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YEARS RE XAVANA

'No deaths from expired COVID-19 vaccines'

▪ P16.9 million worth of expired vaccines destroyed

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Ookeditse

NO DEATHS WERE RECORDED in relation to alleged administration of expired COVID-19 Pfizer vaccines on patients, Assistant Minister of Health Lawrence Ookeditse told Parliament this week, revealing that vaccines worth P16,909,236.00 had to be destroyed.

Answering a question in Parliament on Wednesday, Ookeditse said it is not true that health facilities administered expired vaccines during COVID-19 immunization, with that resulting in deaths nationally. Serowe South Member of Parliament, Leepetswe Lesedi had asked the Minister of Health (MoH) to inform the house if any members of the public in Botswana were ever offered COVID-19 expired doses and vaccines.

He asked that in particular, the Minister should state: the number of people who were given expired Pfizer shots locally and who granted permission to unilaterally extend the vaccines' shelf life as well as the number of people who died during and after the COVID-19 vaccination.

Ookeditse said as at the 8th of

August 2022, Botswana had received 463,098 (Four hundred and sixty-three thousand and ninety-eight) doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. He said early consignments received on the 3rd of June 2022, 3 September 2022, and the 17th of November 2022 had a six-month shelf life and were distributed and utilised within their valid expiry periods.

Ookeditse said expiry date extensions were not unilaterally determined by Botswana. Such extensions were approved by the World Health Organization (WHO) following scientific stability studies conducted by manufacturers and reviewed by global regulatory authorities. "Mr. Speaker, no deaths have been attributed to the

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PALAPYE RETREAT

Masisi, Khama divide BDP

- BDP Central Committee clashing over Masisi, Khama invitations
- Masisi as former BDP leader or Khama as Bangwato Kgosikgolo
- Some CC members unhappy over apology tendered to Khama
- BDP Palapye retreat to test BDP unity; some regions unhappy



Khama



Balopi



Masisi

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THE 2025 CEASEFIRE MISSION undertaken by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) leadership to offer an external apology to former president and Bangwato Paramount Chief, Kgosi Ian Khama is haunting the party ahead of the party's retreat in Palapye, with the central committee divided over the invitations of former presidents Mokgweetsi Masisi and Ian Khama.

Information gathered by this publication is that the BDP leadership is caught between a rock and hard place over Khama and Masisi on the crucial party congress

TO PAGE 4

De Beers powers citizen businesses

DE BEERS HAS LAUNCHED A Diamond Enterprise Development Programme aimed at strengthening local participation across Botswana's diamond value chain, as part of broader efforts to deepen beneficiation beyond mining. The programme is being implemented through De Beers Global Sightholder Sales and uses a phased, funnel-based approach to identify and support high-potential citizen-owned diamond businesses over the long term. Speaking at the workshop, Baleseng Best Raditladi, Vice President Sales and Beneficiation at De Beers, said the initiative was deliberately structured to prioritise quality and impact rather than numbers. More than 140 entrepreneurs applied when the call for applications opened late last year. From these, 30 were selected to participate in an initial two-day workshop focused on business discovery and network building. Following assessments of commitment and business readiness, the cohort was reduced to 20, who are currently undergoing intensive training.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 9

KFC

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India hosts AI Summit 2026

INDIA WILL HOST THE AI Impact Summit 2026 from 16 to 20 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, bringing together governments, policymakers, innovators, researchers, industry leaders and youth from around the world. The summit comes at a time when artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming economies, public services and labour markets, making it essential for countries to engage early, thoughtfully and collaboratively with this emerging technology.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

The AI Impact Summit 2026 will focus on how artificial intelligence can be harnessed responsibly and inclusively to drive economic growth, social development and public good, particularly in the context of the Global South. Rather than viewing AI solely as an advanced technological tool, the summit will emphasise its practical impact on people's lives and its potential to enhance productivity, widen access to services and support sustainable development.

India's growing leadership in artificial intelligence provides a strong foundation for hosting this global dialogue. India is currently ranked third globally in AI competitiveness, reflecting the strength of its digital public infrastructure, talent pool and innovation ecosystem. Recognising AI as a strategic priority, the Government of India has approved an outlay of Rs 10,300 crore, equivalent to over one billion US dollars, for the IndiaAI Mission. This initiative aims to expand national AI capabilities while ensuring that innovation remains inclusive and aligned with societal needs.

Significant investments are being made to strengthen AI infrastructure and access. More than 38,000 GPUs have

been onboarded to expand national AI computing capacity, supporting researchers, startups, academic institutions and public sector users. In parallel, India has established AIKosh, a national AI repository that hosts over 5,500 datasets and 252 AI models, enabling the development of AI solutions across sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, education, finance and governance.

India's experience has shown that the true value of artificial intelligence lies in people-centric and affordable applications. Digital public platforms have demonstrated how technology can be scaled to serve large populations while improving efficiency and transparency. The AI Impact Summit 2026 will build on this experience by promoting ethical frameworks, capacity building and cross-border collaboration to ensure that AI benefits are widely shared.

For Botswana, these conversations are particularly relevant. Botswana's strong institutions, sound governance and long-term development planning provide a solid base for leveraging artificial intelligence in support of national priorities. AI has the

potential to enhance service delivery and productivity in sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, education, mining, financial services and public administration, while also opening new pathways for youth employment and entrepreneurship.

In this context, the AI4Botswana Impact Summit held recently in Gaborone, jointly organised by the High Commission of India and PulaSpace, served as an important precursor to the New Delhi summit. The discussions highlighted how AI can support economic diversification, modernise traditional sectors and empower young people to move beyond job-seeking towards solution-building.

The AI Impact Summit 2026 will place strong emphasis on Global South perspectives, ensuring that developing countries are active contributors to shaping the future of artificial intelligence. Botswana's participation and insights will therefore be valuable in helping to shape practical, development-oriented AI solutions.

As India and Botswana continue to deepen their partnership in technology, innovation and capacity building, artificial intelligence offers a powerful new area of cooperation. The AI Impact Summit 2026 provides an opportunity to engage with global best practices, share experiences and ensure that AI becomes a force for inclusive growth, sustainable development and shared prosperity.

**Prepared by the High Commission of India in Gaborone in connection with the forthcoming AI Impact Summit 2026, scheduled to take place from 16 to 20 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.*

STEAM Centre connects BIUST to society

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BOTSWANA International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) officially launched a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Centre on Thursday (12th February 2026) at the university campus in Palapye.

The STEAM Centre was established through partnering with STEmpower Incorporated, which was formed in the United States of America by the Gelfand family Charitable Trust, which has a significant impact in advancing STEAM education across Africa.

The STEAM Centre targets secondary and pre-university students, offering practical, hands on laboratory experiences that spark interest and encourage young people to pursue further studies and careers in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

In his keynote address, the Vice Chancellor of BIUST, Professor Otlogetswe Totolo noted that the STEAM Centre is more than just a laboratory, it represents an investment in human potential, innovation and national development. It demonstrates what can be achieved when global partners work hand in hand with local institutions to empower the next generation of scientists, engineers and problem-solvers.

"What makes this initiative especially impactful is its inclusive nature. STEAM enrichment programmes help bridge gaps across gender, ethnicity and social backgrounds, promoting unity, innovation and development within and across communities. STEmpower is guided by three objectives; the first being



Professor Otlogetswe Totolo

addressing societal challenges through hands on laboratory-based learning. The second objective is strengthening

capacity to build engineering and technological skills which are vital for production of value chains. The third one is empowerment at scale by enriching STEAM education at pre-university level. The programme improves education quality, innovation and career readiness, creating benefits that extend across societies," he said.

A STEAM centre is a dedicated learning facility offering free, age-appropriate programmes to local students who participate voluntarily. In a safe and supportive, trained laboratory mentors guide students as they work with modern scientific and engineering equipment.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 90 STEAM Centres have already been established with several more currently under development.

Through the growing network

of STEAM Centres, innovative hands-on engineering curricula is developed and shared. These include vital computing and electronics, microcomputers and 3D printing as well as training in soil and water technologies, chemical engineering and biochemical sciences. The Chief Education Officer for Palapye Sub Region in the Ministry of Child Welfare & Basic Education, Segopodiso Selato highlighted that their priority is to deliver a transformative and shock response education system through STEAM.

"It is a privilege for us to be a part of this initiative because what we want to achieve through STEAM will be readily available at BIUST. T

he laboratory is going to go a long way in assisting us to realise our dream of providing quality education that is

responsive to the current needs of our society. We want our schools to be like BIUST, and with the university opening doors for our learners and teachers, we can achieve that dream," she said., urging students to take full advantage of the centre initiative, to be innovative and become problem solvers at grassroots level.

For his part, the Director of Outreach and Engagement at BIUST, Dr Haniso Motlhabane said universities are traditionally known for teaching and learning, but progressive universities have the outreach and engagement departments to ensure that the communities benefit directly.

He said it is important that they reach out to learners prior to starting university as it is important that they appreciate the importance of STEAM education.

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Experts hail 2026/27 budget

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■ Budget dialogue highlights jobs creation opportunities

ACADEMICS, POLICY MAKERS and economists believe that the 2026/27 financial year budget has the potential to address socio-economic challenges such as high youth unemployment, should the ministerial allocations be used prudently.

They were contributing to discussions during the University of Botswana (UB) annual budget dialogue held on Thursday in Gaborone. The budget dialogue, themed 'Doing More with Less: Reimagining Public Spending for Growth, Equity and Productivity', brought together academics, policymakers and stakeholders to discuss the 2026/27 national budget, its allocations and impact on various sectors of the economy.

During a panel discussion, Kimberly Cornfield from UB Office of Research and Development said the ministry of Education received one of the largest shares of budget allocation and that demonstrates government commitment to unlock opportunities that can drive economic development. She said research and development is important in the ministry of education as the country seeks to address unemployment, particularly among the youth.

According to Cornfield, UB as a tertiary education provider is committed to pursue research that is solutions based, therefore they appreciate government commitment towards digital



Secretary, Macroeconomic and Financial Policy at Ministry of Finance, Dr Sayed Timuno

transformation of the economy. "It would be interesting to see more funds going into the national research fund. Digitalization in the rural areas would be helpful in creation of jobs outside urban areas. Digital connectivity can create jobs for the youth and improve skills," she said.

Secretary, Macroeconomic and Financial Policy at Ministry of Finance, Dr Sayed Timuno said the budget puts emphasis on fiscal consolidation while also looking at maximizing economic growth opportunities. He said government considers the Micro, Small and Medium



Kimberly Cornfield from UB Office of Research and Development

Enterprises (MSMEs) as critical in unlocking employment opportunities. He observed that MSMEs sector is excluded in the funding ecosystem and any emerging funding challenges will be addressed through the proposed National Fund of Funds as proposed in the national budget. He welcomed the adjustment of income tax for top earners following simulations with Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) to unlock more revenue.

Look to creatives

For her part, Professor Connie Rapoo from UB Department

of Visual and Performing Arts concurred that the budget presents a lot of opportunities but lamented that the parent ministry of the creatives sector remains not a priority on national budget allocations. She said the creative sector is broad based including different value chains such as fashion, music and film etc. which can bring solutions to the youth unemployment scourge.

According to her, the creatives can create more jobs than any other industry. "Botswana has not done badly in terms of policy making, like the National Arts Council of Botswana (NACB) and the Companies and

Intellectual Property Act. These made the environment more conducive to operate," she said.

Additionally, Prof Rapoo said with the current economic status, Botswana needs to move from digital investments to measurable gains: jobs, service delivery, and productivity that citizens can feel. This is the reality that the arts need to become profitable and commercially viable, she opined.

Centre of excellence

Meanwhile, UB Vice Chancellor, Professor David Norris said they are a national think tank and found it fit to translate the budget into action, human capital development and equity. He highlighted that research remains pivotal for the advancement of the institution.

He said in line with its mandate, UB should not only be a centre of teaching and research but a national platform for advancing knowledge, informing policy and contributing meaningfully to economic and socio development of Botswana.

Professor Norris said Botswana just like many economies is facing fiscal pressures, rising demands on public resources and imperative to accelerate inclusive growth. "UB is particularly interested in how public spending can support structural transformation, transitioning from resource dependence towards diversified knowledge driven economy, investment in research and innovation and developing human capital must remain central to that transformation," said Prof Norris.

Prof Bulawa slams education policy

- Blames automatic promotion, one size fits all curriculum
- Calls for introduction of mixed ability teaching, multiple pathways



Prof Bulawa

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EDUCATIONIST, PROFESSOR Philip Bulawa has advised the Ministry of Child Welfare & Basic Education (MCWBE) to use the 2026/27 financial year budget to bring reforms and abolish automatic promotion of students from primary to secondary school model.

Minister of Finance, Ndaba Gaolathe has allocated P11.8 billion to the MCWBE, the second largest allocation after Ministry of State President, Security and Defence who received the lion's share of P13.05 billion.

Speaking during a budget dialogue organized by the University of Botswana on Thursday, Professor Bulawa, who is the acting Dean in the School of Graduate Studies, said Botswana education results are a complete disaster at junior secondary level and worst a senior level. He observed that the automatic promotion model is the root cause of poor performance because students who have failed at the primary level advance to junior secondary education.

"This is a complete error. It still doesn't make sense how children who have not at all mastered primary education skills and competencies could be expected to do better at junior level. High unemployment levels come from this disastrous process," said Professor Bulawa, adding that the MCWBE should be working on how to get maximum value from the 2026/27 budget allocation, especially because the ministry has been receiving the largest share of the budget over the years.

According to Professor Bulawa, teachers should be trained on mixed ability teaching. "Teachers should be retooled so that they can deal with learners of different abilities. We call

that differentiation. At UB, we have expertise that can help the ministry of education to achieve that," he added.

In addition, Professor Bulawa said the curriculum must be reviewed to cater for different learning abilities, moving away from the one size fits all curriculum. He said through multiple pathways, when students proceed to secondary school they have the liberty to choose subjects that can contribute positively to their dream careers.

"I plead with the government to find money for research and give that money to us experts in UB. We will send our experts to conduct studies for example in the regions that continue to fail dismally every year. How can same five (5) regions be failing every year. There is a serious problem," Prof Bulawa lamented.

Catastrophic Several studies have suggested that Botswana should review her education policy frameworks to address poor academic results. In addition, teacher trade unions, Botswana Teachers Union (BTU) and Botswana Sectors of Educators Trade Union (BOSETU) have been calling on government to tackle challenges bedeviling the education sector, leading to a string of poor results annually.

The unions have decried lack of political will on the side of government to address deteriorating education system and poor results. They singled out some of the predicaments that lead to poor results year in and out such as automatic progression policy, shortage of classrooms and stagnation by the teaching cadre etc. Unions have also expressed disappointment that multiple pathways proposals have been reduced to idle chat as there is nothing tangible in terms of implementation.

