property rates and service levies through available online platforms to enable the council to effectively

deliver services.
BOPA



Mr Ganakgomo said the move to introduce the App would enable most of rates debtors and the community at large to pay the council conveniently at the comfort of their homes. Photo: Pheno Moalosi

BUSINESS BRIEF

Investments drive job creation

JOHANNESBURG

Chinese investments have created thousands of jobs and introduced advanced manufacturing technologies in Gauteng, South Africa, a provincial official said on Monday. Delivering the State of the Province Address, Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi noted a series of multi-sectoral investments by Chinese firms aimed at bolstering the province's economic growth. Lesufi highlighted Chung Fung Metal's US\$156-million investment in a new steel factory, which opened in January and has created over 1000 jobs. "This new steel factory has brought the latest technologies in steel manufacturing to our shores," Lesufi said. *Xinhua*

Namibia eyes salmon farming to boost high value exports

WINDHOEK

Namibia is positioning salmon farming as a new driver of industrialisation and sustainable blue economy growth, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Land Reform Ruthy Masake said on Tuesday. Speaking at a conference titled "Unlocking Namibia's Salmon Industry: An Opportunity for Industrialisation," Masake said the country was seeking to move beyond traditional wild-catch fishing toward high-value aquaculture and agro-processing industries. "Unlocking the potential of Namibia's salmon industry presents a real opportunity for economic transformation through value chain development," she said. Masake said developing a domestic salmon value chain could help stimulate foreign direct investment. *Xinhua*

Expert urges Africa to boost output under China zero-tariff policy

LUSAKA

African countries should scale up production to fully benefit from China's zero-tariff policy and better access the vast Chinese market, an expert said on Monday. Kelvin Chisanga, a Zambian social economist, said Africa's abundant raw materials and agricultural potential could translate into stronger exports to China under the tariff-free arrangement, creating new momentum for industrial expansion on the continent. During the 39th African Union Summit held earlier this month in Ethiopia, China announced that it will fully implement zero-tariff treatment for 53 African countries with diplomatic relations with China starting from May 1, 2026. *Xinhua*

Dikgang

PAMPIRI YA THUTO LE DIKITSISO

Ipapatse Fa
Leletsa

659 6315 | 625 0353 | 533 0379 | 297 8237
261 0480 | 241 3402 | 365 3500

Ba Francistown ba bete se molangwana ka kgotla ya molao motheo

Kelebogile Taolo
FRANCISTOWN

Banni ba toropo ya Francistown ba kopile gore mogopolo wa go tllhamiwa ga kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo o eme pele ka jaana go na le dieemo mo lefatsheng tse di ka tsibogelwang pele.

Ba tlhalositse se, kwa diphuthengong tsa kgotla tsa Block 4, Monarch le Donga tse di neng di buisiwa ke tona wa boatlhodi le kago sesha ya magolelwa, Rre Nelson Ramaotwana mo Francistown bosheng.

Bangwe ba banni ba ntshitse matshwenyego a tshwana go sa tlhologanya sentle gore kgotla e, e ya go bereka jang, fa bangwe ba kaile fa go ka emiwa pele ka go tlhama kgotla e mme ga itebagangwa le seemo se se sa iketlang kwa dikokelong jaaka go tlhoka melemo.

Kwa Block 4, Mme Mlambo Nfila o kaile fa go le bothokwa go tlhoma kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo e bile e thokega, mme a kaya fa go ka nna kaone gore go itebagangwe le mathata a a mo lefatsheng pele.

“Kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo re batla gore e tlhomiwe. Sebe sa phiri ke gore go na le mathata jaaka letlhoko la dipilisi. A lefatsheng le boele pele mo seemong ke gone kgotla e, e ka tlhamiwa,” ga tlhalosa jalo Mme Nfila

Fa a tswa la gagwe, Rre Boycie Pekenene a kaya fa go tlhokana le kitso e tseneletseng ya gore kgotla e, e ya go bereka jang.

Mo phuthengong e nngwe, banni ba kgotla ya Monarch le bone ba ne ba ntsha maikutlo a bone, mme bane ba kopa gore go seka sekwe molao motheo pele go ka tlhamiwa kgotla eo.

