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Vision 2030 clock ticking, Nandi-Ndaitwah warns Cabinet

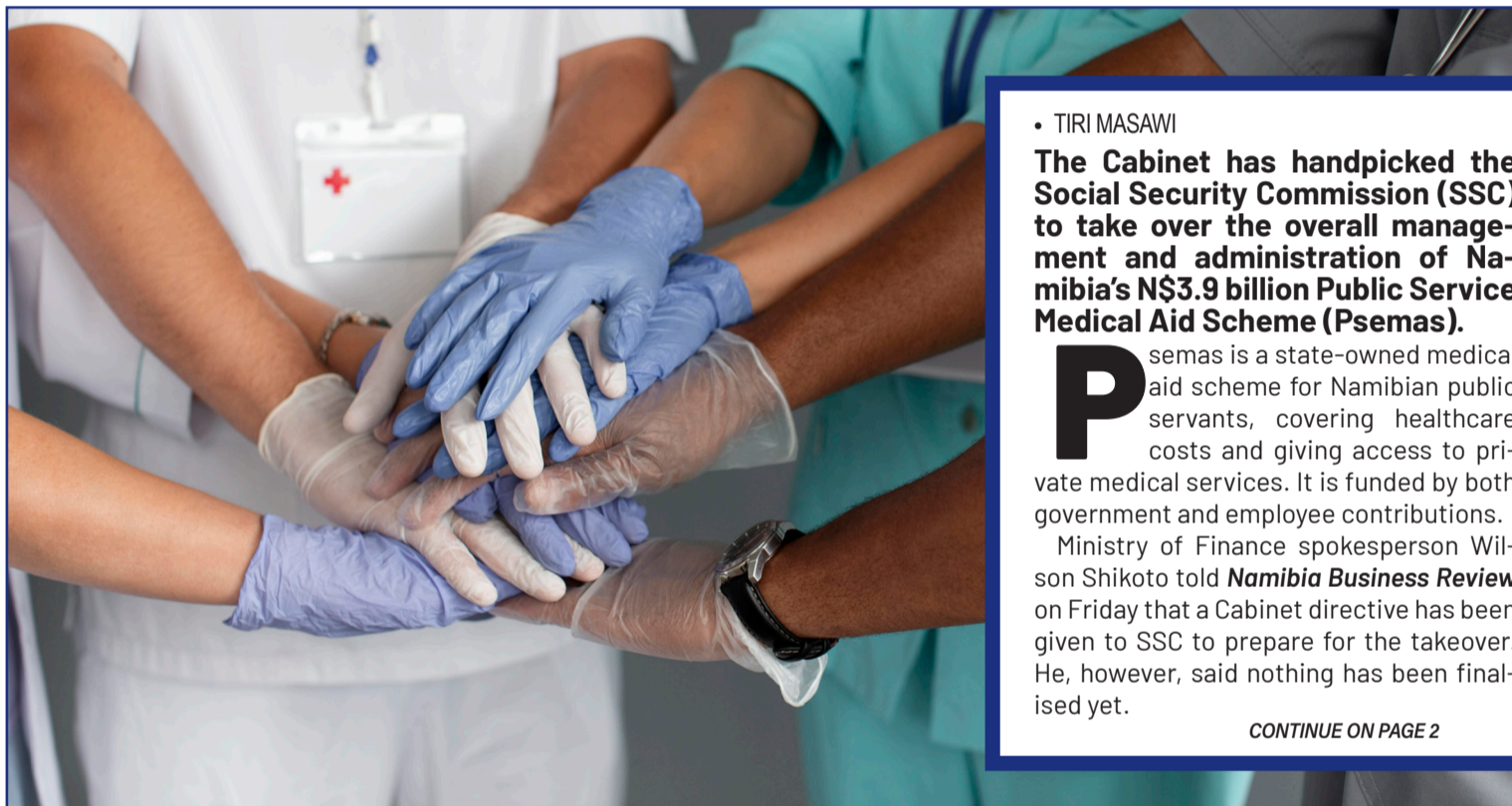
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NAMIBIA BUSINESS REVIEW

Where Business meets ideas

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Cabinet hands N\$3.9 billion Psemas to Social Security Commission



• TIRI MASAWI

The Cabinet has handpicked the Social Security Commission (SSC) to take over the overall management and administration of Namibia's N\$3.9 billion Public Service Medical Aid Scheme (Psemas).

Psemas is a state-owned medical aid scheme for Namibian public servants, covering healthcare costs and giving access to private medical services. It is funded by both government and employee contributions.

Ministry of Finance spokesperson Wilson Shikoto told *Namibia Business Review* on Friday that a Cabinet directive has been given to SSC to prepare for the takeover. He, however, said nothing has been finalised yet.

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> Milka Mungunda

Tourists snap photos, but leave wallets behind



Small traders struggle to survive in tourism

• ERNST CALITZ

Windhoek's city centre is crowded with tourists visiting hand-crafted stalls, taking photos and browsing but only a few are buying.