BPC tariff hike opposed

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■ Power outfit seeks over 46% electricity tariff hike

BOTSWANA ENERGY Regulatory Authority (BERA) has been thrown into dilemma over the Botswana Power Corporation (BPC)'s 46% electricity tariff adjustment request, with several stakeholders in the economy utterly rejecting the adjustment citing that it would collapse the economy and hamper industrial growth.

BERA is expected to make a final decision on the BPC request following presentations by both BPC and other stakeholders.

BPC executive management team led by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) David Kgboko appeared before BERA public hearing over the electricity tariff adjustment application that is a burning topic nationally. In its high-stake call, BPC is asking BERA to adjust the electricity tariff by 46% for the 2026/27 financial year.

BPC General Manager for Power Generation, Mogomotsi Kebitseng while justifying BPC 46% tariff application said the costs of production of higher while the pricing of electricity remains very low. He said BPC if it is granted the 46% adjustment, it will still incur P397 million loss in 2026/27 financial year. He said BPC experiences cash flow problems due to stagnant revenue growth while costs of production continue to escalate.

Economic Meltdown

During the hearing, several players from sectors such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing and telecommunication etc. lamented that the tariff proposal is unreasonable amid tough economic conditions.

Calls have been made to BERA to not consider BPC 46% adjustment request, a development that private sector body, Business Botswana (BB) view as unreasonable given economic meltdown even experienced by the government itself.

Business Botswana Head of Policy and Research, Mphahi Tsholofelo said 80% of the members that Business Botswana represents have indicated that they reject and are going to react against the 46%



BPC CEO, David Kgboko

electricity tariff hike by BPC. He said the current economic hardships are not accommodative of increase in electricity costs. He said Business Botswana's assessment is that should BPC be granted 46% adjustment, this will drive inflation up and cause instability in the economy.

Moreover, Business Botswana instead while acknowledging the importance of ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the national power utility, Business it maintains that tariff increases should not be used to offset inefficiencies within the electricity supply industry.

Therefore, it has said transferring



BPC General Manager for Power Generation, Mogomotsi Kebitseng

such costs to businesses and consumers would weaken competitiveness and undermine the economy's productive capacity.

To maintain economic stability while ensuring a sustainable energy sector, Business Botswana recommended a balanced and phased approach to electricity tariff adjustments, supported by a predictable, multi-year pricing framework etc.

Manufacturing

Local manufacturing sector has also expressed outright rejection of BPC's push for 46% tariff increase. Chief Executive Officer

(CEO) of Botswana Exporters and Manufacturers Association (BEMA), Mmantlha Sankoloba said the manufacturing is an infant sector grappling with litany of challenges impeding its growth. The outspoken Sankoloba said the sector would be headed for collapse should BPC adjust electricity prices.

"Brace yourselves for the total shutdown of the manufacturing sector. The manufacturers are not being forced to stay in Botswana and could exit if electricity pricing go high unreasonably. There would be negative impact on growth or survival of manufacturing businesses," said Sankoloba.

In addition, Sankoloba said the burden of electricity is passed into the business community which is owed lot of explanation and communication on really why BPC is pushing for a substantial adjustment. "How did we get here as the economy is not clearly elaborated. There must be clear explanations and answers more than questions," she said.

Debswana

Speaking from the mining sector perspective, Head of Engineering and Asset Management at Debswana, Lefoko Sethobo said Debswana's costs are expected to escalate should BERA grants BPC 46% adjustment.

He said Debswana has high capital-intensive projects such as the Jwaneng Underground expansion and Orapa Cut 3 which their implementation may be hampered by cash flow challenges to be associated with high cost of electricity.

He said Debswana is already feeling the negative impact of the 50% electricity tariff adjustment effected last year to the mining companies by BPC, adding that Debswana is against the extra 46% adjustment as requested by BPC.

Food Security

For her part, Secretary of Tuli Block Farmers Association Letty Masunga said the farming community is already incurred high production costs that include electricity. Masunga said for Botswana to attain food security, it is high time for government to subsidize electricity for agriculture sector.

Masunga said Tuli Farmers over the years have incurred electricity costs amounting to over P10 million for all 13 commercial farmers involved in food production in Tuli Block. According to Masunga, subsidized electricity towards food production would making local production efficient or viable with that helping Botswana to cut down high costs accrued from importing food.

'We failed our people' – NGOs

■ Civil Society admits failure, ratifies position on 2026/27 Budget

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CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS meeting at the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) offices this week have ratified their collective position on the 2026/27 national budget, admitting that they failed to meaningfully influence government policy early in the process and calling for a more proactive, grassroots-driven approach.

Speaking during the civil society budget review, GAYO Botswana Director, Bokang Basejane said the

sector has largely been reactive, focusing on post-budget analysis instead of shaping priorities before the budget is tabled. "We have failed our people as civil society. We come together to tick boxes while communities are facing serious problems every day. If we are serious about making a difference, we must start from the ground up and engage the people we represent long before the budget speech," Basejane said.

Basejane questioned the real power of civil society organisations, arguing that while NGOs possess influence and public trust, they have not used it effectively to shape public opinion or budget priorities. He said the absence of a united civil society "shadow budget" weakens advocacy efforts and limits the sector's ability to push government on key social

and economic issues.

"One would have expected civil society to present its own expectations well in advance, so that people can see where we stand and what we are demanding," he said.

Discussions during the meeting also showed concerns about government spending on social issues, particularly child-related programmes. Participants noted that government allocates less than 22% of its total budget to child-focused interventions, warning that this remains insufficient given the scale of social challenges facing children and young people.

Civil society representatives further raised alarm over declining international donor funding, which currently supports a significant portion of civil society work in

Botswana. They cautioned that without increased domestic investment in social protection and civic activity, service delivery and advocacy efforts could be severely affected.

On the broader economic outlook, the meeting noted that Botswana's economy has experienced consecutive years of contraction, with growth projected to begin recovering gradually over the medium term. While the 2026/27 Budget shows a return to positive growth, participants questioned whether this recovery would be felt at community level, particularly among young people.

Concerns were raised about the absence of direct cash injections or targeted stimulus measures for youth in the latest budget, as well



GAYO Botswana Director, Bokang Basejane

as limited funding for civic and democratic activities. Participants argued that young people continue to bear the brunt of unemployment and economic uncertainty, yet remain inadequately supported through

fiscal policy. The budget review also discussed government's focus on fiscal consolidation and system reforms, including shifts in budget planning towards private sector lending and supply chain efficiencies. While acknowledging the need for fiscal discipline, civil society organisations said consolidation should not come at the expense of social spending and vulnerable groups.

The meeting concluded with a call for civil society organisations to rebuild their advocacy from the grassroots, strengthen district and youth committee structures, and engage communities more meaningfully ahead of future budget cycles. Participants agreed that civil society must assert its influence earlier in the policy process if it is to remain relevant and effective in shaping national development priorities.

Boko, Gaolathe to grace bank notes

As BoB urges locals not to hide Lestile Tebogo P50 notes

THE GOVERNOR OF BANK of Botswana, Lesedi Moseki has urged members of the public to utilise and not keep for themselves the new commemorative P50 banknote which was officially issued into circulation on Friday (6th of February). He noted that the Bank has printed enough notes to ensure that every Motswana across the country has access to it and it is vital that they circulate.

Giving a keynote address during the official issuance of the banknote in Palapye, Moseki said BoB designed and produced a special edition of P50 to mark 50 years of existence which was a huge milestone. A commemorative bank note is a special type of currency that can be circulated, issued by a central bank to mark a significant national event or achievement, anniversary or tribute to a national hero. It features unique designs, colour or security features that set it apart from the normal circulating banknotes.

"The Bank's golden jubilee provided a befitting moment to issue one for the Pula currency. The P50 commemorative banknote is a first of its kind for Bank of Botswana, while the bank has previously issued commemorative coins to celebrate national milestones and achievements, this is the very first issuance of a circulating banknote. The denomination of the P50 banknote was chosen intentionally, reflecting our P50 years of service to the



Governor of Bank of Botswana, Lesedi Moseki

nation. This banknote is legal tender and will circulate with the existing P50 banknote bearing the portrait of our first President," he said.

Moseki emphasised that that this banknote does not replace the existing one as some people believe and mislead the nation. He stated that a commemorative note tells a story of stewardship, resilience and national progress, Botswana's enduring journey

towards economic sovereignty and future aspirations. He said that the design not only captures the institutional legacy but also celebrates Botswana's heritage, achievers and national pride. Bank of Botswana has served as the guardian of the Pula currency, preserving its value and enhancing its integrity.

"The banknote frontage pays homage to the role of stewardship featuring the

redeveloped Bank of Botswana headquarters building, Pula- Thebe, a beacon of stability and progress in the heart of the capital city. The note goes beyond institutional achievements, it features one of the most extraordinary discoveries in the mining sector, the Motswedi diamond, which is the biggest diamond unearthed in Botswana and the second biggest globally, unearthed at Lucara Diamond

Mine. This discovery is not just a geological wonder, it is a tribute to the economic success of our minerals through sound governance, prudent fiscal management and strong institutions like BoB. The commemorative note stands at the intersection of honouring the past and signalling the future," he said.

The reverse of the banknote showcases Botswana's 2024 Olympians, Letsile Tebogo, Bayapo Ndori, Busang Collen Kebinatshi, Anthony Pesela, in recognition of their historic performance at 2024 Olympic Games. By featuring this athletes, the aim is to honour excellence and inspire the young generation to strive for greatness. Moseki said that

this achievements are powerful expressions of national excellence, showing that with determination the youth of this country can compete on a world stage.

Moseki noted that to safeguard the integrity of our currency, the banknote incorporates enhanced security features including a security thread with an animated running man effect alongside other familiar features found on the current P50 banknote. He urged members of the public to familiarise themselves with the features to avoid being scammed.

Moseki noted that extensive stakeholder engagement and public education are ongoing to ensure smooth introduction

of the banknote. He reassured the public that there is no need to shy away from using cash, however there are rules that are used to govern cash use and mitigate against criminal activities. He said that the commemorative banknote is expected to remain in circulation until it is withdrawn in accordance with the bank's clean banknote policy, as notes become unfit for use due to wear or tear or environmental factors. He urged Botswana to handle all banknotes and coins with care and love as it is an offence to willingly mutilate banknotes.

"Before the end of the year 2026, Bank of Botswana will introduce a new banknote bearing the portrait of the

current President, Advocate Duma Gideon Boko. This issuance follows established tradition or practice of having the sitting President on the P10 note. The introduction of the banknote will be undertaken through the normal banknote issuance process and will circulate concurrently with the current P10 note. Furthermore, before the end of February 2026, the bank will introduce into circulation the third emission of both the P50 and P20 notes currently in circulation. The new notes will retain the same features except that they will bear the signatures of the Minister of Finance, Ndaba Gaolathe and the immediate former governor, Cornelias Dekop," he said.

Masisi, Khama divide BDP

FROM PAGE 1

billed for Palapye on 28th February.

The BDP central committee is torn between Khama and Masisi, as some members of the Central Committee hold the view that BDP has committed an error by sending a delegation led by BDP party leader Mpho to Serowe last year to offer a formal apology to Kgosi Khama and the people of Serowe.

Currently, it is said the BDP central committee and the 16 BDP regions are divided over who should be invited to the party's official retreat between Masisi and Khama. One senior member of the BDP central committee has conceded that there is no harmony in the central committee at all ahead of the Palapye retreat.

"The proposal had been that Masisi, as former president of the Republic and immediate BDP president, should be the one invited for the retreat as the official guest of honour. Some suggested that Khama, as Bangwato Paramount Chief, should be invited. However, some CC members are against Khama," said a source close to developments.

He added: "A grudge is held against some of us in the central committee, particularly as we didn't commit to that Serowe apology mission. Those central committee members are brutally labelled Masisi moles and cheerleaders. It is common knowledge that some BDP CC members are vilified in the social media."

Contacted for comment on Friday, the BDP Secretary

General Kentse Rammidi said the BDP has invited all of its former presidents to the retreat in Palapye and it is their expectation that they will accept the invitation.

Rammidi said those who are questioning the choice of Palapye as a venue and linking it to Khama influence are cynical in their thinking.

"We looked at Palapye as a central point because we are taking into consideration that our people are just coming from the festive break and money is a challenge now. So Palapye is a critical meeting point, and there is no politics associated with it," said Rammidi.

Rammidi also said the retreat is very important because it will give the BDP the opportunity to reconstruct itself following the 2024 general election defeat. He said the last BDP congress was election focused and didn't give the party sufficient time to introspect intensively.

Survival Mode

Political analyst, Frank Mogotsi said the BDP is going to Palapye following a successful elective congress in Maun last year, adding that the retreat will test the party's unity.

He said Khama and Masisi are former BDP presidents and the BDP cannot ignore their influence.

"Currently, the BDP is navigating stormy waters, and

it is on survival mode.

They would use both Masisi and Khama for political expediency.



Rammidi

BDP continues to hold Masisi in high regard, although he has retreated politically," said Mogotsi.

Mogotsi said the BDP has so far remained intact despite experiencing resignations by some members, who joined the ruling Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), adding that unity would be critical for the BDP survival in the long run ahead of 2029 election.

He said on paper, the BDP remains a strong political formation and that shouldn't be taken for granted by other political parties.

Balopi vs. CC

Meanwhile, it is said Balopi is under pressure ahead of the party retreat from some frustrated members in the central committee, who are uncomfortable with his drive to have a strong grip on the affairs of the party.

The Patriot on Sunday is reliably informed that peace is eluding BDP National Executive Committee (NEC) as some members are frustrated over what they deem a one-man show at the expense of collective responsibility.

The members, who spoke to this publication, intimate that the dissenting voices in the central committee are targeted by Balopi's inner circle both in the CC and in other party structures.

Recently, the former minister of health Dr Alfred Madigole resigned from the central committee under unclear circumstances. Madigole was an additional member of the central committee.

Some party members say there was no proper consultation with party structures such as regions ahead of the retreat. It is said some regions, which are also feeling sidelined by the party leadership, have threatened to boycott the retreat.

Some of the disgruntled regions are Kweneng West, South West, Shoshong-Mahalapye and Western region.

"There is no harmony in the CC. Members who express dissatisfaction over the direction of the party are being victimised and attacked on social media through sponsored pseudo-Facebook accounts. The planned retreat is exposing rife divisions within the executive committee," said another member of the CC.

Rammidi said the CC is cohesive and is working together, dismissing claims that there is fragmentation or any form of iron rule by the Party president Balopi. He said some members of the CC have been allocated regions to oversee, and they are hard at work doing very well to keep the party strong.

'No deaths from expired COVID-19 vaccines'

FROM PAGE 1

administration of expired COVID-19 vaccines, as expired vaccines were not used. All adverse events following immunisation were investigated in accordance with national and international

pharmacovigilance guidelines," said Ookeditse.

In addition, Ookeditse said expiry dates for COVID-19 vaccines are determined through scientific stability testing conducted by manufacturers and approved

by regulatory authorities under the WHO Emergency Use Validation framework.

