

Nurses drag Health ministry to court

Govt insists that nurses should continue dispensing of medicines

KABO RAMASIA
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

THE STANDOFF BETWEEN Botswana Nurses Union (BONU) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) threatens to plunge the health sector into further crisis, after lawyers representing nurses announced on Thursday that they will approach court to have dispensing of medications confirmed as a non-nursing duty.

BONU complain that the MoH has resorted to intimidating and threatening nurses not to abide by an instruction to stop the illegal act of dispensing medicines. Aggrieved by Ministry of Health (MoH) decision to insist on nurses dispensing medicines to patients, while it is evident that it amounts to criminal conduct, Botswana Nurses Union (BONU) lawyers have issued a statutory notice to sue.

According to the notice, BONU shall, after 30 days, approach the court seeking a declaration that nurses are by law prohibited from dispensing medicines, that by instructing them to dispense medicines to patients MoH is complicit in crime and that the MoH and/or its agents are interdicted from ordering nurses to dispense medicines.

The statute that forms the bone of contention is the Medicines and Related Substances Act, 2013. The MoH has indicated that they have set a legal process in motion to address the issue, but contend that for now, whatever duties currently performed by nurses and midwives have been authorised by the employer. However, BONU disputes that and believes that the courts of law will clarify the interpretation.

Public outcry

The Patriot on Sunday reached out to members of the public who mostly cited the need for improvement in the public health sector. "I don't think the medical situation has improved. They even write down your prescription on a plain white paper. They give you the prescription to go and look for medication at pharmacies," said one patient who declined to be named.

Amidst information of the rot at the MoH, where there is an on-going investigation by the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC), this publication can confirm that, to this day, there are cases where patients are turned back without medication or referred to other health facilities to seek treatment.

Khamas to miss Sekgoma's burial

BAKWADI LEKOPANE
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

Sekgoma is last surviving son of Tshekedi Khama

SEKGOMA KHAMA, THE SENIOR uncle of former President Ian Khama and the last surviving son of Tshekedi Khama, has passed away, marking the end of an era for the prominent Khama family.

Sekgoma's demise comes shortly after the recent loss of his niece, Jaqualine Khama, the late elder sister of Ian Khama and his twin brothers Tshekedi and Anthony. Sekgoma's passing leaves a void in the Khama lineage, as he was the final living offspring of Tshekedi Khama, a revered figure in Botswana's history. Tshekedi Khama, who served as the regent of the Bangwato tribe and played a significant role in the country's struggle for independence, left behind a profound legacy.

However, Ian Khama, the former president of Botswana and his brother, Tshekedi, named after Sekgoma Khama's father, will be unable to attend their uncle's funeral, just as they missed the celebration of their late sister's life. Ian, Tshekedi



The Khama family

[PIC-PRESSPHOTO]

and Anthony currently reside in self-imposed exile in South Africa, claiming to have escaped persecution by Botswana's Directorate of Intelligence and Security Services (DIS). In a brief interview, Ian Khama expressed regret at being unable to attend the funeral. "I will miss the funeral. I guess, like with my

late sister, I will not be able to attend his funeral," he lamented the sad development.

These words hint at the strained relationship between the Khamas and President Mokgweetsi Masisi, which has led to their self-imposed exile and concerns about their safety if they were to return to Botswana.

President Masisi's administration has clashed with Ian Khama on various issues, including violation of the law and what Masisi's administration describes as treasonous acts by Khama. The strained relations have resulted in Khama's absence from significant family events, even during times of mourning.

Khama recently applied to the South African Courts pleading with them to stop the Botswana government's pending extradition request to South Africa against him challenging some extradition sections as unconstitutional and seeking a declaratory order to the effect that the law permits a Magistrate seized with an application for an arrest warrant to consider representations by a person whose arrest is sought before the issuing of the warrant.

He contended that in the context of a warrant of arrest under section 5(1)(b), where a person's liberty is at stake, a fair procedure requires

the interposition of an impartial entity, independent of the executive to act as an arbitrator. All he wants, he says, is for the Court to adopt an interpretation that leaves the door open to the possibility of representations to assist the Magistrate to form a judicial opinion as to whether a warrant of arrest is justified. He stated that Botswana intends to seek his extradition on what he says are "trumped-up, fabricated charges". Should he be arrested in South Africa or extradited to Botswana, he "will be persecuted for his political views, putting his life and bodily integrity at risk".

