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Botswana in COVID-19 data censorship

Botswana transparency compromised as government switches to COVID-19 data masking Government to withhold public interest information from citizens Botswana's new strategy is a COVID-19 infection threat multiplier - experts

SUNDAY STANDARD REPORTER

Botswana government's COVID-19 public health response this week shifted from transparency to obfuscation and data masking as the country's coronavirus cases climbed to 22.

In a curious break from its commitment to transparency in the fight against the coronavirus, Coordinator of COVID-19 Task Force Dr. Kereng Masupu disclosed this week that government had taken a decision to mask the country's COVID-19 data.

Masupu argued that government's decision to apply masking to the country's COVID-19 data field is to protect information that is classified as personally identifiable or sensitive personal data.

Under the new plan to control the COVID-19 message, government will start withholding information of public interest especially the demography and geographical locations of new virus cases. The new strategy will make it difficult for Botswana to gauge when the virus progresses from limited "local transmission" (in which carriers are identified and their contacts can be traced) to "community transmission" (in which it is no longer known who is carrying and transmitting the virus).

Answering questions from journalists, Masupu revealed that unlike South Africa, Botswana will not stratify its COVID-19 data, but will instead aggregate it to hide demographic variables that may compromise patients' right to privacy.

"We are a very small society and if we stratify information some people may see through it and guess who the patients are", he argued. He cited a recent example where the team received complaints from some Ramotswa residents about disclosing the geographic information of the Ramotswa old woman who tested



Coordinator of COVID-19 Task Force, Dr. Kereng Masupu

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Another CoA ruling casts aspersions on Judge Khan

THOBO MOTLHOKA & MPHOKO KELEBOGE

A panel of three Court of Appeal Justices has again raised questions about Acting High Court Judge Rahim Abdool Khan's competence.

Delivering a unanimous ruling in a case involving Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board (PPADB), Zhengtai Group Botswana, and China Jiangsu recently Justice Stephen Gaongalelwe stopped short of accusing Khan of making judgements based on emotions. PPADB and others had lodged an appeal against a High Court decision to overturn a decision to award a P1.5 billion Maun Water Tender to Zhengtai Group Botswana which tender had initially been awarded to China Jiangsu. Gaon-

The decision by PPADB to withdraw the awarding of the tender to China Jiangsu followed a letter from the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS) labeling the company a "national security threat".

galelwe made reference to submissions that Judge Khan might have gotten frustrated by what he found to be deliberate delays by the PPADB and others.

"I must say while it might well be so a judicial officer's judgement should never reflect anger at any of the parties."

He said it was also impermissible for the Court, as the lower Court did, to confine itself to the interests of one side only.

Zhengtai Group had already started works on the project before their counterparts won the case at the Court. The CoA found that it was wrong for Khan to substitute the PPADB's decision to award the tender to Zhengtai Group when work had already commenced and Zhengtai had not been found to be at fault. The decision by PPADB to withdraw the awarding of the tender to China Jiangsu followed a letter from the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS) labeling the company a "national security threat". "It is common cause that Zhengtai Group Botswana was in no way to blame for the DIS letter," Gaongalelwe said. He said case law shows that generally a court must be reluctant to substitute its own decision for that of a body tasked with such duties like PPADB. In considering such an application, Gaongalelwe said, the court

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Sekwakwa's blunder opened up Botswana to COVID-19

SUNDAY STANDARD REPORTER

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Solomon Sekwakwa's blunder was responsible Botswana's first three recorded cases of coronavirus, and probably more.

Sunday Standard investigations have revealed that had Sekwakwa

reversed a directive by the Director of Health Services to enforce mandatory quarantine earlier last month, Botswana would have contained the first two cases of COVID-19.

A week before Botswana's first two imported cases of Coronavirus slipped past border controls, Director of Health Services Dr Malaki

Tshipayagae evoked provisions of the Public Health Act to enforce mandatory quarantine on all arriving travellers from affected countries for a period of 14 days.

A Savingram from Dr Tshipayagae addressed to HATAB dated 6th March 2020 states: following the latest World Health Organisation

(WHO) on international travel and as per the Public Health Act (2013) in control of communicable diseases, the Ministry of Health and Wellness has taken a decision to enforce mandatory self-quarantine of all arriving travellers from affected countries for a period of 14 consecutive days, at their place of residence.

"Please note that those will be monitored by the Ministry of Health officers in their respective health districts. Furthermore, those who are here as tourists will be quarantined at their place of residence (hotel, guest houses, lodges, inns)."

The Director is empowered by the Act to enforce mandatory quar-

antine to control the spread of communicable diseases.

It is however, not clear if Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Wellness is empowered by the Act to reverse the Director's decision.

CONTINUES ON PG 3

WEATHER & INFO

WEATHER FORECAST GABORONE

SUNDAY Max: 28°C Min: 14°C



MONDAY Max: 28°C Min: 13°C



TUESDAY Max: 27°C Min: 13°C



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Covid-19 delays bourse financials

SUNDAY STANDARD REPORTER

A number of companies listed on the Botswana Stock Exchange which were due to release their audited financial statements have notified shareholders of anticipated delays due to the coronavirus.

Botswana's top budget grocer, Choppies Enterprises, which for the last two years was embroiled in controversy over its operations is one of the companies that have notified the markets that audited financial statements will be delayed due to the disruptions caused by Covid-19, a disease that has caused havoc across the world.

For Choppies shareholders and market observers, the delay of results for financial year ended June 2019 is nothing new, but only adds to the anxiety. Choppies remains suspended on the BSE and Johannesburg Stock Exchange over its failure to publish audited results on time. The June 2019 financials are already overdue by seven months and were supposed to be published by end of June 2020. The retailer says this will not be possible as measures imposed by the government to curtail the spread of the virus has affected the work of auditors.

"The current lockdown in Botswana imposed by the government has affected the work stream related to the completion of the Annual Financial Statements in respect of the financial year ended 30 June 2019 and the Auditor's Report thereon," the company said in cautionary note on Wednesday.

"Accordingly, it is anticipated that the said Financial Statements and Auditor's Report shall be completed and released on or about 30 July 2020, presuming that the current lockdown will cease on 30 April 2020."

This means that the June 2019 financials will be ten months late as ordinarily they should have been published by September 2019 latest. However, the company has had troubles with auditors and regulators after it failed to publish the audited June 2018 financials on time, setting in motion a corporate scandal that played itself over a year. The company finally released the financials in December 2019, late by a year and five months. Adding to the drama, the company's auditor, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), dropped the retailer as a client and refused to sign off the June 2018 financials. The retail chain giant says it will be suing PwC for over P800 over how the whole saga unfolded.

Meanwhile, Choppies added that in the event that the lockdown is extended, the anticipated date for completion of the said annual financial statements will be delayed and a further announcement advising shareholders of the revised expected date of completion will be released.

Besides Choppies, G4S Botswana, the only listed security company on the BSE, says its December 2019 financials which were supposed to be published before end of March, will be published before this month ends, attributing the delay to the requirement to weigh in the impact of Covid-19 on the financial standing of the security company. The company added that its auditors are working around the clock to assess the impact on the viability of the business.

The country's top microlender and one of the most profitable companies on the BSE, Letshego Holdings, which operates in other markets outside Botswana has also notified shareholders that the financial statements for the year ended December 2019, which are supposed to be publicly released at the latest in March, will only be available on April, citing the lockdown for the delay.

"The Independent External Auditors of the Letshego Group, informed Letshego that it would not be able to complete their review of the audited financial statements, and therefore issue their audit opinion, due to additional disclosures needed to be included in the audited financial statements around subsequent events and related notes specifically relating to Covid-19. This is due in the main to the impact of the lockdown in South Africa where the EY Technical IFRS team is based," Letshego said.

Property investment behemoth, Turnstar Holdings, which owns Game City, one of the biggest and busiest mall in the country, said its financials for the year ended January 2020 which were due this month will be delayed as a result of the lockdown, with auditors unable to complete the annual audit as it was ongoing when the lockdown came into effect.

"The Turnstar Group Audited Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 January 2020, will be published on or before the 31 May 2020," the company said.

Authority receiving complaints of unfair business practices during lockdown

Implementation of border closures policy and lockdown literally coming at cost to consumers



Gideon Nkala

The Competition and Consumer Protection Authority's Director of Communications and Advocacy, Gideon Nkala, says that the Authority continues to receive complaints from consumers about unfair business practice albeit on a smaller scale.

While some of those complaints relate to alcohol-based hand sanitiser production. Some of what was touted as sanitiser were actually watered down detergents like Jik and Windolene – which can become a serious health hazard when used on bare hands. The Authority did issue a warning about "dubious products being sold in the market." Section 15(4) of the Consumer Protection Act outlaws trading in goods that do not conform to the mandatory safety standards set by the Botswana Bureau of Standards (BoBS) or international bodies it recognises. Section 15(5) empowers the Authority to halt trade of such goods, to

notify the public about unsafe goods as well as to "direct the supplier to replace the goods, refund any consumer who bought the unsafe goods or compensate the consumer for any damage suffered by the consumer in using the unsafe goods at an amount determined by the Authority. In a statement that the Authority issued before the lockdown, Nkala indicated that they would be monitoring the situation to guard against unfair business practices. While the Authority's offices are closed, some of its officers (including Nkala himself) have been working from home and fielding calls from members of the public. Nkala says that he has received complaints related to price in-

flation about one supermarket chain. In the case of a complaint from Metsimothabe largely because of the lockdown constraints, he was unable to ascertain the veracity of the complaints. In the second case, Nkala received two different complaints from Otse about a local store having increased the price of a bag of potatoes from P49 to P70. On following up these reports telephonically, the store manager confirmed the prices and indicated that the price increase was unavoidable. Apparently, the store had been buying the potatoes at a cheaper price from South Africa but not long ago, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security did, in terms of the

border closures policy, suspend the importation of potatoes. This forced the store to buy from a Gantsi farmer who sells his produce at a Gabane warehouse at a higher price. Nkala says that he confirmed this account to be true. In explaining his own pricing, the Gantsi farmer stated that unlike his competitor farmers in South Africa who draw water from the Orange River, he has to contend with high input costs - that include extraction of water in a desert. For consumers, the lockdown and implementation of the border closures policy have eliminated the option of shopping around the region, town or village for cheaper products.

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Maun police broke arm of assault victim during lockdown patrol

Results of an x-ray examination that was done at Letshegothe Primary Hospital in Maun show that a man who had a nasty run-in with a police patrol team suffered a broken arm.

When he spoke to *Sunday Standard* last week, Mooketsi Goitsemodimo complained about a swollen arm. He suspected the arm was broken when three police officers from the local police station fell upon him like a tonne of bricks during a heated argument. Courtesy of an x-ray examination, such suspicion has been confirmed. Goitsemodimo's medical card says that "following assault more than one week ago", he suffered a fracture in the ulnar (the long bone in the forearm that stretches from the elbow to the smallest finger) of the right arm and that callus has formed. Callus means soft tissue, especially in an area that has been subjected to friction. His right arm is now encased in a cast.

Goitsemodimo, who is epileptic, has a leg disability and walks with the aid of a stick, says that he was assaulted by police officers who had apparently been acting on a tip that home-brewed beer was being sold at his family home in Sanyedi Ward. All told the patrol team comprised four police officers (three males, one female) and a soldier. The woman officer and stayed in the patrol van throughout the period that the officers and soldier searched the homestead. The altercation began when the police wanted to search a hut in which Goitsemodimo's sister, a



Botswana Police

new mother, was secluded with her two-week old baby in line with indigenous culture. Goitsemodimo says that he balked at the searching

of the hut but minus the soldier who expressed grave misgivings about violating a strict cultural norm, the officers bulldozed their way in. They

didn't find what they were looking for and coming out, got into a verbal spat with Goitsemodimo, who says that he remonstrated with them

for their acultural conduct. It was at this point, he claims, that the officers fell upon him, taking turns slapping him hard across the face and kicking him all over his body as he fell to the ground.

"Then they handcuffed me, dragged me on the ground like a bag of maize and threw me into the back of their patrol vehicle," he says.

The vehicle took him to the police station where he was thrown into a holding cell and released a few hours later without being charged, by one of the officers who had earlier assaulted him. He says upon releasing him the officer told him: "I don't ever want to see you here again."

His body aching all over, Goitsemodimo later went to a medical clinic and provided the nurse who attended him with an account of the alleged assault, that was transferred to his medical card. The handwriting is characteristically hieroglyphic code that is difficult to read but some parts are clear enough: "reports to be assaulted by the police on the 8th April, 2020, sustaining injury to the face ... cheek bruises ... forearm swollen ... soft tissue injury ... report that they were kicking him in the face ... pain on the ears ... reports discharging [circled /] ear ... reports some cracking sounds." From reading the hieroglyphic handwriting on the card, it is unclear to make out what he was discharging from the ear but Goitsemodimo himself says that he was bleeding from both ears after the police beat him up.



Matida Mmipi

Botswana's strategic fuel reserves can cover 18 days

Botswana Oil Limited says that the current strategic reserves storage guarantees an 18 days' cover and that the fall in crude oil prices presents further opportunity for it to further enhance its stocks in the interest of national security of supply.

"Closely monitoring the price trend and capitalizing on the price as it goes down is normal business practice," says Matida Mmipi who is BOL's Head of Stakeholder Relations.

In an ahistorical development, demand for oil is down 30 percent as flights have been grounded and factories shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Russia and Saudi Arabia worsened the situation by continuing to pump more oil throughout March amid decreased demand. Resultantly, the price for Brent Crude, which is the global benchmark, has fallen below \$20 a barrel for the first time in 18 years. While oil producing nations have now cut production by 10 million barrels, this reduction is not commensurate with the decline in demand. As a result, these nations find themselves having to spend over \$30 a barrel to get the oil off their hands.

Historically, oil markets take between a year and a year and a half to stabilise. *Sunday Standard* sought to find out from Botswana Oil, which manages the government's strategic reserves, whether it would take advantage of lower prices by buying more petroleum products. While capitalizing on the price as it goes down would be the most natural thing to do, Mmipi says that BOL also takes into cognizance other factors that come into play when it comes to the stockpiling fuel reserves. One she mentioned is "quality of the product if stored for prolonged periods."

Indeed, while crude oil can last millions of years underground, the refining process alters its composition and makes it susceptible to degradation. Environmental factors such as heat, oxygen and humidity also affect the fuel's condition. In that regard, while buying more and more fuel might seem a smart buying decision, there is downside that Mmipi describes.

Regarding the lockdown itself, Mmipi says that in discharge of its mandate, Botswana Oil Limited acted proactively and put measures in place to ensure security of supply when indications that the world would go into lockdown in response to the COVID-19 became apparent. In addition to the current stock that can cover 18 days, she says that the government has put measures in place to increase local storage capacity through the construction of storage facilities, amongst them the Tshele Hills Depot.

On its website, BOL says that a study undertaken by Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources (MMEWR) between 2012 and 2014 revealed that there were three main petroleum product consumption areas in Botswana; Gaborone, Francistown and Gantsi/Maun.

"These areas were found to constitute 57 percent, 35 percent and 8 percent of the overall national consumption of petroleum products respectively. The study recommended the construction of Tshele Hills oil storage with a capacity of 150 million litres; expansion of Francistown by 30 million litres and construction of Gantsi oil storage facility with 15 million litre capacity to augment the existing two government storage installations currently in use," the website says.

Expert analysis of what lies ahead in a post-COVID-19 world is far from rosy. One is that the bankruptcies of cruise ships, airlines, and oil companies will keep oil consumption depressed and that should demand accelerate, pumping back oil to match the demand will take considerable time - precipitating a spike in prices.

Sekwakwa's blunder opened up Botswana to COVID-19

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Curiously, even before the ink on the director's directive had dried, on March 7th, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Solomon Sekwakwa issued another Savingram, reversing the Director's directive.

A Savingram signed by Sekwakwa and addressed to HATAB states, "Reference is made to our Savingram REF:MH20/33 dated 6th March, 2020 in which the Ministry of Health and Wellness informed your office that the Ministry management has taken a decision to enforce mandatory self-quarantine of all arriving travellers from affected countries for a period of 14 consecutive days.

"The Ministry wishes to withdraw the correspondence with immediate effect. If there are any further developments you will be notified accordingly."

The result was that Botswana returning from COVID-19 high risk countries were allowed to join their families and friends without putting them through quarantine, risking pre-symptomatic local transmission.

As it turned out, four days after Sekwakwa reversed the director's directive and two days two days after the UK COVID-19 risk level was raised from moderate to high, a 27-year-old pre-symptomatic Mtswana young man arrived from the UK. At the time, the UK had registered a total number of 1,140 cases with at least 21 deaths and was listed as a high-risk country.

He was however allowed to go home after being 'advised' to monitor his health. On March 28th he tested positive for the virus and the following day his partner tested positive too, recording Botswana's first local transmission.

Minister of Health Dr. Lemogang Kwappe could barely hide the disappointment on his face as he took the nation through the sequence of events leading to the first local transmission of the virus. The young woman (by the Minister's own admission) had no travel history.

The 'couple', according to the Minister, tested positive for COVID-19 a day apart on March 28 and 29 following admission at Scottish Livingston Hospital (Molepolole). It was only two weeks following the gentleman's arrival from the UK.

Molepolole is currently one of the COVID-19 flashpoints in Botswana and has been earmarked for contact tracing and testing.

In another case, on March 15th, eight days after Sekwakwa reversed the director's directive, a pre-symptomatic Ramotswa old woman returning from South Africa with family members slipped past Botswana border controls. A few days later she was admitted to Ramotswa Lutheran Hospital, where she was tested for the virus. Her results were released post-humously, revealing that she was COVID-19 positive.

According to experts, cases of pre-symptomatic COVID-19 that fly under the radar without being detected may have fuelled the rapid spread of the virus. Experts say, people with the virus but without symptoms or diagnosis because they did not feel very sick in the earlier stages, were the source of at least two-thirds of documented COVID-19 cases in China during the early days of the outbreak.

President Mokgweetsi Masisi this week dismissed Sekwakwa and his deputy Morrison Sinvula with immediate effect without citing reasons for their removal.

