

Republic of Botswana TAUTONA TIMES vol. 9 no. 10 (22/5/2011) – The Electronic Press Circular of the Office of the President

“REAL LEADERSHIP FOR REAL DELIVERY”

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“...and there is no way that a responsible government that all these years prided itself with prudent economic management that we are going to increase are deficit by an additional P 2 billion...and that is why at the beginning we indicated that we had nothing to offer...We should all be in this together and I have no intention of drawing out this painful recession any longer than it has be. So I am afraid we will continue to stand our ground and we are not going to give into those demands that are coming from the Unions.” – H.E. the President [A]

“It will take time, money and sacrifice to undo the damage that has been caused by a few to our economy. This means that we shall face serious difficulties in repairing, fixing and rebuilding facilities in schools that may have been damaged. As a result, the welfare and future learning of our children will be further compromised. On behalf of Government and all Batswana, I appeal to all those bent on disturbing the peace to refrain from any destructive behaviour, more especially injury to fellow Batswana, and damage to property.” – H.H. the Vice President [B1]

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A. The Week that was – Khama reaffirms need for restraint

Dear Readers – Welcome to another edition of Tautona Times, your window into issues and events involving the Botswana State Presidency.

During the week His Excellency's announced the appointment of the Hon. Dr. Gloria Somolekae to Cabinet as the new Assistant Minister of Finance and Development Planning. She replaced the Hon. Vincent Seretse who was transferred to the Ministry of Trade and Industry in place of the Hon. Maxwell Motowane, who in turn replaced the Hon. Kentse Rammidi at Local Government. The Hon. Rammidi informed his Excellency of his desire to resign from his post as Assistant Minister at the beginning of the week.

[C7]

PRESIDENT ADDRESSES THE STRIKE

On Thursday Morning the President chaired the 30th meeting of the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC). The biannual meetings of the HLCC bring together senior representatives of Government, the private sector and additional key stakeholders, including representatives of labour and NGOs, to discuss ways of ensuring that Botswana becomes a more productive and prosperous nation. The work of the HLCC is supported by regular meetings of economic sector sub-committees within each Ministry.

Besides addressing industry specific issues, this week's meeting provided an opportunity for His Excellency to not only address the HLCC itself but also the nation, through the public and private press in attendance, on the ongoing strike action by a segment of public sector employees. **[C4]**

In his remarks the President reiterated Government's position that it cannot afford public sector salary increase at the moment, reminding the gathering that Government spending remains in deficit, with a projected revenue shortfall of P 7 billion in the current financial year. This meant that revenues did not cover the costs of much needed programmes and projects, resulting in a need to source funds elsewhere to cover spending priorities.

In this respect, it may be noted that this year's deficits come on top of those already accrued since the second half of 2008 as a result of the global economic downturn. As the Hon. Minister of Finance and Development Planning repeatedly observed, in the just

completed, 2010-11, financial year Government spent a total of 40.5 billion pula, which was 10.2 billion pula above revenues received, meaning that Government revenues covered only 3 out of every 4 pula that Government spent.

The President further informed the HLCC that, at their current rate, public sector wages already cost Government P 12 billion annually, considerably more than the P 10 billion that has been allocated for development projects this year.

A 16% wage increase would thus add nearly P 2 billion more to the budget deficit, in the absence of deep cuts elsewhere; upon which the President observed that "there is no way that as a responsible government which has for all the years prided itself with prudent economic management that we are going to increase our deficit by an additional P2 billion".

Put another way a 16% increase would result in public service salaries accounting for 44% of Government's total recurrent expenditures. As it is public service salaries already account for 38% of recurrent expenditure.

The President added that even a 10% increase, would amount to some P1.2 billion, which would be too great a burden under current economic circumstance "and that is why at the beginning we indicated that we have nothing to offer".