Rre Gibson Puso, o ne a kopa tona gore go simololwe ka one molao motheo pele o sekasekwe ka jaana o sale o dirwa bogologolo. Fa a latlhela la gagwe, Rre Mshingo Mathews o ne a kopa tona go tlhalosa gore a go tla nna motlhofo gore Motswana yo o senang madi a kgone go itsheka kwa legkotleng le.

E ne e rile mo maitseboweng, tona Ramaotwana a ya go lekodisa banni ba kgotla ya Donga e ntse e le mo Francistown, mme bone ba supa fa ba le bete se molangwana ka go tlhomiwa ga kgotla e, mme segolo bogolo ele ka dikgang tsa go sa kaletsa bao ba ba athloletsweng loso.

Rre Simisane Ramaotwana o ne a tlhalosa fa Batswana ba thobaetswa ke gore e sale puso e ntsha e tsena ga go ise go kaladiwe ope ntsa go na le ba ba athloletsweng lesa.

“Re le Batswana re dumela gore ope yo tseelang yo mongwe botshelo, tshwanelo ya gagwe e ema gone foo,” ga bua jalo Rre Ramaotwana.

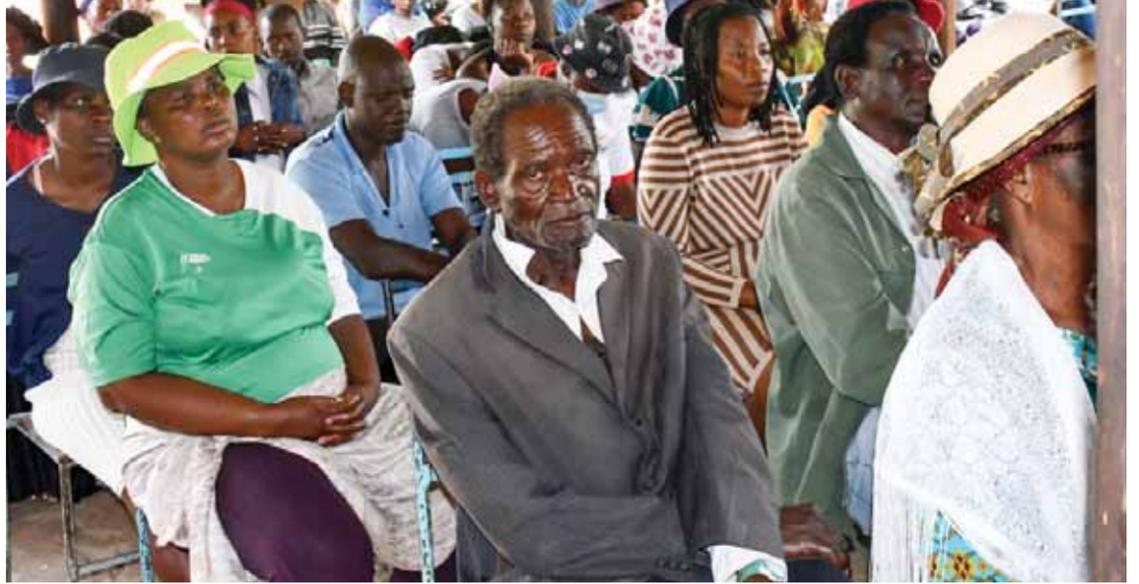
Rre Shingani Matebu o ne a

iteela kobo moroko mafoko a ga Rre Ramaotwana, a tlhalosa fa go lebege puso e eme fela e sa dire sepe tebang le batho ba ba bolaileng ba bangwe.

E rile fa a ba kgwa dikgaba, tona Ramaotwana o ne a kopa gore morafe o tlhoke pelaelo mabapi le dikgang tsa katlholelo lesa ka jaana molao motheo o tla salwa morago fa go sena go sekasekwa dintlha tsa ba ba athloletsweng lesa.

Mo go tse dingwe tse e leng letshwenyego la setshaba jaaka letlhoko la dipilisi le melemo mo dipatela, tona Ramaotwana o kopile gore morafe o none pelo ka mathe ka jaana go rekwa ga melemo go tswelutse sentle le ntsa go tsaya nakonyana gore e gorage.