Gaps in Botswana's official COVID-19 report worrying

THOBO MOTLHOKA

Glaring gaps in official reports on the state of the country's COVID-19 may be creating space for speculations and conspiracy theories to flourish.

Since the first three cases in the country were reported on March 30, 2020, the public has not been apprised on their health.

While one of the three initial cases was reported dead less than a day following the announcement, there has not been a progress report on the other two.

No information on any of the initial cases displaying symptoms has been shared with the public by health authorities either. International research has shown that the median time from patients first having symptoms to finally having a negative test for the virus was 10 days.

It had been 24 days since the announcement of the first reported cases of COVID-19 Botswana. By the time of going to press the country stood at 22 confirmed cases with one casualty. The number of local transmissions has also increased to eight as the expiry date for the 28 day lockdown looms. This has prompted health authorities to switch strategy from the initial plan to undertake community testing of 20,000 people, to contact tracing.

Authorities hope to identify those who have had physical contact with the people who have so far tested positive for the virus.

Coordinator of COVID-19 Task Force Dr. Kereng Masupu told the nation this week that the government will impose a partial lockdown of vil-



Dr. Kereng Masupu

lages with confirmed cases of the virus such as Molepolole, Mahalapye, Bobonong, and Siviya. Professor Mosepele Mosepele, Deputy Coordinator of COVID-19 Task Force, said contact tracing was bearing fruits and should be intensified through target testing and abandon community testing. A total of 24 contacts

of the COVID-19 Siviya patient had been reported to have tested negative for COVID-19. Daily News quoted North East District Health Management Team (DHMT) coordinator, Rodah Phindela as having said they had managed to trace 36 contacts of the 34-year-old man from Siviya village in the North East District. CO-

VID-19 Task Force Coordinator Masupu told the nation this week that they have taken a decision to avoid sharing "too much information" on the confirmed cases to avoid giving away identities of the patients.

South Africa this week reported at least 1,055 recoveries out of 3,635 confirmed cases with 65 deaths.

World Health Organization (WHO) Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus this week told the international community that the fight against COVID-19 was far from over. "Make no mistake: we have a long way to go. This virus will be with us for a long time," he said in a statement.

"Although numbers are low, we see worrying upward trends in Africa, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe. Most countries are still in the early stages of their epidemics. And some that were affected early in the pandemic are now starting to see a resurgence in cases."

He said while stay-at-home orders and other physical distancing measures have successfully suppressed transmission in many countries, the virus remains extremely dangerous.

Ghebreyesus said early evidence suggests most of the world's population remains susceptible, saying that means epidemics can easily re-ignite.

"One of the greatest dangers we face now is complacency. People in countries with stay-at-home orders are understandably frustrated with being confined to their homes for weeks on end. People understandably want to get on with their lives, because their lives and livelihoods are at stake. That's what WHO wants too. And that's what we are working for, all day, every day," he said.

He said the world cannot go back to the way things were. "There must be a 'new normal' - a world that is healthier, safer and better prepared. The same public health measures we have been advocating since the beginning of the pandemic must remain the backbone of the response in all countries."

COVID-19 spoils bankers party

BONNIE MODIAKOTLA

The country's local lenders continue to grow their balance sheets, defying the headwinds that have affected other sectors, ramping up on loans in the first month of the year, following the usual tradition of customers replenishing their accounts after festive spending. But the banks will have to adjust their sails this year to weather a storm that has spared no other industry.

The latest financial statistics available from Bank of Botswana (BoB) shows that total deposits held by banks increased by 0.4 percent from December to P76 billion in January, setting a new record in the local banking industry for the biggest deposits held by banks.

In the now familiar trajectory, the growth in deposits in the first month of the year was spurred by businesses which account for 68 percent of total deposits. Households trailed with P16 billion worth of deposits, representing 21 percent of total deposits held at banks.

Another record was also set in the total credit extended by banks, jumping by 1.1 percent from December to P63.5 billion in January, also making it the largest outstanding loans in the history of the country. In another known pattern, households were responsible for the bulk of the loans, holding 63.7 percent of the total debts, while businesses account for 36.5 percent of outstanding loans.

The appetite for credit by households was expected to grow in the second half of the year, bolstered by government workers who were supposed to get wage increases in April. However, that decision has since been suspended as the government battles to contain Covid-19, a viral infection that has become a global pandemic, infecting millions and killing hundreds of thousands.

As a response, countries worldwide have imposed measures that have negatively affected economic performances due to movement restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of the disease. Businesses considered non-essential have been temporarily closed, affecting various value chains, and putting pressure on non-governmental workers' wages.

While the coronavirus continues to cause uncertainty in markets, businesses have taken cautious approaches which might result in job losses. However, in Botswana, companies have been barred from retrenching workers, instead they have been advised to tap on the government's announced P2 billion Covid-19 relief package. The size of the package will increase to P5 billion, according to government, as it ramps up efforts to stabilise the economy.

Banks have also factored in the Covid-19 impacts, allowing some of their affected customers to apply for three months loan repayments holidays. Furthermore, the government has guaranteed some loans that will be taken by affected businesses, also as part of the relief package.

Another CoA ruling casts aspersions on Judge Khan

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has to consider the magnitude of the project and the welfare of the community at large.

"In this matter the project in question involves provision of water, an essential commodity in a wide area which has suffered inconvenience for some time. Zhengtai commenced the works in October 2019 though it was later interrupted by court orders. As a result of such interruptions operations have stalled resulting in immense prejudice to the community."

The panel consisting Justices Gaongalelwe, Singh Walia, and Zibani Makhwade eventually ruled in favor of PPADB, Ministry of Land Management, Water & Sanitation Services, and The Attorney General.

It is not the first time Judge Khan's competency has been called



Justice Stephen Gaongalelwe

into question. In 2019 questions were raised over his decision to delay a ruling in which Portfolio Pharma-

ceuticals Botswana Propriety Limited sought to interdict the Ministry of Health from procuring Anti-Retrovi-

ral Drugs. Delivering a judgement, Court of Appeal's Justice Walia found that: "In a matter where there

were uncontroverted averments of imminent threat to the health and even life of patients in need of drugs, it was irresponsible and callous of the judge to have treated the matter in what I can call an uncaring manner. These are strong words but they echo what has been said by this court before."

Walia also cited the China Jiangsu judgement in which Justice Isaac Lesetedi had lamented the delay in the court making its decision saying that "the ruling was delivered after the Respondents' attorneys had on several occasions approached the Registrar and finally written to the judge expressing the need for the ruling to be delivered expeditiously."

In that case too, Walia noted, the same judge presided. "This Court is not alone in deploring the delay in judgment delivery, particularly in cases brought on urgency."

Botswana in deadly COVID-19 censorship

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

positive to the virus.

Experience from other countries however suggests that Botswana's new COVID-19 information strategy is a threat multiplier - Where official information sources are perceived as untrustworthy; this sets the climate for the viral spread of unfounded speculation.

This will not help Botswana's fight against the pandemic, when the country is already battling a heady cocktail of COVID-19 rumours —

an indistinguishable mix of unverified information, helpful information, misinformation and intentionally manipulated disinformation.

With the virus cutting a deadly swathe across the globe, the world has been divided between the Chinese censorship model and Taiwan's transparency model in dealing with COVID-19 information of public interest.

Taiwan, one of Asia's most vibrant and boisterous democracies has managed to stay ahead of the virus against all odds. Only 81 miles

off the coast of mainland China Taiwan was expected to have the second highest number of cases of coronavirus due to its proximity to and number of flights between China

While South Africa has followed the path of Taiwan, Botswana seems to be drifting towards the path taken by China, United States of America and India among other countries.

A number of experts have warned that censorship of COVID-19 information is a threat multiplier. Most, among them researchers from the COVID-19 Resource

Centre credit Taiwan's success in containing the virus on its public transparency.

In a comparative study - Taiwan Is Beating the Coronavirus. Can the US Do the Same, world acclaimed author of Bots: The Origin of New Species, and renowned American journalist who coined the term "open source journalism" Andrew Leonard also came to the conclusion that the success and failure of the two countries in fighting the pandemic came down to "public trans-

parency".

Leonard states in his report, "Taiwan's commitment to transparency has also been critical. In the United States, the Trump administration ordered federal health authorities to treat high-level discussions on the coronavirus as classified material. In Taiwan, the government has gone to great lengths to keep citizens well informed on every aspect of the outbreak, including daily press conferences and an active presence on social media."

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BOTSWANA

VACANCIES

Lucara Botswana (Pty) Ltd operates the Karowe Diamond Mine at Lethakane in the Boteti sub district. The plant was commissioned in April 2012 and has gone on to achieve exceptional performance. It is the source of some truly special diamonds. The plant completed major upgrades that include introduction of X-Ray Transmission (XRT) technology in diamond recovery. This is adding to the already existing innovative application of autogenous milling in diamond processing. The Company is embarking on projects, which entail enhanced large diamond recovery.

Lucara Botswana invites suitably qualified candidates to apply for the following positions:

PROJECT ENGINEER

Job Summary

Reporting to the Engineering Manager, the Project Engineer will be the Site Engineer responsible for construction and installation works, managing all engineering works and resources, including technical acceptance of the work, scheduling of work and engineering input to keep capital costs within budget, and to ensure that the technical integrity and work scope adherence is maintained throughout.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Operational Effectiveness
- Project Delivery Effectiveness
- Maintenance Effectiveness
- Financial Effectiveness
- Business Optimization
- Contractor Management
- Project Schedule Management
- Safety, Health and Environmental compliance
- Legal Compliance

Personal Attributes:

- Planning and organizing
- Accountability
- Strategic thinking
- Conflict Management
- Change Management
- Innovation and Creation
- Teamwork
- Communication

Qualifications and Experience:

- Degree in Mechanical or Civil/Structural Engineering or equivalent
- Eight (8) years' experience in process plant engineering in the mining environment
- Project Management Professional (PMP) or Prince 2 qualification will be an added advantage

SENIOR CRANE OPERATOR

Job Summary:

Reporting to the General Engineering Supervisor, Senior Crane Operator is responsible for asset utilization, maintenance, repairs and reliability and supervision of the Crane Operation.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Asset Utilization and Management
- Planning
- Budget and Resource Management
- Safety Health and Environment
- Legal Compliance

Personal Attributes:

- Communicating with impact
- Teamwork
- Building Relationships
- Project Management and Planning
- Challenging and Influencing

Qualifications and Experience:

- Trade Test B
- Basic Rigging, Crane Operations, Safety Health and Environmental Systems
- At least five (5) years post qualification experience in crane operation preferably in a Mining environment
- Valid Class B Driver's License

MAINTENANCE PLANNER

Job Summary:

Reporting to the Assets Care Engineer, the Maintenance Planner will be responsible for providing logistic support to the maintenance management of plant mechanical and electrical equipment to ensure optimal plant availability and reliability, in order to achieve production targets, through effective implementation of a computerised maintenance management system (CMMS).

Effectiveness Areas:

- Assets Management
- Shutdown Planning and Feedback reporting
- Budget and Expenditure Control
- Process Improvement
- Safety Health and Environment

Personal Attributes:

- Results Driven
- Teamwork
- Building Relationships
- Project Management and Planning
- Challenging and Influencing
- Risk Management and Commodity Modelling

Qualifications and Experience:

- NCC or National Diploma in Mechanical or Electrical Engineering
- Eight (8) years' experience as a qualified tradesman or technician preferably of which three (3) years should be in a Mining environment
- Registered with Botswana Registration Board
- Good understanding of purchasing in mining operations and/or heavy manufacturing processes

DRAUGHTSMAN

Job Summary:

Reporting to the Maintenance Planner, Draughtsman is responsible for producing mechanical designs and drawings for the mine.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Provision of drawings and designs
- Site inspections and measurements
- Site surveys and measurements
- Documentation
- Safety, Health and Environment

Personal Attributes:

- Communicating with impact
- Teamwork
- Building Relationships
- Planning and Organizing
- Innovation
- Analytical Skills

Qualifications and Experience:

- Diploma in Design and Drafting
- Advanced Computer Skills
- Four (4) years post qualification experience

RIGGER

Job Summary

Reporting to the Lead Rigger, the Rigger will be responsible for carrying out safe lifting and movement of loads and plant machinery, and inspecting and servicing lifting equipment throughout the Mine.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Inspections and Lifting Equipment Maintenance
- Rigging
- Subordinate Effectiveness
- Safety, Health and Environment

Personal Attributes:

- Analytical Skill
- Innovation
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Analytical skills

Qualifications and Experience:

- Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) or equivalent.
- NCC in Rigging
- Knowledge of lifting/rigging equipment
- Minimum five (5) years' experience with practical experience, with at least three (3) years in a Mining environment, including inspection of equipment
- Class B Driver's license

PLANNING CLERK

Job Summary:

Reporting to the Maintenance Coordinator, the Planning Clerk is responsible for Clerical support in the relevant Department/Section to ensure effective and timeous planning, scheduling and recording of all Plant maintenance work.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Maintenance Data Capturing
- Administration

- Budget and Resource Management (Operations)
- Safety Health and Environment
- Legal Compliance

Personal Attributes:

- Analytical Skill
- Innovation
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Analytical skills

Qualifications and Experience:

- Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) or equivalent.
- Basic Computer training (MS Office Excel, MS Office Project and MS Office Word).
- Two (2) years in a Clerical role and/or Engineering maintenance workshop experience/Working knowledge of a Computerized Maintenance System

MAINTENANCE FITTER

Job Summary:

Reporting to the General Engineering Supervisor, the Maintenance Fitter is responsible for maintaining equipment according to sound engineering practice and equipment specifications.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Maintenance effectiveness
- Financial Effectiveness
- Project Management
- People Development
- Client Relationship
- Safety Health and Environment
- Legal Compliance
- Engineering Legal and Operational Compliance
- Engineering Operational Communication
- Process knowledge and skill
- Maintenance Skills and Knowledge
- Mobile equipment operating skills

Personal Attributes:

- Analytical Skill
- Innovation
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Analytical skills

Qualifications and Experience:

- Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) or equivalent.
- National Craft Certificate or equivalent.
- Minimum of two (2) years post qualification experience
- Previous experience in Process plant or Mining environment will be an added advantage
- Valid driver's license

MAINTENANCE BOILERMAKER

Job Summary

Reporting to the Engineering Supervisor, the Boilermaker will be responsible for carrying out welding, fabrication and pipe maintenance work at the Crushing and / or Milling Sections, both planned and repair work, to the required quality standards, to ensure optimal plant/equipment availability and reliability in order to achieve production targets, while working in a safe and secure work environment.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Planning
- Inspections
- Fabricating and Welding/Maintenance and Repair
- Raising requisitions
- Safety, Health and Environmental Compliance.

Personal Attributes:

- Planning & Organising Skills
- Innovation
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Analytical Skills

Qualifications and Experience:

- Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) or equivalent
- NCC in Welding and Fabrication



LUCARA
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VACANCIES CONTINUED

- Thorough understanding of welding and fabrication techniques
- Ability to read engineering drawings
- Basic engineering design and development skills
- A minimum experience of five (5) years post qualification experience, at least 3 of which must be in Mining Industry

MAINTENANCE ELECTRICIAN

Job Summary

Reporting to the Maintenance Electrical Coordinator, the Maintenance Electrician will be responsible for carrying out inspections, installations, system operations and maintenance to ensure network availability of supply, and operational safety in the area of responsibility

Effectiveness Areas:

- Preventive, Predictive Maintenance and Repairs
- Shutdowns
- Warehouse Requisitions
- Safety, Health and Environment
- Safety, health and environmental compliance.

Personal Attributes:

- Planning and organizing.
- Accountability.
- Conflict management.
- Team leadership.
- Innovation and creation.

Qualifications and Experience:

- National Crafts Certificate (Electrical) or equivalent
- Diagnostics ability
- Understanding of SHEA procedures
- Electrical equipment installation, maintenance and repair
- Power generation and distribution, and network switching knowledge
- Driver's License

RECOVERY SUPERVISOR

Job Summary

Reporting to the Process Engineer the Recovery Supervisor is responsible for coordinating the operation of the diamond recovery plants (BSP and Audit Plants) efficiently and effectively to meet production targets. This position will also be responsible for overseeing the BSP and Audit Recovery plant maintenance and ensuring that any contractors working in the red area complies with all statutory and company policies and procedures.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Metallurgical Plans Implementation
- Operational Effectiveness
- Contracts administration
- Budget and Resource Management (Operations)
- Legal Compliance
- Safety, Health and Environment

Personal Attributes:

- Planning and organizing
- Mentoring and leadership
- Excellent technical skills
- Team player
- Innovation (Proactive)
- Strong knowledge of metallurgical processes
- Good analytical Skills
- Good Job / Work Ethics
- Accountability

Qualifications and Experience:

- BGCSE Certificate or equivalent qualification.
- Supervisory Development Programmes
- Plant Operator Training
- Safety, Health and Environmental Systems
- Working Knowledge of Diamond Control procedures including search and diamond pick ups

CENTRAL CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR

Job Summary

Reporting to the Recovery Foreman the CCR operator is responsible for remotely controlling and monitoring the operation of the diamond recovery plants (Recovery, 4 – 8 mm XRT, Audits and main XRT Plants) efficiently, effectively and safely to meet set production targets. This position will also be responsible for ensuring effective communication across all stakeholders to minimize plant down times and ensure compliance to statutory, and company policies and procedures. CCR Operator is also accountable for the Plant Operators and attendants within their field.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Process Maintenance / Operational Effectiveness
- Diamond Control
- Cost control
- Safety, Health and Environment Compliance

Personal Attributes:

- Communication skills
- Mentoring and leadership
- Excellent technical skills
- Team player
- Innovation (Proactive)
- Strong knowledge of metallurgical processes
- Good analytical Skills
- Good Job / Work Ethics
- Accountability

Qualifications and Experience:

- O' Level or BGCSE Certificate or equivalent and appropriate Central Control Room operator training programme
- (3) years Plant Operational experience in a diamond mineral processing production plant with at least twelve (12) months on the job Central Control Room Operator training/ at least one (1) years in a similar position.
- Central Control Room Operator Training
- SHE related training
- Working Knowledge of SCADA systems
- Knowledge of Diamond Control procedures including search and diamond pick ups
- Leadership training
- Microsoft office training

SHIFT SUPERVISOR

Job Summary

Reporting to the Shift Foreman the Shift Supervisor is responsible to oversee the operation of a specific defined section of the process plant efficiently, effectively and safely to meet set production targets. This position will also be responsible for ensuring effective communication across all stakeholders, supervising the section maintenance, minimizing plant down times and ensure compliance to statutory, company policies and procedures.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Metallurgical Plans Implementation
- Operational Effectiveness
- Contracts administration
- Budget and Resource Management (Operations)
- Legal Compliance
- Safety, Health and Environment Compliance

Personal Attributes:

- Communication skills
- Mentoring and leadership
- Excellent technical skills
- Team player
- Innovation (Proactive)
- Strong knowledge of metallurgical processes
- Good analytical Skills
- Good Job / Work Ethics
- Accountability

Qualifications and Experience:

- BGCSE Certificate or equivalent qualification.
- Four (4) years Plant Operational experience in a diamond mineral processing production plant with at least three (3) years at Plant Operator level. Previous experience as a Supervisor will be an added advantage.
- Supervisory Development Programmes
- Plant Operator Training
- Safety, Health and Environmental Systems
- Metallurgical training will be an advantage
- Working knowledge of SCADA systems
- Working Knowledge of Diamond Control procedures including search and diamond pick ups

ACCOUNTS SUPERVISOR - GABORONE

Job Summary

Reporting to the Financial Accountant, the Accounts Supervisor is responsible for assisting the entire Finance function in achieving its mandate of providing accounting services to its customers and maintaining financial security by adhering to internal controls.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Sales accounting
- Treasury Function
- Procurement
- GL Reconciliations
- Operating Expenditure

- Audit Support
- Safety, Health and Environment

Personal Attributes:

- Sound Communication skills
- Good client service skills
- Attention to detail
- Results driven
- Teamwork
- Upholding Confidentiality

Qualifications and Experience:

- O' level and AAT or equivalent qualification.
- Computer skills, relevant accounting and asset management courses
- Three (3) years post qualification experience in a computerised accounting environment of which at least two (2) years should have been at the same level.
- BICA Membership

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT - LETLHAKANE

Job Summary

Reporting to the Financial Accountant, Accounts Assistant is responsible for performing effective accounting transactions, in accordance with organisational policies and procedures, in the areas of Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Payroll, Asset Accounting, Cash Management, General Ledger and Reporting.