While the Ministry of Environment and Tourism's 2024 Tourist Statistical Report, launched late last year, indicates that tourism is rebounding, street traders like 45-year-old Chris Many have yet to feel the benefits.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic nearly crippled the industry in 2020, Many has struggled to make ends meet. He quietly arranges his hand-crafted goods in Windhoek's Post Street Mall, often without making a single sale.

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"The Cabinet directed the Ministry of Finance and relevant stakeholders to explore and assess the Social Security Commission's viability to administer and manage claims for the Public Service Employees Medical Aid Scheme (Psemas)," Shikoto said.

He added, "The Social Security Commission is not yet appointed. The directive is only to assess its viability and capability of administering the scheme."

If implemented, the takeover will see SSC managing the scheme, which caters to about 120,000 civil servants. The scheme receives members and annual government subsidies exceeding N\$3.9 billion and provides health benefits for public service employees and their dependents.

GETTING READY

An internal memo dated 26 January 2026, circulated to SSC staff by executive officer Milka Mungunda, also confirms the Cabinet decision.

"High-level stakeholder engagement and consultations are at an advanced stage following a Cabinet directive to SSC to assess the readiness and capability to take

over the claims and management function of Psemas," Mungunda said.

She added, "This development presents a potential expansion of our mandate and service delivery role. It also presents opportunities for job security, new skills acquisition, possible new career paths for staff, and employment creation for Namibians at large. We should approach this process with optimism, readiness, and a shared vision for a stronger SSC."

Apart from Psemas, President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah has also directed SSC to implement the National Medical Benefit Fund (NMBF). The NMBF is a public healthcare fund that helps cover medical expenses for workers and their families, making healthcare more accessible and affordable. It aims to extend coverage even to low-income earners such as taxi drivers and vendors.

Mungunda told Namibia Business Review that the proposed changes are part of a raft of measures expected to ensure all Namibians have access to affordable, quality healthcare.

"When it comes to the issue of the National Medical Benefit Fund, we are working with stakeholders from the health ministry as well as the finance ministry to find ways of managing the financing of this process," she said.

She added, "Again, this is something that has been pending since 1990. It is still a process that we are going through, and we are finding a solution to it."

Mungunda said managing the National Medical Benefit Fund requires a funding model to meet the implementation period in the first quarter of the year.

She continued, "When all conditions have been met and plans put in place for such an implementation, we will communicate how this will be done. At the moment, we are still consulting with all relevant stakeholders, including unions and the line ministry. We also need to consider the capacity required to manage this in the future."

TEETHING PROBLEMS

In August last year, Namibia Private Practitioner Forum (NPPF) chief executive Jürgen Hoffmann said Psemas was facing potential challenges as private healthcare providers continue to withdraw from it. This was due to alleged outdated tariffs, rising operational costs, and "regulatory paralysis."

At the time, Hoffmann said that without urgent reform, rural communities and patients in need of mental healthcare and general medical care risked being left stranded as services become increasingly unsustainable.

He added that reimbursement rates under Psemas are still based on tariffs set by the Namibian Association of Medical Aid Funds in 2014, despite steep increases in the cost of living and medical supplies over the past decade.

Finance Ministry spokesperson Shikoto said the process is being implemented to ensure transparency, accountability, and disciplined financial management.

"This will be determined once the feasibility exercise is concluded. The procurement for a Psemas administrator is ongoing," Shikoto said.

The scheme has been undergoing reform since 2021, when the government appointed a technical committee of public and private sector officials to assess its challenges and propose reforms for optimal restructuring.

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Opposition political parties have expressed cautious support for the policy change. Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) President McHenry Venaani said the move to appoint SSC to manage Psemas must be carried out with due diligence and safeguarded from potential manipulation by politically exposed persons.

Joubert explained that pre-pandemic tourism in Namibia heavily relied on bigger tour groups, especially from Germany, but these groups became less prominent after COVID-19.

"So the first people who started travelling to Namibia [after the pandemic] were your independent travellers. What they call a Fully Independent Traveller (FIT)," Joubert explains.

According to Joubert, the FITs are more likely to rent their own vehicles, as opposed to using tour bus companies, and drive across the country.

Joubert said Gondwana observed that group travellers were also more conservative and willing to trust pre-established systems and tourist institutions, whereas the FITs were more adventurous and willing to try new experiences.

He said it became essential to offer the opportunity to tourists to rent their own vehicles and travel the country independently.

This shift does however mean that travellers are now more likely to rent a vehicle when arriving at Namibia's airports and spend their first night in locations outside of Namibia's urban centers like Windhoek where traders like B. Fraans and Chris Many sell their goods.

THE WAY AHEAD

Though policy might not be able to hopefully bring artisans and craft traders into the fold, other African nations have taken active measures to include them.

"If the government has finally taken the decision to implement this policy in principle, we support it. It is something that has always been part of our political manifesto to have the SSC capacitated to take over such a role," Venaani said.

He added, "We just hope that this will be done in a very open and transparent manner that does not raise concerns. There is a need for gradual implementation to ensure due diligence. It would be unfortunate if it is hastily implemented and fails the civil service in the process."