Khama cited his rights under section 12(1) and section 34 of the Constitution seeking a declaratory order to the effect that, properly interpreted, section 5(1)(b) permits a Magistrate seized with an application for an arrest warrant under that section, in appropriate circumstances, to consider representations by a person whose arrest is sought before the issuing of the warrant. His application was dismissed.

US 'change guru' preaches mindset change

implores entrepreneurs to innovate, embrace AI

JOEL KONOPO
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

BOTSWANA HAS A POTENTIAL to harness solar energy and become food self-sufficient if it develops a "crazy" mindset to disrupt and innovate, a top US change guru said.

Salim Ismail, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur is in Botswana at the invitation of Debswana Diamond Company to inspire an industry level transformation among young entrepreneurs and help them take advantage of the technological advancement in their respective industries. He believes Botswana, a net importer of food, can take advantage of cutting-edge technology in agriculture and become sustainable in food production. He said other countries have done that. For example, the Netherlands, a tiny Nordic country, uses vertical farming, seed technology and robotics to become a global model. Around 14 times smaller than Botswana, the Netherlands is the second exporter of agricultural products by value after the United States.

"You don't need millions of hectares to farm, you need small space.



Salim Ismail

Holland is the second biggest food exporter because it has radically changed the way they produce food."

Ismail, who identifies himself as an exponential strategist is an angel investor with vast experience in tech startups and building disruptive digital companies. He has also worked for Yahoo and with NASA to incubate some of their original ideas. He believes the advancement in technology has pushed down the global price of photovoltaic solar and startups can take advantage to power their technologies. He said energy, which has been scarce for the entire human race is rapidly becoming cheaper. As this happens, it will have a multiplier effect on health,

agriculture, and other industries. Clean water for example will mean that fewer people get sick and do not go to hospitals, taking pressure off doctors.

Botswana generated just 0.26 per cent of its electricity from solar in 2020, and it has only 6 megawatts (MW) of installed solar capacity out of a total 890 MW energy capacity, with coal accounting for 99 per cent, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the African Development Bank (ADB). Botswana has been experiencing power outages which normally increase in intensity during winter as the power utility company, Botswana Power Corporation (BPC)

struggles to meet demand. Public records show that Botswana has a significant solar potential receiving over 3 000 hours of sunshine per annum, one of the highest irradiation rates in the world.

"Solar energy will transform our lives," an optimistic Ismail said. To achieve this, entrepreneurs must embrace a hardworking and innovative spirit. This includes taking advantage of the disruptions in the technology and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). "Use machine learning and deep learning to find patterns in your data and collect as much data as possible."

The technology and tools to build AI systems are getting cheaper. A successful entrepreneur typically assumes that they will be disrupted if they don't do it themselves. Ismail gave example of the fall of Research In Motion (RIM), the makers of BlackBerry smartphones in the early 2000s as an indication of disruption that RIM did not foresee.

"Have an open mind and think of the worst. All you need is to have a crazy mindset. All I have seen is that in your country, you are crazy," he said to an applause.

He believes advancement in computation such as machine learning and deep learning will not replace mankind in the workplace. "There will be a temporary deep. Even if we automate, there is still so much to do," Ismail said, adding that the introduction of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) within the banking sector improved service

delivery and did not replace tellers. "If we automate, we become efficient. I do not believe AI will take over the world. It will just transform it."

He said heavily industrialised Sweden uses AI in most of its day-to-day life but has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe. The Scandinavian country's unemployment rate stood at 7 percent in 2022. He believes there are limitless opportunities to disrupt in local industries, giving example of use of drone as a mode of transport in the tourism sector.

Perhaps even more optimistic, the change guru believes that lab grown diamonds will never outcompete traditional diamonds. However, he said to beat the synthetic diamond industry, Botswana should get involved in the synthetic industry and become an active player in the market.

"It's hard to disrupt the diamond industry. I am optimistic about Debswana," he said.

He describes mindset change as the ability to articulate what is old and understand the need to forgo the old and adopt new principles.

Top government official, Boyce Sebetlela said at the event at Gaborone International Commerce Park that for a long time Botswana have been stuck in a comfort zone. He said Botswana need to find a way of thinking differently. "We have heard this before - lets make it happen. We should have a growth mindset," he said.

Women in politics demand equality

KABO RAMASIA
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

WOMEN ACROSS BOTSWANA political divide have complained that government has failed them dismally when it comes to protection of their human rights and promoting their participation in a democratic dispensation. They were speaking on Thursday afternoon in Gaborone during a symposium convened by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to discuss the topic: Can it be a Full Democracy without Women?