Effectiveness Areas:

- Accounts Payable
- General ledger
- Accruals and Pre-payments
- WHT, VAT & PAYE submission
- Records Management
- Customer Care
- Safety, Health and Environment

Personal Attributes:

- Sound Communication skills
- Good client service skills
- Attention to detail
- Results driven
- Teamwork
- Upholding Confidentiality

Qualifications and Experience:

- O' level and AAT or equivalent qualification.
- Computer skills with relevant accounting and asset management courses.
- At least three (3) years accounting post qualification experience in a computerised accounting environment of which at least 2 years' will have been at the same level.
- BICA Membership

MECHANIC

Job Summary

Reporting to the General Engineering Supervisor, the mechanic is responsible for asset maintenance, repairs and reliability

Effectiveness Areas:

- Maintenance Execution
- Planning
- Budget and Resource Management (Operations)
- Safety, Health and Environment
- Legal compliance

Personal Attributes:

- Sound Communication skills
- Good client service skills
- Attention to detail
- Results driven
- Teamwork
- Upholding Confidentiality

Qualifications and Experience:

- Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) or equivalent.
- At least eight (8) years post qualification experience in earthmoving field.
- Basic hydraulics and troubleshooting will be an added advantage
- N3/N4
- NCC in light vehicle or Earthmoving

Only candidates who meet the above requirements need to apply enclosing detailed curriculum vitae and certified copies of certificates, clearly indicating the position applied for on the email subject line to recruit.transition@lucarabotswana.co.bw.

Closing date for applications is May 10, 2020. Only short-listed candidates will be responded to.

The Cost of Coronavirus – A Layman's Perspective

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success. - Henry Ford

On the 31st of December 2019, just as the world was about to usher in 2020, Chinese health authorities were grappling with a unique pneumonia-like virus. The unknown virus was affecting residents of Wuhan in the province of Hubei. To their credit, the Chinese alerted the World Health Organisation. Hardly a week after that, Covid-19 was identified and the world was advised that it belonged to a coronavirus family that include SARS and the common cold (for this article, the terms Covid-19 and coronavirus are used interchangeably). Eleven days into the new year, the new virus had claimed the life of its first victim and six days later the second victim succumbed to the virus. By the end of January 2020, confirmed cases had risen to just under 10,000 and lives of close to 200 people had been lost.

As confirmed cases and deaths ballooned worldwide, the world started paying heavily for dismissing the virus as a Chinese epidemic. The virus had no respect for physical borders. In no time what had started as a health crisis in Wuhan, or epidemic if you like, had spread its tentacles across the globe ultimately curdling into a pandemic. By the end of the first week of March, the virus had spread to 90 countries with over 100,000 confirmed cases and close to 3,500 dead. At the end of March, confirmed cases had increased nine-fold to over 900,000.

The virus did not discriminate. The world watched helplessly as monarchs, royalty, eminent statesmen and their spouses, celebrities, accomplished entrepreneurs, fitness fanatics, health professionals, academics, dignitaries, wealthy and poor individuals fell victim to the virus. In a bid to contain the spread of the virus, by the beginning of April about half of the world's global community was in lockdown. The rate at which almost the entire global village capitulated to hard hitting socio-economic paralysis at the

best of a microorganism continues to shock people to this day.

But what exactly is the cost of the spread of this virus? For now, no one can accurately quantify the cost. And probably, no one ever will. The cost manifests itself in a number of areas, among these being the economic, health and social fronts. This article discusses the cost of coronavirus from a general perspective, without focusing on any specific country.

Economic Cost. From an economic perspective, quite a good number of emerging and developing nations are bearing the brunt of this plague. They were not fiscally ready for this magnitude of disruption. Their disaster relief funds are not bottomless and cannot adequately cushion them from the effects of the virus. They are not endowed with sufficient financial resources to keep the flames of economic activity burning. Some are already teetering on the brink of recession as the flame of economic activity flickers with an almost invisible glow.

Add to this challenge, the huge number of unemployed people and those already hustling to make a living through informal sector initiatives. For these people, putting food on their table each day and paying for essential utilities remain a monumental challenge. They have to go out almost each day to hustle. Some of them have always lived a day or two away from famine, but through their industriousness and resourcefulness they have always succeeded in giving their families something to nibble on.

Now that hustling is out of bounds for many of them, you can imagine the pain and despair in many households, with fathers and single mothers contending with the horrible effects of Covid-19. For many men, the surest way of figuratively emasculating them is to deny them an opportunity to provide for their families. They are worried and rightly so about the length of the lockdown. Not because, they fail to appreciate



ate the need for instituting such a bold measure, but purely because their survival is at stake.

Small and medium enterprises and countries that have not fully succeeded in diversifying their economies are likely to be trapped in some form of economic inactivity. Companies are likely to fail in meeting their contractual obligations with respect to paying suppliers, meeting their rental commitments, timeous remuneration of staff and even servicing of mortgages. For the future, despite prevailing ILO conventions, the advent of the virus might result in public and private entities protecting themselves from financial liability against employees, suppliers and service providers with extensive, watertight and legally enforceable *force majeure* clauses.

A number of first world countries have taken the lead in formulating a response strategy that talks to sustaining their economies primarily through government driven economic stimulus packages and charging central banks with the explicit mandate of infusing stability into capital markets and improving liquidity through quantitative easing and other sustainable initiatives. Some developed countries like the UK and the US already have a provision for giving their citizens hard cash to help them survive these

trying times. But even for these countries, there is a small section of vulnerable individuals living in abject poverty and near squalor conditions. One must hasten to add that several developing countries have also taken initiatives broadly similar to those taken by developed countries, but of course within limitations imposed by the quantum of their resources and fiscal constraints.

Health Cost. By all standards the health cost has been phenomenal. When the virus started wreaking havoc in China, a good number of nations were quite content with watching from a safe ground, almost reducing the far east country to a pariah-like status. By the time the world woke up from its deep slumber, and started hemming and hawing its way into dealing with the virus, it was perhaps a case of too little too late. Yes, the stables were already empty, the horses had long bolted!

The initial worldwide inertia in crafting and implementing sound plans for ensuring speedy and reliable tests, isolation and quarantining of suspected cases left much to be desired. In some countries, funds had to be expended on makeshift health facilities and procurement of testing equipment. Some of the equipment was found to be faulty and

could not be relied on. Quarantining came at a humongous cost for some nations, with some people having to be quarantined in hotels.

All this begs the question: why was the whole world caught napping? In all fairness, health authorities and governments do not have a crystal ball they can gaze into with a view to ascertaining what the future holds. Although they have facilities and equipment required to take care of the normal day to day load and probably any reasonable unforeseen increased load, there is just no way they could have accurately foreseen this quantum of disruption.

However, professionals in the health fraternity have always known that ever so often, a new virus would hit the world and metamorphose into a pandemic in no time. A few examples are in order. The Spanish flu (1918/19) with an estimated death toll of 40 to 50 million people, HIV (1981 to date) with about 30 million or more victims, Swine Flu (2009/10) with about 200,000 people succumbing to the virus, Ebola (2014-16) with 11,000 victims. Prior to these, the world or certain geographic areas suffered from deadly plagues such as the Antonine Plague, the Great Bubonic Plague and the Third Plague. Some of the many plagues in human history came in the form of microscopic virulent viruses. Clearly, virus-induced plagues don't send warning scintillas as forerunners or precursors to pandemics. They often hit when they are least expected and cause untold sorrow.

In view of this information, some individuals claiming to be the brightest daffodils in the bouquet keep nudging us to think aloud. Even without the benefit of the so-called perfect 20/20 vision, would it not have been reasonable for health experts to foresee that the next worldwide plague would come in the form of a virus? Furthermore, would it not have been prudent for these professionals to push for procurement of all the necessary equipment with a view to ensuring that the spread of the virus is effectively contained? And if they did, why did Governments fail to listen? In view of the heartrending mortality figures mentioned in the preceding paragraph, as a global initiative, shouldn't health experts have rallied to put forth effort in swiftly mobilising resources required to contend with the virus right in China before it spread to other parts of the world? Of course there is no one-size-fits-all solution to viruses. The truth is, it's always easy to scream from the sidelines, as if one is endowed with a measure of prescience. Pandemics like the Covid-19 virus are watershed moments in mankind's history. They can only teach us a lesson with the benefit of hindsight. May it never happen that we are caught napping again!

Social Cost. From a hygiene perspective, we will all emerge from this virus endowed with some good habits. Already now, we appreciate the importance of regularly sanitising our hands, and frequently washing them with soap and water not as a matter of mundane routine, but as a way of preserving our health and that of our loved ones and colleagues. Gone are the days of seeing people allowing a little water to hit their palms (quite common in gents during pre-coronavirus era) and moving on without bothering to use a proper hand wash detergent to carefully wash palms, fingers and spaces between fingers. And surely gone are the days when one would struggle to find hand wash detergents in bathrooms of ports of entry, offices, shops and restaurants.

Could there be some benefit in the form of reduced carbon emissions? Yes, owing to less automobiles on the road, fewer aeroplanes in our airspaces and fewer factories polluting our environment. A good number of entities are now using the Zoom app as a medium for holding meetings. This started as an intervention targeting businesses entities. Now this innovative platform is being used all over the world even for family and religious meetings as well as for teaching students. Although a few problems have been found with its privacy, it nonetheless remains a good intervention that could be used post the corona-virus era to reduce the need for traveling to specific meeting areas.

We all know that owing to existing wealth disparities between social groups, some people's risk of contracting the virus is high. Think about people living in close proximity to each other, for whom social distancing remains a far-fetched dream. People living in the slums of Khayelitsha, Cape Town; Orangi Town, Karachi; Kibera, Nairobi and Dharavi, Mumbai. Incidentally, for now, these are not the areas worst hit by Covid-19, in fact they do not even appear in the list of the top ten countries. Our wish is that the virus may stay away from these highly vulnerable communities.

So, what exactly is the social cost? People answer this question differently depending on their perspective in life. If you are a gregarious character, the so called social butterfly or the life and soul of a party, and you are forced to endure lockdown conditions, you would probably feel that you are in solitary confinement. You may get bored, especially if you live on your own. A French philosopher named Jean Baudrillard once wrote, "Perhaps, the world's second worst crime is boredom. The first is being a bore." Try to find ways of stimulating your mind and engaging in wholesome activities, like reading, writing or learning a new skill. Surprise yourself! In fact there hasn't been a more perfect time to tackle our inhibitions. Be smart, keep depression at bay. Think about a young man seeing his mother dying, but not being able to rush to her side, to hold her hand, to hug and kiss her and to tell her that he loves her. Or a helpless and distraught parent seeing his beloved child dying alone in a hospital bed unable to comfort them. Add to that the pain of seeing one's loved ones being taken away for cremation, without the normal benefit of a decent burial and a comforting memorial programme.

What about planned wedding ceremonies? Everyone has their dream wedding in mind. Imagine all that scuttled by restrictions on public gatherings and other lockdown conditions. Of course those who could, managed to postpone their weddings, but some, who had their heart set on a planned date, having waited long for their wedding day, just did not have the patience to postpone. They may be happily married, but they had to forfeit a fully-fledged wedding reception, thanks to the disruptive Covid-19.

Take a moment to reflect on people who have allowed their love for each other to wane over time. Spouses who merely tolerate each other. People who have reduced their spouses to house or

roommates. Some already finding a hug from their spouses as repulsive as a Judas kiss. Others having gone to the extent of even physically and sexually abusing their loved ones. Some countries such as France and Brazil have apparently reported an unprecedented surge in domestic abuse since lockdown. Australia has reported a huge upsurge in google search for help in dealing with domestic abuse. What about your country?

Imagine the pain of spending 24 hours a day with your abuser! May individuals who have the propensity to abuse their spouses take advantage of the lockdown to introspect on when and how things went awry and pursue meaningful measures for mending their relationships. Remember, it is never too late to do a good thing. It would be the height of naiveté for anyone to think that they can just wish away their marital woes, without putting forth a concerted effort toward reversing such challenges. That would not be positive optimism. It screams negative optimism. And by its nature, it breeds negative energy and its eternal soulmate lethargy. It is this kind of flawed optimism that probably prompted one of the founding fathers of the United States Mr. Benjamin Franklin to write, "He that lives upon hope will die fasting."

We cannot afford to stoke the flames of antipathy. May love prevail over pride and motivate erring parties to look their spouses in their eye, and with a contrite heart say, "I'm sorry. I'm prepared to change." Since we are forced to spend time with our spouses, doesn't it make sense for us to have fun while we are at it? Or would we rather be gunglions in allowing our egos to take centre stage and sadly destroy what should be a solid bond. If you can, try to remember that wedding vow, when you inwardly said to your sweetheart the words of Dolly Parton, "Together we can make the rain stop and make the sun shine." Dig deep and revive that heartfelt innate passion of never allowing anything to get between you and your loved one.

If you are corona-phobic, you may probably be feeling caged. Perhaps suffocating as if you are in a small area that does not allow air and light in. To take your mind away from feeling that way, there are some things that you may wish to resist. Resist the temptation of watching the same depressing news over and over again. Thinking that by watching the same stuff uncountable times would change the status quo goes head on against the grain of conventional wisdom. Resist the temptation of spending endless hours on Facebook reading other people's views. Why don't you take time to write your views and share them with the world! If you have stockpiled alcoholic beverages, please drink responsibly, surely this is not the time to add one or more souls into the list of alcoholics.

There is an abundance of free wholesome and enlightening material to watch on the internet. Search for anything that humps your camel. But don't be gullible. Without being unduly cynical, don't believe everything you read, hear and see. Process information, and in so doing remember that we live in a world of colour, not everything we see is either black or white, there are often multiple shades of grey. Try to share with your loved ones at least one thing you have learnt each day.

Men and women who have been busy chasing livelihoods, leaving home early, only to rock up at home late, tired and ready to turn in, all of a sudden find themselves with a lot of time in their hands. About 16 hours a day discounting time spent sleeping. Time to spend with their loved ones. On face value, this will surely solidify marital and family bonds. People are bound to play more with each other, talk more with each other, show concern, compassion and care to one another in many endearing ways. All that is the very essence of humanity. Anything else is pure vanity.

If there is nothing to say, and you are not accustomed to filling conversation gaps with flimflam, just smile at your loved one. Never underestimate the power of that smile. It is often loaded with powerful meaning. After all, sometimes, silence is golden! If we all do the right thing, we may

not fit the stereotype described by an American author named Philip Yancey, "We talk too much, love too little and lie too often."

The question though is, will this work? Years ago, it was reported that some retired people in one country in the Far East struggled to save their marriages. Women were used to managing homes by themselves with very little input other than financial contribution from their husbands. When the men retired, they tried to usurp home management from their wives, and their wives vehemently rejected that. This resulted in avoidable tensions and unexpected divorces. Would we see a similar challenge, people failing to appreciate what they have, daring to selfishly push boundaries, even if it means losing the love and respect of their spouses? Now, the issue is not only with retired people. The issue is with people of all age groups. Would people be able to adeptly pursue reasonable peace and happiness? Of course hundred percent in our state of imperfection is impossible.

A renowned Nigerian author named Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie once put it so aptly, "Stand up for your loved ones. Tell the people you love that you love them. Tell them often. Find reasons to laugh." So be on the lookout for creative ways of reviving that bond with your loved ones, you may just be surprised at its therapeutic value. It is in order for us to allow our mind to run wild and imagine good things. In his last column in the Guardian (UK), before assuming his new position as professor of sociology at the University of Manchester, Gary Younge, a renowned journalist wrote these encouraging words, "In these bleak times, imagine a world where you can thrive, for which there is no evidence. And then fight for it."

Of course this is not the time for throwing stones and shifting blame. This is the time for each one of us to play their role in ensuring that they do not unwittingly help in spreading the virus. Kudos to all Governments which made the painful but necessary decision of putting their countries under lockdown irrespective of the financial cost. A special word of appreciation to all in the health field and everyone whose work falls in the category of essential services for their self-sacrificing spirit in unselfishly braving the frontlines, putting lives of others ahead of their own. Some of them do not even have appropriate protective gear, but they are quite happy to risk their lives for the sake of many. And a more deserved commendation to the global citizenry for complying with all lifesaving conditions put forth by governments.