Venaani also pointed out concerns about SSC's capacity. "There are questions about the ability of Social Security to manage such a scheme. Those must be addressed before rushing with implementation."

He warned that in the past, Social Security had been abused at the defunct SME Bank under the pretext of funding 'struggle kids.'

Independent Patriots for Change spokesperson Immanuel Nashinge also called for careful implementation.

"Generally, such a decision, if done with wide consultations and protected from corruption, is supported. It is important to ensure SSC has the capacity to manage such a fund," Nashinge said.

He added, "There is also a need to make sure that SSC is not given too many responsibilities at one time."

LEFT OUT

Unionist Kavhwa Mahongora, who represents a significant number of teachers in the civil service, said they were not consulted on the process.

"We have not yet been engaged on this issue. Unless they are speaking to unions in the broader sense, we are not aware of this development. This is the challenge with some of the decisions taken by this administration. They are done secretly without wide consultation. This process is an important one that needs all stakeholders, especially those affected, to add their input," he said.

Mahongora also called for capacitation of SSC workers to handle such a large fund.

"There is a lot of money involved, and one wonders whether SSC has the ability to manage such funds. One also wants to know what has been done to give them the skills and abilities needed for this going forward. We encourage the government to take time to implement this in the best interest of our members," he said. **NBL**

Botswana's government is currently working on a tourism initiative called the "Blue Route" which will connect pre-existing popular tourist routes with craft markets, local enterprises, and rural communities to help foster inclusive economic growth.

Other initiatives like the United Nations Tourism and TUI Care Foundation's 'Colourful Cultures' grant provides financial support and training to artisans and craftsmen across 10 African countries, including Namibia.

The Namibian Tourism Board spokesperson Flora Quest suggested that informal markets should be linked to the tourism value chain.

She suggested incentivising or requiring tour operators and lodges to incorporate accredited local markets into itineraries, upgrading existing markets to meet standards, and designating them as tourist stops.

Quest said that expanding low-cost digital payment systems can help address practical barriers that exist which prevent tourists from spending money.

"Light-touch registration systems that unlock benefits rather than impose penalties, combined with small-scale finance and public or corporate procurement of local crafts, would further stabilise incomes," she said. **NBL**

TOURIST FROM PAGE 1

Shy, and under his breath he told *Namibia Business Review*; "We see them [tourists] walking about, but the business itself has declined a lot. Since the Coronavirus started, we have experienced a lot of... I don't know. They don't come."

Manya travels from the high density suburb of Katutura to Windhoek's Central Business District (CBD) to sell his goods, trying to support his two children, often-times arriving at 6:00 and leaving 12 hours later, occasionally without earning anything for the day.

"Of course we are not making enough to support a family. You are expected to contribute where you can, but you can't anymore. And also supporting just a two-child family, it's tough, very hard."

PHOTOS DONT PAY BILLS

B Fraans, an older woman occupying the stall next to Manya's, spoke of similar hardships.

"The tourists come and they take photos and leave. I think the problem is the people who walk with the tourists [guides], they don't encourage the tourists to come and buy from us. They just chase them on to continue walking," she lamented.

She also said she can see more tourists on the streets, but they are not buying her goods, as they did before the pandemic. She says that it's the worst it's been since she started her business around twenty years ago.

"I don't know the business like this." She tells *Namibia Business Review* that she used to have a bank account, and made enough money to deposit in it, but now she barely makes N\$500 a month.

She also blames the local municipality for not repairing the public bathrooms around the corner from her stall, a situation that she says chases away possible clients. "Dit ryk soos piss," (It reeks of urine) she complained.

Most, if not all, the traders in the area tell a similar story, about feeling left out from the tourism industry's recovery

THE NUMBERS

According to the tourism ministry's report, 2024 saw a near 79% industry bounceback to the pre-COVID-19 levels of 2019, with 1,257,093 tourists visiting Namibia, a 45.5% increase from 2023.

South Africa still holds the lion's share of visitors, accounting for 38.5%. While Germany still ranks the highest in terms of non-continental tourists, with about 111,164 visitors in 2024.

A study by major global consulting firm McKinsey & Company does, however, shed some light on why traders like Chris and B. Fraans, who make a living from selling traditional goods, might be left behind.

The firm surveyed over 5 000 travelers from Germany, China, the United Kingdom, the United States and the United Arab Emirates and found that the way tourists are spending has changed from previous years.

McKinsey & Co found that 14% of those surveyed are now looking for carefully curated experiences, while carefully watching costs, like potentially cutting spending on buying souvenirs. At least 11% of the travelers were also older and predominantly cared about the cost of the trip, again, cutting spending. Another 18% of respondents indicated that they would rather spend money on experiences when traveling.

The surveyed group from Germany, Namibia's largest European market, indicated that 45% of travellers wanted to escape familiar environments and daily routines. They said this familiar environment drives them away from Namibia's urban centers, like Windhoek, towards more nature-centric experiences, like lodges and campsites.