Tona o ne a tlhalosa gape fa lephata la botsogo le abetswe madi a kwa godimo mo kgaoganyong ya madi e e satswang go feta gore le kgone go tsibogela diemo tsa lone. BOPA



Banni ba Monarch kwa Francistown ba le kwa phuthengong ya mogopolo wa tshimolodiso ya kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo e e neng e buisiwa ke tona wa tsa boatlhodi le kago sesha ya magolelwa, Rre Nelson Ramaotwana bosheng. Ba kopile gore mogopolo wa go tllhamiwa ga kgotla eo o eme pele ka jaana go na le dieemo mo lefatsheng tse di tlhokang go tsibogelwa. Senepe: Lephata la boatlhodi le kago sesha ya magolelwa

Banni ba atla mogopolo wa tshimolodiso kgotla ya molao motheo

Booster Mogapi le Keetile
Bontsibokae
MOLEPOLOLE

Merafe ya metse ya Molepolole le Kopong ba supile fa ba dumelana le tshimolodiso ya kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo ka e

tle sireletsa ditshwanelo tsa batho.

Ba buile se mo diphuthengong tsa kgotla tse di neng di buisiwa ke tona wa lephata la metsi le bonno, Rre Onneetse Ramogapi ka Labobedi kwa Molepolole le Kopong ka go latelelana.

Tona Ramogapi o ne a tlhalosetsa morafe fa puso e lemogile mosola

wa go nna le kgotla eo ka e tla thusa go sireletsa ditshwanelo tsa batho, bogolo jang ka mo sebakeng seno go sena kwa ba ikuelang teng fa makgotla a ditsheko a tsere ditshwetso kgatlonong le se ba se batlang.

A re ka jalo, puso e mo letsholong la go tsaya megopolo mo setshabeng gore a ba tlhokana le kgotla eo kana jang.

Tona Rramogapi, yo gape eleng Mopalamente wa Palapye o tlhaloseditse morafe gore tiro ya kgotla ya ditsheko eo, e tlaabo ele go itebaganya le go sireletsa ditshwanelo tsa mongwe le mongwe mo setshabeng.

Mongwe wa banni ba Kopong Rre Dipheko Motube a re o dumelana le kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo mme o ne a re puso e lebe sentle gore a ke nako ya go fefosetsa go e diragatsa kgotsa e itebaganye le go rarabolola mathata a seemo sa itsholelo.

O ne a supa gape gore puso e ka bo e ne ya simolola pele ka go baakanya molao motheo wa lefatsheng ka seo se tla fa kgotla ya molao motheo dintlha kgolo tse batla berekang ka tsone mme e bile di ba kaela gore ba bereka jang.

Mme Gaone Mmatlinyana le Mme Galenamong Tshekiso ba re ba itumelela gore kgotla e, e tlaabo e tsile sentle mo nakong e banana ba sotlakakiwang ke bahiri bangwe mme go sena gore ba ka ikuela kae.

Mme Keletso Moroke e ne a re le mororo a ise a tlhologanye kgotla e, o dumela fa ele yone mopholosi wa gagwe mo dikgannyeng tsa go tseelwa lefatsheng kwa masimong mme a setse a iphotthere fela ka lekgotla la kabo ditsha le ikgatholosa selemo sa gagwe.

Rre Tshwaragano Motswagole kwa Molepolole a re o batla kgotla e ka patla le jase mme a re fa go ne go kgonega e ka bo e simolodisiwa ka ponyo ya leitho go nne dikgang tse di marara tse di bogisang setshaba di ne di ka bona tharabololo.

Yo mongwe monni wa Molepolole, Rre Joseph Tshireletso o iteetse moonoo wa go tllhongwa ga kgotla e legofi, mme a re kang tsa mofuta o di ne di le monate fa ne di roletswe magosi pele gore e nne bone ba di begelang setshaba.

Erile a fa malebo, Mopalamente wa Molepolole Borwa Rre Shima Monageng o ne a supa fa kgotla ya molao motheo e le mosola fela thata mo go sireletseng ditshwanelo tsa batho.

A re mo mafatsheng a mangwe, kgotla eo e arabile selemo sa batho le merafe ka go farologana mme tharabololo ya thusa go ritibatsa dikgoberego, ga nna le ledula mo lefatsheng la bone.