He informed the HLCC that the need for deficit spending, as a stopgap measure, had arisen in 2008 as a result of the global economic downturn when the country was unable to sell her diamonds, thus money had had to be borrowed from international financial institutions, drawing down from its financial reserves to stimulate the economy, while continuing to implement already ongoing priority projects that government could not afford to slow down or stop.

In this respect the President also reminded the meeting that Government was committed to spending considerable sums of money on critical infrastructure projects including the provision of water and new power stations to ensure the country's economic future. "As you will be aware, if we were to have a deficit in water and energy that would greatly impact on our ability to grow as a country," he said.

Other projects included senior secondary schools and other infrastructure that were either completed or nearing completion. "We couldn't just stop at the middle of the project and let it idle for a couple of years and then resume building."

At the same time the President warned that in light of recent student unrest which had caused the closure schools (below) Government would not be in a position to rebuild school infrastructure that was wantonly destroyed.

The President also affirmed that Government remained steadfast in its commitment to assisting Batswana through various social welfare and empowerment programmes such as:

- Ipelegeng, which catered for up to 50,000 monthly beneficiaries at an annual cost of P330 million;
- ISPAAD, which currently has 156,000 beneficiaries at a cost this year of P 200 million; and
- Poverty Eradication, which is to have 64,000 beneficiaries this year at a budgeted cost of P 100 million.

His Excellency observed that he was not aware of any country that had awarded public service salaries increase while going through such serious economic difficulties. In this context he reiterated that: "Unfortunately, it cannot be a priority like electricity and water projects I was talking about that you can give an increase in public service salaries," he said.

He further noted that unlike many other countries burdened with budget deficits Botswana had not cut public sector salaries or jobs, adding - "I have not heard anywhere where they had actually increased."

On the contrary, Government had taken a deliberate decision to avoid at all possible costs reducing the size of the public service, let alone cutting salaries to save money, regretted the fact that the public service unions was to appreciate what government had done to keep the wage bill at its existing P12 billion "for which we had to go outside to borrow money in order for them to stay in their jobs, adding:

"I thought that would have been appreciated by public officers that we were able to keep them in employment and keep their salaries at what they were in the past without having to cut them,"

The President noted that in countries much better off than Botswana were severely cutting back on their public sector employment, citing the example of the UK where currently between 300,000 and 490,000 public service jobs are up for elimination. Public sector wages have actually been cut in at least ten European Union countries, while wages are frozen elsewhere throughout Europe and North America

The President further observed that while the rest of Batswana clearly understood that there was no money the leadership of the public service unions behaved as if they failed to appreciate the fact. "Why would they continue to insist to ask for what is not there? You cannot give what you don't have. That is a fact," he said.

"We should all be in this together and I have no intention of drawing out this painful recession any longer than it has to be. So I am afraid we have stood our ground and we will continue to stand our ground and we are not going to give in to those demands that are coming from the unions."

He cited continued volatility in the economy, due to internal and external developments, such as rising fuel prices and the earthquake in Japan, to explain why Government had made a conditional offer of a 5% increase, which would be implemented if Government stayed within its budget projections.

The President also confirmed to the HLCC that Government had also offered an unconditional 3% increase.

Summing up the challenge the President promised that: "during the time I am in office I am not going to take any decisions which are going to drive this country deeper in debt", noting that one cannot give what one does not have. An economic downturn was something beyond government's control hence the need for belt-tightening and sacrifice by every citizen.

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES

On Friday the President was in Namibia, where he joined 11 other regional heads of state and government in attending the Extraordinary SADC Summit. The Summit discussed regional political issues, including the unresolved conflict in Madagascar and the status of the SADC Tribunal. The President returned home Friday evening. **[C6]**

With respect to Madagascar, which remains suspended from the regional body in the aftermath of the overthrow of its elected Government in a December 2009 coup, the Summit considered "the report of the SADC mediator, His Excellency Joaquin A. Chissano, former President of the Republic of Mozambique, noting the development of the roadmap for returning that country to constitutional normalcy."