It would be remiss of us if we failed to applaud efforts expended by various governments, private business entities and philanthropists in ploughing funds into research. Neither do we want to fail to acknowledge the hard work of many professionals working round the clock to find a vaccine or cure for the virus. While we anxiously await that 'Hallelujah' moment, where a vaccination against Covid-19 is found or antiviral drug is delivered to the market, let's all try to stay safe.

Certainly there are costs associated with the spread of the coronavirus; economic, health and social. There are also lessons for all of us. While we may take time preparing for the next virus, may we remember that the next plague might not come in the form of a virus.

And may this experience humble us as the human race, for as one highly revered book says, we are no more than a thin film of dust on the scales. If we can be decimated with so much ease by an organism probably weighing less than a millionth of a trillionth of a gram, we may not be all that invincible. In fact, we need to have a proper perspective of ourselves and grudgingly or gleefully come to terms with the fact that relative to the entire universe, we are so inconspicuously puny. To put it bluntly, lest we fall in the unenviable trap of deceiving ourselves, which is the greatest injustice a living being could ever inflict upon itself, it is essential to frequently pinch ourselves in the chest and remind ourselves that we are not necessarily always in total control.

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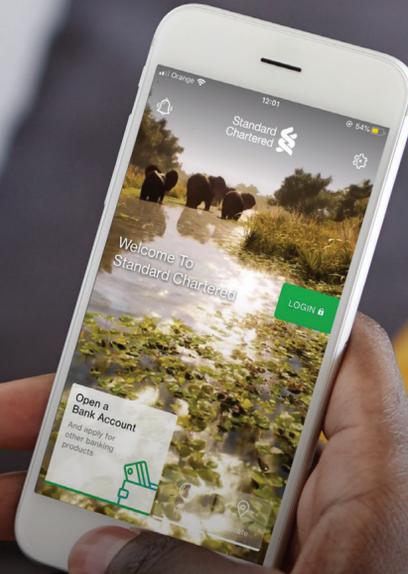
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opinion



GUEST COLUMN
THABO SELEKE

Coronavirus Tsunami: Will everything be all right in Botswana?

We have all heard the expressions, "A lack of planning on your part, does not constitute an emergency on my part."

While that may hold true for an individual situation, it does not hold true when dealing with a disease pandemic.

The Covid-19 has triggered an unprecedented crisis in human history. Everyone and every country is trying to play catch up. When new threats to human life arise, anxiety, needs and expectations are high. Policymakers require information quickly that will inform risk assessments and potential counter measures. The failure of a government to conduct the necessary planning in order to be prepared to provide a competent and effective response to a predicted inevitable event, such as a disease pandemic, becomes an emergency for all of us.

The public likewise, demands transparency and trust and assurance that the actions taken by all those involved including politicians, scientific and public health officers are guided by overarching concerns about global health.

Research has demonstrated that in the past decades, the emergence of new infectious diseases has shaped not only medical concepts, but also those of science and public health, affected political responses at global, regional and national levels. It had serious economic impact and influenced the anxieties and expectations of the public. The Covid-19 adds another such disease and its impact may be understood in such a historic and global context.

In the 1980s for instance, the emergence of the HIV/AIDS had an enormous impact on medicine, science, politics and society - an impact that is still unfolding. The concerns raised by HIV/AIDS changed the relationship of patients to their disease and treatment. It provided the clearest example, to date that a disease has the capacity to become a globally transforming political issue, affecting national & intentional relations.

There was also the emergence of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 which affected 23 countries, which demonstrated the speed at which infectious diseases in the globalized world can move beyond its local origins to become crisis affecting the health of people & economics by reducing international travel and trade.

SARS became a fundamental test case and driving force for countries to reshape the International Health Regulations (IHR). The regulations which came into force in 2007, are an acknowledgment that all countries are at risk from certain threats, such as a new infectious disease with the potential for international spread.

The IHR also stress the need for a proactive approach by affected countries and the need for transparency in reporting. This approach encompasses prevention, containment, investigation and timely reporting. Furthermore, in 2011, a new fundamental Public Health agreement called the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) framework was adopted. This framework pertains only to Influenza viruses but reflects the large concerns of Members of WHO, including Botswana.

It is on the basis of this that we have seen WHO developing the Global Action Plan for the Covid-2019 response and the roll out to its member states with its clean hands campaign and social distancing at the center stage. Will the new Corona virus be worse?

The 2009 H1N1 Influenza pandemic demonstrated that a global outbreak of even a relatively mild disease could overwhelm the capacity of many countries to respond and raised a number of issues, along with the rapid pace of development and enormous amounts of information and mis-information, politicians and aided in particular by the different social media platforms created significant levels of distrust and anxiety among countries.

The pandemic has eventually underscored that Botswana's health system needs serious reforms post Covid-19. Botswana's medical care delivery system is not set up to respond to pandemic surge. Unfortunately, Botswana is now paying the price for failing to properly plan in terms of the lessons learnt from the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases. The Tsunami wave from the Covid-19 will hit Botswana's health care system much more, which calls for an urgent need to train health care professionals, nurses, counsellors, policy analysts and health care administrators.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 has demonstrated that there is urgent

need for human capital development in various areas of health training such as health policy analysis, health economics, health informatics, health and logistics and health care service delivery / health care financing. Heavy reliance on general practitioners and physicians who are not trained in robust training on public health and policy need to be looked into going forward, there is currently a serious gap.

The Institute of Health Sciences also need to be reformed, these institutions must be capacitated to provide quality health care training. Their training courses must not only meet the national accreditation with BQA but must also meet the global standards and should be affiliated with other Universities in the region and globally offering these health courses as opposed to take them to fly by night institutions that have been set up chasing the government purse. It will also assist in sending less students to those so-called privately-run institutions that are 100 percent dependent on government funding.

Post Covid-19, there will be a compelling need for the University of Botswana to establish a Centre for Global Health, which can be housed at the Sir Masire Hospital or at the Faculty of Health Sciences. This center will spearhead training program on health policy analysis, global health, health diplomacy and politics, health economics, health informatics, logistics and health, health care financing and epidemiology. The stereo type mentality that this is the preserve of public health is driven by naivety and should be a thing of the past. BIUST can also invest in Medical health technology and offer training modules in Medical Tech and may work closely with industry players and not with fly by night business Men and Women who have entered this space for money opening a window for corruption.

Unbelievably, even as the virus continues to spread widely globally and with new cases of local transmissions in Botswana, people are still queuing for permits and are still dismissive on the seriousness of the virus. The reality is that if the government of Botswana was to relax and bow down to un-necessary political pressure the disaster the country is currently dealing with, the worst will come as Covid-19 will spread even more rapidly and widely, causing more deaths. Botswana's health system will not be able to care for patients, as well as those requiring non-Covid-19 medical care. This will prolong the disease and will also prolong and deepen the economic situation.

There will also be an urgent need to address the issue of Brain drain which is likely to arise post Covid-19. However, the fundamental question to ask is how can brain drain be converted to into brain gain? What policies can be adopted to stem such movements from developing countries to developed countries. The push and pull factors in the journey of hope - what mitigating factors should be put in place to address the brain drain and benefits to be derived from brain gain.

The recent episodes in Botswana and South Africa have been a fiasco. South Africa for instance used the apartheid *skoop en dorroom* approach in their early response to the Covid-19. In Botswana, we have seen how dis-honest and dis-respectful some politicians can be. In just less than an hour after they were expected to be in quarantine a video of them on a shopping spree went viral, including the opposition Spin Doctor, Rre Pono Moathodi, who later wrote and issued a lousy and clumsy apology.

An attempt was also presented to use Science as a reasonable justification in the political deliberations that went on in Parley by making reference to the incubation period of the Covid-19 cycle. The Scientific - Mis - Information threw some opposition fanatics into a wild a party. Un- be known to them this was just cheap political grand standing by making reference and using science as an excuse. In their celebratory mode, the unfortunate un-suspecting victims as well as naive victims threw lock down parties. The new research on the Covid-19 disputes the scientific arguments presented by the MP. The incubation period, the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of disease suggest that if you haven't developed the symptoms by day 12, you could still be spreading the virus. In day the second day the arguments had shifted from science to political begging.

**Thabo Lucas Seleke is Researcher and Scholar of Global Health Policy Analysis*

opinion

Children will pay the biggest price of Covid-19 in Botswana

The economic hit of the lockdown on children should never be underestimated.

Yet that is what we are seeing among our leadership.

When they brief the nation on what interventions the government is coming up with to cushion families against losses of income as a result of covid-19, minister after minister would say Government would ensure that no citizens die of hunger.

This casual statement has become a boilerplate kind of response. And there is no evidence to suggest that any official honestly and sincerely believes in what they are saying.

These clichés (and they are indeed clichés) are anchored on old misnomers from another generation when Botswana used to have a strong family structure, strong welfare system and a wealthy government.

None of those are true today. And many people die of hunger which sadly either go unreported or classified as other causes.

In fact, many families barely survive beyond hand to mouth kind of existence.

There is no doubt that the pandemic will deliver a blow to many of Botswana's children.

As a matter of fact, the pandemic has brought into public glare the limitations and total inadequacies of the much-touted welfare systems in Botswana.

Just when they mattered most, the safety valves proved as weak as to be non-existent.

It all started with the closure of schools.

In Botswana schools provide not just education, which has lately become more and more mediocre, but also food and nutrition for many of the children.

Outside of the education framework, a majority of children in Botswana revert to all the frailties and vulnerabilities found in their homes.

Schools are now not just for education and sport. They have become holy grails of nutrition and with that survival for many children.

When schools are open, many children can count on schools to deliver them three hot meals a day - well balanced and without fail.

Now schools have been closed for more than a month. As UNICEF has observed, school closure as a result of Covid-19 and the restrictions that come with lockdown has "upended" the lives and routine of children and their families.

Stresses on families are now at new heights. Today there are relatively few cases of covid-19 in Botswana.

It can still go either way. If, God forbid Botswana ends up where other countries in Europe and north America are where large numbers of parents will become absent because they are hospitalized, then the toll on children will reach a breaking point.

This means that the primary source of food for many children is not there.

This has placed extra burden on families that are themselves weak even during the best of times.

At the moment authorities are more obsessed with numbers of confirmed covid-19 cases and less with how children can be protected, maintained and fed while their parents are affected.

In a few weeks, Botswana will be

in the middle of winter, and the situation for children will become dire.

If ministers are waiting for a statistic that a school going kid has died of hunger, they will not get it.

Any death will be attributed to other causes.

For these kids, when schools were closed, it was not only an affront on their leaning but also on something more crucial - food.

As people worry on when schools will reopen, for many kids it is when will they once again access their livelihood.

Just a few weeks before lockdown UNICEF called the editors of mainstream media to brief them on the general state issues pertaining to children in the country.

That meeting has over time proved prescient.

Botswana's underinvestment on children is glaring.

And given the country's deteriorating public finances, there is simply no how the country is going to catch up; post coronavirus.

If anything, the situation will deteriorate, especially in the rural areas

and also in those districts where poverty and schools' results have traditionally been the worst in the country.

The country's western belt - from down south to the north is almost irredeemable, even without covid-19.

Poverty and poor school results go hand in hand.

The size of the family is also directly proportionate to the quality of life led by that family.

We are seeing all those at play today. There is a way out.

Deliberate public intervention provides that way.

This is certainly not the time to be pessimistic, but it is very unlikely that the children in Botswana will be seeing any surge in the quality of their life soon.

Botswana may be ahead of its peers on taking care of children.

But it is the best among the worst cases, and thus really not much to brag about.

Botswana needs to invest more on children, including strengthening children's defence and protective mechanisms in a crisis.

opinion

Botswana Police Service enjoys popular support



GUEST COLUMN
KWAPENG MODIKWE

At least for now, the Botswana Police Service and their colleagues in the BDF seem to be at their best in ensuring compliance to the regulations governing the state of emergency declared two weeks ago by the President to deal effectively with corona virus pandemic. I was travelling from the Kgope farming areas at the weekend when I suddenly bumped into a road block on the Rasesa/Lentswetau Road exactly a week after the state of emergency came into effect. No roadblock had ever been set at that particular Seleme lands before, so it was a surprise for me. I grew up in the area. There were ten or more police and BDF officers. From the look of things, it appeared they had been there for some days. As the vehicle slowed down, one unarmed police officer approached and extended greetings in a highly obedient manner. The questions he asked were "sir, where are you from and where are you heading to?" He paused for a response. The next question was "sir, may I see a permit entitling you to be on this road at this particular time?"

I did not have one but explained that the permit requirement started when I was already in that farming area and there is no issuing authority in the area. The inhabitants are pastoral farmers while others are engaged in subsistence agricultural pursuits. Secondly, I am a freelance journalist, I have been assessing the level of compliance to the regulations of the state of emergency among the rural folks and I am going to Mochudi to file my article to the newspaper. There are no

internet facilities in the area I come from. I produced my identity cards and newspaper articles bearing my byline to proof my journalistic credentials. The headline in one article was "Corona virus may reach us" while the other one was "South African Lockdown good for Botswana." The officer was impressed to see that I had been writing articles about corona virus long before the state of emergency was declared. He then gave me the green light to proceed. Throughout our discussions, the rest of those manning the roadblock with him stood a distant away in groups of two or three but kept a watchful eye. They waved at me as I passed through the road block.

Several people who had gone through that road block said they were surprised by the good reception they were given by the officers. Some had expected a hostile reception since they did not have permits but to the contrary, everything went on smoothly. One driver who did not want to be quoted yet had a permit to visit his cattle post area said those "boys at the road block are good. They don't harass people. They are soft and respectful. I don't know if they have lie detector to determine if someone is not telling them the truth", he said. Even in the streets of Mochudi, the police were visible but were not harassing people who appeared breaking the state of emergency regulations. They advised them accordingly while at the same time not compromising their duty. They applied legal measures against hard core *diti-*

bakanatlhoga. Elsewhere the behavior of the police was equally the same. When I drove to Bokamoso Hospital, I encountered three roadblocks along the A-1 Road, along Paul Rantao Road and the other along the Mogoditshane/Molepolole road. To their credit, the officers addressed most of us as *bagolo ba me* and requested to see if motorists had permits.

The performance of the Botswana Police during this state of emergency period, reconciles perfectly well with the findings of the World International Security and Police Index which have rated the Botswana Police Service as the best in Africa and the seventh best in the world. The ratings were presented by an organization called Dispolre in the last half of last year. It found its way into my Whatsapp page on 17th November 2019. At that time, I did not give it the attention it deserved because I did not take it serious. I regarded it as one of those fake video clips which often go viral on social media. It was only this week when the conduct of the police impressed people, not withstanding isolated cases of indiscipline elsewhere, that I revised it. There is the common saying that, "a rotten potato spoils the other". For me it is not always the case. The recent Lobatse case, in which police officers were alleged to have beaten up two people, is unfortunate and isolated incident. We are told it is being adequately addressed at an appropriate level. The rating by the World International Security and Police Index covered capacity, processes, legitimacy and outcomes. In the capacity domain, researchers looked at resources a nation dedicated to the internal security. For the processes domain, they looked as to whether the resources allocated to the police were used in an effective manner while the legitimacy domain is a measure as to whether the public views the police in a favorable manner.

It was found during the survey that the Botswana Police Service is

well resourced, well paid, highly effective and efficient. Researchers underscored the fact that Botswana is a model African country known for its democratic stability, strong economy and blessed with visionary leaders and that it keeps on getting things right and the world acknowledges the country's strides. About its credit, the officers addressed most of us as *bagolo ba me* and requested to see if motorists had permits.

I now return to my story about the level of compliance to the state of emergency by the rural folks in the farming areas. These are folks who do not have running water, folks who do not have toilet facilities, folks who no longer use the position of the sun to determine the time because most have cellular phones but enjoy indulging on bear drinking from sunrise to sunset if it is made available to them. More often than not, they travel 20 kilometres a day in search of alcoholic beverages or mabolara. They do not access newspaper messages. Most of them do not care much about current affairs. You will see them smoking dagga but you may never know the source of supply. The Senamane Dam, constructed by Makuka Regiment soon after the Anglo Boer War for the chief's cattle is a meeting place as it is currently the only source of water for the area's herd. During the first week of the state of emergency, it was clear that the social distancing message had reached many

and the level of compliance was very good. However, there were still a few who either the message did not reach them or it meant nothing to them as they could be seen squeezed on a two-wheeled very small donkey card unperturbed.