Rre Monageng o ne a supa fa kwa phelelong Batswana e tla nna bone ba laolang gore a kgotla eo e nna teng kana jang mme puso e tlaa ba reetsa. BOPA



Mongwe wa banni ba Kopong, Mme Galenamong Tshekiso a re go tllhongwa ga kgotla ya ditsheko ya molao motheo go ka thusa go rarabolola matshwenyego a go jewa ntsoma ke bahiri bangwe. Senepe: Keetile Bontsibokae

Gaolathe issues stark call as Botswana outgrows diamond era

Tebagano Ntshole

GABORONE

For decades, Botswana's economy was the 'golden child' of Africa, robust and fuelled by the diamond trade.

But in Parliament on Tuesday, Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mr Ndaba Gaolathe offered a stark portrait of the nation's economy as he responded to the legislators' contributions to the debate on the 2026/27 budget. Minister Gaolathe spoke of an elderly and sick parent.

Once the provider and the pillar of the home, she now lies bedridden, her strength sapped as diamond revenues, the very lifeblood of the nation, plummet.

"The sick parent represents an economy that was once booming. Now, she relies on her children to see her through," he told Parliament. The metaphor was not just a rhetorical flourish; it was a plea for collective action.

As government moves to resuscitate the patient, the Vice President indicated that the era of passive inheritance was over. Botswana can no longer survive on the memory of past successes or the dwindling safety net of its foreign reserves.

The 2026/27 budget, according to the finance minister, is the beginning of a long-term treatment plan. It is not a magic pill that provides all the answers, but rather a roadmap toward a diversified and private-sector-led recovery.

To fund this recovery, government has had to tighten its belt. One of the most talked-about moves has been the centralisation of Government Purchase Orders (GPOs).

While Mr Gaolathe admitted this was not a permanent solution, he credited the move with stopping wastage of public funds, essentially plugging the leaks in a system that could no longer afford to lose a single drop.

However, the treatment is not without its critics. Leader of the Opposition and Maun North MP, Mr Dumelang Saleshando, though he supported ending supplementary budgets, he warned

that extreme centralisation could backfire, arguing that in trying to save money, government might inadvertently starve local businesses of the timely payments they need to survive.

The phrase 'economic diversification' has been a staple of the country's political vocabulary for a generation. But as Mr Gaolathe said, the time for talk had expired.

"We have had good policies. All that is left is execution," said Minister Gaolathe. Enter the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP).

Billed as the 'active wing' of government's strategy, the BETP is designed to turn blueprints into bricks and mortar.

Whether it is improving infrastructure, digitising tax collection, or stabilising struggling entities like the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC), the goal is to ultimately create a country where a citizen's dreams are not dictated by the price of a gemstone in a London vault. The debate revealed a rare, albeit cautious, sense of national unity. Even as opposition members like Okavango West MP, Mr Kenny Kapinga pushed for more stability and Selebi Phikwe East MP, Mr Kgoberego Nkawana pledged his support, the underlying message was the same, the 'sick parent' belongs to everyone.

The Vice President was quick to clarify that a private-sector-led economy does not just mean rolling out the red carpet for foreign billionaires.

It means empowering the local farmer, tech entrepreneur and the small business owner to take their place at the table. As Parliament end debate on the Appropriation Bill, yet to move toward the Committee Stage, the atmosphere remained one of focused urgency.

The 'parent' is still in the hospital bed and the recovery will be slow. But with a shift from diamonds to digital services and from wastage to welfare, government is betting that the best days are not just a memory, but a future waiting to be built. **BOPA**



Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo (centre) has called for robust economic reforms targeting young people, women and persons with disabilities.

Chombo advocates economic liberty for youth

Mmoniemang Motsamai

GABORONE

Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo, has called for robust economic reforms targeting young people, women, and persons with disabilities.

Contributing to the 2026/27 budget speech debate on Tuesday, Minister Chombo stated it was crucial for government to create a responsive economic ecosystem tailor-made to support mentorship, growth and access to capital and markets.

In that regard, she emphasised that the P1.85 billion procurement budget across all ministries and departments must strictly comply with the 20 per cent reservation for young people.