The Summit further reaffirmed that there is still a "need for an all-inclusive political process towards finding a lasting solution of the challenges facing the country", and scheduled another meeting to this end will be held in Gaborone in the near future.

With respect to the Tribunal it was reported that Summit has "mandated the Ministers of Justice/Attorneys General to initiate the process aimed at amending the relevant SADC legal instruments and submit a progress report in August 2011 and a final report to Summit in August 2012".

Yesterday morning, the President undertook a town-walk about in the Gaborone West North Constituency, starting in the Sebele Ward behind Botswana Agricultural College- at E.M.U. Estate Management Unit. He also interacted with resident at the Tlogatloga

Ward, which includes the Khuduga Primary School. As is the norm for such visits, the residents the two wards had the opportunity to interact with His Excellency, pointing out issues such as a lack of utilities in some areas due to project delays.

Interviewed on BTV last night the area MP, the Hon. Robert Masitara, informed viewers that he had invited the President to visit the Sebele and Tlogatloga Wards in particular as they were among the most economically and socially challenged in his constituency.

Earlier in the week the President was at the Mmopane Kgotla, where he spoke about the need for Government to live within its means, while carefully balancing its spending priorities for the equitable benefit of all Batswana. He affirmed that Government remained committed to assisting those most in need. He was in Mmopane to participate in this month's Office of the President Community Service Day activities, which involved environmental clean-up and the donation of winter blankets, jackets and wheelchairs to the needy.

GOVERNMENT CLOSES SCHOOLS

One of the most unfortunate outcomes of the ongoing strike has been the recent outbreak of violent unrest in some schools. As a result Government took the decision on Monday to close all Government primary and secondary schools until further notice. **[C8]** This step was taken out of concern about the safety and security of students, teachers and members of the public, as well as public and private property. **[C5]**

As H.H. the Vice President, Lt. Gen. Mompoti Merafhe, subsequently informed the nation in a broadcast message on Monday evening, the closure will give time to restore a proper learning environment. **[B1]** In this regard, His Honour noted that Botswana has progressed on the basis of our paramount value of Botho, and respect for the rule of law.

On Friday evening the Ministry of Education and Skills Development issued a Spot Announcement informing parents, guardians, teachers, students and the general public that all Government PRIMARY SCHOOLS will reopen this coming Monday the 23rd of May 2011. In the meantime Government Secondary Schools remain closed. **[C1]**

Further to the above announcement, Government has denied rumours being circulated that the said decision was the result of being contacted by foreign missions or is otherwise in anyway related to the reopening of some private schools.

VICE PRESIDENT IN MAHALAPYE

On Friday the Vice President was in his home village of Mahalapye, where in the morning he addressed residents at the main Kgotla for the first time since his return to duty. His Honour thanked residents for their messages of support during his absence.

He further briefed them on developments, including Government's position with respect to the strike.

During the day the vice President also visited Madiba Senior Secondary School, where he inspected damage caused by student unrest earlier in the week. There he reiterated Government's position that in light of existing constraints students and the public at large should not expect that Government will be in a position to fix and restore property that has been put in place at great public expense only to be maliciously damaged by irresponsible elements.

Yesterday, His Honour returned to the Mahalapye Kgotla as the keynote speaker at this year's National Culture Day celebration. **[B2]**

- Dr. Jeff Ramsay, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Government Communications (22/5/11)

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B. STATEMENTS

B1) 16/5/11: STATEMENT BY H.H. THE VICE PRESIDENT, LT. GEN. MOMPATI MERAFHE ON THE CLOSURE OF GOVERNMENT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Please find below the text of H.H. the Vice President's statement as delivered I on BTV and Radio Botswana this evening -

1. Bagaetsho, as you are aware five (5) public service unions have announced that the ongoing strike by public sector employees is indefinite. In the light of this development, Government has taken urgent contingency measures to ensure continuity in the provision of public services.
2. In the context of these ongoing efforts, Government is concerned about recent developments in some of our schools. As you already know, a number of teachers have joined the strike, which has disrupted teaching, learning and discipline in the schools.
3. Unfortunately, a new development has now emerged in which acts of violence in some schools have occurred, resulting in injuries and destruction of property.
4. In the face of this development, Government is concerned about the safety and security of students, teachers and members of the public, as well as public and private property.

