

NAMIBIA BUSINESS REVIEW

Where Business meets ideas

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Minister stops SSC CEO recruitment process

• TIRI MASAWI

Justice and labour relations minister Filemon Wise Immanuel has halted the recruitment process for the Social Security Commission (SSC) executive officer position.

The position is one of the highest-paying jobs in the state-owned enterprise sector, with an annual package of more than N\$2 million.

The recruitment process, which was launched in March, attracted interest from several senior executives before it was stopped.

Among those linked to the position were Government Institutions Pension Fund (GIPF) general manager for operations Elvis Nashilongo, former Namibia Institute of Pa-

thology (NIP) chief executive officer Kapena Tjombonde, Old Mutual executive Ndangi Katoma, and businessman Ndeulipula Hamutumwa.

Approached for comment on Monday, SSC board chairperson Markus Kampungu confirmed that the process had been halted.

"We have actually stopped that process and we are waiting for the minister to decide.

I am not privy to the reasons why he suspended the process but we are only waiting for him to give us go ahead," Kampungu said to **Namibia Business Review**.

While the reasons behind the decision remain unclear, sources said the minister is considering broadening the scope of requirements and competencies for the position.

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"The position is one of the highest-paying jobs in the state-owned enterprise sector, with an annual package of more than N\$2 million"



> Elvis Nashilongo



> Kapena Tjombonde



> Ndangi Katoma

City Police under investigation for 'abusing' S&T

• TIRI MASAWI

The City of Windhoek has launched an internal investigation into allegations that subsistence and travel (S&T) allowances are being misused through repeated selection of the same officials for refresh-

er training and short courses within the City Police.

The probe comes after City Police officers lodged a formal complaint last month, alleging that training opportunities are being concentrated among a small group of staff, raising concerns

that the system is being used to benefit certain individuals financially.

In a letter addressed to City of Windhoek CEO Moses Matyayi, the employees claim that refresher training sessions are repeatedly allocated to the same

officers, particularly administrative assistants and those close to senior management.

"The same people are sent again and again... as they look for short courses knowing that the Chief will approve," the complaint states.

It further alleges that some officers view training mainly as an opportunity to access S&T benefits rather than skills development, adding that "some members even say openly that they attend training mainly for S&T."

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> Milka Mungunda

Kampungu said the board has not been informed whether the suspension is linked to possible changes in the role.

"I am not sure whether the decision to stop the process has anything to do with broadening the scope of the work or expectations from the candidate but we will wait for the minister," he said.

The recruitment process was launched

on 6 March as SSC began searching for a replacement for long-serving executive officer Milka Mungunda, who has led the institution for 10 years.

The appointment comes at a time when SSC is undergoing a transition after the government directed the commission to take over the management of the N\$3.9 billion Public Service Medical Aid Scheme

(Psemas). Namibia is currently implementing a National Pension Fund (NPF) and National Medical Benefit Fund (NMBF) via the Social Security Commission to expand social coverage to all workers, including the informal sector.

This initiative aligns with the United Nations Global Accelerator to enhance social protection.

In the original advertisement, SSC said the Executive Officer would be responsible for providing strategic leadership and executive direction to secure the long-term financial sustainability, social relevance and institutional viability of the commission.

The commission said it was looking for a candidate with strong strategic leadership and vision, including the ability to think long term and align organisational activities with business objectives.

The successful candidate was also expected to demonstrate sound judgement, accountability and the ability to balance short-term operational demands with long-term sustainability.

SSC further said the candidate should be able to analyse complex issues objectively, apply commercial judgement, understand stakeholder needs and communicate effectively across diverse audiences.

Some of the individuals linked to the position on Monday distanced themselves from the process.

THE CANDIDATES

Nashilongo said he was not interested in commenting on the matter.

"On this issue I am simply not interested.

I have nothing to comment on that issue," he said.

Hamutumwa denied any interest in the position.

"I am not interested in government jobs my brother, they make people old to weary. I run a very successful business. Why would I want to leave that? This kind of thing might even disturb employees at my business. So for you I will tell you straight that I am not interested in this," he said.

Katoma yesterday said "I noted your query. I prefer not to comment on this. Thank you." Tjombonde did not respond to questions.