"Businesses owned by women, young people and persons with disabilities must get a share of this budget. We must make sure of it," she said.

Ms Chombo further emphasised that economic liberty was vital, particularly for women, as financial independence often provided the means to leave abusive relationships. She also urged institutions entrusted with funding development projects to

prioritise youth and women-led businesses. Furthermore, she argued that government must work harder to create pathways for graduates, noting that the demand for many years of work experience often hindered their breakthrough into the job market.

To address such gaps, she informed Parliament that her ministry was working to capacitate and equip such groups through strategic partnerships.

She also announced that the ministry was finalising a Youth Employment Strategy in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Additionally, she said a Revised National Youth Policy would be tabled in Parliament to lay the groundwork for a Youth Development Act, intended to secure sustainable opportunities for the youth. MP for Tswapong North, Mr Prince Maele, commended the budget for focusing on three main pillars which entailed addressing financial haemorrhage, stabilisation and economic take-off. He noted that the budget speech aligned with both the State of the Nation Address (SONA) and previous

budgetary goals.

Mr Maele welcomed that supplementary estimates and virement of maintenance votes would be restricted.

"These measures are meant to address financial haemorrhage," he noted, adding that strict enforcement of centralised Government Purchase Orders (GPOs) had effectively curbed wastage.

He also welcomed the transformation of state-owned enterprises, such as the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) and Air Botswana, as a step toward revitalising the economy, while highlighting the importance of the Sovereign Wealth Fund for posterity.

Tati East MP, Mr Tlhabologo Furniture, opposed the budget, arguing that the Minister of Finance failed to address bread and butter issues and ignored policy pronouncements previously promised by the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC).

Mr Furniture suggested that income must be more strictly aligned with expenditure to avoid deficits, stressing the need to improve foreign reserves and revenue collection.

He cautioned government against increasing taxes, saying it would have negative impact on households.

On healthcare, he opined a national health insurance scheme was currently unfeasible due to budget constraints. Instead, he argued that government should prioritise improvement of medical supplies in existing health facilities.

He also raised concerns regarding the delay of Constituency Community Projects (CCP) funds, which he said hampered local development.

While he welcomed the P97 million budget allocated to fight Foot and Mouth Disease, he disapproved the lack of a detailed plan on how the funds would be utilised.

He further called for the establishment of a dedicated gender-based violence (GBV) fund to support victims and combat the scourge. **BOPA**

Ministry commits to impactful YDF

GABORONE

The Ministry of Youth and Gender Affairs is committed to ensuring that all Youth Development Programmes (YDF) not only serve national development objectives but also act as a meaningful springboard for young people into sustainable livelihoods.

Answering a parliamentary question Monday, Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Lesego Chombo said they had thus embarked on reviewing and remodelling the YDF with the aim for it to be inclusive, impactful and to create meaningful employment.

Minister Chombo said the ministry would align the YDF with strategic sectors identified under the twelfth National

Development Plan (NDP 12) and the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BTEP).

"These programmes must particularly contribute to economic diversification, support employment and value chain development, enhance citizen participation in high-growth and underrepresented sectors and promote innovation, export potential and digital enablement," she said.

Accordingly, she said the ministry would prioritise areas with higher scalability, productivity and multiple effects, including among others, agri-business, manufacturing and agri-processing, digital and creative industries, tourism value chains, renewable energy as well as and

knowledge-based and innovative-driven ventures. Ms Chombo further said prioritisation did not equate to restriction, adding that YDF was not designed to confine young people to a prescribed list of businesses. "Innovation often emerges outside conventional categories, and it would be counterproductive to stifle entrepreneurship creativity by over-regulating sector entry," she said.

She added that the objective was not to dictate what youth must do, but to ensure that youth enterprise development contributed meaningfully to Botswana's transition towards a diversified, high-income and export-driven economy, while allowing room for entrepreneurship ingenuity and

responsiveness to local demand.

Furthermore, she said the ministry had over the years funded a total of 44 day care centres, out of which 27 were operational, located in Maun, Kasane, Mochudi, Palapye, Masunga, Francistown and Shashe Mooko, while others closed due to high rentals and shortage of pupils, in Tonota, Middlepits, Otse, Mahalapye, Shoshong, Gumare, Shakawe, Serowe and Moiyabana.