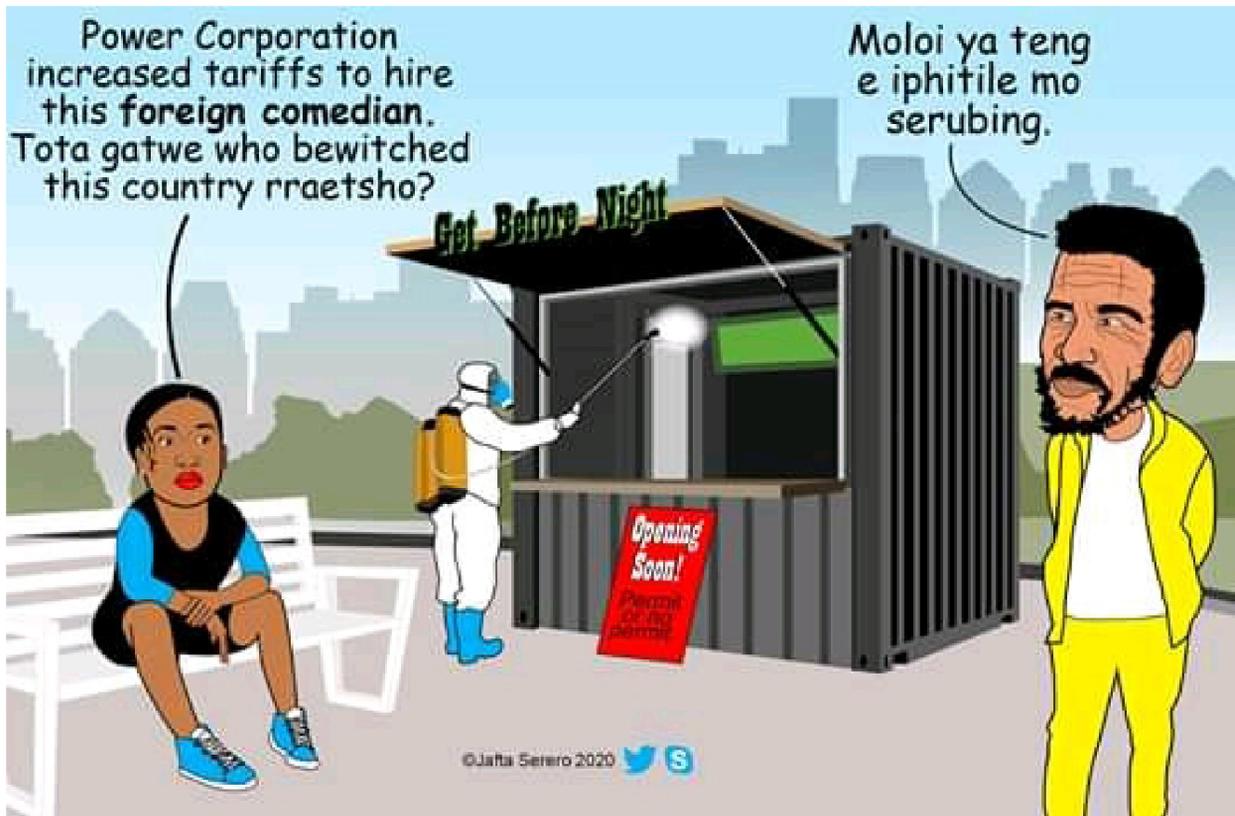
David Ramphaleng and Bonkani Dube are the only ones among farm managers who are up to date with current affairs. Ramphaleng goes to bed at about midnight listening to the radio especially Motswedding FM or Duma FM. As for Dube, he is just superb. He asks questions which show that the man is well informed. During our interactions, he kept me busy wanting to know how true it was that corona virus was manufactured by China to counter the United States in their trade war and how the corona virus would impact on vulnerable societies and very poor economies of countries such as Zimbabwe. He was aware that US President Donald Trump has called the corona virus China virus because it started in China. However, Dube wonders as to how a country could manufacture the virus as a weapon against a foreign enemy and tests the very same weapon on its own people and also against its friends since the spread of the virus was not selective.

But be what that may, corona virus is giving the world sleepless nights. Here at home, the government continues urging people to stay at home and maintain social distancing, wash hands with water and soap or use sanitizers. This is a plea which everybody should not find it difficult to carry out. In some major villages such as Mochudi, the loud speaker van drives around spreading this important message. Perhaps it may be good if these rounds of trips are extended to the outside villages, in the farming areas where the messages do not reach the communities.

OUR MOTTO: wash your hands with clean water and soap, keep social distancing and remain at home until further notice.

& analysis

cartoon



opinion

The coronavirus pandemic presents a second glorious opportunity for national unity!



BADGE OF COURAGE
KENNETH DIPHOLO

In his inauguration speech on 1st November 2019, President Masisi pledged to do all in his power to unite the people of Botswana. President Masisi expressed that *'therefore I want to urge all of us to continue on this path and work together in building a peaceful and harmonious country as a united people'*.

The President's inauguration speech consistently made reference to unity and/or a united people in ways that suggested that the President was genuinely worried at the escalating political and ethnic polarization that is threatening to tear the nation apart.

When we look deeply at these political and ethnic differences ravaging the Botswana society, the realization is that these are a result of our failure to appreciate that part of what had hitherto set us apart from the rest of the African continent until we lost the tag as a success story in Africa, was down to deliberate efforts at promoting national unity and making all citizens embrace a sense of belonging to the nation of Botswana.

That posture of national unity took a huge dent alongside the country's loss of innocence as a fascinating success story of an African country that escaped the resource curse, mainly due to our lackadaisical view of the value of national unity. Thus, Botswana's erstwhile exceptionalism was partly derived from national cohesion that is a product of deliberate efforts at ensuring a socially inclusive society in spite of obvious differences inher-

ent in all beings. Thus, President Masisi's pledge to unite Botswana so that we are able to take on our challenges as a united people was a timely and decisive pronouncement that had the potential to make him a unifying statesman and a darling of the pro-unity movement.

However, since making the pronouncement in November 2019, President Masisi's actions or the actions of his handlers, especially in terms of filling up senior positions in government, have been inconsistent with his pledge. Whereas he had publicly preached national unity, his choice of people for senior positions in government sits almost opposite his declaration. The President has been accused of showing a preference for people who originate from the southern part of the country in ways that suggest the existence of a practice sociologists call ethnic nepotism, wherein the administration favours people from particular ethnic groups.

However, it has to be noted that a majority of the beneficiaries of this practice, if indeed it is deliberate routine, actually are qualified for the jobs they have been offered. Yet, since a majority of people who have been offered senior positions in government under his presidency are potentially his kin and friends, accusations that he is in fact a tribal supremacist are not without substance.

Even if it is coincidental that those who landed the plum jobs happened

to originate from the southern part of the country, critics have found a prime case to discredit the president and enter his name in the history books as an incorrigible tribal demagogue.

President Masisi has been accused of deliberately dividing the nation in order to reap from the comfort of being in the presence of his kinsmen. These are serious accusations that cannot be dismissed as the mere imaginations of delinquents who escaped from maternity wards and landed on keyboards.

The reality is that President Masisi's actions, particularly in terms of filling up senior positions in government with persons from particular tribes and his pledge to unite Botswana stand at cross purposes.

It has to be noted that it is not an exaggeration that President Masisi inherited a nation divided down the middle owing to a decade of boundless misrule and pompous nepotism. A common refrain is that a divided nation is susceptible to stress and shocks and can hardly prosper.

In fact and indeed, a divided nation is a nation in distraught and cannot defend itself from external and internal invasion whatsoever. As such, President Masisi's pledge to pursue an agenda of national unity and contain escalating political and cultural polarization came as a relief to many responsible citizens.

The uncomfortable truth is that President Masisi had initially squandered the opportunity to unite a people willing and keen to be united for the good of their republic, soon after taking over the presidency of the republic.

That moment was a very unique opportunity occasioned by our realization that we had taken our national unity for granted and we were now paying a huge price for our indifference and complacency. Such unique opportunities do not come every day

hence the need to grab them when they so avail by chance or by deed.

Whereas the opportunity has been lost mainly because many people have come to believe that the president's pledge was insincere, dishonest and more than just a hoax, the coronavirus pandemic presents President Masisi with yet another golden opportunity to pursue an agenda of national unity – indeed a second chance to unite Botswana.

The coronavirus pandemic comes as a terrifying enemy that does not distinguish between ethnicity, political party affiliation, gender or social class. Thus, by virtue of its being a common enemy, the coronavirus provides us with a common purpose to pursue ourselves, regroup and face the enemy as a united front for individual and collective survival.

Certainly the coronavirus is not President Masisi's fault neither is it Botswana's fault. It is something all of us have to face and from a vantage point, it is really frightening as a threat to humanity and an even greater threat to Botswana given our tiny population and an underdeveloped health system.

Whereas differences are inherent in living beings, and while it is neither possible nor desirable to pursue absolute national unity, the bottom line is that Botswana are presently united by a clear and present danger in the form of the coronavirus. This danger makes our political and ethnic differences petty and a distraction at this point in time.

In this regard, President Masisi ought to humble himself and forget that he ever behaved like a hard core tribal chief who brazenly and wantonly showed non-tribesmen the middle finger. President Masisi ought to reinvent himself as a national leader whose duty is to serve the interest of Botswana and Botswana without fear or favour as he had expressed it in his inaugural speech.

While many people may have been hurt, humiliated and marginalized by President Masisi's actions or the actions of his handlers, at this point in time our formidable common enemy is the coronavirus and our differences have become blurred except for a few individuals who appear to have skipped some crucial stages of human evolution and have no potential to appreciate human goodness in the form of national cohesion. Such people will continue to frustrate efforts to unite Botswana and best way to deal with them would be to acknowledge that deviant behaviour is a normal human condition.

A majority of Botswana are united in their generosity of spirit and action to defeat the enemy that threaten to wipe out our nation. It is up to President Masisi to seize the golden opportunity and take a much more active role in providing an environment conducive to mend our adversarial relationships and consolidate our unity.

In an instant, Botswana have discovered that we are more vulnerable than we ever thought and that part of it points to toxic polarization of our society and that unless the trend is reversed as a matter for national survival, a large number of our people would perish.

While death is inevitable, the death of a large number of citizens and residents that would be fuelled by political and ethnic differences would look like a campaign of genocide and the state president would inevitably take the ultimate blame for failing to unite the nation against a common and existential enemy.

President Masisi cannot just sit back and expect the fear of the coronavirus to draw us closer to one another. Instead the president ought to steal the thunder from the fortuitous effects of nature's fury and lead us in the direction towards purposeful and sustainable national cohesion.



THE WATCHDOG
SPENCER MOGAPI
DEPUTY EDITOR SUNDAY STANDARD

Fighting Covid-19 reawakens the old boys clubs in the public service

When an evaluation report is finally made on how Botswana responded to coronavirus, a chapter and a half will be dedicated to why and how Solomon Sekwakwa and Dr Simvula ultimately lost their jobs.

Until they were sacked, the two men were at the coalface of fighting the virus.

The evaluation will look at the meetings in the build up to expulsions. But also, the personalities in those meetings.

Sekwakwa was sacked as a Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health.

Dr Simvula was his deputy in the same ministry.

The moment an announcement was made that Sekwakwa and Dr Simvula had been summarily sacked, the rumour mill went abuzz.

Everybody tried to search for answers. None were forthcoming.

A few senior government officers called the sacking "long overdue."

"The search for a scapegoat has been ongoing," one of them said.

Others called the sackings a diversionary tactic. We are where we are - in a new territory. And mistakes are inevitable. In fact, the public will gladly forgive mistakes made in good faith.

The sacking of Sekwakwa and Co will underscore and highlight a scary fact that instead of fighting as a united front, Botswana has been caught up in the middle of turf war.

Another civil servant has talked of a nostalgic veterinarian, plucked out of retirement and given excessive powers as Covid-19 coordinator," powers that are already going to his head."

But still the stakes are too high to lose focus. It remains a matter of life and death.

Those of us outside of the public service are gobsmacked, confused but also uninspired.

We want to trust. But nothing around us inspires trust.

Sekwakwa was clearly a likeable character. But so far there is no evidence to suggest he was a particularly distinguished career civil servant.

But his sacking is already casting a long shadow over efforts to fight Covid-19 in Botswana. His sacking has become a huge national event. But also, a distraction.

Even those who never heard about him are now asking about him. That is the nature of politics. Events always have a way of shaping and even determining the route of politics.

"Events, my dear boy, events," a British Prime minister once replied when asked what could derail his campaign.

There is no doubt that Covid-19 comes at a time of immense political dearth inside government, including and especially at cabinet.

Divisions between political parties are also leading to is too much grandstanding.

A pandemic of this magnitude requires not just epidemiological expertise but also crack management skills.

Lapses from bad luck and mistakes of bad judgement will always happen.

In our instances they were mostly a lack of grasp of the gravity of the stakes.

The Head of State has been quarantined, not once but twice. Thankfully in both instances he eventually tested negative.

But there is no denying that both country and government was missed his direct leadership, especially in the second quaran-

ting where an entire cabinet and parliament were forced to go on quarantine.

We can only blame that on the leadership, but also on the clumsiness of the expert team assembled to lead us through the pandemic.

Fighting Covid-19 requires skills in logistics.

Logistics is not guesswork. It is engineering based science.

These are complex skills that premier policy makers at the government enclave often shy away from.

Those skills extend to procurement and also distribution.

Botswana Defence Force remains by far the most developed home of such skills and expertise in the country.

The pandemic has also exposed structural defects we have always known existed in Botswana's public service.

Forty years on, the country has not produced logistical experts.

For the last forty years Botswana continues to rely on one man to manage huge logistical efforts entailed in Covid-19. His name is Gabriel Sceletso.

In the early 1990s Sceletso managed cattle lung disease in the Ngamiland. It was a huge budget undertaking specifically to rid the area of lung disease, pay the farmers and restore Botswana's share of the European union beef market share.

After that Sceletso was again at hand when Botswana created the IEC (Independent Elections Commission), he was called to come and establish the IEC as its founding Chief.

Most recently he was called back to come and run an ill-fated EVM (Electoral Voting Machine) that was on course to delivering an unprecedented electoral anarchy.

Sceletso should consider himself a very lucky man who never goes away. Every time the country needs a magician to run logistics he is ever at hand.

Two weeks ago he was yet again called to be the country's relief coordinator.

There is no denying that old alliances and personal friendships including inside cabinet have played a big hand.

Sceletso should count himself a lucky man. Every time the country runs into a crisis he is never out of reach.

To be taken for such a key existential matter, not once, not twice but thrice because no other serving public servant is as good would take special skill, special attribute and special talent.

No nation should rely on one man for so long to resolve so many catastrophes.

There is yet another concern. To this day briefings have still not graduated to higher more informative levels.

They are still about the rudimentary issues.

There have not as yet graduated to other equally important aspects like ventilators, testing capacity and protective equipment for frontline personnel. One hopes these are not the reasons why Sekwakwa and Dr Simvula were sacked.

Surprisingly even the experts briefing the nation seem mesmerized by confirmed cases even as they know that the numbers are by all measure an understatement of reality, given low testing capacity.

Their strategy seems stagnant; "awe and shock."

That cannot be. Botswana have paid with their lives to get where we are.

Somebody should tell us what is next.

A guest of the state remembers

After spending 17 days in mandatory quarantine, MESH MOETI shares the experience of what happens when the state suspends citizens' rights

When the state takes away a citizen's rights, the little things often taken for granted, like when and what to eat, fly out the window. As a guest of the state, you are not to be bothered with such trivial matters. Someone else will determine your eating timetable.

You're used to breakfast at 7:45am? Tough luck buddy.

"We serve breakfast from 8 to 10 sir," the lady at the other end of the line patiently explains.

Now, that means your morning meal can reach you anywhere within that two-hour stretch. Forget consistency, man. That does not belong here. Remember you are a guest of the state. Today the knock that signals arrival of the meal pack may be at 8:30am, while the following day it might be at 9am or even 9:30am. And, by the way, you don't get to decide what you are served - whether at breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Your daily ration of bottled water is limited to two 500ml bottles. So you jump rope in the evening to exercise, thereby taking up your water intake beyond what's currently provided? Once



A quarantine place

troop out to congregate at the closed gate where we stand on one side of the fence while our tormentors, who masquerade as public servants, most of them in masks, stand on the other.

Food is being served. We troop out of wherever we've been to queue for whatever is being served. Forget about social distancing here.

Through social media and the tireless efforts of civil society activists such as Pusetso Morapedi, Uyapo Ndadi, friends, and many others our plight came to the notice of decision-makers, and we were moved to more habitable conditions in hotels in Palapye. But that was not before we endured two days in which we slept on bare mattresses and were under the guard of police officers, some possibly my son's age, who sauntered about brandishing horsewhips and rifles.

as if daring us to.....I have no idea what. I recalled another era, and another police chief. Whatever happened to the humane face of the police service once led by an affable man, a true gentleman, called Norman Moleboge?

Funny how word gets around in a camp. And today is no exception. You notice heightened activity, and you enquire from the guy in the Barcelona replica shirt that he has clearly worn for a couple of seasons. When the response comes, you don't know whether to celebrate or curse. We are being moved from this place, the Catalan club's fan says.

Nobody saw the need to communicate this little detail the previous evening. You are a guest of the state, so presumably you have no need to know what's being planned for your tomorrow and the day after. So you hurry to retrieve your wet undershirts that you had just hung on the laundry line, to pack your bags because it has been decided that you should up and go. Right now. Or as the government people said, "now now".

But, as we would learn from experience, "now now" does not mean immediately as we had initially thought. Though we had finished packing our bags and sat under the soon receding shades by 9am, it was only after 2pm that we began to board the bus - and even much later that it roared to life, and began the trip to Palapye where I would spend the next 15 days before being cleared after undergoing a Covid-19 test, thereby turning into a statistic - part of the numbers that are quoted as having been tested for the coronavirus in Botswana.

So what did I take out of my time in quarantine? I value freedom more. I value the crucial role of civil society in holding the powerful accountable. I value an independent judiciary. Yes politicians are elected to take decisions, some of them very difficult, on behalf of citizens, but citizens must always maintain oversight over all public officers - elected leaders and the government bureaucracy. It is often during abnormal times, such as this one, that the rights of citizens, especially the poor and less powerful, are most violated by overzealous enforcers who turn themselves into demigods.

Kanye Seventh-day Adventist Hospital



We are looking for passionate, loyal and trustworthy candidates to join our team. Be able to read and write English and/or Setswana languages. Have ability to follow commands and acquire knowledge and skills as taught. Should also possess good interpersonal and communication skills.

1. Senior Medical Officer

Salary: D3 (P239 292 – P263 808)

Qualifications: Honors Degree or Bachelors in Medicine, and should be registered with the Botswana Health Professions Council.

Work Experience: At least five (5) years working experience in the medical field.

Leave: 30 working days per annum

2. Drivers-3 Positions

Salary: B4 (P45 012 – P51 360) per annum

Qualifications: Junior Certificate (JC), valid driver's license (class "B"), heavy duty license will be added advantage.

Work Experience: Minimum of two (2) years proven driving experience.

Leave: 20 working days per annum

Applications: Applicants should include: Application letter, detailed curriculum vitae, certified copies of relevant qualifications, certified copies of current registration with relevant professional bodies, two written references which are less than six months old, certified copies of identity document or passport and preference may be given to candidates who apply locally. All Applications should be addressed to:

The Human Resources Department
Kanye Adventist Hospital
P O Box 11
KANYE

For more information please contact Human Resources Office at 5441107.