5. Having considered all possible options, we have taken the decision to close all Government primary and secondary schools until further notice. The Minister of Education and Skills Development has already issued a notice to this effect.
6. The closure will give us time to restore a proper learning environment in our schools.
7. Bagaetsho, in this regard, I appeal to all of you to assist Government in any way possible, to maintain peace and stability in our country. We are a nation that has progressed on the basis of our paramount value of Botho, and respect for the rule of law.
8. It will take time, money and sacrifice to undo the damage that has been caused by a few to our economy. This means that we shall face serious difficulties in repairing, fixing and rebuilding facilities in schools that may have been damaged. As a result, the welfare and future learning of our children will be further compromised.
9. On behalf of Government and all Batswana, I appeal to all those bent on disturbing the peace to refrain from any destructive behaviour, more especially injury to fellow Batswana, and damage to property.
10. If this continues, Government will have no option but to take whatever action may be necessary to ensure the maintenance of peace and stability. PULA!!

B2) 21/5/11: KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS HONOUR, THE VICE PRESIDENT, LT. GEN. MOMPATI S. MERAFFE, MP, AT THE OCCASION TO MARK THE 2011 NATIONAL CULTURE DAY MAHALAPYE MAIN KGOTLA. THEME: CULTURE IS MY BUSINESS OR NGWAO KE BOIKARABELO JWA ME

[Salutations]...Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am greatly honoured and privileged to be here this morning on this auspicious occasion to commemorate the 2011 National Culture Day, held under the theme, "Ngwao ke boikarabelo jwa me", loosely translated as "Culture is my business."
2. I would like to extend a special welcome to all of you and hope that you will enjoy the warmth and generous hospitality of the people of Mahalapye.
3. It is indeed a delightful moment for me to join you this morning on this momentous occasion where Batswana and other dignitaries from all walks of life have come to Mahalapye to celebrate Botswana's cultural heritage. The significance of this event cannot be overemphasized since culture is the embodiment of our national values and way of life.

4. As our first President, Sir Seretse Khama once noted: "A nation without a culture is like a nation without a soul." Therefore, it is fitting for us as a nation to celebrate our cultural heritage in order to ensure and safeguard its continuity for the benefit of our future generations. In this connection, I would like to commend the Organising Team for putting everything perfectly in place to ensure the success of this event.

5. I am informed that the National Culture Day has been celebrated in Botswana annually since 1998 in various districts across the country.

6. Bagaetsho, I would like to reiterate that Government is committed to the promotion, preservation and development of our culture. This is evidenced by various programmes that Government has put in place such as the President's Day Competitions, Constituency Art Competitions, National Languages Day, Visual Art Exhibitions, Community Cultural Festivals and Pitso ya Ngwao. In this regard, let me formally congratulate Mahalapye Choral Choir for taking the second position in the July 2010 President's Day Competitions under the Choral Music category.

7. This cultural renaissance is in line with the 2001 National Policy on Culture, which seeks to keep Botswana in touch with our rich and diverse cultural heritage. I am informed that the event seeks to create awareness on the importance of the preservation of culture and resuscitate and promote our diverse cultures. It also seeks to create awareness on the importance of culture in socio-economic development, provide a platform for information sharing among cultural practitioners and showcase the diverse cultures in the form of exhibitions and performances.

8. Bagaetsho, Government also provides assistance in the form of grants to artists and cultural practitioners to undertake projects and programmes, in recognition of the crucial role played by the arts in the socio-economic development of this country. This gesture will go a long way in developing cultural industries and tourism, diversifying the economy and eradicating poverty, in view of deliberate efforts being made to market both performing and visual arts products and services locally and internationally.