Shoshong MP, Mr Moneedi Bagaisamang, had wanted to know if the ministry did not see the need to prioritise funding youth day care centres through the YDF programme, considering that many youth had studied Early Childhood Education and many day care centres were owned by foreigners. **BOPA**

Arts & Culture



Obakeng Keitemoge's mission is to elevate Botswana's art in the global stage.



Keitemoge's art celebrates the Africa's rich heritage, often portraying tribal life, fashion, cuisine, architecture and pottery.

Keitemoge strives to share African culture abroad

Keetile Bontsibokae
MOLEPOLOLE

Obakeng Keitemoge, born and raised in Gaborone, is a visual and fine artist whose work is deeply rooted in Botswana and African traditions.

His art celebrates the continent's rich heritage, often portraying tribal life, fashion, cuisine, architecture and pottery.

'Mostly, I like to draw cultural artwork depicting African tribes, their way of life, fashion, culinary traditions, and architecture. Our culture is so rich, and I want to capture it.'

His passion for art began in Standard 5 during a CAPA lesson and never faded.

He carried it through junior and senior secondary school days, eventually earning an A* in Botswana

General Certificate of Secondary Education.

In 2016, he turned his passion into a full-time career, working across drawing, painting, and fabric design.

Beyond his own practice, Keitemoge is committed to teaching, he mentors young artists, unemployed individuals, and vulnerable communities,

equipping them with painting and drawing skills to help them create opportunities for self-employment.

"I share my skills because I know art can change lives, it worked for me, and I want others to benefit too," he says.

Keitemoge envisions art becoming a valuable investment in Botswana, comparable to real estate.

He believes art not only appreciates in value but also has the potential to contribute to the nation's GDP and diversify the

economy. His dream is for Botswana to invest in art as a way of telling their own stories and showcasing their identity to the world.

With the internet connecting global markets, Keitemoge aims to reach audiences far beyond Botswana.

"The whole world is connected; we can sell to people in Finland, Germany, the United States. I want to use the internet to reach everywhere," he notes.

Despite challenges such as limited understanding of art's economic potential, he remains committed to educating others.

In 2025, he marked a milestone year, participating in a programme sponsored by the National Art Council of Botswana, where he and fellow artists taught art skills to school dropouts and vulnerable groups, empowering them to earn through creativity.

His advice to fellow artists is to remain original, patient, and persistent; "Never tire of telling and sharing stories in the global village," he says, encouraging artists to attract international enthusiasts.

He also wishes for the Ministry of Sports and Arts to invest in artists by recognising art's role in storytelling, economic diversification, and national development.

At 32, Keitemoge continues to build momentum, driven by a vision of art as both cultural heritage and economic opportunity.

His journey, a reflection of personal achievement and a mission to elevate Botswana's art onto the global stage. **BOPA**



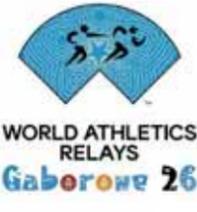
Obakeng Keitemoge



His dream is for Botswana to invest in art as a way of telling their own stories and showcasing their identity to the world.

Photos: Courtesy of Obakeng Keitemoge

DailySport



Ticket Prices

GOLD STAND
Grandstand North with a clear view of the final lap of the 100m):

Day 1 – \$120
(approximately BWP1598)

Day 2 onwards – \$150
(approximately BWP1986)



Ramoreboli optimistic

Anastacia Sibanda
GABORONE

The senior national football team coach Morena Ramoreboli has expressed confidence that the Zebras have what it takes to qualify for the next edition of the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Speaking at the team’s appreciation event in Gaborone Monday, he said Botswana had an abundance of talent, emphasising that players developed best when their mistakes were corrected rather than overlooked with praise as constructive criticism was key to their growth.

“To all technicians, remember that your contribution is to grow football in this country. We have been given that responsibility,” he said.

Ramoreboli stressed that in nurturing talent, coaches must focus on helping players improve and grow into stronger footballers.

The coach admitted that the team was not proud of their AFCON performance in Morocco, where they were eliminated in the group stages.

However, he said their participation in the finals provided valuable lessons that would help them reach the same level as stronger teams.