Justice and labour relations minister Immanuel also did not respond to questions.

NBR



> Markus Kampungu

CITY POLICE UNDER INVESTIGATION FROM PAGE 1

The officers said that the practice undermines fairness in skills development, stating that many staff members have been excluded from training opportunities for years. "Some of us last attended training a long time ago, around 2005 and 2006," the letter reads.

City of Windhoek spokesperson Harold Akwenye confirmed on Monday that the institution is investigating what he described as "serious allegations" relating to recruitment practices, training allocation, and possible abuse of S&T allowances.

"The City of Windhoek takes any allegations relating to recruitment, promotion practices, and workplace conduct seriously, as these matters touch on the integrity of the institution and staff morale," Akwenye said.

He said CEO Matyayi has requested an internal review to establish the facts and determine whether any policies or codes of conduct were breached.

"At this stage, the matter remains an internal administrative process and is therefore confidential in nature," Akwenye said, adding that it would be "premature to comment further until the process has been concluded."

The complaint, also addressed to City Police Chief Leevi likela and the Chairperson of the Management Committee Austin Kweenani, further raises concerns about broader maladministration, including



> Moses Matyayi

claims of preferential promotion patterns and concentration of opportunities within a perceived group of officials.

likela did not respond to the questions sent to him yesterday.

While the S&T-linked training allegations form the core of the complaint, the officers also raise concerns about what they describe as unfair treatment in recruitment and advancement within the City Police.

A list attached to the complaint, seen by **Namibia Business Review**, outlines several divisions where senior and supervisory roles are reportedly held by a recurring group of officers, with complainants alleging patterns of preferential appointment.

The City says it will only consider further steps, including the possibility of an independent investigation, once internal processes are completed and recommendations are made.

"With regard to the progress of the process, the matter is receiving the necessary attention through the appropriate channels," Akwenye said. **NBR**



"CEO Matyayi has requested an internal review to establish the facts and determine whether any policies or codes of conduct were breached"



Namibia urged to protect press freedom legacy



and Archives. "As a Ministry, we remain committed to prioritising programmes that strengthen our Libraries and Archives, recognising these institutions as the custodians of our collective memory," she said.

At the same event, veteran journalist and Namibia Media Trust Foundation board chairperson Gwen Lister reflected on the lasting impact of the Windhoek Declaration on press freedom across Africa and beyond.

"The 1991 Windhoek Declaration turned things around for the press in Africa," Lister said.

She noted that before the declaration, independent journalism on the continent was often suppressed or barely tolerated by governments.

"In the immediate years following the Windhoek Declaration, Africa's landscape slowly opened up to broader acceptance and realisation of the rights to press freedom and free expression, and private outlets began to flourish," she said.

Lister said the declaration helped establish press freedom as essential to democracy and economic development globally.

"From Sofia in Bulgaria to the Declaration of Alma Ata in Kazakhstan and San'aa in Yemen, the world's journalists affirmed that a free press is essential for democracy and economic development," she said.

However, she warned that threats to press freedom continue to grow in the digital era.

"This is becoming increasingly difficult in a world in which the press fights for sustainability, where toxicity and AI-fuelled disinformation thrives online," Lister said.

She also raised concern about attacks on journalists globally and efforts to suppress free expression.

"Press freedom and free expression has always, and will continue to be, a battle that is never fully won," she said.

Referring to Namibia's position in Africa's press freedom rankings, Lister said the country remains one of the continent's strongest performers, but warned that challenges remain.

"Among others, we need to protect journalists from legal and digital harassment and to ensure transparency in state advertising," she said. Lister also called on government to urgently implement the Access to Information Act.

"The delays to the implementation of the Access to Information Act remain problematic and it is important that government operationalise this as a matter of urgency," she said.

She urged Namibia to continue leading efforts to protect media freedom on the continent.

"The question now facing us in 2026 is whether Namibia will lead again in defending press freedom in these challenging times," Lister said. **NBR**

• STAFF WRITER

Namibia has been urged to continue defending press freedom and democratic values as the country marked the 35th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration at the World Press Freedom Day commemoration held in Windhoek on Friday.