9. It is interesting to note that many local artists have been sponsored by Government to take part in cultural exchange programmes abroad. In essence, many of our artists have been able to forge strategic links and also promote our culture abroad.

10. Government cannot achieve this alone. It is for this reason that the participation of many Botswana in this cultural renaissance comes as a huge relief. I must commend many of our cultural organisations, which have consistently organised cultural festivals to promote and preserve our culture. It is our fervent hope that others will follow suit and sustain our rich cultural heritage.

11. As a nation, we should ensure the sanctity of our culture. In this regard, I would like to commend those who appreciate our values and norms as it resonates well with our national pillar of a proud and united nation.

12. Bagaetsho, Botswana has started implementing in earnest, the provisions of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in an effort to safeguard our culture, after signing the Convention in July 2010.

13. I wish to conclude my remarks by once again commending the people of Mahalapye Sub-District for providing an enabling environment for the success of this historic event. With these remarks, it is now my pleasant duty to declare the 2011 National Culture Day Commemoration officially open. I thank you.

C. NOTICES & FORWARDING

C1) 22/5/11: UPDATE GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO REPOEN

Further to Friday evening's spot announcement by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (below) this is to further inform members of the media that Government denies malicious rumours being circulated that the said decision was the result of being contacted by foreign missions or is otherwise in anyway related to the reopening of some private schools.

20/5/11: Ministry of Education and Skills Development Spot Announcement - PRIMARY SCHOOLS to reopen 23-5-11

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development wishes to inform parents, guardians, teachers, students and the general public that all Government primary schools will reopen for students on Monday the 23rd of May 2011.

C2) 19/5/11: SITUATION OF HEALTH SERVICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Please find attached and below a copy of a Press Release received from the Ministry of Health informing the public of the status of health facilities across the country in the context of existing challenges and misinformation.

PRESS STATEMENT

The Ministry of Health advises the public that its services nationwide have been adversely affected by the on-going industrial action by the civil servants. The public is therefore requested to be patient when seeking medical attention at any of the Ministry of health facilities as waiting periods are bound to be longer. Emergency cases will however continue to be given priority.

The Ministry is aware of misleading reports in some media houses that most of its health facilities are closed due to the strike. The truth is that government hospitals are operational although with reduced staff. The vast majority of clinics also remain open.

Whilst all efforts will be made to assist the public, the Ministry advises the public to take responsibility of their health by taking reasonable health precautions like avoiding exposure to colds, heat, potentially contaminated water and food and getting protection against mosquito bites.

The Ministry further wishes to assure the public that it remains committed to its identified values of botho, dignity, timeliness, confidentiality, teamwork and to providing customer focused service.

The Ministry is working around the clock to ensure that the services are restored to near normal as possible under the circumstances. We value life and we will do everything possible to protect it.

For further information please call the: Toll free number 0800 600 740, 3632766 or 363 2080

C3) 19/5/11: GOVERNMENT URGES STRIKING WORKERS TO RETURN TO WORK WHILE NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE

The Employer and the five (5) recognised Unions affiliated to the Botswana Federation of Public Sector Unions (BOFEPUSU) met today, the 19th May 2011 to continue with salary negotiations, following an adjournment on the 18th May 2011.

During the meeting, Government re-submitted her unconditional offer of a 3% salary adjustment to be effected in September 2011, and implored employees to return to work. For their part, the Unions re-stated their demand of a package comprising 12% salary adjustment effective 1st April 2011; reinstatement of all dismissed employees; and setting aside of the no work no pay rule for employees on strike.

There was no agreement on the two positions, and parties agreed to engage as and when opportunities arise.