SHIFTING STRATEGIES

The Gondwana Collection, a leading player in Namibia's tourism sector, had to aggressively shift its strategy after the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Collection's managing director Gys Joubert, Gondwana would not have survived if this shift didn't occur.



< Steve Galloway

• STAFF WRITER

Industry experts have raised concerns about weak oversight, accountability, and performance management at eight key state-owned enterprises (SOEs) currently led by acting executives.

From meat to diamonds, oil to roads, some of Namibia's key parastatals are drifting on autopilot under acting chief executive officers. With acting bosses in charge for months, analysts say tough decisions are being delayed, accountability is blurred, and the risk of failure is growing.

The parastatals regarded by analysts as running on autopilot include the Meat Corporation of Namibia (Meatco), National Petroleum Corporation (Namcor), Namibia Post Ltd (NamPost), and Namibia Industrial Development Agency (Nida). Others are Namib Desert Diamonds (Namdia), Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), Roads Contractor Company (RCC), and Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR).

In an interview with *Namibia Business Review*, Namibia Institute of Corporate Governance chairperson Steve Galloway said acting CEOs often work with limited mandates, uncertain tenure, and reduced authority to implement meaningful reforms.

"Long-term strategy requires difficult trade-offs, restructuring decisions, and sustained stakeholder management, work that is harder to execute when the top role is temporary and perceived as uncertain," he said this week.

In practice, Galloway said "organisations tend to defer major decisions, over-index on short-term fixes, or avoid high-stakes reforms that could be reversed by an incoming substantive CEO."

Galloway warns that prolonged acting periods increase vulnerability to informal power centres and political or stakeholder pressure, as interim leaders may be seen as "temporary" and easier to override.

"International SOE toolkits emphasise stable, competent leadership to protect value and integrity," he said.

Galloway criticises persistent delays in appointing substantive top management, describing it as a governance failure when temporary arrangements become the operating model.

"A board and shareholder/ownership authority have a duty to ensure leadership continuity with clear accountability, including timely succession and appointment processes," he said.

He adds that globally, boards are urged to treat succession as a core governance discipline, not an ad hoc event.

"Recent board-focused research

continues to highlight how weak succession processes and protracted transitions create avoidable organisational risk," Galloway said.

Corporate governance expert Ntelamo Ntelamo echoes these concerns, saying that running a public enterprise on "autopilot" often results in suboptimal performance as acting CEOs hesitate to fully exercise their authority.

"When unsure if they make major decisions they could be challenged and face uncertain consequences, they begin to tread carefully and suppress enterprise," he said.

Ntelamo attributes the lack of substantive CEO appointments to weak boards.

"Prolonged acting spells at that level imply there is a weak board of directors in place. Competent boards will fill such critical vacancies without unnecessary excuses," he says.

AUTOPILOT PARASTATALS

At Meatco, prior to the appointment of acting CEO Albertus Aochamub in September 2025, the company faced a leadership crisis following the July 2025 suspension of acting CEO Patrick Liebenberg over the disappearance of hundreds of cattle and allegations of mismanagement.

A mid-2025 Cabinet attempt to reinstate former CEO Mwilima Mushokabanji triggered the resignation of board chair Sakaria Nghikembua due to political interference. Aochamub was appointed in September 2025 for a 6-month period ending in February.

"His vision, strategic insight, and wealth of experience will be invaluable as the company strengthens its role in serving local customers while expanding its reach across regional and international markets with premium Namibian beef products," the board said at his appointment.

Namdia continues to recover from the dismissal of CEO Alisa Amupolo and a massive diamond heist scandal. Amupolo's contract was terminated in October 2025 after a disciplinary hearing found her guilty of gross negligence and insubordination. Kelly Usiku currently serves as interim CEO amid ongoing litigation against security providers.

At the time of appointment Namdia board chairperson Justus Hausiku expressed confidence in Usiku's ability to run the company until the appointment of a substantive CEO.

Namcor has seen four interim heads in less than two years, following the 2025 arrests of former MD Immanuel Mulunga and 10 others on fraud and money laundering charges involving over N\$480 million.

Current interim managing director Maureen Hinda-Mbuende was appointed in August 2025, succeeding Victoria Sibeya (April-August 2025), Ebson Uanguata (January 2024-March 2025),

and Shiwana Ndeunyema. The company reported a N\$1.2 billion loss in 2022/23, and the court case against former leadership was postponed to 19 March.

Hinda-Mbuende's appointment faced criticism at the time with opponents questioning whether she has what it takes to manage the entity.

Honda-Mbuende's acting tenure ends this month.

In an interview with *New Era* last month, Hinda-Mbuende said she found the task given to her exciting.

"When I arrived, staff morale was very low, internal control systems were not reliable, and I think for most of my colleagues at Namcor, they were very sceptical of this politician called Maureen coming to head their company. But I must really say that it has been a good journey; we are changing a lot of things as a team, and the staff's morale is quite high now. The company's board has truly been very supportive, and I must thank them for that," Hinda-Mbuende said.