This process, he said, it takes into account storage conditions, handling procedures, and temperature requirements, including ultra-low temperature

storage at minus 80 degrees Celsius for Pfizer vaccines. He indicated that any changes to expiry dates are communicated formally to Member States following regulatory approval. Ookeditse said there is no evidence that expired COVID-19 vaccines were administered to Botswana, and therefore no population-level long-term health effects can be attributed to expired vaccines.

Meanwhile, Ookeditse said out of a total of 6,326,694 (Six million three hundred and twenty-six thousand six hundred and ninety-four) Covid-19 vaccines received, 500,128 (Five hundred thousand one hundred and twenty-eight) vaccines expired, constituting 7.9% of all the Covid 19 vaccines received.

Ookeditse said the destruction of expired vaccines was undertaken using approved high-temperature incineration methods to minimise environmental risks, particularly to soil and groundwater.

He also said Botswana's COVID-19 vaccination programme was implemented in full compliance with the international regulatory standards, with the safety of Botswana remaining the Ministry's highest priority.

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Elephant hunting is a growing economic risk for Botswana, says report

When poaching amplifies the effect of higher hunting quotas, it is bad news for the future of Botswana's elephant population and its contribution to the economy, according to research.

DON PINNOCK

BOTSWANA – HOME TO THE world's largest remaining population of African elephants – is losing its most valuable wildlife asset at a rate far higher than officials have acknowledged, according to a major [new report](#) released by Elephants Without Borders (EWB).

Combined with an aggressive trophy-hunting quota and rising mortality from hunting, drought and human-elephant conflict, the country's elephant management system is entering what researchers describe as a dangerous period of biological and economic fragility.

Adding to this, elephant poaching in northern Botswana is now occurring with "alarming regularity", targeting the nation's biggest and most economically significant bulls.

According to one of the authors, Scott Schlossberg, "poachers and trophy hunters are both targeting the same elephants: older bulls with big tusks. So poaching directly affects hunting by reducing the number of bulls available to hunters. In the long run, controlling poaching is one of the best ways to ensure the sustainability of legal hunting."

EWB's population simulations demonstrate that:

When hunting quotas are high, the population has no buffer to absorb spikes in poaching, drought mortality, or human-elephant conflict;

Even minimal poaching deeply depresses trophy sizes; and

A decade-long poaching outbreak of around 500 elephants a year reduces trophy size for up to 50 years. Unfortunately, says the report, the monitoring system used by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) relies primarily on tracking the tusk sizes of hunted elephants. This approach detects declines a decade too late – after irreversible depletion has already taken place.

In economic terms the findings are a warning: Botswana could be losing an estimated BWP2.5-billion (about R3-billion) every year from elephant poaching – losses that fall disproportionately on rural

communities, tourism operators and the national treasury.

When numbers of bulls become depleted, says Schlossberg, it directly affects the hunting industry. "They have fewer bulls to hunt, and hunters are forced to take younger bulls with smaller tusks. That sort of change can impact the hunting outfits' bottom line and the revenue that Botswana receives from hunting fees."

Poachers target old bulls with big tusks

In Botswana, poachers select for the biggest tusks – and therefore the oldest males. In EWB's datasets, the average age of poached elephants is around 41 years, compared to 29 years in elephants dying of natural causes. These old bulls are the country's biological crown jewels:

They carry the largest, most impressive tusks, crucial for high-value photographic tourism;

They serve as leaders in male elephant societies, guiding younger bulls through landscapes and migrations; and

They are disproportionately important for mating success.

Losing such bulls has cascading effects – not only on tourism revenue and genetic health but on elephant behaviour. When old males are removed, younger bulls can become more aggressive and less disciplined.

Collision course with science

While poaching escalates, Botswana has sharply increased its trophy-hunting quota. After lifting the hunting moratorium in 2019, the 2025 quota rose to 410–431 elephants, equivalent to 0.29–0.31% of the national population.

In 2019 the elephant quota was 290. By 2025 it had risen to 431 – an increase of 48.6%. The assumption was that this level of hunting would be biologically harmless to a population of roughly 140,000 elephants. But this statistic is dangerously misleading. According to one of the report's authors, Dr Mike Chase, "the real threat is not how many elephants are killed, it is which elephants are being removed."

"Trophy hunting doesn't remove a random sample of elephants. It disproportionately targets the largest, oldest bulls, usually over 40 years



Without informed hunting quotas big tuskers will disappear. (Photo: Elephants Without Borders)

old, the carriers of Botswana's biggest tusks and strongest genetic traits. These elephants represent only a tiny fraction of the population."

Trophy hunting also does not occur across the whole elephant range. It is concentrated in specific hunting blocks that together hold only about 45,000 elephants. Within those areas, the effective harvest rate reaches 0.9% – almost double the rate that the government itself previously declared "biologically safe". EWB's modelling shows that at a 0.9% harvest rate, older bulls disappear entirely within 25 years. Tusk sizes shrink steadily until hunters are forced to take bulls that barely meet minimum trophy thresholds.

The government's justification for these high quotas is based heavily on a 2011 study that the EWB report identifies as seriously flawed. EWB alleges that the 2011 study used invented survival rates, ignored

density-dependent population dynamics (the way an elephant population's growth rate changes in response to its own density) and failed to incorporate known ecological processes.

Bull immigration

One of the report's most striking findings is the extent to which hunting zones in Botswana are population sinks – areas that lose more bulls to hunting than they can naturally produce.

Trophy hunting relies on a constant flow of big bulls migrating out of protected areas such as Chobe and the Okavango Delta into the hunting block.

The latest quota allows for 84 elephant to be hunted in blocks bordering immediately on the Okavango Delta and 75 to be hunted in blocks bordering Chobe National Park, of which 30 may be hunted along the Chobe River itself.

But because trophy hunting targets the biggest and the best, it will become more difficult to find trophy-quality bulls with big tusks.

Early survey data suggests that elephants may be starting to avoid hunting areas, a behavioural shift that would undermine the entire hunting model. If bull immigration slows, hunting operators could face a rapid collapse of trophy quality within a few years.

The poaching problem

The report shows a consistent trail of ivory-poaching interceptions from 2023 to 2025, exposing organised international syndicates operating with troubling efficiency.

On 23 November 2023, authorities seized 26 elephant tusks weighing 652kg, the equivalent of more than 10 large bulls. Three days later, another batch of 15 tusks was intercepted, followed by nine tusks on 3 December. On 5 December, a

further 18 tusks and seven suspects were detained near Savuti. In May and June 2024, interceptions continued – one involving 19 tusks on Namibia's side of the border, another involving six tusks seized by the Botswana Defence Force (BDF).

The most recent incident occurred on 10 September 2025, when BDF patrols along the Linyanti River recovered 13 freshly poached tusks abandoned by a foreign gang fleeing across the border. The matching elephant carcasses – with faces hacked open to remove ivory – were later located in neighbouring concessions.

Between November 2023 and May 2024 alone, law enforcement intercepted seven armed poaching gangs fleeing Botswana with ivory from freshly killed elephants. In just six months, authorities seized 103 tusks weighing nearly three tonnes. These figures expose the scale, organisation and persistence of cross-border poaching now hitting Botswana's elephant population.

Poaching appears to be conducted with impunity in both Chobe national parks and two tourism concessions by foreign gangs. In the concessions, 120 elephants were poached between October 2023 and May 2025.

The way forward

For four consecutive years, EWB has requested basic hunting and PAC (problem animal control) data from DWNP, including the ages, sexes and trophy measurements of elephants killed. No such information has been provided. This data is essential for assessing sustainability and is required under the Elephant Management Plan. For four years, the NGO has formally requested elephant mortality data and detailed hunting records from the Department of DWNP without success.

The report also raises governance concerns, noting that both Botswana's Elephant and Leopard Management Plans were authored by a foreign hunting-advocacy organisation, Conservation Force, without adequate transparency or local consultation. This, EWB argues, undermines the objectivity

of national wildlife policy and places it in the hands of foreign vested interests.

"When National Parks was planning for hunting, they assumed a healthy environment with few threats to elephants," Schlossberg said.

"In the real world, we know that elephants are being lost to drought, poaching, disease and retaliatory killings. But we don't know exactly what future levels of these losses will be. So setting a lower quota, at 0.1 or 0.2% of the population, is the best way to ensure that we have enough mature bulls to withstand whatever happens in the future."

A choice

The report closes with a warning: if current hunting quotas and ivory poaching continue, Botswana risks losing not only its largest elephants but also a major economic engine which is tourism.

EWB recommends:

Reducing hunting quotas to 0.2% or below, creating resilience to drought, poaching spikes and demographic shocks;

Improving transparency by releasing all hunting and PAC data.

Investing in year-round anti-poaching surveillance, including aerial patrols and drones;

Protecting key non-hunting areas that supply bulls to hunting blocks; and

Recognising the high economic value of living elephants and integrating this into national development planning.

As the researchers conclude, "Poaching by foreign syndicates is stealing directly from Botswana – from communities, from the tourism industry and from the nation's identity itself." In a country where each elephant represents millions in future value and the promise of long-term ecological stability, the cost of mismanagement may be felt for generations.

Daily Maverick sent the report to the Director of the DWNP, Moemi Batshabang, on Monday, 24 November, asking for his government's response to the report, but by the time of publication, he had not replied. [DM]

India- EU strategic partnership

ANIL TRIGUNAYAT*

INDIA AND EU HAVE BEEN strategic partners for over two decades, since 2004. EU has also emerged as a top trading (Euro 120-135 bn) and investment partner for India. The relationship and institutional mechanisms including the Troika dialogue have continued to reinforce and deepen for mutual benefit. Even though in several areas like Bilateral Trade Agreement the progress has been slow and painful, the current disruption in the Trans-Atlantic alliance engineered by Trumpian unilateralism has created a certain urgency to close the Trade deal at the earliest. It is expected that during January 2026, the gaps will be addressed and FTA could even be signed on January 27 or before when the India-EU Summit takes place in New Delhi. India has also conferred a distinct honour on the EU leadership by inviting them as the Chief Guests on the Republic Day -January 26. European Commission President Ursula Von der Loven and European council Chief Antonia Costa are expected to be the Chief Guests this year.

This gesture on the part of India and the fact that under the changed global circumstances and volatility the EU have begun to attach greater importance to one another by cementing and frequenting high level interactions, despite certain political differences with certain members over the Russia-Ukraine war and India's continued imports of crude from Russia. However, pragmatism and the fact that India has become the fastest growing major economy surpassing UK and Japan in a space of one year to be the fourth largest one and India's clear articulation of its national interests, have made them realise the need to dispense

with rigid positions for their own interests. Besides, India and UK as well as several others have already signed the FTAs. The EC-FTA with some European countries with investment commitments has also become operational. All these factors, along with the ever threatening Trumpian tariffs and disenchantment with US policies, has caused a reasonable ground to identify and overcome any irritants in India-EU trade and economic relations including the trade agreement.

High level contacts have been exceptional in recent past. It was for the first time that twenty two EU Commissioners travelled to India. German Chancellor Metz just concluded a state visit signing over two dozen agreements. French President is also expected to visit early this year as several hundred Rafael fighter aircraft's and other equipment's are being negotiated and finalized by India and France. Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister of India and H.E. Emmanuel Bonne, Diplomatic Adviser to the President of the Republic of France co-chaired the 38th India-France Strategic Dialogue in New Delhi on 13 January. During the Strategic Dialogue, India and France reiterated their commitment to the strategic partnership.

Earlier Minister of External Affairs Dr S Jaishankar started of the New year with the first visit to Europe -France and Luxembourg. Apart from conferring with his counterpart he also called on French President Macron. In the India-France Year of Innovation, they explored ways to diversify ties in areas of innovation and technology, startups, health, education and mobility, as well as discussed growing cooperation in strategic areas of defence, security, space,



Trigunayat

civil nuclear and maritime security and economy. An India -Weimar Foreign Ministers meeting was also held. Dr Jaishankar, appreciated his counterpart and President Macron's comments on both sides being the Chair of G7 and BRICS respectively during 2026 would aim to work together to find synergies rather than working at cross purposes. He also said that "our two nations committed to multi-polarity, I believe that working together is important for ourselves, also for stabilizing the global politics at this stage." Italian PM Meloni has invited PM Modi to visit Italy. The IMEC corridor and multidimensional route has tremendous connectivity and capacity potential AI between India and, Middle East and Europe, which both sides are serious to exploit despite immediate roadblocks.

The comprehensive trade and investment deal has dragged on for over two decades. But fortunately the differences on market access, agriculture, automobiles, technical and non-technical barriers to trade including GIs and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism of EU are

nearing redressal or being narrowed to the mutual satisfaction. The Trade deal will provide smoother access to each other's markets especially for the Indian labour intensive products.

The remit of bilateral engagement has expanded to various other strategic domains including climate change, counter-terrorism, defence, security including cyber, AI Quantum and new communication technologies 6G and Indo-Pacific, and human resource, education and skill development and innovation and renewables. India and EU had established a Trade and Technology Council in 2023 to enhance cooperation in digital governance, semiconductors, clean energy technologies and resilient supply chains. Migration and Mobility remain a major priority for India. How to immunise the global and value supply chains (GVCs) from utter dependencies on a certain country to arbitrary behaviour of certain others remain a major area of concern and congruence for both sides. India reiterates that relationship can be reinforced only if their Mutual Respect; Mutual Interests; Mutual Sensitivity.

India and the EU have a matured strategic mindset driven by mutual interests and can lead to a productive and rewarding strategic partnership with shared values and democratic architecture, for the 21st century. Both support the rules based order and multilateral global governance and institutions which provides a fulcrum for the shape of things to come.

*Anil Trigunayat is a former Indian Ambassador to Jordan, Libya and Malta and Distinguished Fellow at the prestigious *Thinks Tanks* like *Vivekananda International Foundation and United Services Institute of India.*

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Opinions, Reviews & Analysis

Comment | FMD outbreak response frantic and destructive

LISTENING TO THE BUDGET SPEECH, one would have expected to hear the Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe pronounce more diverse and innovative approaches to fighting the current Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak, which is ravaging the cattle and beef industry due to a blanket countrywide moratorium on movement and slaughter of cattle.

But the more you listen to the Minister of Finance, it is clear that the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) government is suffering the hang-over of aligning with European export standards that impose stringent FMD-free status in perpetuity, ignoring the fact that EU markets are now marginal destinations for Botswana's beef.

It is common knowledge that the risk of FMD to humans is minimal, and the feasibility of rapid control within defined zones is highly pragmatic. The decision

to impose a nationwide moratorium on cattle slaughter in response to an FMD outbreak reflects a policy rooted in outdated export paradigms rather than present-day economic realities.

Past and present regimes have been telling Botswana that they have identified new partners for our beef and other exports, among them West Africa, Asia, the Middle East etc. By contrast, regional African and Asian markets continue trading under more flexible, risk-based protocols. For example, in the past, Botswana exported beef and live cattle from FMD-free zones to neighboring African markets even when EU access was restricted, which practice we have now abandoned without justification. These included markets like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola which were in the past announced as destinations for our beef and live animals,

without stringent requirements.