F. S. Bakwena
DIRECTOR PUBLIC SERVICE MANAGEMENT

C4) 19/5/11: PRESIDENT ADDRESSES HLCC ON STRIKE

Today, the President chaired the 30th meeting of the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC). The biannual meetings of the HLCC bring together senior representatives of Government, the private sector and additional key stakeholders to discuss ways of

ensuring that Botswana becomes a more productive and prosperous nation. The work of the HLCC is supported by regular meetings of economic sector sub-committees within each Ministry.

Besides addressing industry specific issues, today's meeting provided an opportunity for His Excellency to not only address the HLCC but also the nation, through those public and private press in attendance, on the ongoing strike action by a segment of public sector employees.

In his remarks President reminded the gathering that Government spending remains in deficit, with a projected revenue shortfall of P 7 billion in the current financial year. He further noted that public sector wages already cost Government P 12 billion annually, considerably more than the P 10 billion allocated for development this year. A 16% wage increase would thus add nearly P 2 billion more to the budget deficit, in the absence of deep cuts elsewhere.

The President cited continued volatility in the economy, due to internal and external developments, such as rising fuel prices and the earthquake in Japan, to explain why Government had made a conditional offer of a 5% increase, which would be implemented if Government stayed within its budget projections. He also confirmed that Government had also offered an unconditional 3% increase.

His Excellency noted that unlike many other countries burdened with budget deficits Botswana had not cut public sector salaries or jobs. He expressed his regret that this fact was not appreciated by those on strike.

The President also reminded the meeting that Government was committed to spending large sums of money on critical infrastructure projects such as new power stations to ensure the country's economic future, while at the same time assisting Botswana through various social welfare and empowerment programmes such as Ipelegeng (50,000 monthly beneficiaries at an annual cost of P330 million), ISPAAD (currently 156,000 beneficiaries at P 200 million) and Poverty Eradication (64,000 beneficiaries at P 100 million).

Summing up the challenge the President promised that he would not take any decision that would drive the country deeper in debt, noting that one cannot give what one does not have.

C5) 19/5/11: BOTSWANA POLICE SERVICE ON STRIKE RELATED DISTURBANCES

Botswana Police Service has been overwhelmed with requests for information by both the media and members of the public regarding the disturbances associated with the civil servants strike that started last Friday (13/05/2011).

The police have since recorded 18 incidents, some of them involving the use of violence and theft. The incidents were reported in Gaborone, Gantsi, Hukuntsi, Mahalapye, Mochudi, Mogoditshane, Molepolole, Moshupa, Ramotswa, Selebi Phikwe, and Thamaga. About 152 students, 13 striking workers and 12 members of the public have been taken in for questioning.

In Mochudi, Mogoditshane, Molepolole, Moshupa, Ramotswa and Thamaga the police arrested 141 students for looting shops and other business enterprises, causing damage to school premises, vehicles and business premises as well as blocking roads by placing stones and debris. In Ramotswa 11 students were arrested for theft involving food at Kagiso Senior Secondary School kitchen.

Meanwhile police in Tshane and Gantsi have arrested four and eight striking workers respectively for behaving in a disorderly manner by blocking roads with stones and debris and are likely to be taken before court after investigations have been completed.

Though in some of these incidents some people suffered minor injuries, no deaths or serious injuries were recorded.

The police wish to assure the public that whoever engages in unlawful/criminal acts under the guise of the ongoing strike, will be subjected to the full force of the law.

Chris B. Mbulawa
BOTSWANA POLICE SERVICE

17/5/11: POLICE DENY DEATHS

Further to the above in a previous Statement the Police Services strongly denied rumours that a police officer and a teacher were killed in Molepolole and Gaborone respectively as a result of ongoing disturbances:

“The Botswana Police Service has been inundated with enquires following rumours that a police officer and a teacher were killed in Molepolole and Gaborone respectively as a result of the ongoing public service strike. According to the rumour the deaths were linked to the ongoing industrial action.