Nida has also faced severe instability and allegations of mismanagement. Acting CEO Richwell Lukonga was dismissed on 1 July 2025 after his 35 000-job strategic plan was rejected by the Ministry of Finance and Public Enterprises. Phillip Namundjebo now serves as acting CEO, as the agency faces scrutiny over failed industrial projects, unauthorised executive appointments, internal feuds, and a controversial N\$27 million contract.

"Mr. Namundjebo brings extensive institutional knowledge and a strong track record in driving investment and industrial development.

His leadership will ensure continuity and stability as NIDA continues its mandate to advance Namibia's industrialisation agenda," NIDA board said during the appointment.

At NIPDB, founding CEO Nangula Uandja stepped down on 31 December 2025 after public criticism over high travel expenditures and allegations of a "toxic" work environment. Jessica Hauuanga now serves as interim CEO following a strategic shift that placed the agency under the Ministry of International Relations and Trade.

At the time of appointment, NIPDB spokesperson Catherine Shipushu said the board of directors has faith in Hauuanga's capabilities to lead the NIPDB during this transitional phase of its growth and wishes her well in this role.

"We encourage all our stakeholders to extend the same support afforded to Nangula Uandja in ensuring continuity and maintaining investor confidence," she said in a statement.

NWR faced turmoil after Dr Ngwangwama's departure, resulting in a N\$1.5 million settlement over a breach-of-contract suit. Acting appointments followed, including Epton Kasuto and Elsa Porfirio, after a permanent recruitment process was cancelled in mid-2025. Public scrutiny over safety standards and service quality at NWR facilities has intensified.

Former Namibia Wildlife Resorts managing director Matthias Ngwangwama this week said failure to appoint a substantive MD or CEO is a serious governance failure.

"A board cannot be said to perform its oversight and fiduciary duty effectively and satisfactorily without an accountable and substantive MD/CEO," he says.

Ngwangwama warns that boards unable to make substantive appointments risk eroding independence between the board and management, as acting leaders may align with board interests to secure permanent positions.

"I think it has to do with lack of understanding and being non-committal to the values of governance by senior organisational leaders, namely board members. Not taking governance seriously. Secondly, I think it has to do with competing views and wishes of key stakeholders (boards and shareholders)," Ngwangwama explains.

He emphasises that the Public Enterprises Governance Act of 2019 must be implemented properly.

"It is not about reforms. Policies and governance codes are clear. It is about board members returning to the core values of corporate governance, and respect of rules-based dispensations instead of opting for personalised wishes, self-love and self-will."

At RCC, CEO Dasius Nelumbu has been acting in that position since 2024.

NamPost is led by acting CEO Eldorlette Harmse, who took over following the planned retirement of long-serving CEO Festus Hangula.

COMPETENCY

Analyst Galloway believes SOEs must prioritise competency-based role profiles, independent assessments, structured shortlisting, and transparent processes to strengthen credibility and reduce perceptions of arbitrariness.

"SOE boards must be empowered to appoint and manage executive leadership based on merit and performance, with the state acting as a professional owner rather than an operational manager," Galloway says.

He stresses that whether acting or substantive, the CEO role must be governed by measurable deliverables, reporting cadence, and consequence management so that interim leadership does not become a loophole for weak accountability.

Analyst Ntelamo said that independent, competent boards do not get dictated to by a shareholder minister and act in the SOE's best interest.

"They will ensure timely recruitment of a substantive CEO rather than sit around waiting for directions from the shareholder.

A board that limits its own powers knows nothing about the peculiar position of a board of directors," Ntelamo notes.

He emphasises that delays of six to twelve months in appointing substantive CEOs represent governance failures. "Critical to the sustainable governance of SOEs is a very simple fact: the appointment of competent and uncompromised directors.

This ensures the insulation of SOEs from unguided interference of every kind, and engenders accountable governance and leadership," Ntelamo says. **NBL**

Namibia's mining sector thrives beyond diamonds



> Veston Malango

• TIRI MASAWI

The Chamber of Mines of Namibia chief executive officer Veston Malango said the mining industry is growing strongly because it is no longer relying mostly on diamonds, but also on other metals.

The latest chamber report showed that Namibia's mining sector finished 2025 on a strong note, despite a challenging global economy. Strong performance in gold and uranium, along with growth in some base metals, helped make up for weak diamond sales.

Malango said, "The 2025 mining outcomes show that diversification is important. While diamonds faced global market challenges, uranium and gold strengthened the sector and proved its importance to Namibia's economy."



Looking ahead, the chamber said the outlook for 2026 is positive"

The chamber said uranium demand is expected to grow as more nuclear reactors start globally. Copper and tin are also likely to benefit from energy-transition needs, boosting exploration and development in Namibia. Although the diamond market may recover slowly, Namibia is well placed to benefit when global demand improves.

Overall, the mining sector enters 2026

with more diversification, renewed investment, and strong commodity conditions, making it a key contributor to economic growth, jobs, and fiscal stability.