We learn that some of these markets were compromised when bagolo at the Office of the President in past regimes demanded a cut from the businessmen who had identified and were servicing those lucrative export markets. On the other hand, the continuing Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) monopoly creates a fertile ground for abuse by these bagolo, who make the final approval on orders to be serviced and deliveries to be made.

Therefore, the blanket moratorium of the movement and slaughtering of cloven hooved animals – predominantly cattle, has crippled domestic market flow and trade continuity in service of European conditions that no longer reflect Botswana's core trade partners or the engines of regional demand.

This moratorium compounds strain on an already fragile economy by constricting

domestic supply, depressing producer incomes, and destabilizing rural livelihoods. Butcheries have closed shop but they remain liable for rent and salaries, despite the disease posing no threat to human health. Meat remains safe for consumption and internal trade once appropriate risk management measures are applied. The government's heavy-handed approach refracts a legacy European export thinking and risks deepening economic strain on local SMEs without delivering meaningful gains in international market access or public health protection.

FMD buffers

There are suggestions for the creation of a buffer of farms along the Botswana-Zimbabwe border, among them horticulture farms, game ranches etc, as a

solution to the frequent FMD outbreaks in the North East region extending to Bobirwa district. In addition to fighting cross-border FMD transmission, these buffer farms could also assist the fight against cattle rustling, rampant in the region.

Apparently, this proposal was once identified and mapped out as a solution but never implemented due to conflicting thought processes between the communities, Land boards and ministry of Agriculture. Now that Lands and Agriculture are under the same ministry, coupled with government's aggressive push for economic diversification targeting agriculture as one of the strategic sectors for growth, the proposal has never been more achievable than now.

The down side is that for over a year now, the ministry of lands and agriculture has never had a substantive minister!

Whither BVI

Touted as a Regional and Global Player in Providing Sustainable Animal Health Solutions and Quality Vaccines, it is time for Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI) to stand up and step up. The FMD medicine manufacturers are our only hope.

We call on BVI to live up to their commitment to go beyond providing vaccines, and support capacity building and foster sustainable, science-driven solutions for animal health. We believe renewed and reinforced regional partnerships are essential to safeguarding livestock, livelihoods, trade and food security across Southern Africa and beyond.

We call on Andrew Madeswi and his team to save Botswana's beef industry and give Botswana their lives back! It is their time to shine!



ADAM PHETLHE
ON SUNDAY!

THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF the Constitutional Court has become a topical issue. Establishment of this court is the brain-child of the ruling Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC). The UDC insist that the Constitutional court will be better placed to enforce human rights of those within our borders. This implies that the High Court and the Court of Appeal have not sufficiently and effectively protected such rights over the years. Those opposing the establishment of the Constitutional court argue to the contrary.

Some Botswana fear that the Constitutional court will be used to cancel the death penalty by declaring it unconstitutional, particularly because it is common knowledge that President Advocate Duma Boko is anti-death penalty. He will indirectly use the Constitutional Court to declare the death penalty unlawful. According to 2024/25 Botswana AfroBarometer report on death penalty, an overwhelming 82% of Botswana support capital punishment despite wide spread international criticism.

The other fear is that since the Judges of the Con Court will be appointed by the President through an opaque process, most if not all of them are likely to be inclined to declare death penalty unconstitutional. The opaque nature of appointing Judges

Con Court will cancel the death penalty



President Advocate Duma Boko

suggests the President will not appoint anyone who is pro the death penalty. Boko has made public statements from which he condescendingly, trashed Judges by describing them as 'incompetent and dispensable'. The removal of the immediate past Chief Justice, Terence Rannowane

could very well accord with the dispensable tag given that the President repeatedly criticised him. He has labelled Judges he believes do not demonstrate a human rights touch in their judgements as a 'danger' to citizens. Because he has already appointed Judges in an opaque manner, it

is expected this approach will continue in the appointment of the Con Court Judges as the Bill establishing it gives him the carte blanche to do so. The more things change, the more they remain the same with respect to the appointment of Judges.

Precedent from elsewhere

As a signatory to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and whose purpose amongst others is for the signatories to commit to respecting the civil and political rights of individuals including the right to life, Botswana is bound by this Covenant notwithstanding the fact that it may not be domesticated in her legal regime. The right to life is provided for in the country's Bill of Rights. Compliance with the ICCPR is monitored by the United Nations Human Rights Committee. With the ICCPR in mind particularly with regards to the right to life, the Con Court could cite this instrument in order to render the death penalty unconstitutional.

Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa to mention but a few, have declared the death penalty unconstitutional. It is my view that the Con Court could refer to the judgements from these jurisdictions on the unconstitutionality of the death penalty in order to make a compelling case. Scholars have stated that "The general theme of courts declaring the death penalty unconstitutional revolves

around the intersection of human dignity, arbitrary application and evolving standards of decency. Courts increasingly rule that state-sanctioned killing is a violation of fundamental human rights—specifically the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment." In the famous Makwanyane case in South Africa which led to the abolishment of the death penalty thereat, the Con Court declared the death penalty ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Courts have held in death penalty matters that because the justice system is susceptible to human error, such error stands to render the death sentence irrevocable. That is, once someone has been killed and it is later discovered he was mistakenly killed for this or the other reason, he/she cannot be brought back to life. The death row phenomenon (the psychological torture that engulfs a death row inmate while waiting for execution) which I discussed recently on this column, is one of the factors courts that have pronounced on the undesirability of the death sentence take into consideration. Further, other courts have increasingly emphasised that the State should not behave like criminals but should strive to preserve life as opposed to being retributive.

In the event the Con Court Bill passes all the mandatory stages to become law, all eyes will be fixated on how the Con Court will

decide the death penalty hot potato should someone approach it for it to be declared unconstitutional. On one hand, there will be the 82% of Botswana who favour the death penalty while on the other, there will be a bigger number of inmates on death row waiting for a date with the hangman. Appreciating that Botswana are for the death penalty, and a referendum on the same is held and passes with flying colours, would the Con Court still be prepared to hear a case brought before it to declare the death penalty unconstitutional because it violates one of the fundamental human rights which is the right to life as provided for in the Bill of Rights? Time will tell.

It is on the basis of the foregoing that the proposed Constitutional Court (in the event it is established) is highly likely to declare the death penalty unconstitutional or in the alternative, recommend the legislature to replace the death penalty with sentences short of the death sentence in light of the sacrosanct principle of separation of powers and importantly, the human rights approach it is expected to promote. The court is also likely to cite similar cases from different jurisdictions and other relevant international instruments. It will be fascinating to observe what will be the first case to be launched with the court. I am prepared to be persuaded otherwise as always. Judge for Yourself!

adamphetlhe08@gmail.com

'Con court, as proposed, is a disaster'

■ A comprehensive Analysis: Understanding the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2025 – Bill No. 14 of 2025

-PART 4
DR LETSHWITI TUTWANE*

CLAUSE 10 WOULD AMEND SECTION 100(1) by deleting the words "unless that office is held ex officio by the Chief Justice" so that the section would read: "The President of the Court of Appeal shall be appointed by the President."

Clause 11 of the Bill would create a new court, the "Constitutional Court". It inserts into the Constitution a new Part (Part IIA – Constitutional Court – new sections 102A to 102E). The new section 102B states that the Constitutional Court shall be a superior court of record (as are the High Court and Court of Appeal) and the new section 102B(3) sets out specific additional powers. For ease of reference, the new section 102B (3) provides that:

- (3) The Constitutional Court shall --
 - (a) be the highest court in all constitutional matters and its decisions on those constitutional matters shall bind all other courts;
 - (b) decide on constitutional matters and issues connected with decisions on constitutional matters;
 - (c) make a final determination on whether a matter is a constitutional matter or whether an issue is connected with a constitutional matter;
 - (d) have original and final jurisdiction to hear and determine any application or question arising out of a matter involving the enforcement or securing the enforcement of fundamental rights as contained in sections 3 to 16 of the Constitution or in any other law;
 - (e) determine questions as to the membership of the National Assembly, including whether a person is qualified to sit and vote in the National Assembly;
 - (f) decide disputes concerning the constitutional status of an entity, including the powers or functions of those entities;
 - (g) make a final decision on whether an Act of Parliament is constitutional and confirm any

order of invalidly made by the High Court in respect of that Act before that order has any force in such manner as may be prescribed by Parliament;

(h) making [sic] a final decision on any matter declared unconstitutional by the High Court and confirm any order that the High Court may have made before that order has any force in such manner as may be prescribed by Parliament; and

(i) decide on any other matter, if it grants leave to appeal, on the ground that the matter raises a point of law of general public importance which ought to be considered by the Court."

The new section 102B(3) would give sweeping judicial powers to the Constitutional Court, particularly with regard to deciding matters concerning the actions of the Executive, including the Presidency, and other constitutional entities. How will the rule of law prevail when the President's appointees wield so much power? Where would be accountability? The Constitutional Court can also, on appeal, decide any matter "on the on the ground that the matter raises a point of law of general public importance which ought to be considered by [it]". Although there is a presumption against the law applying retroactively, there is a risk that paragraphs (g) and (h) might be interpreted to apply to Acts and orders already made, if the Bill were to be enacted, before the Bill became an Act.

No quorum for the hearing of matters by the "Constitutional Court" is set by the Bill, so a matter could be heard by only one Constitutional Court judge.

The South African Constitution, from which some provisions of the Bill are selectively copied, requires that "a matter before the [South African] Constitutional Court must be heard by at least eight judges". But typically 11 judges sit on a matter. UK Supreme court has 12 justices and typically

from 5 to 9 judges hear a matter. The US has 9 judges and they all sit to hear a matter. South Korea has nine and they all sit together. Zambia has 11 and a minimum of three sit to listen to a matter. To their credit, Botswana's various CJs have used their powers to create panels to hear weighty constitutional matters.

The judges of the Constitutional Court would be appointed by the President (in the case of the Chief Justice and Deputy Chief Justice) or by the President "acting with the advice of" the Judicial Service Commission.

The new section 102C (1) provides that:

- (1) The judges of the Constitutional Court shall be—
 - (a) the Chief Justice [who would be appointed by the President under the new section 94C];
 - (b) the Deputy Chief Justice [who would be appointed by the President under the new section 94D];
 - (c) such number of Justices of Constitutional Court as may be prescribed by Parliament;
 - (d) such other judges as the President acting with the advice of the Judicial Service Commission may appoint for a limited period as required."

The Bill is inexplicably silent on who would appoint the "Justices of Constitutional Court" referred to in the new section 102C(1) (c). Regarding the new section 102C (1) (d), it states that such judges would be appointed by the President "acting with the advice of the Judicial Service Commission". This is significantly different from the wording used in sections 96(2) and 100(2) of the Constitution in respect of the appointment of High Court and Court of Appeal judges, which is "acting in accordance with the advice of the Judicial Service Commission". The words "in accordance" make it clear that the President must follow their advice.

In the new section the President expands his powers by sidestepping the JSC, effectively

making it powerless like the House of Chiefs. Ironically, he wants to avoid the Motumise factor. In 2015, without giving reasons, then President Ian Khama refused to appoint then senior attorney Omphemetse Motumise to the High Court bench. The Court of Appeal directed him to appoint him. Now it's getting worse.

There is a confusing cross-reference in the new section 102D (3). It appears that the reference to "appointed under the new section 102C (1) (c)" should be to "appointed under section 102C (1) (d)" because there is no mention of a period of appointment in the new section 102C (1) (c) whereas there is in the new section 102C (1) (d).

The new section 102C (2) gives the qualifications to be appointed as a judge of the Constitutional Court as follows: "A person shall not be qualified to be appointed as a judge of the Constitutional Court unless—

- (a) he or she is a citizen of Botswana; and
- (b) he or she is qualified to be appointed as a judge and has been so qualified for not less than 15 years."

The qualifications for appointment as a judge of the High Court (section 96 of the Constitution) and Court of Appeal (section 100 of the Constitution) do not include citizenship of Botswana but are otherwise more detailed.

For example, section 96(3) (a) of the Constitution of Botswana refers to a person who "holds, or has held office, as a judge of a court having unlimited jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters in Botswana, in a Commonwealth country or in any country outside the Commonwealth that may be prescribed by Parliament or a court having jurisdiction in appeals from such a court".

The new section 102C(2) requires only that the person must be a citizen of Botswana and be qualified to be appointed as a judge, and have been so qualified for not less than 15 years. But "judge" is not defined, leaving the interpretation

thereof uncertain. Why would government want to close out expatriates who could bring the relevant expertise and experience to a new court of such importance?

In progressive democracies, judges are not appointed in the back room. Rather, they are subjected to some public scrutiny, and positions advertised in the first place. Of the 9 judges of the Korean Con Court, 3 are nominated by the president, 3 are elected by the legislature and 3 are recommended by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

In South Africa, while the president makes the appointments, political parties in parliament are consulted and candidates are subject to public interviews.

In the US Supreme Court judges are appointed following a robust scrutiny by Congress.

Similarly, in the UK Supreme Court judges are appointed through an independent selection commission.

The vacancies are advertised and the candidates interviewed by the commission. Whilst these processes are not perfect, they help expose and or eliminate dubious candidates.

Clause 12 would amend section 103(1) of the Constitution. The section would be repealed and replaced but it would add only two members to the Judicial Service Commission (the Deputy Chief Justice and a retired judge of the High Court).

*Dr Letshwiti Bathalefi Tutwane (PhD), Regulatory Law and Policy. Dr Tutwane is also with the Leeds Law School and has sat on the Freedom of Speech panel of the International Association of Constitutional Lawyers (IACL). In 2018, Dr Tutwane received extensive training on constitutionalism in Seoul (South Korea) under the auspices of the IACL and the Korean Ministry of Justice.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We invite readers to write Letters to the Editor on various issues, be they social, political, economic or entertainment related. Although we support and encourage healthy debates and sharing of alternative views, we will not publish any letter that is slanderous or libelous.

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email to dibelela@thepatriot.co.bw /
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Can AU be the institution Africa needs?

FROM AN ONLINE POST, A commentator asked an intriguing question: "If the African Union (AU) cannot create a single currency, a unified military, or a common passport, then what exactly is this union about?"

The comment section went wild, with some commentators saying that AU no longer serves the interest of the African people, but rather the interests of the West and individual nations with greedy interests in Africa's resources. Some even said

jokingly that it should be renamed "Western Union".

But seriously, how has a country like France managed to maintain an economic leverage over 14 African states through its CFA Franc system, yet the continent is unable to create its own single currency regime? Why does the continent seem to be comfortable with global powers establishing their military bases throughout its territories yet doesn't seem interested in establishing its own unified military? Why does the idea of an open borders freak out our leaders,

driving them to hide under sovereignty?