Speaking at the National Archives of Namibia, Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture Minister Sanet Steenkamp said the Windhoek Declaration remains an important symbol of freedom of expression and independent journalism.

"It affirms the Windhoek Declaration as a globally influential African contribution to international human rights and media freedom norms," Steenkamp said.

She added that the recent inscription of the Windhoek Declaration on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register was "another historic recognition of freedom of expression, independent journalism and democratic governance as part of humanity's shared heritage".

According to Steenkamp, the recognition strengthens Namibia's position as a symbol of democratic transition and media freedom.

"For Namibia, this recognition elevates the country's standing as a symbol of democratic transition, constitutionalism and media freedom," she said.

Steenkamp also praised journalists and media advocates who helped shape the declaration in 1991.

"Let us recognise the courage and dedication of journalists, past and present, including pioneers here present today, such as Madam Gwen Lister, who were instrumental in the development of the Windhoek Declaration," she said.



> Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture Minister Sanet Steenkamp



> Gwen Lister

She said the declaration remains "a lasting global symbol of the indispensable role of journalism, freedom of expression and democratic memory in advancing human dignity, accountability

and inclusive development".

Steenkamp further said the government remains committed to preserving Namibia's documentary heritage through institutions such as the National Library

Otjikoto Mine beats expectations with higher gold output in first quarter



"...the mine recorded "higher than expected" production during the quarter"

Clive Johnson



• STAFF WRITER

B2Gold says its Otjikoto Mine in Namibia produced 24,529 ounces of gold during the first quarter of 2026, exceeding expectations.

In a statement released last week, the group's president and chief executive officer, Clive Johnson, said the mine recorded "higher than expected" production during the quarter.

"The higher than anticipated production in the first quarter of 2026 is primarily due to higher than expected average ore grade partially offset by slightly lower than planned throughput due to some mill repairs in the period," Johnson said.

The company, which holds a 90% stake in the Otjikoto Mine, said mill feed grade for the quarter was 1.06 grams per tonne, while mill throughput reached 0.74 million tonnes. Gold recovery averaged 98.1%.

B2Gold said cash operating costs for the first quarter were US\$896 (N\$16,576) per ounce of gold produced and US\$903 (N\$16,706) per ounce of gold sold.

"Cash operating costs per ounce produced for the first quarter of 2026 were lower than expected as a result of higher than anticipated gold production and lower than planned underground mining costs," Johnson said.

The company said all-in sustaining

costs for the quarter stood at US\$1,327 (N\$24,550) per ounce of gold sold.

Johnson said the lower costs were linked to reduced cash costs and lower sustaining capital expenditure during the period.

"The lower sustaining capital expenditures for the first quarter of 2026 were mainly a result of timing of expenditures and are expected to be incurred later in 2026," he said.

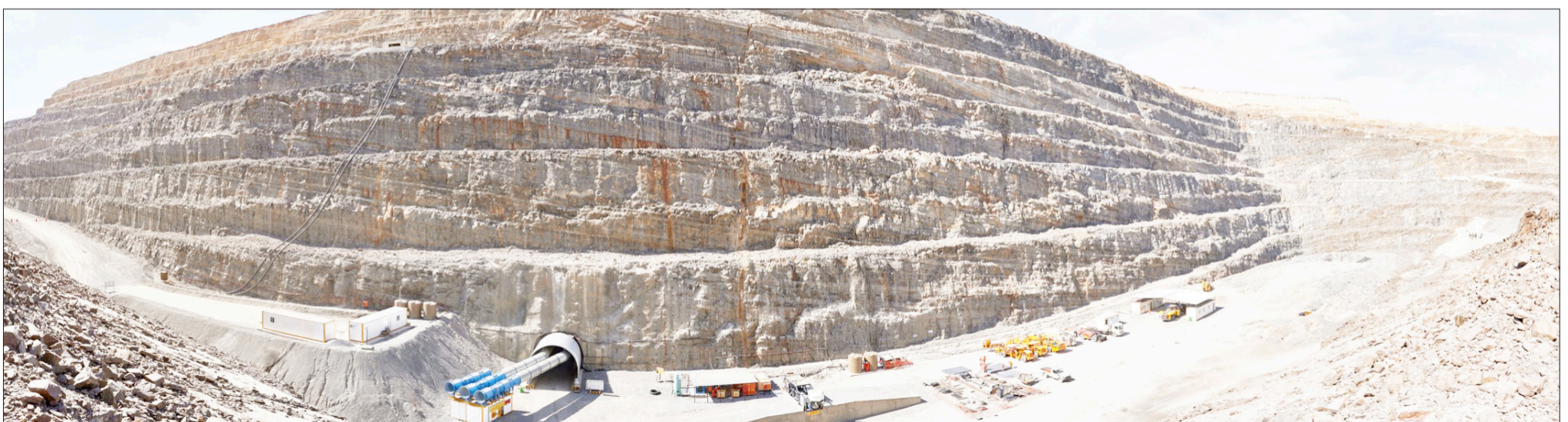
Capital expenditure for the first quarter totalled US\$7 million (N\$129.5 million), including US\$4 million (N\$74 million) for Antelope development and US\$3 million (N\$55.5 million) for the Wolfshag underground development.