Base metals had mixed results at the end of 2025, and the diamond market remained weak due to low global demand and high inventories.

Looking ahead, the chamber said the outlook for 2026 is positive.

Global economic uncertainty may continue, but demand for key commodities remains strong. Gold prices are forecast by some analysts to rise above US\$5,200 per troy ounce, which could boost revenue and investment in gold.

The chamber also noted that global economic conditions in November and December 2025 were cautious but stable, with moderate growth overall. Advanced economies slowed while emerging markets grew faster, according to the IMF. **NBL**

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Govt approves N\$14.9m for 46 youth-owned businesses

• IMELDAAMBONDO

The National Youth Development Fund (NYDF) has approved N\$14.9 million in financing for 46 youth-owned enterprises across Namibia through the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN).

The Ministry of Finance announced the approvals on Friday.

The latest approvals, covering the period 1 November 2025 to 30 January 2026, amount to N\$8.6 million for 30 enterprises, marking the third project approval under the NYDF.

This follows an earlier approval of N\$5.3 million for 16 enterprises announced at the official launch of the fund.

The finance ministry said DBN is finalising disbursements for several approved

enterprises, while approximately 40 additional applications are currently under assessment, with further approvals and an update on disbursements expected by the end of February 2026.

"The NYDF remains committed to supporting viable youth-owned enterprises and strengthening their contribution to economic growth and employment creation," said ministry of finance spokesperson Wilson Shikoto.

The NYDF funding window remains open, with project approvals made on a continuous basis as applications are assessed and meet funding requirements.

Eligible applicants may submit applications through the Offices of the Regional Governors or directly to participating Development Finance Institutions, namely the Development Bank of Namibia, Agribank and the Environmental Investment Fund. **NBL**

Namibia Civil Aviation keeps top quality certification

• STAFF WRITER

The Namibia Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has kept its ISO 9001:2015 certification for its Aeronautical Information Management (AIM) Unit, which falls under the Air Navigation Services Department.

NCAA spokesperson Nelson Ashipala, confirmed on Monday that the organisation successfully retained the certification.

Ashipala said the achievement shows the NCAA's "unwavering commitment to excellence in civil aviation safety, quality, and service delivery."

ISO 9001:2015 is a worldwide standard for Quality Management Systems. Ashipala said it ensures that NCAA meets stakeholder expectations through good processes, continuous improvement, and focus on customer satisfaction.

"The re-certification strengthens Namibia's civil aviation sector by improving the accuracy, reliability, and timeliness of aeronautical data. It also boosts Namibia's credibility in following Civil Aviation Regulations (NAMCARs) and International



< Nelson Ashipala

al Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards."

The certification promotes safety and efficiency by standardising workflows, speeding up responses, and reducing disruptions, giving more confidence in the country's civil aviation system.

NCAA executive director Toska Sem said: "Retaining our ISO 9001:2015 certification reflects our unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest standards in aviation safety and service delivery. It reinforces our position as a reliable and credible air navigation service provider, committed to continuous improvement for the benefit of all stakeholders." **NBL**

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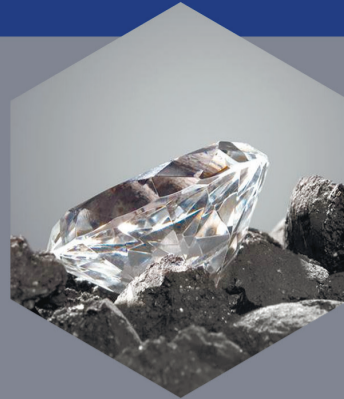
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• IMELDAAMBONDO

President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah has warned Cabinet that time is running out for Namibia to realise Vision 2030, urging ministers to fast-track the implementation of government programmes and accelerate public service delivery.

Addressing the first Cabinet meeting of the year on Monday, Nandi-Ndaitwah said the country has only four years remaining under the current administration to deliver on the national development blueprint.

She told the ministers that the new year must not mark a return to routine but a renewed call to duty, as expectations from Namibians remain high and every decision must contribute meaningfully to Vision 2030 goals.

"Time is therefore not on our side. Every day, every hour, and every decision must count," the President said. Nandi-Ndaitwah called on ministers to prioritise results-based service delivery through decisive implementation of Cabinet resolutions.

While acknowledging progress made during the first year of the administration, she said restoring and strengthening public confidence in 2026 would require greater focus, discipline and unity of purpose, including faster implementation of the Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6) across its four pillars.

On education, Nandi-Ndaitwah welcomed improvements in Grade 11 and 12 results but cautioned that the country remains far from its targets, calling for intensified efforts towards achieving a 90% pass rate in the future.

She also welcomed the rollout of the Subsidised Tertiary Education Funding Model, commending the ministries of education and finance ministry for its implementation, while noting that initial challenges would be addressed as the

Vision 2030 clock ticking, Nandi-Ndaitwah warns Cabinet

system matures.

Turning to the global environment, the President warned of increasing geopolitical uncertainty, shifting alliances and selective enforcement of global standards, reaffirming Namibia's commitment to sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality of nations and peaceful conflict resolution through diplomacy and international law.