These questions interrogate AU's relevance in the ensuing geopolitics. No doubt, the AU is still relevant as it still speaks on behalf of Africa on global platforms as a symbol of the continent's unity. But the unease surrounding it is justified because symbolism is no longer enough.

In a continent grappling with persistent conflict, economic fragmentation, and democratic reversals, institutions are judged not by their presence, but by their impact.

From the chat, and several other discussion groups on social media, most Africans are unhappy with the performance of the African Union so far. To many, the organization is out of touch with reality and they are now calling for an immediate reset.

To them, AU is a club of cabals, whose main achievements have been safeguarding fellow felons. One commentator said, "AU's main job is to congratulate dictators who kill their citizens to retain power through rigged



Chairperson of the African Union (Assembly), João Lourenço

elections." Another said, "AU is a bunch of atrophied rulers dancing on the graves of their citizens, looting resources from their people to stash in foreign countries."

These views may sound harsh, but are a good measure of how people perceive the organization across the continent.

Blurring vision

The African Union, which was established in July 2002 to succeed the OAU, was born out of an ambitious vision of uniting the continent toward self-reliance by driving economic integration, enhancing peace and security, prompting good governance and, representing the continent on the global stage - following the end of colonialism.

Over time, however, the gap between this vision and the reality on the ground

has widened. AU appears helpless to address the growing conflicts across the continent - from unrelenting coups to sham elections to external aggressions. This chronic weakness has slowly eroded public confidence in the organization and as such, AU is being seen as a forum for speeches rather than solutions - just as one commentator puts it, "AU has turned into a farce talk shop that cannot back or bite."

Call for a new body

The general feeling on the ground is that AU is stagnant and has nothing much to show for the 60+ years of its existence (from the times of OAU). It's also viewed as toothless and subservient to the whims of its 'masters'. Some commentators even called for its dissolution and the formation of a new body that would serve the interests of the continent and its people.

This sounds like a no-confidence vote. To regain favour and remain a force for continental good, AU must undertake critical reforms, enhance accountability, and show political courage as a matter of urgency. Without these, it may end in form while fading in substance.

The question is not whether Africa needs the AU, but whether the AU is willing and ready to become the institution Africa needs - one that is bold enough to initiate a daring move towards a common market, a single currency, a unified military, and a common passport regime. It is possible!

By Mike Omuodo

Mr. Omuodo is a pan-African Public Relations and Communications expert based in Nairobi, Kenya. He can be reached on mike.omuodo@mediafast.co.ke

LEKORWE J.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA HELD AT LOBATSE

CASE NO: CVHGB-00675-22

In the matter between:
FIRST NATIONAL BANK BOTSWANA
 And
MOSIMANEGAPE NTUNYANE

PLAINTIFF
 DEFENDANT


NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION

BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE THAT pursuant to the Judgment of this Honourable Court dated 1st June 2022 and stamped on the 1st June 2022, the following movable property of the above-mentioned Defendant will be sold in execution to the highest bidder by the Deputy Sheriff G. W. Ramogwana in the manner hereinafter set out.

DATE OF SALE: Friday 20th March 2026
TIME OF SALE: 10:30 Hours
PLACE OF SALE: Broadhurst Magistrate Court
TERMS OF SALE: Cash or Electronic Bank Transfer
PROPERTY TO BE SOLD: 1 X MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION NO. B 149 BIG POLO VIVO WHITE, 1X QUEEN SIZE BED, 1X HISENSE FRIDGE (SILVER), 1X KIC DEEP FREEZER (WHITE), 1X 3 PIECE SET 1X LG HOME THEATRE WITH 3 SPEAKERS, 1X SAMSUNG TV 32 INCH, 1X TV STAND, 1X MICROWAVE HISENSE (SILVER), 1X 4 BURNER STOVE, 1X KITCHEN UNIT 3 PIECE.

The conditions of sale may be inspected at the Deputy Sheriff's Offices at the addresses below.
DATED AT GABORONE THIS 13th FEBRUARY 2026.

Deputy Sheriff G. Ramogwana
 72201769 / 74029047
 C/o Gobhoza Legal Practice
 Plaintiff's Attorneys
 Plot 115, Unit 19, Kgale
 Gaborone International Finance Park
 P O Box 26168 Game City
 Gaborone



GOBHOZA LEGAL PRACTICE
Attorneys, Conveyancers, Notaries, Arbitrators & Corporate Services

LEBURU J.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA HELD AT GABORONE

CASE NO: CVHGB-000586-25

In the matter between:
FIRST NATIONAL BANK BOTSWANA
 And
TSHEPO RANKWANA

PLAINTIFF
 DEFENDANT


NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION

BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE THAT pursuant to the Judgment of this Honourable Court dated 5th May 2025 and stamped on the 5th May 2025, the following movable property of the above-mentioned Defendant will be sold in execution to the highest bidder by the Deputy Sheriff G. W. Ramogwana in the manner hereinafter set out.

DATE OF SALE: Friday 20th March 2026
TIME OF SALE: 10:30 Hours
PLACE OF SALE: Broadhurst Magistrate Court
TERMS OF SALE: Cash or Electronic Bank Transfer
PROPERTY TO BE SOLD: 1 X MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION NO. B 500 BCL MAZDA 3 (SILVER) CHASIS NO. JM6BK106100169066

The conditions of sale may be inspected at the Deputy Sheriff's Offices at the addresses below.
DATED AT GABORONE THIS 13th FEBRUARY 2026.

Deputy Sheriff G. Ramogwana
 72201769 / 74029047
 C/o Gobhoza Legal Practice
 Plaintiff's Attorneys
 Plot 115, Unit 19, Kgale
 Gaborone International Finance Park
 P O Box 26168 Game City
 Gaborone



GOBHOZA LEGAL PRACTICE
Attorneys, Conveyancers, Notaries, Arbitrators & Corporate Services

(Before **MOTUMISE J**)

IN THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA HELD AT GABORONE

CASE NO. CVHGB-001889-25

MACKINNON HOLDINGS (PTY) LTD t/a ENGEN CHARLESHILL
 and
DAYSTONE (PTY) LTD t/a SEEMA TANKERS

Plaintiff
 Defendant

NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION

BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE THAT pursuant to the Judgment granted by the Honourable Court the following movable properties hereunder of the Defendant will be sold by public auction by Deputy Sheriff to the highest bidder as follows:-


DATE OF SALE: 26th March, 2026
TIME OF SALE: 1000hours
PLACE OF SALE: Broadhurst Magistrate Court

PROPERTY TO BE SOLD: 1 x 1 Sitrak Truck B 231 BSK, white in colour, 1 x 1 Fuel Tank Trail B 470 BSK.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Cash or Bank guaranteed cheque otherwise detailed and conditions of sale may be inspected at the Plaintiff's Attorneys Office.

DATED AT GABORONE THIS 11th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2026.

MESHACK MOSHABI c/o RAMALEPA ATTORNEYS
 Plaintiff's Attorneys
 Plot 4853, Independence
 Avenue, Extension 11,
 P.O. Box 70567
GABORONE(UB)
 (SM/mm/16695)
 71623026/71263198



RAMALEPA
 ATTORNEYS
NOTARIES & CONVEYANCERS

KEBONANG. J

IN THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA HELD AT GABORONE

CASE NO: CVHGB-002571-22

In the matter between:
FIRST NATIONAL BANK BOTSWANA
 And
THABISO MOCHONGWANE

PLAINTIFF
 DEFENDANT


NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION

BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE THAT pursuant to Court Order of this Honourable Court dated 12th September 2022 and stamped on the 12th September 2022 the following movable properties of the above mentioned Defendant will be sold in execution to the highest bidder by the Deputy Sheriff G. W. Ramogwana in the manner hereinafter set out.

DATE OF SALE: Friday 27th March 2026
TIME OF SALE: 1030 Hours
PLACE OF SALE: BROADHURST MAGISTRATE COURT
TERMS OF SALE: Cash or Bank Guaranteed Cheques
PROPERTY TO BE SOLD: 1X MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION NO. B 969 BGP HONDA FIT (OLD SHAPE), 1X DEFY FREEZER WHITE, 1X ICE CUBE MAKER MACHINE, 1X KIC FRIDGE, 1X LG 40 INCH HISENSE TV, 2X QUEEN SIZE BEDS, 1X KIC CHEST SIZE FREEZER (GREY) 537 LITRES, 1X STUDY/OFFICE TABLE, 1X MICROWAVE, 1X CHEST OF DRAWERS, 2X FLOOR MATS, 1X ELECTRIC STOVE, 1X 4 BURNER GAS STOVE, 2X GAS CYLINDERS

The condition of sale may be inspected at the Offices of Gobhoza Legal Practice at the addresses below.
DATED AT GABORONE THIS 13th DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026

Deputy Sheriff G. Ramogwana
 72201769 / 74029047
 C/o Gobhoza Legal Practice
 Plaintiff's Attorneys
 Plot 115, Unit 19, Kgale
 Gaborone International Finance Park
 P O Box 26168, Game City
 Gaborone



GOBHOZA LEGAL PRACTICE
Attorneys, Conveyancers, Notaries, Arbitrators & Corporate Services


INTENTION TO CHANGE MARRIAGE REGIME

(in terms of section 8(1) of the Married Persons Property Act 2013)

- Biki Letebele and Sethunya Kelebogile Letebele (Nee Leselamothaka)** in community of property on the 20th day of **April 2006** at **Kanye**, wish to change their marriage property regime from "in community of property" to "out of community of property".
- The parties intend to apply to the High Court of Botswana after the expiration of the three (3) weeks statutory notice from the date of the 1st Publication.
- Any person, or creditor or debtor, who may have an interest in the assets and/or liabilities of the parties' estate, should they have objections to the parties changing their property regime, they should inform the parties' attorneys, **McERICK ATTORNEYS** before the expiration of the said 3 weeks period, or make representation before the High Court of Botswana once the contemplated application is lodged.

DATED AT GABORONE THIS 11TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026.

McERICK ATTORNEYS
 Applicants' Attorneys
 Plot 70667, 7th Floor
 Fairscape Precinct
 Fairgrounds Office Park
 P.O.Box 612,AAH,Masa
GABORONE



McERICK
 ATTORNEYS

IN THE MAGISTRATE COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA HELD AT MAHALAPYE

CASE NO: CCMY-000033/25

IN THE DISPUTE BETWEEN:
NAMETSO KEEKAE
 And
ARONE MOSEPELE

PLAINTIFF
 DEFENDANT

NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION


BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE that pursuant to judgment of the above honorable Court the following property of the above - mentioned Respondent/Defendant will be sold by public Auction by Deputy Sheriff Zachariah F Mashamaite to the highest bidder as follows;

DATE OF SALE : 03rd MARCH 2026
VENUE : INFRONT OF POLICE,MAHALAPYE
TIME :10: 00 hours

PROPERTY TO BE SOLD :1x2 SEATER SOFAS, 1x COFFEE TABLE, 1 x LG FRIDGE, 1x TWINMAID WASHING MACHINE, 1x HISENSE MICROWAVE, 1 x QUEEN BED WITH MATTRESS, 1x SIDE TABLE, 1 x WALL MIRROR

TERMS OF SALE: Cash or E.f.t and can further be viewed at the office of the Deputy Sheriff.

DEPUTY SHERIFF ZACHARIAH F MASHAMAITE
 P O BOX 30426, FRANCISTOWN
 Contact Mr. Mashamaite #74271019, 77638433



IN THE MAGISTRATE COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA HELD AT MAHALAPYE

CASE NO: CCMY-000233-25

IN THE DISPUTE BETWEEN:
PHUTHEGO EXPRESS (PTY) LTD
 And
OMPHILE MOLEFE

PLAINTIFF
 DEFENDANT

NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION


BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE that pursuant to judgment of the above honorable Court the following property of the above - mentioned Respondent/Defendant will be sold by public Auction by Deputy Sheriff Zachariah F Mashamaite to the highest bidder as follows;

DATE OF SALE : 03rd MARCH 2026
VENUE : INFRONT OF POLICE,MAHALAPYE
TIME :10: 00 hours

PROPERTY TO BE SOLD :1x DOUBLE DOOR FRIDGE, 1x DEEP FREEZER(KIC), 1x 4BURNER GAS STOVE(VENAX),1x 9KG GAS CYLINDER, 1x INDUSTRIAL STOVE(GAS),1x WASHING MACHINE (LG),1x8PCS JV SYSTEM, 1x HISENSE TV, 1x 3PCS SOFAS, 1x KING BED WITH MATTRESS, 1x 3PCS BEDROOM SUITE,1x QUEEN BED WITH MATTRESS,1 x CHEST OF DRAWER, MOTOR VEHICLE OF REGISTRATION NO.B872BLT NISSAN DJALIS(BLACK)

TERMS OF SALE :Cash or E.f.t and can further be viewed at the office of the Deputy Sheriff.

DEPUTY SHERIFF ZACHARIAH F MASHAMAITE
 P O BOX 30426, FRANCISTOWN
 Contact Mr. Mashamaite #74271019, 77638433



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Business

Households, SMEs under tax strain

KITSO RAMONO

editors@thepatriot.co.bw

ECONOMIC ANALYSTS HAVE warned that households and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are likely to face increased financial pressure following tax measures announced in Botswana's 2026/27 national budget, while questions persist over the country's continued reliance on tax hikes during periods of fiscal stress.

FNBB quantitative analyst Innocent Keoagile said the government's decision to increase corporate tax by three percent and raise personal income tax for high-income earners by 2.5 percent shows a clear move towards strengthening domestic revenue mobilisation as public finances come under strain.

Keoagile noted that while the measures are intended to stabilise government finances, they will raise operating costs for businesses and reduce disposable income for households, particularly at a time when economic recovery remains fragile.

The budget was presented against the backdrop of prolonged economic weakness, with Botswana recording six consecutive quarters of contraction from 2023. Although recent figures from Statistics Botswana show the economy expanded by 8.2 percent towards the end of 2025, Keoagile cautioned that the recovery is still uneven.

He further warned that proposed reductions to the list of zero-rated VAT items could add to cost-of-living pressures, placing additional



FNBB quantitative analyst Innocent Keoagile

strain on consumers.

IMPROVE TAX COLLECTION

These concerns were echoed at the FNBB Budget Review Seminar, where Tumelo Rannau, Managing Consultant at Rans and Associates, challenged Botswana's long-standing approach of raising tax rates during periods of fiscal pressure, arguing that greater focus should be placed on improving tax collection efficiency.

Speaking under the theme "Cementing Our True North: Unlocking Sustainable Growth",

Rannau said Botswana has historically responded to economic shocks by increasing taxes rather than fixing weaknesses in revenue administration.

"Whenever we face fiscal pressure, our first instinct has been to hike taxes. We saw it during the 2019-2020 reforms, and we are seeing it again now. Yet there are other ways to collect more revenue without increasing rates," he said.

Rannau pointed to declining diamond revenues as a key factor exposing Botswana's fiscal

vulnerabilities, noting that mineral income and SACU receipts still account for about 55 percent of government revenue.