Closing Date: 10/05/2020

again, tough luck dude. The lady who answers the call made to the guest relations desk explains that there's nothing the hotel can do to help your situation. They won't even sell you an extra bottle or two.

"It's not allowed," she explains before we both agree to end the conversation.

When nation states were carved out, it impacted on people's unfettered movement. People could no longer roam the earth as they pleased because now there were borders to respect. But the need to travel beyond the confines of the borders that now quarantined human beings into the geographical area they had the (mis)fortune to be born in did not stop when the fences went up. International travel persists to this day, and it happens for a myriad of reasons - from government diplomatic work, business, leisure, flight from persecution, criminal undertakings, study to anything else that drives people to wander around the world. Movement through ports of entry is facilitated by a document whose origin is traced to the biblical era.

In the book of Nehemiah, its eponymous central character - who was an official under King Artaxerxes I of Persia - sought permission to travel to Judea. And having granted such leave, the king gave Nehemiah a letter "to the governors beyond the river" requesting safe passage for him as he travelled through their lands.

The historian Martin Lloyd, in "The Passport: The History of Man's Most Travelled Document", states that centuries ago, what was known as the "sauf conduit" (safe conduct pass) was designed to grant the bearer "passage in and out of a kingdom" being visited; a written request that acted as a gentleman's agreement that two rulers recognise each other's authority, and stepping over a border by the other's subject

would not be interpreted as an act of aggression. In the absence of an international convention and norms, the rules were not always clear. And there were no guarantees. This changed in the aftermath of the First World War when, in 1920, the newly established League of Nations championed the idea of a worldwide passport standard.

So today, on top of a flag and national anthem, each nation state has a national passport that it issues to qualifying citizens and, in some cases, non-citizens who are often victims of persecution in the countries of their birth.

In many respects, the national passport is still very much like King Artaxerxes' letter that Nehemiah bore in his possession and the "sauf conduit" of later years.

My passport, for instance, carries a request by the President of the Republic of Botswana to "all those whom it may concern" that I be allowed to pass freely without let or hindrance, and that I be accorded "such assistance and protection as may be necessary".

One of the acts of curtailment of a citizen's right to free movement is the withdrawal, or denial, of a passport. It's the tried and tested action of choice by authoritarian regimes against citizens who often don't share the popular worldview.

Such an abrogation of citizens' right to freedom of movement is something we can never imagine happening in Botswana. Our rights, we like to think, are protected by that very sacrosanct document whose copy many of us don't even have - the Constitution of the Republic of Botswana.

Imagine the irony then, when I returned from a visit to Zimbabwe, to find that my right to free movement ended the moment I stepped into the geographical territory of Botswana. A government led by the person in whose name I am usually

courteously ushered through borders and ports of different countries had decreed that this time my own country's immigration officials not let me "pass freely without let or hindrance".

Returning from a country that at the time had recorded three cases of Covid-19 while Botswana was yet to register any, made me eligible for the just introduced mandatory 14-day quarantine.

Incidentally, when government information machinery first announced the decision to quarantine returning citizens and residents on March 24, it was only in reference to people entering the country from South Africa. A couple of hours later, a decision had been taken to extend the protocol to returnees from Zimbabwe as well.

And so began my 17 days as a guest of the state, first at Masunga Senior Secondary School. We were checked into the school's boarding dormitories, where we came face to face with the ugly face of Botswana's public education system. It's unforgivable that in today's Botswana, boarding learners still have to contend with non-functioning toilets, flooded bathrooms, and lack of warm bathing water. These didn't seem ideal conditions to quarantine over 160 people without risking another public health disaster.

The atmosphere around Masunga Senior Secondary School had the depressing feel of refugee camps you often see depicted on TV. But even in such conditions, the human spirit refuses to die. Friendships and alliances are struck. People are generous to a fault. You have no cellphone charger? Strangers offer theirs. You can't stand a cold shower? The two guys down the corridor have an electric kettle that they are happy to share.

In such a camp, word has a way of getting around. The District Commissioner has an announcement to make, and somehow we get to know. So we

Leading the fight against an invisible enemy

The man tasked with leading Botswana's response to Covid-19 has fought against both livestock and human epidemics in a career spanning over 30 years. MESH MOETI reports

Seemingly overnight, coronavirus has put a stop to everything. One farmer has even had to abandon his integrated horticultural project after an unexpected call.

A source with knowledge of how it all unfolded says there was a thorough discussion of the skills set in the country, and one name ticked all the boxes. And so the decision was made. All that was left was to place the call to the man, and find out if he was available.

The call inviting him for a meeting at Office of the President found Dr Kereng Masupu at his smallholding just outside Mochudi where he is known to be one of the major producers of different crops such as butternut, cabbage, and lablab.

One of the country's foremost epidemiologists, Masupu politely declines to discuss the intimate details of the meeting at OP, except that he was briefed on the Covid-19 status at the time, and that government was putting together a Covid-19 Task Force. Then came the cut to the chase.

He was asked to be the coordinator of the task force. In his wry humour, he recalls the offer being presented as a question whether he still had the energy to do this kind of work. He did not ask to be given time to think about it because all around him he could see that the country was hurtling towards a national health crisis. So no time to play Mr Hard-to-Get.

"I said since it was a call to national duty, I would do it," he tells me over the phone.

I have asked for a few minutes during his lunch break to fill in a few details to the outline I have put together from talking to people who know him – former colleagues, friends, clients..... they come in all shades – and the conversation goes for much longer than we had planned. Not once do I pick a sense of irritation or edginess.

In the best of times, the interview would have been face to face, possibly over a cup of tea. But these are not the best of times. In fact, we could be in the worst of times. A novel virus is whizzing across the world changing life as we used to know it, decimating populations, bringing national economies to their knees, and spreading fear, anxiety and uncertainty. This is the time of social distancing, and WFH (working from home), and conversations are done electronically.

Masupu's professional training in veterinary medicine. He is an alumnus of two universities in the United States, Tuskegee University (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) and University of California (Master of Preventative Veterinary Medicine). Having spent his early professional years at the Ministry of Agriculture, his career focus was changed by another pandemic that – in the words of Botswana's president at the time, Festus Mogae, in one of his most symbolic speeches – threatened the country with extinction, HIV/AIDS.

So when Mogae's administration established the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA) to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it was deemed that Masupu's epidemiological expertise was needed more in the new battle front.

That was after two years fighting another fast-moving epidemic that, like the current coronavirus, threatened livelihoods, and called for drastic measures. Only that was a livestock disease.

In 1995, Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP), which affects the lungs of cattle and buffalo, was noticed in one farmer's kraal in Xhaudumo Valley, on the edge of the Okavango Delta. It quickly spread. Masupu was dispatched to head a national task team to contain the disease.

He draws a parallel between CBPP and Covid-19. For one, just like CBPP, Covid-19 is highly contagious and if not contained through restricted movement of carriers, it can spread very fast and spiral out of control.

"The dynamic of how this virus spreads, and the importance of contact tracing make it very similar to CBPP," he says.

To illustrate the importance of restricted movement in the current case, he makes the point that when CBPP was first noticed in Xhaudumo, the red zone only extended around the valley. But because some farmers who did not agree with the measures suggested to contain the disease smuggled their cattle out of the red zone, the disease soon spread to Shakawe, and ultimately the entire district.

"Eventually, the entire Ngamiland became a red zone and we had to kill all the

cattle in the whole district to contain the disease," he recalls.

To this day, mention of Masupu's name among the pastoral farmers in the North West District elicits different emotions. He has fans and harsh critics.

To his fan base, the man is a hero who eradicated a disease that threatened a people's way of life, while the opposing camp blames him for the disease's spread throughout the district.

To his credit, perhaps he may point out that since the last outbreak of CBPP 25 years back, there has not been another occurrence.

A former colleague who worked under Masupu at the Department of Animal Health says he is a scientist to his fingertips who pays attention to the minutest detail. He says because the man has a huge capacity for work (an early riser and a late sleeper), he can be a hard task master. But methodical, he is.

The former colleague, who later veered off veterinary science and is now a deputy permanent secretary in one ministry, recalls an incident in 1988 when a young Dr Masupu was a livestock officer in Serowe. An elderly man was inexplicably bitten by his cat and died at Nyangabgwe Referral Hospital.

It was a mystery because the cat had never shown any violent tendencies towards people. The pathologist at Nyangabgwe refused to do a post-mortem on the corpse because he said he was not well-versed in animal diseases. So Masupu asked to remove a brain smear from the man's head and sent it to the veterinary lab for test. The result showed that the man had died from rabies, which he had contracted from the cat.

"So we vaccinated all the animals in the area for rabies," the former subordinate says. "That's how persistent and methodical he can be."

When he left NACA, then began a period of wanderlust as his services were enlisted by the governments of Zambia (one year), Namibia (three years), Nigeria and South Africa (six months each) to set up HIV/AIDS intervention strategies. He later became the founding Executive Director of Champions for an HIV-Free Generation, a group of former presidents and other influential personalities which was launched in 2008 by President Mogae to mobilise high-level leadership in response to HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.

When he was appointed to the Covid-19 Task Force in mid-March, Botswana had not recorded its first case. What he calls the "baptismal case" came during his first week on the job. We are now sitting at 22 confirmed cases, one death, zero recovery, and 5 023 tests.

At the National Emergency Command Centre in Gaborone, where he turns up at 6am each morning and often only retired for the day at 10pm, he leads a closely-knit team of distinguished professionals who bring different skills – from the security cluster, to medicine, epidemiology, communication, and IT.

The same structure has been replicated in all the districts. At that level, the structure is a District Command Centre. The district structures present situational reports to the National Emergency Command Centre every day.

Having fought to contain both livestock and human diseases, I ask Masupu which is easier to control.

"None is easier," he answers. "In both instances you deal with human beings. To control a disease you need the buy-in of the people, who in the case of livestock epidemics are the livestock owners and caretakers. And in both instances, your success depends on the degree to which the population abides by the measures that are meant to contain the epidemic."

Already, there is talk that post

Covid-19, certain practices should be reviewed due to their predisposition to spread infections. Masupu agrees. In that bracket he mentions the tendency to shake hands throughout the day, without having to wash the hands frequently. He would also like to see a conversation around being crowded in various buildings and amenities such as public transport.



Nyangabgwe Referral Hospital

"But as medical professionals we are not dictators of what society should do," he adds. "Society will decide its own practices and culture. After this experience, some will revert to the old ways, while others may

want to draw lessons." So when will we go back to our normal lives – so that interviews can be conducted face to face once again, and retired epidemiologists can go back to tend their farms?

"It all depends on when we arrive at time that evidence tells us that we have brought the virus under control," he answers. "The time frame will be dictated by what unfolds, particularly at this phase."

DEBSWANA

DEBSWANA'S SUPPORT TO COMMUNITIES AND THE NATIONAL COVID-19 RELIEF FUND

The outbreak of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has had an unprecedented impact on the entire global community and the diamond industry, of which Debswana is a significant stakeholder, has suffered greatly from the inability to sustain sales due to global movement restrictions implemented as an infection spread response measure.

As part of these world-wide interventions, the Government of the Republic of Botswana (GRB) has also effected a number of swift interventions to prevent and manage the spread of the virus. These include a request by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Dr. Mokgweetsi E.K. Masisi for the private sector to contribute towards the national COVID-19 Relief Fund, whose primary objective is to cushion the impact of the pandemic on the cross-section of Botswana's economy and communities.

Since the spread of the pandemic escalated, Debswana has committed resources to provide financial and in-kind support towards corresponding relief efforts, these also being in line with the Company's Corporate Social Investment programme's focus area of SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES. The Company has so far spent P14 million on the pandemic preparedness of our hospitals and operations, as well as support to communities. Over the next few weeks Debswana will contribute a further P10 million towards national relief efforts and community support.

In formulating its contributions Debswana has taken the following aspects into consideration:

1. The current interventions are focused on Prevention and Response, albeit with plans already developed for the pandemic Recovery phases.
2. Communities within our mines' environs are a particular focus area due to their resource constraints to respond to the pandemic, relative to urban areas of the country.
3. Debswana runs two district referral hospitals which are already at the core of the Boteti and Jwaneng-Mabutsane sub- district's response to the pandemic.
4. Debswana is a member of the Joint (Government and Debswana) District Disaster Management Committees through which the Company implements its Emergency Response Preparedness Plans in the event of any crisis. Both sub-districts' clinics are experiencing significant shortages of resources, such as front-line personnel protective equipment (PPE), for which requests for support have been submitted to the Company's respective operations.
5. Lack of access to remote learning due to limited or no internet connectivity, as well as a lack of access to broadcast media (radio and TV) for students in all of these outlying communities.

Since the previous month, Debswana has been proactively engaging stakeholders in our immediate impact communities, as well as at national level, such as the District Disaster Management Committees (DDMC), District Health Management Teams, National Emergency Operation Centre, Ministry of Health and Wellness, community leadership, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders, to work on prevention and response initiatives. The Company conducted risk assessments from which an inventory of its resources and assets that can be mobilised was formulated.

COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS FOR ALL DEBSWANA OPERATIONS AND IMPACT COMMUNITIES

Debswana has to date spent P14 million to prepare its operations and hospitals to fight the pandemic.

This consisted of procuring related medical supplies, PPE, testing equipment, converting some of its accommodation facilities into isolation centres, as well as pandemic educational materials and communication platforms. Of this figure P7,682,758 was spent on local suppliers. In addition, Debswana's mine hospitals also serve as district referral hospitals in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and have to be adequately prepared.

Other funds and efforts were spent on:

1. Re-allocation and streamlining of hospital services at both Jwaneng and Orapa towards COVID-19 treatment and patient care.
2. Availing funds, facilities and Company employees to assist the District Health Management Teams.
3. Enabling Government to convert some district clinics into COVID-19 treatment centres.
4. Re-deployment of mine hospitals' ambulances to support wider healthcare efforts around the communities: Jwaneng (two ambulances) and Orapa (one ambulance).
5. Provision of water and sanitisers to the Company's impact communities.
6. A cash donation to the Boteti DDMC to purchase masks, gloves and other medical supplies.
7. Provision of self contained porta cabins for a period of six months to be used by a clinic in Jwaneng and Mabutsane to house health personnel (eight rooms in Jwaneng and sixteen rooms in Mabutsane).

Jwaneng Mine Hospital doctor, Dr Rachel Seleke, shows traditional leaders the Isolation Centre.

Self contained porta cabins provided as accommodation for health workers

Assistant Minister of Health checks OLDLM hospital readiness

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT

With an additional contribution of P10 million the Company will continue to support interventions at both impact communities and national levels.

Debswana will commit the P10 million as follows:

- a) **P5 million** for the production of 250,000 re-usable masks and distribution to front-line workers such as the Police and Military; as well as Government essential workers and communities around our Mines. The masks will be made by pre-existing tailors in Botswana and around our communities, thus stimulating economic activity such as local production, import substitution and socio-economic development during this time of economic downturn.
- b) **P3 million** to purchase food packages, provide water and various supplies requested by communities around Orapa and Jwaneng.
- c) **P1.3 million** to support education programmes around the communities in Orapa and Jwaneng.
- d) **P700, 000** to augment costs for medical Personnel Protective Equipment being purchased by the Anglo Foundation for 24 clinics in the 200 kilometer radius around our Mines.
- e) **Technical support** in the form of Emergency Preparedness training.

With regard to Debswana's employees and contractors we have ensured and continue to further consolidate the following:

1. Purchased disposable masks, sanitisers and gloves for **Debswana's 12,000 employees and contractors** who work at our operations.
2. In the next few weeks, spend **P480,000** for the production of re-usable masks for all employees and contractors.
3. Provision of **daily medical screening to employees and contractors** (currently only essential services and skeleton staff are working).
4. Providing **daily COVID-19 educational messages and advice** to employees via SMS and email.
5. Provision of a **toll-free number with 24-hour** for communication and wellness support services for employees.
6. Our crisis management teams have put in place robust plans for post lockdown re-entry to our operations that will ensure compliance with **COVID-19 safety protocols.**

The Acting Managing Director, Ms. Lynette Armstrong had confirmed that; "Debswana remains committed to play its part in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Our efforts in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 extend way beyond this pledge. Through our existing and long-term socio-economic development, Corporate Social Investment programme, Citizen Economic Empowerment programmes and our Debswana Values, we will ensure the continued support in the best way possible even post the COVID-19 crisis."

What does Global Oil prices fall mean for Botswana?



WHAT IT MEANS SO FAR: The oil price crash is now upending the global economy, with ramifications for every country in the world including Botswana

The price adjustments will be as follows:

1. Retail prices for petrol grades will decrease by 13 thebe per litre;
2. Retail prices for all diesel grades will decrease by 10 thebe per litre;
3. Retail prices for illuminating paraffin will decrease by 20 thebe per litre;

VICTOR BAATWENG

Covid-19 pandemic aside, the plummeting price of oil is the biggest energy story in the world right now.

Apart from answering the question on why price of oil keep falling, analysts throughout the globe are busy explaining how this Oil price fluctuations are affecting economies. The effects, analysts say, is different

depending on whether a country is a net oil-importer or net oil-exporter.

In Botswana local financial analyst - Kwabena Antwi says the drop in prices should be positive for the domestic economy.

Antwi works as Capital Investment Analyst at local asset management firm – Kgori Capital based in the capital Gaborone.

He explains that the global oil prices drop will reduce Botswana's import bill, "which is welcome as

exports are also currently under pressure".

Officials balance of trade figures as shared by the state-owned statistics agency – Statistics Botswana shows that the country ended 2019 with a cumulative trade balance deficit of P14.3 billion, the second highest since 2012's trade deficit of P16.3 billion. The country's huge deficit has put an abrupt end to what has been an impressive recovery, marked by five straight years of trade balance

surpluses.

On top of the trade shortfall, Botswana is expected to run budget deficits in the next two financial years, and given the latest developments, experts warn that the deficits will widen in size and affect some of government's planned interventions to stimulate the economy.

Despite this fear from some sectors, Kitwe says another positive from the oil price fall is low inflation.

"A drop in oil prices will most

likely lead to a drop in local pump prices. Transport is 23% of the inflation basket and hence low or disinflationary pressure within this component will keep overall inflation muted", says Kitwe.