He said as a coach, he learnt a lot in Morocco.

“For the first time in my football career I had to stand for 90 minutes, and it was difficult to send messages because of the

crowd and stadium noise. Those are things our players are not used to,” he said.

He said they also gained insight into the lifestyle and level of commitment demonstrated by other players at AFCON.

“We saw Sadio Mané play 90 minutes in all games and still give the same attitude,” he said.

Ramoreboli noted that during the 2012 AFCON tournament, the same Senegal side that recently won the championship had once gone home without a single win.

“Sometimes we take many lessons before getting what we want, but because of noise and negativity we end up thinking we are not good enough,” he said.

He further said national team coaches and players carried huge responsibility in representing their countries with pride.

“Before pointing fingers, players, coaches, legends and stakeholders should ask themselves how best they can help the national team,” he said.

Ramoreboli observed that people were often quick to judge and forgot their critical role in supporting the national team so that it could achieve good results.

“This is a national team where everybody is responsible. Your little contribution, whether at the stadium or through positive messages on social media, always pushes our boys,” he said.

He added that if the nation could unite, there was no doubt Botswana could achieve great things.

Ramoreboli also thanked the Botswana Football Association for its relentless support during AFCON preparations and throughout the tournament. **BOPA**

Brazil closes new deal with Ancelotti

RIO DE JANEIRO

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) is close to extending the contract of the men’s national team coach, Carlo Ancelotti, beyond this year’s FIFA World Cup, CBF president Samir Xaud said on Tuesday.

Xaud said the Italian had agreed to a new deal pending ‘bureaucratic and legal adjustments’.

“What we want, as I always say, is not something immediate, but rather a long-term project,” Xaud told reporters in Rio de Janeiro.

“We believe one year is far too little to develop work that produces lasting results.”

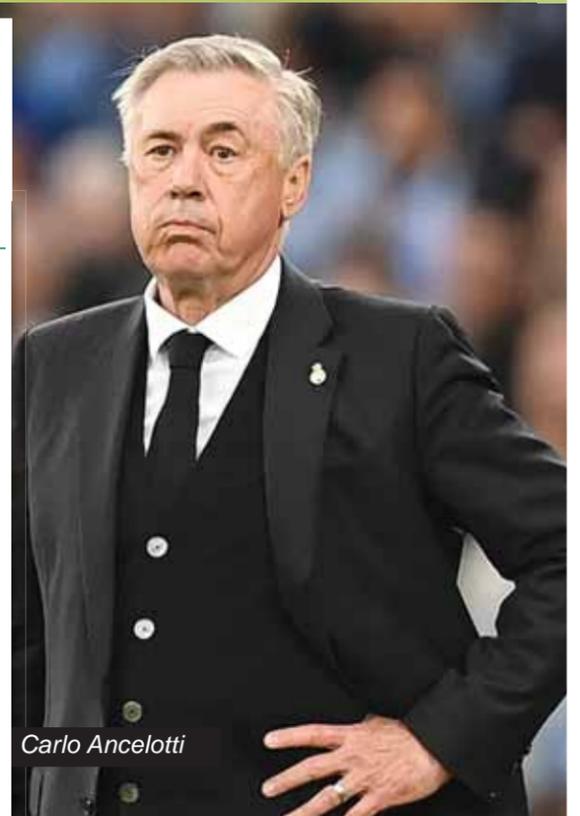
Ancelotti took charge of Brazil last May on a contract running until the World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

The 66-year-old has overseen four wins, two draws and two losses since his appointment.

“We have the best raw material in the world when it comes to a coach and we have to make the most of his time here in Brazil with the national team,” Xaud said.

“I strongly believe in the work he has been doing. It is that confidence that led us to begin these renewal talks.”

Five-time World Cup champion Brazil secured its place in the next edition of football’s



Carlo Ancelotti

biggest tournament with a 1-0 win over Paraguay last June, the Italian’s second game in charge.

Brazil will begin its 2026 World Cup campaign against Morocco on June 13 before also facing Haiti and Scotland in the group stage. **Xinhua**

Coach Morena Ramoreboli says the Zebras can qualify for the next edition of the Africa Cup of Nations.