"This over-reliance is risky. Any disruption in those two streams places the entire budget under pressure," he said.

He added that while government policy documents have repeatedly committed to improving tax administration and digitalisation, progress on the ground has been slow.

"For nearly two decades, budget

speeches and BURS reports have talked about digitalisation and efficiency, yet the system remains largely manual and fragmented," Rannau said, citing delays in taxpayer record updates, KYC processes and ownership changes.

Rannau argued that Botswana's transition away from diamond dependence requires a fundamental overhaul of tax administration rather than continued increases in VAT, income tax and corporate tax rates.

He welcomed proposed reforms contained in the VAT Bill,

Income Tax Bill and the new Tax Administration Bill, but stressed that success would depend on effective implementation.

On VAT reform, Rannau said taxing digital services such as streaming platforms and online software was necessary to level the playing field between local and foreign service providers, but warned that poor implementation could create compliance challenges.

He cited Kenya and Rwanda as examples where electronic billing systems and real-time reporting have improved revenue collection without increasing tax rates.

"In Rwanda, digital enforcement reduced leakages and increased collections because it made manipulation harder. That is the type of efficiency Botswana should be aiming for," he said.

Rannau also cautioned that frequent tax increases risk shrinking the tax base, particularly for businesses already under pressure.

"When companies struggle, the tax base contracts. Higher rates do not automatically translate into higher revenue," he said.

While government has proposed financing and support measures for SMEs, analysts agree that the immediate impact of the 2026/27 budget will be felt most by households and small businesses, as fiscal consolidation gathers pace.

Both Keoagile and Rannau stressed that sustainable growth will require predictable tax policy, efficient revenue collection, reduced wastage and stronger compliance, rather than continued reliance on higher taxes to plug fiscal gaps.

Economy rebounds in 2026, but ...



Senior Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Finance, Naledi Madala

STAFF WRITER

editors@thepatriot.co.bw

THE ECONOMY IS EXPECTED to rebound in 2026 due to positive economic activity in the non-mining sector. However, overall, in the short to medium-term, the economy is expected to grow below potential, due to amongst others, negative total factor productivity.

Addressing business leaders and private sector officials during the annual First National Bank Botswana Budget Speech Review, the Secretary for Macroeconomic and Policy in the Ministry of Finance, Dr Sayed Timuno, said, recognising the current model is not sustainable, the government, places the private sector at the centre of its transformation agenda.

This, he said, makes it imperative for the country to tap into non-mining sectors to drive economic growth. Dr Timuno noted that four priorities have been identified to turn around the country's economic fortunes: human capital development, infrastructure transformation, private sector participation, and digital transformation.

For her part, the Senior Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Finance, Naledi Madala, said the government is moving at lightning speed to revitalise the economy. She described the introduction of the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) as a clear commitment to creating a private sector-led economy, supported by legislative amendments to foster a conducive business environment.

Madala revealed that 186 projects have been identified through a stress-test filtration process and are earmarked for implementation across six (Agriculture, Manufacturing, Financial Services and Digitalisation, Infrastructure, Tourism and Social Protection) priority economic sectors and three social sectors (Healthcare, Education and Social Protection).

She expressed execution of the BETP would significantly propel the economy towards its National True North, of a high-income Botswana that is digitally enabled, export-driven, and economically diversified, where every citizen is employed, empowered, and fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer of FNB Botswana, Steven Bogatsu, said that despite the economic challenges facing the country, there are positive developments following the 2026 budget speech presented by the Vice President and Minister of Finance, Ndaba Nkosinathi Gaolathe.

Bogatsu welcomed the introduction of the National Fund of Funds as a cornerstone of a modern financial ecosystem for the SMMs and the recalibration of the statutory debt ceiling currently set at 40% of GDP.

De Beers backs citizen businesses

... Launches Diamond Enterprise Development Programme

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DE BEERS HAS LAUNCHED A Diamond Enterprise Development Programme aimed at strengthening local participation across Botswana's diamond value chain, as part of broader efforts to deepen beneficiation beyond mining.

The programme is being implemented through De Beers Global Sightholder Sales and uses a phased, funnel-based approach to identify and support high-potential citizen-owned diamond businesses over the long term.

Speaking at the workshop, Baleseng Best Raditladi, Vice President Sales and Beneficiation at De Beers, said the initiative was deliberately structured to prioritise quality and impact rather than numbers.

More than 140 entrepreneurs applied when the call for applications opened late last year. From these, 30 were selected to participate in an initial two-day workshop focused on business discovery and network building. Following assessments of commitment and business readiness, the cohort was reduced to 20, who are currently undergoing intensive training.

The group will be narrowed further to 10 and eventually five businesses.

The final five will form the first cohort of a five-year development journey, with a second cohort planned thereafter, making the programme a 10-year initiative.

Raditladi said the programme was not designed to guarantee profitability but to produce competitive, compliant and internationally capable Botswana-owned diamond enterprises that can create employment and grow revenue over time.

Building Business Skills in a Technical Industry



20 entrepreneurs presented their business pitches before a selection panel

The programme is being delivered in partnership with RACE Corp, a South African-based enterprise development firm with experience running similar initiatives in the diamond sector.

RACE Corp facilitator Tshepo Serogola said Botswana has significant technical talent in diamond manufacturing, cutting and polishing, but many entrepreneurs lack business skills needed to scale sustainably.

"There is a lot of talent here. This is a diamond-making country with real opportunities, but entrepreneurs need to learn the business side of it," Serogola said.

He noted that many participants possess strong technical expertise but struggle with fundamentals such as market access, customer acquisition, financial management and differentiation in a crowded space.

"A lot of people are chasing international markets, yet there is a gap locally where demand can be created.

We are helping them think about

where their customers are, how to price, how to manage finances and how to plan their businesses for the next 12 to 24 months," he said.

Serogola added that the programme also aims to encourage collaboration and healthy competition among local diamond entrepreneurs, helping to build a stronger ecosystem rather than fragmented individual efforts.

Entrepreneurs Welcome Practical Focus

One of the programme participants, Kabo Motlogelwa, said the initiative was addressing a long-standing gap between craftsmanship and business management in the industry.

"Many of us come into this space as craftsmen, we know how to cut and polish or design jewellery, but we don't know how to run a business," Motlogelwa said.

He explained that most small operators end up managing every aspect of their enterprises themselves, often without formal business training, which limits growth.

"This programme helps us understand branding, product development, market segmentation and how to use data to grow a company. For many of us, this is the first structured exposure to business thinking," he said.

Long-Term Vision for Local Beneficiation

De Beers said the programme was launched at a time when global diamond markets remain under pressure, arguing that periods of difficulty offer an opportunity to build resilient local businesses.

While the total financial investment has not yet been disclosed, the company confirmed that the programme, including workshops, training and international market exposure for the final cohort, is fully funded by De Beers.

The initiative is expected to play a key role in shifting perceptions that the diamond industry is closed to citizens, while creating a pipeline of capable local enterprises positioned to participate meaningfully in Botswana's diamond economy.

MMG Khoemacau splashes P13 billion on expansion project

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MMG KHOEMACAU OFFICIALLY launched its expansion project, marking a major milestone that is set to double the mine's copper production output from the current design capacity of 60,000 tonnes to 130,000 tonnes per annum.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony held in Toteng Zone 5 last week, the President of China Minmetals Corporation, Xu Jiqing said the expansion project is an important step towards diversifying Botswana's mining industry while contributing to economic growth and improving livelihoods. He said at the peak of construction, more than 5,500 staff and contractors are expected to be on site. Once fully commissioned in the second quarter of 2028, the expansion project is expected to support a workforce of more than 4,000 people.

Jiqing said the project will require supplementing the local workforce with international recruits who will help with construction, operations, training and skills transfer. "Our success will be measured through the creation of a highly skilled citizen workforce through effective training, skills transfer and leading technology programmes," he said.

He added that the company will continue working closely with the University of Botswana and the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST). MMG also plans to establish a training centre within the local community and strengthen support for the technical college in Maun.

Jiqing said the company is also conducting studies to increase output beyond 200,000 tonnes per annum by optimising operational resources and developing additional resources within its licence areas. He said the expansion project has a capital expenditure of more than USD 900 million (approximately P13 billion), with the investment influenced by Botswana's stable fiscal and regulatory



President of China Minmetals Corporation, Xu Jiqing

environment and its foreign direct investment policies.

The Minister of Minerals and Energy, Bogolo Joy Kenewendo, said once completed, the expansion will make MMG Khoemacau the largest copper mine ever developed in Botswana and is expected to contribute about six percent to the country's GDP.

She said the project reflects MMG's commitment to delivering investor returns while improving the quality of life for Botswana and surrounding communities. Kenewendo said the government supports foreign direct investment and acknowledged that international expertise will be required to ensure successful project delivery and effective skills transfer to citizens.

She emphasised that the project's true success will be measured by the development of a highly skilled local workforce through training, technology transfer and partnerships with local institutions. The minister said MMG has committed to working with higher learning institutions and establishing a training centre at the Maun technical college through a public-private partnership to enhance local capacity and support national development goals.

What 2026/27 budget means for the banking sector



REALEBOGA PHOI
CHIEF FINANCE AND VALUE
MANAGEMENT OFFICER
STANBIC BANK BOTSWANA

HERE ARE MOMENTS IN A COUNTRY'S economic journey when a National Budget ceases to be a routine fiscal exercise and instead becomes a signal of intent. Botswana's 2026/2027 National Budget feels like such a moment: measured, deliberate, and forward-looking, yet undeniably shaped by the weight of current realities. It invites cautious optimism rather than celebration. And perhaps that is precisely what our times demand. "But we need to ask ourselves: in today's prevailing environment - where growth projections improve, but household pressures remain tangible - can optimism exist without honesty?" The Budget's theme, "A New Era of Economic Transformation and Fiscal Prudence," is both aspirational and corrective. It recognises that while the country is charting a path toward diversification, digital enablement and export competitiveness, it must do so from a position of fiscal discipline.

As I listened to the calm and calculated delivery of our Minister of Finance, Honourable Ndaba Nkosinathi Gaolathe, as he presented the Budget before the National Assembly on 09 February 2026, I could not help but wonder how, for the financial sector, this signals not a surge of easy opportunity, but a recalibration of responsibility. When Government intentionally shifts from being the primary financier of growth to an architect and enabler, are financial institutions prepared

to shoulder more of the execution burden - and to do so prudently?

The Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP) identifies 186 bankable projects with the potential to unlock over P514 billion in investment and create more than half a million jobs by 2036 (Budget Speech, 2026). We see this dynamic daily. Whether it is structuring trade finance for a local agribusiness exporting citrus into new EU markets or supporting a mid-sized manufacturer to expand production capacity through asset-backed lending, the translation from policy ambition to economic activity happens through deliberate financial decisions, and not projections alone. Yet, numbers do not deploy capital; institutions do. Behind each statistic sits a business plan, a risk assessment, a repayment schedule and, ultimately, a human story. A young entrepreneur seeking seed funding, a manufacturer attempting to expand into regional markets, a renewable energy developer navigating regulatory frameworks. The opportunity is real, but so too are the complexities. And there are indeed complexities we ought to be alive to. The question is not whether growth prospects exist, but whether we can finance them sustainably in a constrained economic climate. The broader macroeconomic picture underscores this duality. The economy is estimated to have contracted by 2.8 percent in 2024, with growth projected to rebound to 3.1 percent in 2026 (Budget Speech, 2026). Inflation is expected to temporarily breach the upper end of the 3-6% target band before moderating, while the Monetary Policy Rate remains at 3.5 percent (Bank of Botswana Monetary Policy stance referenced in Budget Speech, 2026). Foreign exchange reserves declined from P48.1 billion to P47.4 billion year-on-year, equivalent to five months of import cover (Budget Speech, 2026). These figures are neither alarming nor reassuring in isolation; they simply remind us that recovery is



Phoi

underway, but not yet secure. In such an environment, how do we balance ambition with restraint?

In recent years, we have observed that targeted sector support, for example in renewable energy financing and SME working-capital facilities, often yields multiplier effects far beyond the initial loan value, particularly where digital payment ecosystems reduce transaction friction for smaller enterprises. Financial stability cannot be assumed, after all; it must be continuously engineered through sound credit governance, liquidity management and risk discipline.

Yet excessive caution risks suffocating the very growth the nation seeks to cultivate. The role of banking, therefore, is to mediate between confidence and caution - to extend capital where productivity is credible, to support innovation where viability is demonstrable, and to maintain resilience where uncertainty persists.

Nation building is often imagined in visible infrastructure: roads, hospitals, schools. Less visible, but equally foundational, are the financial decisions that enable these outcomes. When a small enterprise secures working capital to employ five additional people, when a farmer accesses export markets through structured trade finance, or when a digital wallet allows a vendor in Maun or Francistown to transact instantly rather than queue for hours, economic dignity expands quietly but meaningfully. Are these not also acts of national development, even if they occur far from parliamentary podiums? Should these not be an area of greater focus as veritable engines of growth?

At Stanbic Bank Botswana, our strategic posture is deliberately aligned to this moment of tempered optimism. Sustainable growth remains our anchor, prioritising sectors that advance diversification while preserving rigorous credit standards. Digital enablement continues to be a central investment, not for novelty but

for efficiency, transparency and inclusion. This alignment is evident not only in our credit portfolios but in our continued investment in digital platforms that now enable thousands of customers to transact, save and access financing remotely. It is a shift that reduces nationally while expanding financial inclusion. Beyond this, partnership has become indispensable: collaboration with Government, regulators and private enterprises is what converts policy into performance. In difficult economic periods, partnership is not a convenience; it is a necessity. Perhaps the most defining feature of the 2026 Budget is its insistence on execution over rhetoric. It is a sobering yet necessary position. It quietly challenges every stakeholder, including financial institutions, to move beyond commentary into contribution. Are we prepared to finance transformation without compromising stability? Can we pursue profitability while preserving purpose? And can we acknowledge economic headwinds without allowing them to dictate our trajectory?

Botswana's economic future will not be shaped by fiscal frameworks alone, nor by optimism unsupported by discipline. It will not occur in silos nor at the hand of any one institution (even Government). The institutions that succeed will be those able to combine prudence with practical action - financing one viable enterprise, one infrastructure project and one innovation at a time. In this lies both strength and responsibility alike in the collective spirit of industries and as the nation as a whole.

The path from fiscal prudence to financial possibility is neither linear nor guaranteed. It requires realism, resilience and collective intent. For the financial sector, the moment calls for neither exuberance nor hesitation, but a steady confidence, grounded in the understanding that progress, especially in challenging times, is often incremental, deliberate and quietly transformative. Botswana is our home; we drive Her growth.