Kick-starting the seminar, Resident Representative of FES Thilo Schone, said Botswana must work hard to break cultural stereotypes for women to be emancipated and gender equality normalised. He said despite that political struggle is about power, male dominated governments still find the need to hire women. He said having more women in politics will ensure diversity of opinions, which is essential for a democracy.

Similarly, a Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Dr Balazs Horvath said women and

other marginalised groups should be represented at all levels of decision making. He observed that female political representation remains low in Botswana despite that the country signed the revised SADC Gender and Development Protocol in 2017 and ratified UN Convention of 1996.

Aligning to this school of thought, Emang Basadi Executive Director, Idah Mokereitane said a study commissioned in 2018 to gauge the participation of women in politics exposed several factors hindering them from taking part in leadership. Some of the hindrances include

formal and informal factors. Formal factors include electoral systems e.g. FPTP used in Botswana, media, finance and resources while informal factors include custom, culture, tradition, socialisation and gender stereotypes. She said it can only be a full democracy when women have a 50 percent representation in political leadership, calling on government to enact gender inclusive laws for transformation.

Inequality
According to Daisy Bathusi of the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), women's struggle is similar to that of

Apartheid South Africa which was a fight for racial equality. She said all patriarchal ideals that hold women back are an indictment on Botswana's democracy. "Not so long ago women could not own land and that has put them far back," she retorted.

BDP veteran politician, Tebelelo Seretse who has served in various capacities within the party said it is not a democracy without the participation of women. She condemned women wings of political parties which serve at the mercy of their male counterparts. "Time has come that we take off political party uniforms and speak as a union," she said.

For her part, Resego Kgosisidintsi of

SOS: Calling blood donors

In Africa only 6 pints per 1000 population, High income countries about 55 pints per 1000 population

DR EDWIN DIKOLOTI -THE Minister of Health has called on Botswana to donate blood as the country is running out of reserves, which are needed in cases of emergency.

Speaking during a blood donation drive held recently in Serowe the World Blood Donor Day under the theme "Give blood, give plasma, share life, share often" Dr Dikoloti said every single blood and blood product donation is a precious lifesaving gift and therefore Botswana should donate blood to preserve lives.

Dr Dikoloti said Botswana has potential to sustain its blood supply without sourcing from other countries because it has a healthy youth population of around 60 percent of the population. He declared that Botswana is unable to meet the annual target for blood collection of 45 000 pints. "In 2022 the national collection was 24 619 pints being a slight improvement from the 2021 collection of 24 224 pints, this low collection has a negative impact on transfusion dependent patients and other emergencies," he revealed.

Dr Dikoloti commended blood donors for their selfless service of saving lives and contributing to the wellbeing of the nation. He said his ministry will continue to support all strategies aimed at improving blood collection in the country. "For us to sustain blood supply in the country, we do not only need to recruit new donors but also to retain existing donors," he said.

Botswana World Health Organisation (WHO) representative Dr Josephine Nampoze observed that blood donation remains low across the world, however in Africa it is critically low compared to high income countries. "In Africa we have only 6 pints per 1000 population and yet in high income countries they have roughly 55 pints per 1000 population," she said.

She said although blood donation is usually voluntary, the work that goes behind the processing of blood requires a lot of resources; therefore there is need to enhance Botswana's expertise to separate blood into its components such as rate cell concentrates, platelets concentrates and fresh frozen plasma. "Regular unpaid plasma donation is critical in achieving access to safe blood products for all in Botswana. Government, and other stakeholders should mobilize support at district, national level to invest in strengthening and sustaining blood programmes," she said.

For his part, Botswana Blood Donor Champion Obusitse Jaele also encouraged Botswana to donate blood in large numbers as the current shortage of blood in the country is disheartening. He has been donating blood every year without fail and has so far donated 89 times and plans to surpass 100. "If it was possible, I will donate blood every day, and I encourage Botswana who are able to donate blood to start donating, and those who have been donating to continue," he said.

the Botswana National Front (BNF), women leagues are gate-keepers of the patriarchal system believes many factors hinder women from political participation including but not limited to resources. Further, she labelled media profiling as a problem women grapple with.

Representing the Alliance for Progressives (AP) was its Youth League President, Thapelo Waleboa who was standing in for Dr. Phenyio Butale. Waleboa said although men and women are not equal, what is needed is a strive for gender harmony. He argued that the ecosystem is not balanced without women in leadership hence calling for concerted efforts.

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