Within this context, she said the call for "Business Unusual" was no longer optional but urgent, as traditional ways of thinking and planning may no longer be sufficient in a rapidly changing world.

Nandi-Ndaitwah urged leaders to govern with empathy and remain closely connected to the realities facing citizens, reminding Cabinet members and public servants that failure was not an option.

"The duty to effectively deliver services and fulfil the promises to improve the living standards and quality of life of our people rests on our shoulders. We therefore cannot and must not fail our people," she said.

She reaffirmed her leadership philosophy of pragmatism, integrity, accountability, meritocracy and inclusivity. **NBL**

Struggling farmers get a lifeline from Agribank

• STAFF WRITER

Agribank has rolled out a new relief programme aimed at giving struggling farmers breathing room, as it begins implementing the first phase of its arrears relief from 2 February.

In a statement released on Friday, Agribank chief executive officer Raphael Karuaihe said the programme, which was launched in September last year, is aimed at assisting clients who have fallen behind on their loan repayments. He said this is being done while strengthening Agribank's loan recovery efforts through an incentivised and supportive approach.

The bank said the application window will run for six months, from 2 February until 31 August.

"The programme is open to all Agribank clients whose accounts are in pre-legal or legal status. Participating clients will benefit from a 100% write-off of penalty interest, subject to conditions," Karuaihe said.

Karuaihe said pre-legal clients are required to pay at least 20% of their ar-

rear balance, while legal clients must pay at least 25%. He said the arrear balance includes the loan instalment and interest portion, excluding penalty interest.

He said additional benefits include de-listing from the credit bureau, where applicable, voluntary advisory services tailored to client needs, and, where suitable, opportunities for project publicity and marketing support.

"Once the required portion of the arrears is paid, the remaining arrear balance will be ring-fenced, and no further interest will be charged on that amount. The ring-fenced balance may be repaid for a period of up to 60 months, through

equal monthly, quarterly, or bi-annual installments," Karuaihe said.

Karuaihe said clients will sign an addendum to the loan agreement to formalise the arrangement. Where legal actions have already been instituted, he said the repayment arrangement will be signed as an Order of Court.

"Clients must, however, continue to service all new and ongoing installments as they fall due. Failure to honour the agreed repayment arrangement will result in the reinstatement of penalty interest and continuation of recovery processes. Defaulting on any other loan obligations may also lead to the revocation of relief benefits. Relief under this programme is granted once per client, unless otherwise revised," he said.

Karuaihe said Agribank continues to cushion farmers against challenges such as drought through climate-responsive financing products, the provision of advisory services to improve productivity, and collaboration with government and other stakeholders on relief measures as and when required.

NBL





EDITORIAL

Sometimes We Are Our Own Worst Enemies

Namibia is racing to achieve Vision 2030, a plan to become an industrialised nation in four years. Yet, this goal has slipped away under three administrations since independence, and it now seems increasingly out of reach.

Several key things are not yet in place for industrialisation. For example, our workforce is still trained mainly to work, not to innovate or create jobs. We also face power shortages, and industrialisation without enough electricity is impossible.

Decision-making in the country is slow. We often produce detailed policy documents, but they remain largely on paper and are hard to implement.

Industry experts have raised concerns about weak oversight, accountability, and performance at eight important state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that are currently led by acting executives. These include:

- Meat Corporation of Namibia (Meatco)
- National Petroleum Corporation (Namcor)
- Namibia Post Ltd (NamPost)
- Namibia Industrial Development Agency (Nida)
- Namib Desert Diamonds (Namdia)
- Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB)
- Roads Contractor Company (RCC)
- Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR)

These SOEs cover crucial sectors such as meat, diamonds, oil, and roads. Yet, with acting bosses in charge for months, tough decisions are delayed, accountability is weak, and the risk of failure grows.

We are sometimes our own worst enemies. Replacing these acting executives with permanent leadership should be a top priority to ensure these institutions deliver the services Namibia needs.



Decision-making in the country is slow"

Pension Reform for Namibia's Informal Economy- Lessons from Kenya, India, and Rwanda



Pension Reform for Namibia's Informal Economy- Lessons from Kenya, India, and Rwanda

Namibia's Social Security Act of 1994 (Act No. 34 of 1994) provides a legislative foundation for the establishment of a National Pension Fund (NPF), intended to offer income protection during old age to all Namibians. Since some 30 years ago, various attempts have been made by the Social Security Commission (SSC) to come up with a broadly acceptable and viable policy and legal framework for the operationalisation of the NPF. In the meantime, formal sector employers and their employees have started to contribute between 12% to over 20% of employee salaries to pension saving arrangements.

The country's existing occupational and private pension funds governed under the Pension Funds Act 24 of 1956 and regulated by NAMFISA have amassed significant assets under management and continue to serve as key institutional investors in the national economy. These retirement funds, primarily accessible to formal sector employees, support both long-term savings and macroeconomic stability through investment in infrastructure, government bonds, and capital markets.