It is against this background that they would like to put it on record that no police officer or teacher was killed during any of the incidents. The rumour is therefore unfounded and untrue and should be treated as baseless as it has no substance, but only surfaces to deliberately cause confusion to the nation.

C6) 19/5/11: RE: TOMORROW'S SADC SUMMIT IN WINDHOEK

Please find SADC Media Statement below on tomorrow's Extraordinary SADC Summit, which H.E. the President is currently scheduled to attend

MEDIA STATEMENT SADC SUMMIT

The Extraordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government will take place on Friday May 20, 2011 in Windhoek, Namibia as scheduled.

The Summit is expected to deliberate on, among other issues, the following:

- Report of the Committee of Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General on the SADC Tribunal;
- The Principles, Guidelines and Institutional Framework, Declaration and Roadmap towards the establishment of the Grand Free Trade Area between Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC); and
- Progress Report on the Impact of the Global Crisis on SADC Region.

The agenda items of the Extraordinary Summit were agreed upon during the August 2010 ordinary Summit that took place in Windhoek, Namibia.

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C7) 18/5/11: CHANGES TO CABINET

For those who may have missed this evening's news bulletins on BTV and Radio Botswana the Office of the President has announced the following changes to Cabinet.

The Hon. Dr. Gloria Somolekae has been appointed to Cabinet as the Assistant Minister of Finance and Development Planning, replacing the Hon. Vincent Seretse.

The Hon. Vincent Seretse has been appointed as the Assistant Minister of Trade and Industry, replacing the Hon. Maxwell Motowane.

The Hon. Maxwell Motowane has been appointed as an Assistant Minister at Local Government, replacing the Hon. Kentse Rammidi.

C8) 16/5/11: CLOSURE OF GOVERNMENT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In accordance with the powers vested in me under Section 27 of the Education Act CAP. 58.01 I have ordered the immediate closure of all Government primary and secondary schools.

The schools shall remain closed until further notice.

I had to take this measure to safeguard the security of students, staff and Government property in schools.

(Signed) Pelonomi Venson-Motoi
Minister of Education and Skills Development

C9) 16/5/11: DISMISSAL OF PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES ON ILLEGAL ESSENTIAL SERVICES STRIKE

DPSM wishes to inform all public officers employed in essential services and/or employed to render essential services currently embarking on the illegal strike and who have failed to report for duty on 16 May 2011, that they have now been dismissed from employment with immediate effect.

The dismissals of each individual employee concerned has been brought about by their continued participation in on-going industrial action in essential services which has been declared illegal, unlawful and unprotected by the Industrial Court.

The employees on strike in essential services have defied several Court Orders directing them to return to work, as well as a series of ultimatums publicly issued by DPSM, as the employer, urging them to return to work immediately with effect from Tuesday 26 April 2011, and pointing out in clear and uncertain terms that their failure to do so would expose them to dismissal.

Each employee is advised to report to their workplace to receive delivery of their individual letter of termination of employment through their Head of Department and/or their supervisors.

Letters which are not collected within 5 working days will be sent by registered post to their last known address.

F.S Bakwena
Director – DPSM

C10) 19/5/11: THE MINISTER OF MINERALS, ENERGY AND WATER RESOURCES LEAVES FOR ANTWERP, BELGIUM

The Honourable Minister of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources, Dr P.H.K. Kedikilwe leaves for Antwerp, Belgium on 21st May 2011 on an official trip to attend the 6th edition of the Antwerp Diamond Conference on behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana.

The Conference scheduled for 23rd -24th May 2011 and held under the theme, "Diamonds 2020: A window to the Future" will bring together all decision makers of the international diamond community and government officials.

The conference will identify and analyse trends and factors that are likely to impact the diamond business over the coming years. It will further discuss alternative strategies that may be adopted by the industry and by individual companies so as to avoid risk and maximise business opportunities.