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

13 February 2026

MINISTER AND REGULATORS TO LEAD INDUSTRY DIALOGUE AT BIG AFRICA SUMMIT 2026 IN BOTSWANA

The highly anticipated **12th Annual BiG Africa Summit 2026**, hosted by Eventus International, officially commences on Monday, 16 February, bringing together Africa's most influential gaming leaders in Gaborone, Botswana. Honourable Tiroeane Ntsima, Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, will deliver the keynote address on Tuesday, while prominent regulators and operators engage in strategic discussions on policy, compliance, and sustainable growth. With just three days remaining, this is the last chance to join us from 16 – 19 February 2026 at The Grand Palm Hotel Casino and Convention Resort and be part of the summit shaping Africa's gaming future.

Backed by the Botswana Gambling Authority, this year's edition places particular emphasis on collaboration between public institutions and private stakeholders to ensure sustainable sector development. Alongside a distinguished speaker lineup, exclusive insights, and invaluable networking opportunities, attendees can look forward to the prestigious BiG Africa Summit Eventus Awards, which will recognise the organisations and individuals championing progress, integrity, and innovation across Africa's betting and iGaming industry.

Regulation as a Catalyst for Economic Growth

Among the most anticipated discussions is the session on the economic contribution of gaming to national development. **Moruntshi Kemorwale, Chief Executive Officer (Acting)** of the Botswana Gambling Authority, will explore the intersection of regulation, tourism, and sustainable revenue generation.

He explained:

"Gambling tourism is an often-overlooked driver of economic value. At the BiG Africa Summit 2026, I'm looking forward to unpacking how well-regulated gambling destinations can stimulate tourism, attract investment, create jobs, and generate sustainable public revenue – without compromising social responsibility."

This observation from Mr Kemorwale reinforces a central theme of the summit, that strong regulatory frameworks support growth and create opportunities for the sector to thrive.

'BiG' Agenda Highlights

Day 1 | Monday, 16 February

- **BiG Africa Summit 2026 Welcoming & Awards Evening** – the perfect opportunity to break the ice before the summit officially begins, reconnect with colleagues, and honour excellence across the continent with the prestigious awards ceremony.

Day 2 | Tuesday, 17 February

- Keynote Address by Botswana's **Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship, Honourable Tiroeane Ntsima**
- The Power of Collaboration Between Operators and Regulators in Africa – a discussion on how strong partnerships can drive sustainable growth, ensure compliance, and shape a prosperous, responsible gaming industry across the continent.
- The Economic Impact of Gaming on Botswana's Tourism Sector by **Moruntshi Kemorwale, Chief Executive Officer (Acting) of the Botswana Gambling Authority**
- The **African Regulatory Seminar (Seminar A)** & the **African Operators' Seminar (Seminar B)** – running concurrently with the main conference programme.
- Fast-Track Connections Evening – pre-scheduled meetings through the BiG Africa App, followed by lively, focused networking over canapés and drinks, designed to turn introductions into lasting partnerships.

Day 3 | Wednesday, 18 February

- Africa's iGaming Revolution: Uniting Markets, Unlocking Growth – presented by **Emolemo Peter Kesitlwe, CEO of the African iGaming Alliance**
- Regulating Responsible Gaming: Balancing Profitability and Player Protection
- Industry Spotlight – Botswana in Focus: Tax Compliance and Sustainability
- The **SPICE Up Diversity Seminar (Seminar C)** & the **Ethics & Compliance Seminar (Seminar D)** – running concurrently with the main conference programme.
- **BiG Africa Harmony (Invitation-Only Dinner)** – an exclusive evening for networking, meaningful conversations, and building strategic partnerships in a relaxed, private setting.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

13 February 2026

Day 4 | Thursday, 19 February

- **BiG Excursion & Farewell Dinner** – a memorable day exploring the breathtaking sights of Botswana, followed by a farewell dinner to celebrate connections made and experiences shared during the summit.

Get ready to meet the following senior decision-makers and top industry leaders:

- **Abdu Mutheer**, Vice President, Botswana Esports Federation
 - **Blessing Makunda**, Board Member, Zimbabwe Lotteries and Gaming Board
 - **Chawapiwa Mpatane**, Senior Regulatory Enforcement Officer, Botswana Gambling Authority
 - **Chicco Mashale**, Sports Betting Retail Manager, Sunbet
 - **Damilola Ruth Atri**, Country Manager, Policy Vault
 - **Emolemo Peter Kesitlwe**, CEO, African iGaming Alliance
 - **Erick Ludoviko Makoye**, Principal ICT Officer, Gaming Board of Tanzania
 - **Francis Makausi Makonese**, Deputy Executive Director, Council of Southern African Football Associations (COSAFA)
 - **Gabriel Pachawo**, Managing Director, BotEx Consultancy | Acting under Delegated Authority of the CEO and Board, Goldrush Slots Botswana
 - **Geoffrey Muindi**, Managing Director, Gaming NewsByte
 - **Joel Duke Ramaphoi**, Permanent Secretary in Botswana's Ministry of Trade and Entrepreneurship
 - **Justice Dithong**, Head of Compliance, SuperSportBet
 - **Kalumbu Soneka**, Country Manager, SuperSportBet – Zambia
 - **Lebowa Mroen**, Communications Specialist, Botswana Gambling Authority
 - **Linky Engelbrecht**, Casino Manager, Moonlite Casino
 - **Malebogo Motlaleng**, Marketing Manager, Peermont Global Botswana
 - **Maurizio Soccodato**, CEO, Global Lab SA (PTY)
 - **Mmoloki Mkgosi**, Gaming Manager, Avani Gaborone Hotel & Casino
 - **Moruntshi Kemorwale**, Chief Executive Officer (Acting), Botswana Gambling Authority
 - **Musa Mngadi**, CEO, African Lotteries and Gaming Association (ALGA)
 - **Ngabe Franklin**, iGaming Attorney, Prima Attorneys Law firm
 - **Nnunda Francis**, Social Media Manager & Content Creator, GSB Uganda
 - **Peter Mshkilwa**, Managing Partner, Blue Strategic Consultancy Services
 - **Richard Kavuma Muteesaasira**, Senior Manager: Regulatory Compliance, National Lotteries and Gaming Regulatory Board
 - **Richmond Mouti**, Technical Director, Botswana Esports Federation
 - **Robert Toth**, Head of Business Development Africa, ComplyGuard
 - **Simon Pepper**, Chief Product Officer, Tola Mobile
 - **Snehil Bhatt**, CEO, Kodedice
 - **Steve Muturi**, Founder/eSports Director, Ni-Wakati Sports Africa
 - **Timothy Kajja**, Associate Partner, Engoru Mutebi Advocates
 - **Hon. Tiroeane Ntsima**, Botswana's Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship
 - **Tsholofelo Mosa Makgoeng**, Country Manager, Sunbet Botswana
 - **Tumelo Batshu**, Internal Audit Manager, Botswana Gambling Authority
 - **Tumelo Mokoena**, Assistant Manager: Advocacy and Communication, South African Responsible Gambling Foundation
 - **Veli Muhlari**, IT and Multimedia Manager, The South African Responsible Gambling Foundation
 - **Witness Saurombe**, Corporate Services Manager, The South African Responsible Gambling Foundation
- AND MANY MORE!**

Last Chance to Reserve Your Place Among Africa's Top Gaming Leaders

The BiG Africa Summit 2026 is set to elevate the continent's gaming industry with a powerful speaker lineup and insight-rich discussions. Don't miss your opportunity to engage directly with Africa's most respected regulators, operators, and other key stakeholders, and contribute to shaping the future of gaming on the continent.

Register now: <https://www.bigafricasummit.com/>

LIQUORAMA

FOR THE GOOD TIMES



BIRTHDAY BONANZA GRAND PRIZE: 2x Toyota Hilux Bakkies won by Shadreck Ntebang and Mpho Semato



TOP TABLE (L-R): Choppies CEO Mr. Ottapathu Ramachandran, Kgosi Arnold Somolekae and Hon. Councillor Carl Lediretse



Kgosi Arnold Rapula Somolekae conducting the raffle draw



Hon. Councillor Carl Lediretse assisting with the draw



Social Media Influencer DJ Lebjee conducting the Draw



FME DJs conducting the Draw



Suppliers by CA Sales doing the Draw



Welcome Remarks by Liquorama General Manager Mr. Willie Bosman



Master of Ceremony Mr. Kebonyemodisa



Project Overview by Liquorama Regional Manager Mr. Tshepo Rapula



Keynote Address by Kgosi Arnold Rapula Somolekae



Vote of thanks by Hon. Councillor Carl Lediretse



Invited Guests



Liquorama General Manager Mr. Willie Bosman (L) cheering on the proceedings

Liquorama 1st Big Birthday Bonanza Grand Finale Draw

Almost one million entries received in the competition

On Thursday 12th February 2026, Liquorama hosted the first edition of their Big Birthday Bonanza Competition Grand Finale draw at FAR Properties in Gaborone International Commerce Park. Since inception in November 2025, the competition has received a large number of entries from Liquorama customers nationwide hoping to be the lucky winners of the unbeatable prizes. Giving welcome remarks, Liquorama General Manager Willie Bosman explained that the initiative is meant to reward loyalty of their customers who have been supportive since establishment of the business. "Today is about celebrating partnership and growth in our business. We give special

thanks to all the supporting partners including our customers and suppliers. Let us make the next edition even bigger. Liquorama is more than just about celebrations. We want to impact the lives of our people," said Bosman. Giving an overview of the competition, Liquorama Regional Manager Tshepo Rapula emphasized that the initiative also plays a critical role in being one of the business' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes. "We are not only focused in selling drinks, we are more than that. We are about giving back to our customers which is also one of our corporate social investments towards communities where we operate. We shall continue with the competition even next year to give back to our customers," he said.

According to Rapula, the competition attracted close to one million entries from both North and South regions. He said during the month of October 2025 they collected 700 000 entries, while by the end of November 2025 they had already collected 800 000 entries. In his keynote address, Kgosi Arnold Rapula Somolekae of Gaborone West, highlighted that the initiative has impacted the lives of Batswana in a positive manner. "I have long advocated for a meaningful contribution towards the communities that the business operates in. Businesses like yours play a critical role in helping us, your support with sponsorships is very significant to our communities," he said. The draw, which covered both the North and South regions, was conducted

through a manual ruffle under close monitoring by auditors from Grand Thornton who verified the authenticity of the entries. The lucky winners were announced telephonically as they walked away with 2x AOS Samsung smart phones, 4x JVC Smart TVs, 2x Samsung Smart TVs, 10x Double Door Fridges and a grand prize being 2x Toyota Hilux Bakkies.

LIST OF WINNERS:

- 2x Toyota Hilux Bakkies**
Shadreck Ntesang (Black Label) – Palapye
Mpho Semato (Black Label) – Mogoditshane
- 2x AOS Samsung Smart Phones**
Kgotshane Onkabetse Jaqueline

Bakang Lebone

- 4x JVC Smart TVs**
Keneilwe Pulane
Oabile Tlotlang
Mosimanegape
Legoko

- 2x Samsung Smart TVs**
Mpuisang
Karabo Digang

- 10x Double Door Fridges**
Bokamoso Gontse Kegolopa
Batsile Kopo
Dikakanyo Powe
Lillian Mponang
Ignatious Sebalo
Thebe Itumeleng
Opelo
Kesegofetse

CHOPPIES 2025 BIG BIRTHDAY BONANZA

Winners receive life changing prizes



Celebrations filled the air over the weekend as Choppies officially handed over prizes to winners of the 2025 Big Birthday Bonanza during ceremonies held in Gaborone at Far Properties Headquarters in Commerce Park and Block 6.

On Friday evening, the retail giant presented keys to 10 brand-new Suzuki Carry vans and four Toyota Hilux single-cab bakkies to excited winners in Gaborone. The celebrations continued on Saturday morning in Gaborone Block 6, where the grand prize, a fully furnished two-bedroom house was handed over to Rre Montisetsi Lekote.

Speaking at the handover, Choppies Group Chief Executive Officer, Ramachandran Ottapathu said the competition, now in its 22nd year, continues to transform lives across Botswana. He expressed gratitude for the strong participation from customers, particularly women, acknowledging their continued support for the brand.

"We are grateful to the women of this nation for their support. We will continue to reward and support our customers," he said. Ottapathu reflected on how the Birthday Bonanza has evolved

since the launch in 2003, growing from modest beginnings to a multi-million-pula rewards campaign that has given away over 100 vehicles and significant prizes over the years. "This journey started 22 years ago. Today we are giving back tens of millions to our customers. We will continue to innovate and reward those who support us," he said, adding that real winners continue to walk away with life-changing prizes every year.

For grand prize winner Rre Montisetsi Lekote, the moment was both emotional and fulfilling. The retired soldier revealed that he entered the competition after buying two juice drinks for his grandson, hoping only to win a P1,000 weekly voucher. When the competition period ended without hearing his name, he accepted that he had not won anything.

It was only during the live draw that he received the call announcing him as the grand prize winner, a moment he initially struggled to believe until family and friends began phoning to confirm the news. Lekote said the fully furnished two-bedroom house in Block 6 will serve as his retirement home for himself, his wife and children.

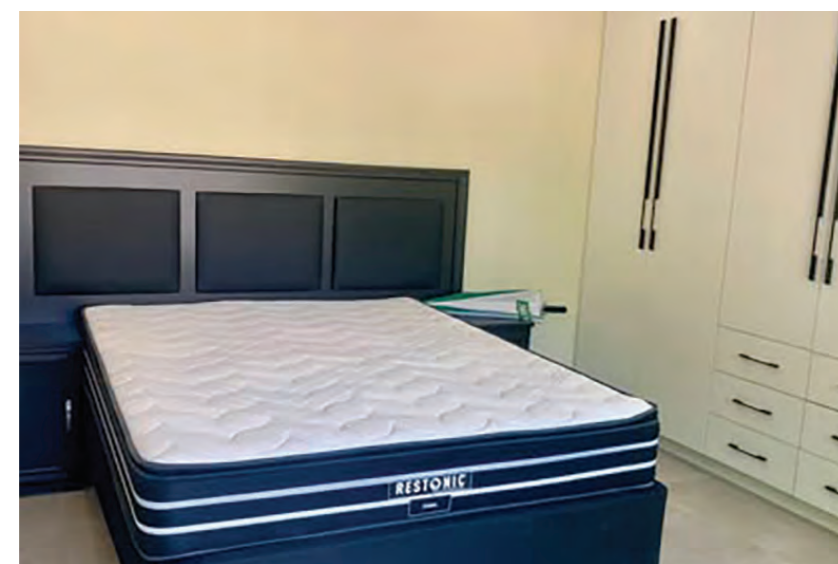
He thanked Choppies for changing people's lives and encouraged fellow winners to use their prizes wisely instead of selling them, saying they can create income opportunities and long-term security.

Gaborone City Mayor, Oarabile Motlaleng congratulated the winners and encouraged them to remain strong, noting that major wins often come with expectations from others.

He urged them to stay focused and use their prizes wisely. He also encouraged Choppies employees to continue delivering excellent service, saying customer satisfaction drives sales and makes competitions like the Big Birthday Bonanza possible.