Most formal sector employees have employer-sponsored retirement funds, but without the NPF, no pension system exists for most low-income, regulated-wage industries, and informal sector workers. They remain excluded from contributory or occupational pensions. A well-designed national pension strategy legally clear, fiscally sustainable, and interoperable can promote both social justice and economic stability. The change should be integrative, not disruptive.

The urgency of reforming Namibia's pension landscape is heightened by its youth-dominated demographics. According to national statistics, nearly 70% of Namibia's population is under the age of 35, and many are already engaged in informal economic activities without social protection. As this generation ages, the absence of a safety net will deepen poverty and widen inequality. To move forward, Namibia can learn valuable lessons from countries that have made notable strides in designing pension solutions tailored to the realities of informal workers. These include Kenya's Mbao Pension Plan, India's Atal Pension Yojana, and Rwanda's Ejo Heza long-term savings scheme.

As Namibia charts the path toward a universal pension framework, it must adopt an approach that balances inclusivity with structural continuity. Crucially, any new social pension or contributory national scheme must not displace or dismantle the existing voluntary pension system, which has taken up an integral role in domestic

capital formation, financial market development, and contributes meaningfully to GDP.

Reform experiences in countries like Kenya, India, and Rwanda demonstrate that it is possible to expand pension coverage to informal sector workers through parallel mechanisms, without abolishing or undermining formal pension systems.

Kenya's Mbao Pension Plan, launched in 2009 and officially known as the Blue MSMEs Jua Kali Individual Retirement Benefits Scheme, is a voluntary pension scheme designed specifically for informal sector workers. Members contribute a daily minimum amount of KES 20, hence the programme's slogan, *usitupe mbao*, "do not throw away 20 shillings". The plan leverages mobile money platforms such as M-Pesa and Airtel Money to allow members to contribute as little as KES 20 per day, making it both accessible and flexible.

By 2018, the scheme had about 100,000 contributors, despite the Jua Kali Association representing 12 million informal workers. It allows flexible, penalty-free contributions and lump-sum withdrawals after three years, with funds managed by professionals under Retirement Benefits Authority oversight. While it promotes saving and financial literacy, it faces low coverage, limited awareness, administrative issues, and frequent early withdrawals, which undermine its pension role.

In contrast, India's Atal Pension Yojana (APY), launched in 2015, represents a government-backed effort to provide guaranteed pensions to informal workers. The scheme is targeted at all Indian citizens between the ages of 18 and 40 who are not covered by any statutory social security scheme and are not income taxpayers.

RFS Fund Administrators choose a guaranteed monthly pension amount (ranging from INR 1,000 to INR 5,000) that they will begin receiving at the age of 60. Contributions are made monthly and vary depending on the age of entry and the desired pension amount.

One of the notable features of APY is the government's co-contribution for eligible low-income workers up to 50% of the contribution or INR 1,000 per year, whichever is lower for a period of five years for early enrollers. **Vincent Shimutwikeni; Manager, Legal Services**

• STAFF WRITER

The Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) last week launched the second telecommunications tower in Ehomba, Kunene Region, under the Universal Service Fund (USF) initiative.

The launch of the Ehomba Tower follows the successful inaugural USF tower deployment in Epinga, Ohangwena Region, which was inaugurated in November 2025.

Kunene Region Governor, Vipua Mharukua highlighted the broader significance of the project for the region and the country.

"Today, as we launch the CRAN Universal Service Fund tower in Ehomba, we open a new chapter of opportunity for Kunene. This tower is more than infrastructure; it is a bridge to education, economic growth, and digital inclusion. It connects our people to the world and moves us closer to a more inclusive, empowered Namibia," he said.

Minister of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), Emma Theofelus, emphasised the importance of this infrastructure in transforming communities and driving national development. She stated,

"The launch of the tower marks a concrete and meaningful step in the implementation of Government's commitment to universal access to ICTs and the attainment of Namibia's Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6) objectives on digital infrastructure deployment. The launch of the Ehomba Tower is clear evidence that our digital inclusion agenda



CRAN launches telecommunications tower in Kunene Region

is not theoretical, nor confined to policy documents, but it is being delivered in real communities, on the ground, where it matters most," she said.

Theofelus Said Without access to reliable communication networks, communities are excluded from opportunities that drive growth and development. Connectivity is a vital enabler of economic participation, efficient service delivery, quality health and education, and social cohesion.

Speaking at the same event CRAN's Chief Executive Officer, Emilia Nghikembua said, "Through the commissioning of this tower, the people of Ehomba and surrounding areas gain access to essential digital tools that support livelihoods,



> Emilia Nghikembua

learning, entrepreneurship, and safety.

It opens pathways for local businesses to reach wider markets, for learners to access educational and health resources, and for families and institutions to communicate more efficiently."The project underscores the power of collaboration among government agencies, private sector partners, and local communities. The Minister commended CRAN, MICT, and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) for working together to translate policy into tangible development. "These partnerships demonstrate how strategic alignment and shared responsibility can accelerate our national development efforts," she added. **NBL**



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