The most recently available Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the change in prices, shows that inflation rate for March 2020 remained at 2.2 percent, the same rate which has prevailed since December 2019. The 2.2 percent

rate has been constant since a slight uptick from November's 2.1 percent rate - the lowest annual inflation rate since 1975. The highest inflation rate recorded in Botswana was 16.4 percent in 1981.

Meanwhile Kitwe says the third positive outcome of low oil prices for Botswana is that consumers will spend less on fuel, "which will mean they have more money to spend elsewhere. This will positively affect other industries and aggregate

demand in general".

Global markets figures show that oil sold for over \$60 a barrel at the beginning of the year but went as low as \$20 by Friday last week. The decline has been attributed mainly to a supply glut caused by OPEC+ after they failed to agree a deal in March 2020, as well as an expected decline in demand as a consequence of social distancing restrictions implemented by many countries across the globe to combat the spread of COVID-19.

De Beers reduces 2020 production due to Covid-19

PORTIA NKANI

The world's leading diamond producers De Beers Group, owned by Anglo American and the Botswana Government has since reduced its production guidance for 2020 in line with anticipated demand by seven million carats to 25-27 million carats, with lower volumes at all its operations.

According to De Beers through its parent company, Anglo American, late this past Thursday, lockdown measures have significantly impacted diamond production in southern Africa, manufacturing in India and retail operations in the United States, while consumer demand has returned to the Chinese market.

Most of the sites around the world are continuing to operate,

with the company's focus on safety reflected through appropriate health, hygiene and distancing measures.

Anglo American Chief Executive, Mark Cutifani, said, "we are also implementing a number of cash improvement measures, including operating cost reductions of at least \$0.5 billion and an approximately \$1.0 billion reduction to our 2020 capital expenditure guidance. This further builds on our already robust current liquidity position of \$14.5 billion. We are acting to protect our optionality through this uncertain period and will continue to act in the best interests of our shareholders, our employees, customers and our broad range of stakeholders across society."

Meanwhile, in its first quarter production report late this past week again, for the three months to



Rough diamonds

March 31st, overall rough diamond production by De Beers was in line with the prior year at 7.8million carats, with limited impact from Covid-19 measures introduced at the end of the quarter in producer countries.

However, unlike in other jurisdictions, in its Botswana operations, production decreased by five percent to 5.6million carats driven by a seven percent decrease at the Orapa diamond mine, while production at Jwaneng fell four percent owing to planned lower grade.

South Africa diamond production increased by 97 percent to 0.8million carats as the final ore from the Vanetia Mine opencast is mined prior to transitioning to underground mining.

In Namibia, diamond production

increased by six percent to 0.5million carats owing to planned higher grade at the marine operations. In Canada, diamond production rolled down by 19 percent primarily due to the closure of the Victor mine, which reached the end of its lifespan last year.

Rough diamond sales totalled 8.9 million carats from two sale cycles during this first quarter before the next cycles were suspended owing to Covid-19 pandemic. This was an increase compared with the first quarter of 2019.

Anglo American has indicated that the prevailing measures to deal with Covid-19 and economic uncertainty are likely to result in delays to both project approvals and commissioning of certain in progress projects.

Turnstar Holdings blames financials delays on Covid 19



GameCity Mall

VICTOR BAATWENG

Botswana Stock Exchange quoted property outfit – Turnstar Holdings has said that it will miss the deadline date for publishing its Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31st January 2020.

In a statement issued to the capital markets on Wednesday, Turnstar said that the Audited Financial Statements which are due to be published by the 30th April 2020 will be delayed due to ongoing national lockdown.

In response to newly registered cases of the global coronavirus pandemic in Botswana by late March 2020, President Mokgweetsi Masisi, declared a state of emergency also placing the country on lockdown for 28 days from April 2.

Movement of citizens away from their home has since been restricted to those performing essential services and transporting essential goods and are issued government travel permits.

“Due to the Government imposed lockdown, effective 3rd

April – 30th April 2020, to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, our auditors have been unable to complete the annual audit. The audit was ongoing when the lockdown came into effect”, reads part of the Turnstar statement.

The statement further stated that the Group’s Audited Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 January 2020, will be published on or before the 31 May 2020.

In late 2019 the group reported that it had recorded revenue of P134 million for the half year period – 31 July

2019. This translated in to an increase of 6.57 percent over the corresponding prior half year. Still during that period, the group’s expenses increased by 6.18 percent to P58.3 million.

Turnstar’s property portfolio include amongst other Game City shopping Centre in the capital Gaborone, Nzano Shopping Centre, in Francistown, Fairgrounds Office Park, Mogoditshane, Supa Save Mall, Turnstar House, Main Mall, offices in Commerce Park, Mogoditshane Flats, Hyundai Warehouse, Tapologo Estates, as well as Mlimani city in Tanzania.

After a damper year, Botswana Banks face bleak year

SUNDAY STANDARD REPORTER

Botswana’s banking sector, largely seen as resilient and at most, lucrative, showed signs of cracks last year after a historic 2018, and growing concerns that current developments this year might widen the cracks.

The expectation was high that Botswana’s ten commercial banks will cross 2019 as another record year of earnings following the P2 billion net income recorded in 2018, the highest bank earnings in the history of the country. It was a remarkable comeback for an industry whose profitability was hampered in 2013 after Bank of Botswana (BoB) imposed a moratorium on banking fees and charges, ending consecutive years of rising profits, and beginning a steep decline that only came to an end in 2018.

Bank profits fell from 2013’s P1.7 billion, touching new lows of P1 billion in 2015, also on the back of the bank rate that was reduced from 7.5 percent to 6 percent. Profitability started improving in 2016 following the suspension of the moratorium, resulting in an increase of P1.4 billion in

net income, despite another bank rate cut to 5.5 percent. In addition, the banking industry saw a surge in bad debts due to the closure of the BCL mines, estimated to have wiped more than 6,000 jobs.

The loan impairments were more significant in 2017 and coupled with the reduction of the bank rate to 5 percent, the banks’ net income slipped to P1.2 billion. In response, the banks tightened credit lending policies, avoiding risky sectors, also increasing banking fees and charges, propelling banks to the historic P2 billion cumulative profits.

The following year, it appeared banks were headed for another historic year, with the first half of 2019’s net income outperforming 2018’s corresponding period. However, in the second half of the year, the central bank reduced the banking rate to 4.75 percent, while loan impairments also soared, resulting in total net income of P1.7 billion - the third highest after the 2018 and 2013 net incomes.

A resurgence this year is highly unlikely even though commercial banks began 2020

on a high note. The bank assets grew to P99.1 billion in January, up from last year’s P98.7 billion, with growth coming from increase in loans extended by the banks in the first month of the year, according to BoB’s financial statistics for January.

Though data for February and March might still reflect positive sentiments in the banking industry, the impact of Covid-19, the disease caused by coronavirus, started to afflict the country’s economy in early March, and measures later put in by the government to tame the spread of the virus in April, including restricting movements, thus affecting consumer spending and trade, will certainly have a negative effect on the banking industry.

Besides the lockdown imposed by the government, the commercial lenders, at the insistence of government, made some concessions, including loan repayments holidays that will run for up to three months to selected clients. To reduce traffic at brick and mortar branches, banks have urged their customers to use digital channels, as most banks offer incentives such as reduced banking fees and charges on

the digital channels, a decision which is likely to lower non-interest income.

The central bank has also taken measures to support banks during challenging period, like increasing liquidity by allowing banks to hold less reserves with the central bank, and also making it cheaper for the banks to borrow, while waiving some regulations to allow banks to restructure loans, including loosening restrictions on how banks assess non-performing loans and determination of expected credit losses.

Still, there are whispers that the central bank is likely to slash the bank rate next week during its scheduled Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on April 30, following in steps of other central banks’ response to the havoc caused by coronavirus. However, financial industry insiders have warned that cutting the bank rate will do more harm to banks as it will lower interest income during a time when some loan repayments are suspended, and will also affect other investment institutions that have invested in money markets, thus reducing valuations.



21 Day Public Notice

Introduction - Acceptance of China Union Pay Credit and Debit Cards on ATMs and POS

Please be advised that Stanbic Bank will be introducing the acceptance of China Union Pay branded Credit and Debit Cards on Point of Sale (POS) and Auto Teller Machines (ATMs).

For more information contact Customer Care Center at +267 3987801.






Stalling the inevitable, mounting job losses on the horizon

BONNIE MODIAKGOTLA

As the lethal coronavirus continues to ravage the world, infecting millions and killing hundreds of thousands of people, measures put in place by various countries to impede the spread of the virus have slowed economic activities. For countries like Botswana, some of the interventions to limit the economic damage can only hold on for so long, delaying the inevitable job losses.

Before Covid-19, the disease caused by coronavirus, became a global pandemic, Botswana's narrow economic base dependent on diamonds for over four decades was already facing its own pressures; widening budget deficits, rising unemployment figures and the increasing inequality gap.

In fact, earlier this year when the virus started gaining trajectory, the country's finance authorities proposed an economic transformation agenda, promising an economy that will be weaned off diamonds, with a leaner and efficient government that will slash wasteful expenditure, and allow the private sector to take a central role in driving the economy.

Hardly a month after the lofty ambitions, the severity of the virus reverberated across the world, forcing countries to impose tough restrictions aimed at curtailing the spread of the disease that has since infected over 2 million and killed nearly 300,000 people. In April 2, Botswana placed its nearly 2.4 million population under a nationwide lockdown, restricting movements and closing businesses considered non-essential.

Fearing a possible economic fallout, the landlocked country best

known for its high value diamonds and picturesque safaris, unravelled plans to inject P2 billion to keep the economy engine humming, geared at supporting affected businesses through various concessions and subsidies, with the government shouldering much of the economic costs.

President Mokgweetsi Masisi in April, the month that marked the second year of his presidency, took an extraordinary measure, imposing a state of emergency (SOE) which was ratified by parliament after a protracted debate, allowing the SOE to run for six months. Reasons advanced by President Masisi was that the fight against the virus required certain provisions that can only be implemented using presidential emergency powers.

Now known as the Covid-19 Emergency Powers, the president has used his sweeping powers to bar companies from retrenching or dismissing workers during the course of the SOE. Instead, the Masisi administration advised companies in distress to apply for part of the P2 billion relief package. Even still, businesses that cannot withstand the pressure of the slowed economic activities, can close down but should not retrench employees during the six months period.

In the most apparent sign to date of how the lockdown imposed by the government has affected businesses, the Commissioner of Labour and Social Security received notice of intention from 53 companies to retrench. The number of affected employees was not availed. However, in a flurry of behind the scenes negotiations between companies and government officials, the number of companies that had planned



THE JOBS PRESIDENT: President Mokgweetsi Masisi

to retrench has now shrunk to 23 companies.

Kabelo Ebineng, the permanent secretary at Employment, Labour Productivity and Skills Development, said there are ongoing discussions with companies to agree on employee retention strategies, further discussing how wages can be structured, ranging from full pay, half or quarter pay, and even taking paid or unpaid leaves, depending on certain facts.

"These facts may include, but not be limited to the financial status of the business, and the packages on offer by the Botswana Government," said Ebineng, who added that the regulation to bar employers from dismissing workers during SOE is

to allow the employer and employee to engage and conclude on how to separate.

"What is outlawed is dismissal, or a retrenchment on the basis of and during the state of emergency," he said in a media address last week.

"The effect of this would be for both parties to agree to suspend their employment contract on account that their contractual obligations are frustrated by temporary circumstances, which neither of them could foresee, and cannot control," said Ebineng.

He said under the circumstances, parties could mutually agree to suspend their relationship, until things return to normal, and then resume on

the same terms as existed before.

Already, more than 5,000 businesses have applied for the wage subsidy offered by the government under Botswana Unified Revenue Services, in which the tax collector will assess application by the companies, and offer wage subsidies from P1,000 to a maximum of P2,500.

The senior official said the government has since ratcheted up the P2 billion Covid-19 fund to come up with a P5 billion package, which is 2.5 percent of the Botswana's almost P200 billion gross domestic product (GDP). The billions will be used in the coming months to provide wage relief and other concessions such as tax and cashflow support

to companies to remain afloat, protecting jobs.

With a cure for the disease yet to be found, and infections still rising, there is no clear indication when the measures imposed by the government will be lifted. But what has become clear is, the government can only seek to stall the loss of jobs for the next six months, but what happens after that will be a bloodbath of massive job losses, as businesses count their losses, while still facing the challenges that existed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the last two years, the Commissioner of Labour and Social Security was already inundated with companies seeking approval for retrenchments, citing the tough operating environment. From April 2018 to January 2019, 30 companies retrenched 399 workers, with the fledgling manufacturing industry emerging as the hardest hit, bleeding about 212 jobs.

Three months later, Employment, Labour Productivity and Skills Development ministry said it received further intentions to retrench from over 100 companies. It is not clear how many of those companies went ahead and retrenched as the government does not publicly publish this information.

Botswana has been grappling with the increasing unemployment roll, which was exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis which affected the country's diamond sales, stalling planned government projects, thus limiting job opportunities. Further compounding the situation, the country has been battered by a spate of job losses.

Minister of Employment, Labour Productivity and Skills Development, Mpho Balopi, in February told

parliament that 6,314 jobs were lost between 2014 and 2018 when 155 companies retrenched workers. However, Balopi's figure was quickly dismissed by legislators, who questioned the accuracy of the numbers given past events in which massive job losses were reported, citing the closure of BCL mines in 2016, estimated to have shed over 6,000 jobs on its own.

Statistics Botswana's most recent available labour market data, the quarterly labour force survey results for July to September 2019, show an unemployment rate of 20.7 percent for that quarter. The government data agency estimates the official unemployment rate at 17.6 percent, but added that if you include the discouraged job seekers in the calculations, the unemployment rate could be as high as 33.5 percent.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has placed Botswana in the top ten of countries in the world with the worst youth unemployment rate. The organisation which defines labour as any work carried out by any economic active person aged between 15 and 24 years says with Botswana's youth unemployment rate at 37.1 percent, the country falls in the tenth position of countries hard hit by unemployment.

Economists and other experts agree that after the coronavirus pandemic, millions of jobs will be lost and may never be recovered. Countries like Botswana which are resource dependent might bear the full brunt of it, with the economy taking longer to recover as the government emerges from one of its biggest spending sprees, all in attempts to save the economy that was already bleeding jobs.

Ref: PPADB 2/2/21 ()

22nd April 2020

All Media Houses

Sir/Madam,

MEDIA RELEASE

COVID-19: RESUMPTION OF ONLINE CONTRACTOR REGISTRATION SERVICES

The Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board (PPADB) informs the public that the service for online contractor registration applications has resumed except applications that requiring site visit/inspection

The above service is offered in addition, to evaluation, adjudication and award of tenders in cases of emergencies like those intended to address the COVID-19.

Due to the ongoing Extreme Social Distancing (Lock down), other services like Capacity Building are still suspended until further notice.

Contractors are encouraged to pay online using the Integrated Procurement Management System (IPMS) portal or at Botswana Post offices that are still operational.

For clarification or requests for assistance on online payments and online contractor registration, the public or relevant stakeholders should contact the Contractor Registration Unit (CRU) Administrators, Assessors and Adjudicators at the following:

Contractor Registration:

Email: CRU@ppadb.co.bw

CRU Receptionists

Mobile 1: 76887058

Mobile 2: 76887053

Service Desk:

Email: servicesdesk@ppadb.co.bw

Mobile 1: 76878905

Mobile 2: 76887054

In order to facilitate more free flow of information regarding PPADB services during the extreme social distancing, the public can also contact the following for assistance in accordance with the issue at hand:

1. Divisional Manager Supplies: 71845210
2. Divisional Manager Services: 74550668
3. Divisional Manager Works: 71825113/73825113
4. Contractor Registration Manager: 74525317
5. Board Secretary: 72307230
6. Public Relations and Education Manager: 73991127.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Charles Keikotlhae
Public Relations and Education Manager

Plot 8913, Maakgadigau way Gaborone West Industrial Site, Gaborone Botswana P/Bag 0058 Gaborone
Tel: +267 390 6853 Fax +267 390 6822

TELEPHONE: 3718045
FASCIMILE: 3915115
TELEGRAMS:
REFERENCE:



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

Chief Justice's Chambers
High Court of Botswana
Private Bag 00220
Gaborone
BOTSWANA

22 April 2020

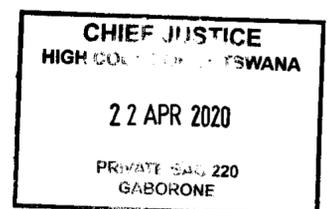
PRESS RELEASE

Contribution towards Covid-19 Relief Fund

1. Members of the public are informed that Judges of the High Court, and Justices of the Court of Appeal have unanimously agreed to contribute 5% of their basic salary towards the above Relief Fund.
2. The threshold of 5% of their basic salary which will effect from May 2020, runs for three (3) months and is reviewable at the end of that period.

Thank you.