Member of Parliament for Gamalete Constituency, Hon. Boniface Mabeo described the competition as one of Botswana's most impactful corporate social responsibility initiatives.

He commended Choppies for its contribution to economic empowerment and job creation, noting that the company employs thousands of Batswana, particularly youth and women.



lifestyle

BIUST hosts Chinese New Year Spring Festival

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BOTSWANA INTERNATIONAL University of Science and Technology (BIUST) hosted the 2026 Chinese New Year Spring Festival on the 12th of February under the theme “gather for spring festival, blend in cultural joy”. While the world celebrated the New Year, six weeks ago, the Chinese are only marking their new year on 12th of February because they use the lunar calendar when Botswana and most countries follow the Gregorian calendar. The festival is the most significant holiday in the Chinese calendar, it is time for family gatherings, feasting and celebrating new beginnings. It is 15 day festival celebrated in Chinese communities’ worldwide. It begins with the new moon that occurs sometime in January 21 and February 20 according to the western calendars, and the festivities last until the following full moon or one month later. During the festivities millions of the Chinese people travel long distances by road, rail and air to celebrate the New Year with their families. The festivities include symbolic traditions and customs that bring families together, among them the consumption of dumplings during the New Year to symbolise wealth and prosperity, as their shape resembles ancient Chinese gold ingots. Writing spring festival couplets and “Fu” characters with brushes dipped in ink symbolises good fortune. It is practice that decorates homes and expresses wishes for a blessed new year ahead. The Vice Chancellor of BIUST,



Professor Otlogetswe Totolo said that the spring festival allows the BIUST community to share in joy and laughter, a taste of Chinese food and the warmth of togetherness. He emphasised that BIUST community must always remember that no matter where one comes from, they are all a part of the globally community with a shared future for mankind, bonding closely together

by the common values of peace, friendship and progress. He said that as the New Year unfolds, may festivities like the spring festival keep strengthening the bond of friendships between China and Botswana and inspire all to embark on the journey of cross cultural exchange. Prof Totolo extended his gratitude towards their key partners, Yashan

University, represented by the Chinese directorate and teachers of Confucius Institute at BIUST (CIBIUST) for their unwavering support for the development of CIBIUST. CIBIUST serves as a brilliant bridge connecting the people of China and Botswana through language and culture. Since its establishment, it has allowed the BIUST community experience

the unique charm of the Chinese language and culture. It is a platform for cross cultural communication and vital part of BIUST vision for multicultural development. The President of the Chinese Enterprises Association of Botswana, Mr Jin Hao highlighted that the Spring Festival is their Chinese New Year and it is as important as celebrating Christmas. He expressed

gratitude towards those who support Chinese Enterprises in Botswana and educational cooperation between China and Botswana. “Our association is excited to partner with BIUST to develop talented students. We’ll bring real-world engineering experience into the classroom, offer great internships and guidance and help students to become well rounded professionals

with a global perspective. We are also committed to supporting CIBIUST, promoting Chinese language and culture and creating exciting cultural exchange opportunities between China and Botswana,” he said. Batswana students showcased different talents of singing and reciting poems in the Chinese language to celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival.

Celebrating female African leadership, excellence

2026 Forbes Woman Africa Leading Women Summit returns

THE FORBES WOMAN AFRICA Leading Women Summit is set to showcase its 11th annual edition, bringing together some of Africa’s most powerful female leaders in business, entertainment, sports, politics and civil society. Held in Sandton on March 18, 2026, an exceptional lineup of speakers from across Africa and beyond will convene for a day sharing ideas, innovations and impactful practices for Africa’s next chapter of glory and growth. This year’s edition of the summit, also honoring International Women’s Month, will be held under the theme, The Voice, Vision and Victories of Her Africa. It will be an inspirational call to amplify women’s voices,



center their leadership visions, and celebrate the tangible wins shaping the continent’s future. “For a decade, the Forbes Woman Africa Leading Women Summit has led the conversation on leadership, equity and the role of women in Africa’s growth story. How can today’s leaders translate authority into action that moves the continent forward? This is the crucial discourse we look forward to every year at the summit, at the same time as

we celebrate outstanding female achievers,” says Renuka Methil, Managing Editor of Forbes Africa. As these conversations continue to evolve, corporates are also taking on a more deliberate role to advance women’s empowerment across the continent. From fireside chats, one-on-one interviews and robust panel discussions to compelling spotlight segments and exciting performances, the day-long summit will conclude

with the prestigious Forbes Woman Africa Awards, honoring women who have made remarkable strides in their careers, followed by a celebratory after-party. The day-long summit and awards will also see the Stanford Graduate School of Business join as an associate collaborator for the first time, with CNBC Africa as the media partner. The speaker line-up includes the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, H.E. Judith Suminwa Tuluka; cybersecurity lecturer and author Popina Khumanda; Miss Universe South Africa 2025 Melissa Nayimuli; Ethiopian fashion entrepreneur Mahlet Afework; South African Olympic ski racer Lara Markthaler; Miss World Somalia 2025 Zainab Jama; Nigerian motorbike adventurer Ebaide Joy; and Grammy-award winning singer and businesswoman Chandrika Tandon, among others.

Wilderness camps nominated

Travel + Leisure 2026 World’s Best Awards



TWENTY-EIGHT WILDERNESS camps have been nominated in the Travel + Leisure 2026 World’s Best Awards, marking a significant recognition for the company’s global tourism and conservation efforts. The prestigious awards celebrate destinations and travel experiences



that leave lasting impressions on visitors. Wilderness says the nomination reflects its strong commitment to conservation, community development, and delivering immersive travel experiences in some of the world’s most iconic natural environments. In addition to the camp



nominations, the company has also been nominated in the Tour Operators and Safari Outfitters category. Wilderness has encouraged supporters and travellers to cast their votes, noting that continued support helps strengthen conservation work and supports communities living alongside protected wilderness areas.

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1.8Ltr
39⁹⁹
RICH N CREAMY Ice Cream each

India Stack – The Indian Approach and Experience

WHAT IS THE INDIA STACK?
It is a collection of open Application Programming Interface (APIs) and Digital Public Goods forming India's foundational digital infrastructure. Its components collectively enable various entities, including governments, businesses and individuals to interact and conduct transactions digitally. The India Stack components like Aadhaar (identity), UPI (payments), DigiLocker (documents), e-Sign (digital signature), e-KYC (know your customer), DBT (direct benefit transfer), Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (healthcare), etc, enable citizens, businesses and developers to avail of paper-less, presence-less and cashless transactions and services.

The India Stack is a framework that aims to accelerate India's digital transformation and enhance financial inclusion.

Although the name of the project bears the word India, the vision of India Stack is not limited to one country. It can be applied to any nation, developed or one that is developing or emerging.

The project was conceptualized early this century, and first implemented in 2009 through the Aadhaar unique identity programme.

The India Stack is designed to provide a secure and interoperable platform for the delivery of various services to citizens, leveraging the power of technology and data.

How does the India Stack work?

The India Stack works through five layers. The *Cashless Layer*, which supports an interoperable payment network, owned and operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

This layer includes payments platforms like IMPS, which facilitates immediate electronic transfers from one bank account to another, and UPI, an instant real-time payment system from an individual or business/entity to another individual or to a business/entity, thus replacing use of notes and coins.

The UPI gained immense popularity during the Covid period,



and has been growing by leaps and bounds in India, since then. These and other platforms like AEPS (Aadhaar Enabled Payments System) and APB (Aadhaar Payment Bridge) reduce the cost and risk of financial transactions. The *Paperless Layer* enables storage and retrieval of information on real time basis. Owned by the Department of Electronics & Information Technology, this layer includes e-Sign, e-KYC and DigiLocker.

The *Presence-less Layer* provides unique digital biometric identities (Aadhaar) with open APIs, enabling real-time, anytime, anywhere verification without physical documents, thus reducing fraud and simplifying access to digital services.

The *Consent Layer* empowers individuals with control over their

personal data through a framework for secure consented sharing featuring Electronic Data Consent (EDC) for time/purpose limits; a Consent Artefact for transparency; and regulated entities like Account Aggregators (AA) to manage data flow. How does it work? To give an example, if an individual or entity seeks a loan, he/it consents to share their financial data like bank statements, through an AA, which securely retrieves the data from the bank with the consent given. The data is shared with the loan provider, with the user's specified permissions in the Consent Artefact.

The *Commerce Layer* is driven by the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a Section 8 (not for profit) company. It features open protocols for interoperability,



India-Stack-The-Indian-Approach-and-Experience

standardized operations (inventory, cataloging), data privacy, and a consent-based framework, enabling seamless integration between buyers and sellers.

It helps reduce monopoly, fostering a competitive digital marketplace, lowering entry barriers for smaller sellers like MSMEs and the neighbourhood kirana (grocery) store. This layer's foundation is laid on India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), using Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker and the Consent Layer.

Experience with the India Stack

Hundreds of millions of Indian citizens and residents have onboarded various components the India Stack-built DPI, to avail of safe and secure financial, healthcare, education and other services. Its key

deliverables are:

Delivers complete services to citizens Main focus is to improve people's lives

A product of several years of innovation

A paper-less and cashless delivery system It has facilitated the creation of innovative solutions and startups that leverage digital technology to address societal challenges and improve access to services for all segments of the population. India's experience can be summed up in the following outcomes.

Financial Inclusion: India Stack plays a crucial role in promoting financial inclusion by providing a digital platform for banking, payments and financial services.

It has enabled people, who were earlier excluded from financial

systems - those unbanked or underbanked - to access digital payments methods.

Access to Services: With India Stack, citizens can access a wide range of government services, financial services, healthcare services, education resources, and more, through digital platforms, enhancing convenience and accountability.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: India Stack's open APIs have spurred innovation by allowing startups and businesses to build new services on top of the existing infrastructure.

This has led to growth of a vibrant tech ecosystem. **Reduced Corruption:** By enabling DBT and digital subsidies, the financial benefits from government to citizens now reach his/her bank account directly through DBT, rather than through

intermediaries, as in the past.

India Stack is thus assisting in reducing leakages and corruption in the distribution of government benefits and subsidies. India's model is being replicated globally, with the India Stack serving as a blueprint for inclusive growth and digital transformation in other developing countries.

Though some challenges remain on data privacy, cybersecurity, digital inclusiveness and regulatory oversight, the India Stack has served the people of the country well. It is also assisting several friendly countries to build their own digital public infrastructure (DPI) for inclusive growth and digital transformation.

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Sport

#Bophaskelem #Kgaatshoo

P16.8 m for Orange FA Cup

48 teams compete in 47 matches in a nationwide knockout ■ Enhanced fan interactions on Orange Max it App

BAKWADI LEKOPANE
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MOBILE telecommunication giant, Orange Botswana on Friday unveiled the 7th edition of the Orange FA Cup in Gaborone, splashing P16.8 million on the popular football tournament over the next three seasons.

The upcoming season is expected to be bigger and more engaging. Orange Botswana and the BFA are targeting increased fan interaction, expanded community activations, and enhanced nationwide visibility, ensuring the tournament reaches deeper into communities across Botswana. Season 7 will also introduce enhanced digital engagement through fan interactions on the Orange Max it App, alongside improved matchday security and convenience through the availability of online ticketing. These innovations are designed to elevate the overall fan experience while strengthening operational efficiency and safety.

Under the renewed agreement, Orange Botswana will support the administration and prize structure of the competition, which features 48 teams competing in 47 matches across a nationwide knockout format.

Thrilling display

The upcoming FA Cup tournament promises a thrilling display of football as reigning champions Jwaneng Galaxy FC gear up to defend their title. This year's tournament will feature intense matchups across divisions, with both lower division

and upper division teams aiming to challenge the champions and make their mark.

Since inception in 2019, the partnership has grown into one of the most meaningful sponsorships in Botswana's sporting landscape driving talent development, community upliftment, and professional growth within the football ecosystem.

The tournament has become a structured platform for nurturing talent, providing a vital bridge between grassroots football and the professional stage which sees lower division and upper division teams compete, which in turn offers players national exposure and a pathway to higher levels of the game. The results have seen several players who featured in the tournament go on to earn national team call-ups.

Orange Botswana Chief Executive Officer, Néné Maiga said the decision to sustain and grow the sponsorship, reflects a deliberate commitment to long term national impact. "We believe leadership comes with responsibility. It is important to continue investing in platforms that develop talent, uplift communities and create opportunity. The Orange FA Cup is not just about football. It is about social mobility, youth development and strengthening communities through sport. Sustained investment creates structured opportunities for young people to grow, compete and succeed," said Maiga.



48 teams compete in 47 matches in a nationwide knockout

Athletics Valentine's Date

BOTSWANA ATHLETICS Association (BAA) has declared: "Love doesn't have to be expensive. For just P20.00, treat your Valentine or your crew to a full day of electrifying athletics action"

BAA was scheduled to host an athletics extravaganza in the City of Francistown yesterday on Valentine's Day- Saturday 14th February 2024. The athletics meet brings together World Champions, Olympic Medalists, African Champions & Medalists and Future superstars.

Already confirmed for appearance by the end of the week were Letsile Tebogo, Bayapo "ZimDollar" Ndori, Leungo Scotch, Obakeng Kamberuka, Victor Ntweng and many more talented athletes.

School boy
Olympic & World Champion Letsile Tebogo was billed to open



his 2026 track season in front of the home crowd at Obed Itani Chilume stadium in Francistown yesterday (Saturday).

All eyes are now on Botswana's sprint king as he launches another campaign for 2026 with the 100m and 200m on the cards.

Zim Dollar
World Champion Bayapo Ndori was also scheduled to open his 2026 track season alongside Tebogo in Francistown yesterday. The 1x World Champion, 1x Olympic Games Silver Medalist, 1x Olympic Games Bronze Medalist, and 1x World Championships Bronze Medalist launches his campaign over the 400m.

From 0800hrs - 1900hrs
Entry Fee only P20.00 at the gate
Date - 14th February 2026
Francistown Stadium (Obedi Itani Chilume)

WAR Gaborone 26 inspections



World Athletics relays and Local Organising Committee inspect venue readiness and local logistics ahead of the event

WORLD RELAYS 2026 LOCAL Organising Committee hosted World Athletics delegates early this week for a comprehensive site visit, officially marking the entry into the readiness stage. Inspections covered the National Stadium and UB Stadium (warm-up venue), official hotels, and key logistical sites around Gaborone

to ensure a seamless experience for the world's elite athletes and international delegations. As the LOC finalizes preparations, fans are encouraged to secure early bird tickets online and reserve their seats early. The countdown is on. Gaborone is ready to deliver a spectacular World Relays. As part of the ongoing World Athletics delegation visit, the Mayor

of Gaborone, Oarabile Motalaleng joined World Athletics Relays Gaborone 26 CEO Moses Bantsi and the LOC to assess progress at the National Stadium. The visit underscores Gaborone's commitment as Host City to meeting world standards and delivering a world-class event on behalf of Botswana for Africa as the first event of its kind in Africa.

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