The Honourable Minister is expected to articulate the country's position on the issues among others beneficiation and downstream industry (cutting, polishing and jewellery manufacturing). He is also to state Botswana's long-term plans/ strategy and the role that diamond entrepreneurs can play.

The minister will also attend the official launch International Training Centre on Corporate Opportunities (ITCCO), the new United Nations Training and Research Facility (UNITAR). The Institute will be training individuals across the world for the diamond industry.

In pursuit to the objective of establishing a Botswana Diamond Centre and downstream diamond manufacturing facilities, the Minister undertook a trip to Belgium and Switzerland at the end of August 2010 and explored areas of collaboration between Botswana and the Antwerp World Centre. Minister Kedikilwe is expected back home on 25th May, 2011.

D. ALSO IN THE NEWS:

NB: News reports, statements and/or views reproduced below are NOT necessarily those of Government of Botswana.

D1) 20/5/11: FROM BNO NEWS - BOTSWANA JOINS UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

UNITED NATIONS (BNO NEWS) -- Fifteen new countries have been selected to join the United Nations Human Rights Council, including six countries that have never previously served on the Geneva-based body.

Austria, Benin, Botswana, the Republic of Congo, Costa Rica and Kuwait will make their debut on the Council next month, starting three-year terms on the 47-member panel

that allots seats according to a formula based on world regions. The other elected members are Burkina Faso, Chile, Czech Republic, India, Indonesia, Italy, Peru, Philippines and Romania.

Last week, Syria withdrew its candidacy for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council. Human rights groups from across the world had called on General Assembly members to reject Syria's candidacy for the rights body. Shortly after, Kuwait announced that it was running for one of the four Asia seats.

Last year, all regional groups put forward what are called "clean" states since council members are expected to "uphold the highest standards" of human rights.

A United Nations watchdog group slammed the election of Congo and Kuwait, but hailed the defeat of Nicaragua, after a campaign with other rights groups that spotlighted the poor records of all three countries.

"Congo, Kuwait and Nicaragua have poor records in respecting the basic human rights of their own citizens, and have consistently voted the wrong way on UN initiatives to promote and protect the human rights of others," said UN Watch executive director Hillel Neuer in a statement.

"With today's election, only 20 out of 47 of the new members rank as free democracies, while the rest -- a majority of 58% -- fail to meet basic democracy standards, rated as either not free or only partly free by Freedom House's annual survey," Neuer added.

General Assembly President Joseph Deiss announced the results of the voting on Friday, which was conducted by secret ballot among Member States at UN Headquarters in New York.

D2) 20/5/11: African Aviation News – "British Airways Routes from Lanseria to Gaborone and Maputo Scheduled for September Launch"

Comair Limited, operator of British Airways in South Africa and kulula.com, confirmed that the imminent commencement of its flights from Lanseria to Maputo in Mozambique and to Gaborone in Botswana on 30 May 2011 has been postponed, pending the finalisation of commercial terms with Lanseria International Airport, and a commitment from Lanseria to commence the building of a new runway and upgrade of the airport infrastructure.

Comair, in partnership with Solenta Aviation recently introduced the first of three ATR turboprop aircraft earmarked for local and regional network growth into its growing fleet. The aircraft originally planned for the regional flights is currently deployed on the Johannesburg-Nelspruit route and performing well, providing the backdrop for Comair

to assess the possible increase in capacity into Nelspruit as well as growing their domestic footprint to include other smaller domestic destinations.

Stuart Cochrane, Executive Manager for Network Development and Alliances at Comair says "We regret the decision to suspend the launch of our Gaborone and Maputo flights as our team has worked tirelessly to ensure that the new routes reach operational readiness in time, however we are extremely pleased with the current performance of the ATR aircraft and look forward to introducing additional routes utilising this equipment."

Customers that have already booked and paid for their flights on these routes are being contacted and have been provided with the option for a full refund, or to change their flights to a date on or after 01 September 2011.

END NOTE - TAUTONA TIMES

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