T.T. Rannowane
CHIEF JUSTICE



Love in the time of COVID-19

The coronavirus lockdown is the ultimate stress test for relationships, and may even lead to arguments and, later break-ups and divorces – WRITES MPHU KUHLMANN

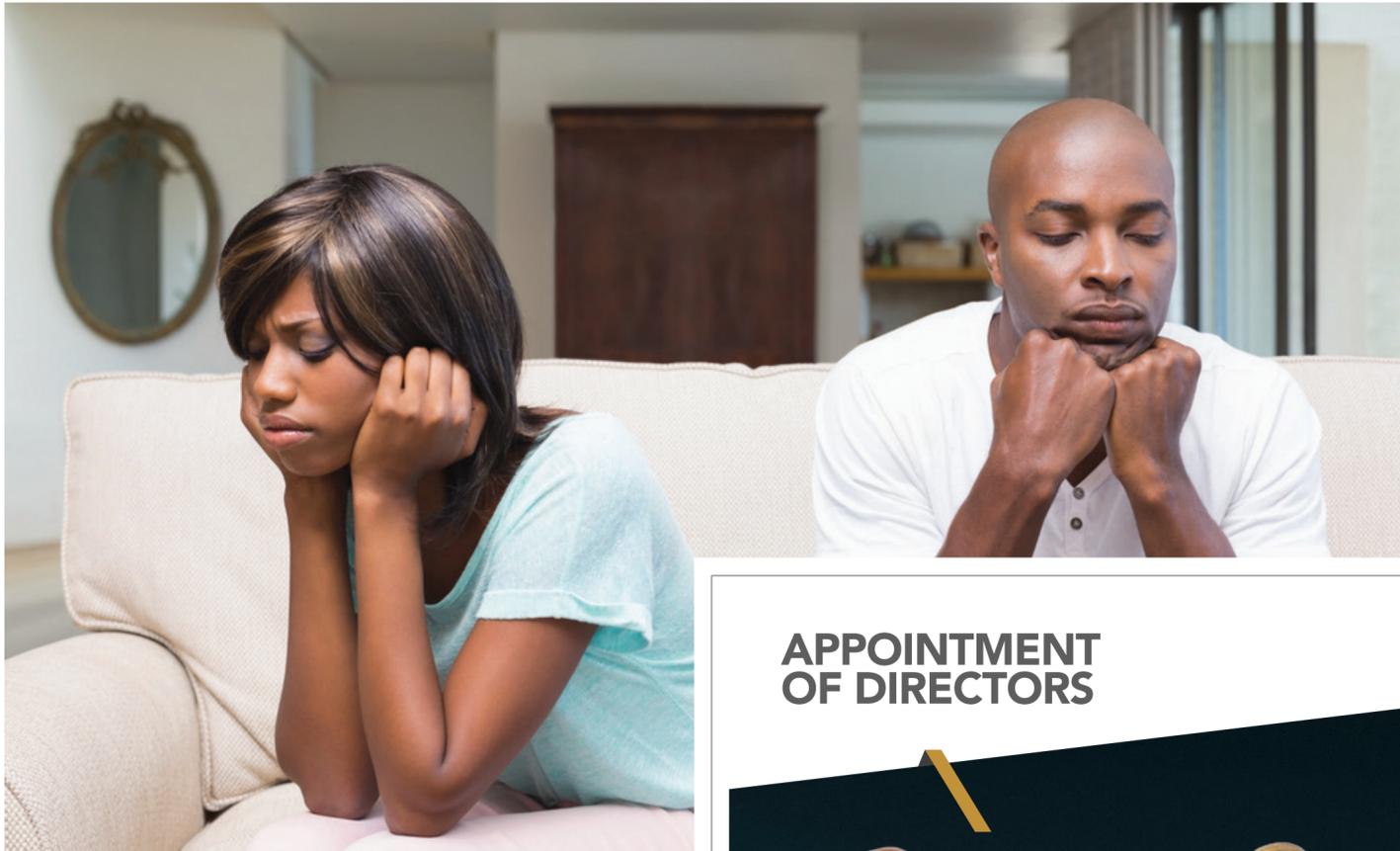
Thousands of Batswana are currently cooped up at home with their partners, spending more time than they have ever spent together in years or ever. This should be any romantic spouse's dream come true – an opportunity to spend quality time and bond with you bay. But alas! That is not always the case. Cabin fever can drive a wedge even in the most loving relationship.

Life under lockdown has altered the dynamics of many romantic relationships. Some couples in long-distance relationships have chosen to quickly move in together, while others have been forced to isolate separately from their partner. And these new living arrangements are putting relationships through a stress test.

Dr Sethunya Mosime, senior Sociology lecturer at the University Of Botswana says "A lot of people around the world right now are reflecting on their relationships, as they're dealing with changes to daily life and work. Maybe you're stuck at home together in home quarantine, or maybe you're separated for several weeks at least. In either case, a global pandemic can put a lot of stress on a couple, especially if both of you react to it differently. Any issues that already existed before the virus panic can become magnified. For example, if you're already feeling irritated by the division of labour in the home, or who earns more money, these issues can become heightened. Times like these are the ultimate stress tests for relationships, and they may even lead to more arguments and, later, divorces. Crisis often brings out the best in people, but it can bring out the worst in people too."

All the coronavirus bad news and the lockdown can be an emotional amplifier and many romantic relationships will be weakened or strained.

A couple's collective anxieties, worries and stresses



Kgomotso Jongman of Jo'Speaks in Gaborone says, "There are families for whom the quarantine will be a bonding experience, while for others it will increase tension and make the atmosphere to be more explosive. It's even more upsetting when you bear in mind that home quarantine is part of a situation at present that for some of us can be threatening – both financially and in terms of health. We're very used to transactional relationships with our significant others, between careers and family life, we're used to the comings and goings, but now things are different. Those in a single life are used to having a choice between aloneness and togetherness. Physical proximity increases the risk of contagion – not only in the case of the coronavirus but also when it comes to reactions to stress."

In addition to being cooped up with their partners triggers a negative impact on some relationships while others will thrive and become stronger. A love-lockdown experience, particularly where there are underlying issues of resentment and poor communication, could be devastating for most relationships. Relationships usually dependent on quality time and physical touch have now been reduced to relationships through digital screens – a change sans choice, and barely any warning.

Young couples who don't live together are finding this enforced and sudden long-

distance relationship difficult and the singles are finding it difficult to meet new people.

Some couples forced to stay in isolation have since realised that they're not right for each other. A realisation which, doesn't make those days in lockdown fly by any faster. In fact, isolating together brings its own stresses. In the current situation we are losing our boundaries. People isolating with their partners are probably not used to the amount of time they are now spending together. As people's romantic lives, work lives, and domestic lives begin to pile on top of each other, the extreme close

quarters makes some people feel trapped in a situation, which can trigger anxiety and defensive responses. Individuals automatically react emotionally when they experience anxiety, which can transfer to their partner(s) feeding into their own anxiety. To a degree, rising tensions within relationships aren't necessarily surprising.

Global pandemics are inevitably high-stress times. But for those couples who are more resilient, or at least are better in communicating about their concerns and anxieties, there may be a silver lining to COVID-19. Even at the darkest moments of

Coronavirus being spread through adopted cultural practices

It is late to wean Batswana away from western cultural practices because the British colonialists did a more than thorough job of getting them to discard their way of life. Interestingly though, if Batswana had not adopted certain cultural practices from the west, they would now be able to deny COVID-19 at least four channels through which it is transmitted.

Handshaking: The work of Dr. Neil Parson, a British scholar who has taught at the University of Botswana, shows that handshaking was alien to at least one Tswana tribe (by extrapolation to all) until 1956 when Seretse Khama returned home from exile in Britain. The future founding president of Botswana had fallen out with his uncle, Tshekedi Khama, and a kgotla meeting in Serowe, recoiled in horror when it suggested that the two men should shake hands to prove that they had really reconciled. Parson writes that Bangwato men at the kgotla said that hand-shaking was an "alien" tradition. An online publication

called Culture Botswana 2.0 quotes Tjako Mpulubusi, a former Director of the National Museum and Art Gallery, as saying that Khama III (Seretse's grandfather and Tshekedi's father), detested handshaking because he associated it with drinking alcohol – which he also detested. During Khama III's time, the only people who were shaking hands were white men in Gammangwato. They walked around with bags and after greeting each other by shaking hands, would take out bottles containing alcohol and start drinking.

Culture Botswana 2.0 says that the equivalent of a handshake greeting in Setswana culture is of someone getting down on one knee a little way from the hosts and exchanging greetings from that distance – much like what happens when a delegation from a groom's family calls at the homestead of a bride to ask for the latter's hand in marriage.

Hugging: Believe it or not but at the turn of the century, hugging was not as commonplace

as it is today. Then you would never hear a Motswana say "Wow!" Today hugging is like COVID-19 – it's all over. Hugging in Botswana became commonplace in the early 2000s and there is actually a 2005 newspaper article that recorded this historic development.

Kissing: When the Portuguese passed through Botswana in the 1500s, when the Scandinavians passed through Gammangwato in the early 1800s and when the British visited to stay in the late 1800s, no Batswana had their tongues locked around each other's or were pecking their children on the cheek when they left home to let cattle out to pasture. To recontextualise what President Mokgweetsi Masisi said last month, these people didn't die because they were not kissing.

Shared accommodation: In pre-colonial society, housing accommodation was not shared as is the case today. Parents, pre-pubescent, pubescent and post-pubescent children as well as same-age and other relatives had their own huts. The kitchen was

out in the open and more than adequately ventilated. In one respect, this social distancing helped control the spread of infectious diseases.

Then Batswana became "civilized", meaning they adopted western culture. More than a century later, a highly unusual disease (the British government believes it is a bio-engineered super weapon and the CIA is investigating) called COVID-19 has come out of China. The COVID-19 public service announcements say that in order to prevent the spread of this pandemic, people should neither shake hands, hug nor kiss and should also distance themselves socially from others, including family members. That PSA describes pre-colonial culture.

In fairness to the historical record, most Batswana have historically never bothered to cover their coughs and sneezes (and some still don't) but at least they had four cultural practices through which they could have mitigated the spread of COVID-19.

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS



In line with the Listing Requirements of the Botswana Stock Exchange, the Board of Directors of Letlole La Rona Limited ("LLR") is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Frederick Selolwane as a non-executive director of the Company.

Fred is the Managing Director of Rider Levett Bucknall (Botswana). He is a registered Quantity Surveyor and a chartered member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors as well as the South African Council of the Quantity Surveying Profession. He has extensive experience in the construction industry specializing in procurement, construction cost management and project management of property developments.

He has previously served as a non-executive Board Member of Botswana Building Society (BBS) where he was the Chairman of the Board Tender Committee and a member of the Demutualization Committee. He was also a Board Member of BPOMAS Property Holdings overseeing the Management of Bokamoso Private Hospital Properties.

Fred is a former Chairman of both the Physical Resources Committee of the University of Botswana Council and served as Chairman of the Institute of Botswana Quantity Surveyors, an organization primarily responsible promoting the advancement of knowledge in the Quantity Surveying profession and the general interests of the profession.

The LLR Board is delighted to have Mr. Selolwane help drive LLR during its next exciting growth phase.

His appointment is effective from 16 April 2020.

By order of the Board



In line with the Listing Requirements of the Botswana Stock Exchange, the Board of Directors of Letlole La Rona Limited is pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs. Bronwyn Corbett as a non-executive director of the Company.

Mrs. Corbett is the Chief Executive Officer of Grit Real Estate Income Group, a London, JSE and SEM listed African focused real estate company. A Chartered Accountant by training, she has significant corporate finance and transaction experience including taking companies public, establishing Domestic Medium-Term Note Programmes and successful conclusion of numerous real estate M&A transactions.

She has grown the Grit portfolio from \$220 million at inception to approximately \$800 million currently, and serves on the board of Gateway Delta, a specialist African development company.

The LLR Board is delighted to have Mrs. Corbett help drive LLR during its next exciting growth phase.

Her appointment is effective from 16 April 2020.

20 April 2020

BBL | BOOKBINDER
BUSINESS LAW
Legal Advisors

IMARA
Capital Securities
Sponsoring Broker

Directors: Boitumelo Mogopa (Chairperson); Terence Dambe; Curtis Matobolo; Tiny Kgatlwane; Oteng Keabetswe; Serty Leburu



Hunger stalks Premier League players



Prisons player

GODFREY MOWANENG

Botswana Premier League players, most of whom are one pay-check away from poverty are facing hunger and starvation as their monthly earnings dry up.

Sunday Standard has established that scores of Prisons XI players are now living on hand-outs because they received their last monthly wages end of February before government called

for social distancing. When the rest of the country went into panic buying, the broke footballers were watching from the side-lines because they were not paid their March salaries.

Prisons XI top brass has allegedly rebuffed players' call for assistance as some players currently do not have food and face possible starvation.

"It is really bad for Prisons players as they only got their salaries end of February. Nothing has been communicated to them since then

and their efforts to reach management continues to hit a snag. Some of them are not Botswana Prison Services (BPS) officers and only earn a living from football," a source told *Sunday Standard*.

One player opting for anonymity in fear of victimisation said "it is so bad that I do not have food in the house. I rely on football to put food on the table. Management is ignoring us and we have tried by all means to engage with the club captain but he

does not answer our calls."

Prisons XI management could not be reached for comment as their phones rang unanswered at the time of going to press.

Morupule Wanderers players are also having to tighten their belts and get by on a shoe string budget because their wages have been slashed by a quarter without their consent. With most of the players earning an average P 4 000, their earnings have shrunk by P1000 on average. "We

got our slashed salaries this week without proper communication. It was communicated through mobile phones just a few days before pay day that our salaries have been reduced by 25% and we were not given a platform to respond. We are aware that there are challenges but I believe that there should be considerations before taking unilateral decisions," one player said.

Morupule Wanderers Patron Tom Mongale however told *Sunday Standard*

that they had consulted their players through mobile communication and everyone at the club was receptive and appreciated the developments. "We dealt with every individual. All players have individual contracts and it should be understood that we will keep assisting them even beyond their contracts ending as some are due in June 2020. We do not know where this scourge is heading but we hope to continue working together during these trying times," said Mongale.

Botswana Chess blitzes through COVID-19 Lockdown

ORATILE OTSETSEWE

Coronavirus may have brought almost all sporting activities to a standstill, but for chess, the game continues.

With no end in sight for the current lockdown and no social gatherings envisaged for a long time, local chess has found a way to circumvent the lockdown. Online chess tournaments!

According to Botswana Chess Federation (BCF) public relations officer Kutlwano Tatolo, a series of online tournament featuring local players are currently ongoing. The tournaments are played through the LiChess application platform, which she says is free to download. The BCF PRO says local chess players have rallied to compete against each other on the online tournaments, with at least 107 players currently competing.

"The federation thought having chess tournaments every weekend was a lot, now people are playing chess every day. The commitment is remarkable," the BCF PRO says.

She says players from various regions in the country have embraced the idea of the online tournament. Tatolo says they have players from regions such as Maun, Nkange, Masunga, Mochudi and Charles Hill, just to name but a few, actively competing.

She says the tournaments offer a platform for both elders and youth players with free entry to play. "After the lockdown, BCF will have improved players. I am appealing to other sporting codes to explore digital arenas where possible," she advises.

In order to be part of the chess movement the players need to have access or download the lichess application and create user accounts. "The online platforms would help to keep people engaged and curb issues that may come with people sitting idle having nothing to do," notes Tatolo.

Tatolo says the tournament, which is organised by International Arbitrator (IA) and Organiser (IO) Vincent Masole takes place every day between 8pm and 10pm.

For his part the tournament organiser, Masole says on any other day the tournament is open to all players around the world. He says the goal of online chess tournaments is to provide a safe environment where chess players can compete and enjoy the games.

To ensure fair play, Masole says participants in the online tournaments have to adhere to the LiChess anti-cheating measures. He says any player caught cheating during the tournament is banned from participating in future tournaments.

Meanwhile, BCF organised an exclusively local online chess tournament this past Saturday 25th April. The tournament was strictly for citizens and residents of Botswana only. The tournament, aptly dubbed Botswana Lockdown Blitz, sees local players take on each other through a LiChess application platform.

The BCF sponsored exclusively local chess tournament to a tune of P2 500, with the whole amount being prize monies. According to the BCF, the tournament was played in two categories, the Open section and the ladies' section.

Masole says while the tournament is on digital platforms, there are rules and regulations in place which all players must adhere to, to avoid elimination from the tournament. All players must take part in the tournament with their real and official Lichess- ID or they will not be eligible for prize money.

COVID-19 rocks BFA foundation

DUNCAN KGANGKENNA

The Coronavirus pandemic seem set to rock the Botswana Football Association (BFA) to its foundation – literally.

BFA leadership was this week hoping for the best and preparing for the worst that the football association's founding document – The Constitution – would trump the coronavirus and that the BFA elective congress scheduled for August will go ahead as planned.

The chairperson of the Botswana Football Association (BFA) electoral committee chairperson Moemedi Letina optimistic that the elective congress will go ahead as scheduled. In an interview with the *Sunday Standard*, Letina said the elections would go ahead as scheduled on the 8th August 2020.

"It is in the constitution that elections should be staged by the second week of August every four years. We have scheduled elections and we are optimistic if COVID-19 does not disrupt them, they will go ahead," he explained.

Letina says the committee is aware that BFA activities are currently on hold and the suspension might end towards the end of the year, provided the COVID-19 pandemic is under

control. Should the BFA activities extend past the normal season break, which usually encompasses the August date, Letina says elections would take place in between the activities.

"BFA elections are not tied to the season. They are a constitutional requirement that occurs on its given time. If the mandate of the other leadership elapses there has to be elections to usher in a new regime to run the association," he said.

There are however rumours in the BFA corridors that some members are running around football regions lobbying for a postponement of elections to December.

Letina said those members do not have a mandate to seek the postponement of the BFA congress. "Maybe they want to stand, and they want more time to prepare, but the BFA elections are the sole responsibility of the electoral committee." Contacted for comment, BFA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mfolo Mfolo would not commit to the allegations that the BFA leadership want the elections postponed.

"The elective General Assembly is the prerogative of the electoral committee to decide. The independence of the electoral



BFA president Maclean Letshwiti

committee must be respected," Mfolo said. According to article 54 of the BFA constitution, the electoral committees oversee the organising and supervising of the

elections process in accordance with the electoral Act of the BFA.

The electoral Act of the BFA consists of electoral committee (first instance body) and Elections

Appeal committee (second instance body). Due to their highly political nature, the BFA elections always attract huge interest among football supporters. Lately, candidates and

their supporters riddle the elections with personal attacks, making for an interesting spectacle.

For the upcoming elections, a rematch is on the cards with the incumbent BFA president Maclean Letshwiti taking on his predecessor Tebogo Sebebo.

In their last elections duel, which Letshwiti won, the election had to go for the second round to determine the ultimate winner as none managed to pass the 70% mark needed to win as per the BFA elections act.

In the first round both Letshwiti and Sebebo polled less than 70% hence they had to go for the second round to determine the winner. While a call for nominations is yet to come, clandestine campaigns for the BFA positions are underway with two factions, led by both Letshwiti and Sebebo seemingly prominent.

According to the BFA electoral committee chairperson, the committee is expecting to open for nomination in June. He says after the nominations, they will follow the process of vetting candidates looking at the elections guidelines before announcing the candidates who will be eligible to stand for elections.

Letina says during the process, those who would have shown interest but do not qualify will be vetted out.