B2Gold said the Otjikoto Mine is ex-

pected to produce between 70,000 and 90,000 ounces of gold in 2026.

The mine's projected cash operating costs are expected to range between US\$1,200 (N\$22,200) and US\$1,300 (N\$24,050) per ounce produced, while all-in sustaining costs are forecast at between US\$1,830 (N\$33,855) and US\$1,980 (N\$36,630) per ounce sold.

The company said the guidance is based on an assumed gold price of US\$5,000 (N\$92,500) per ounce in 2026. "This is expected to result in total budgeted royalties and production taxes of approximately US\$17 million (N\$314.5 million), or approximately US\$200 (N\$3,700) per ounce sold," Johnson said. **NBR**



Namibia courts French investors



"First and foremost, I wish to express that Namibia and France maintain a long-standing relationship and excellent bilateral relations"



• STAFF WRITER

Namibia has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening investment and trade relations with France, with Vice President Lucia Witbooi calling for closer cooperation between the two countries.

Witbooi made the remarks during a meeting with French businesses and the

Mouvement des Entreprises de France International (MEDEFI) delegation held on Monday in Nairobi, Kenya.

The MEDEFI delegation, is an international arm of the French employers' organisation, which organises business missions for French companies to engage with international partners and explore investment opportunities.

"First and foremost, I wish to express that Namibia and France maintain a long-standing relationship and excellent bilateral relations," Witbooi said.

She said she was honoured to engage with both French and Namibian business leaders.

"...hence, I am profoundly pleased and honoured to join you here this morning as French and Namibian businesses interact to further strengthen investment cooperation and trade between Namibia and France."

Witbooi said the engagement is important for Namibia as it seeks investment in priority sectors.

"This event is especially important for Namibia, as we present opportunities for investment in our country and look for in-

vestors in our identified priority areas," she said.

She listed seven key focus areas: agriculture, youth empowerment, sports, creative industries, quality education, quality health, and land, housing and sanitation.

Witbooi described Namibia as a strong investment destination in sub-Saharan Africa.

"Namibia is a leading investment prospect in sub-Saharan Africa and a fast-growing, prosperous, and peaceful investment destination, with solid good governance and adherence to democratic values," she said.

She also highlighted efforts to diversify the economy beyond mining and agriculture. "We have made notable progress in diversifying our economy beyond traditional primary sectors such as mining and agriculture," she said.

Witbooi pointed to emerging industries such as oil and gas, tourism, manufacturing, general services, digital and global business services, and technology.

She said these sectors offer new investment opportunities with long-term potential.

"We are inviting you to partner with us in value addition to our mineral resources," she said.

Witbooi encouraged French businesses to consider Namibia as an investment destination.

"In short, we look forward to receiving you in the Land of the Brave, Namibia," she said.

She added that she hopes the engagement will produce concrete outcomes.

"It is my hope that discussions at this event will lead to tangible results for our mutual benefits." **NBR**



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Namibia records N\$13.2 billion in exports, N\$15.5 billion in imports

• STAFF WRITER

Namibia recorded exports worth N\$13.2 billion and imports worth N\$15.5 billion in March, according to the latest figures released by the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) on Friday.

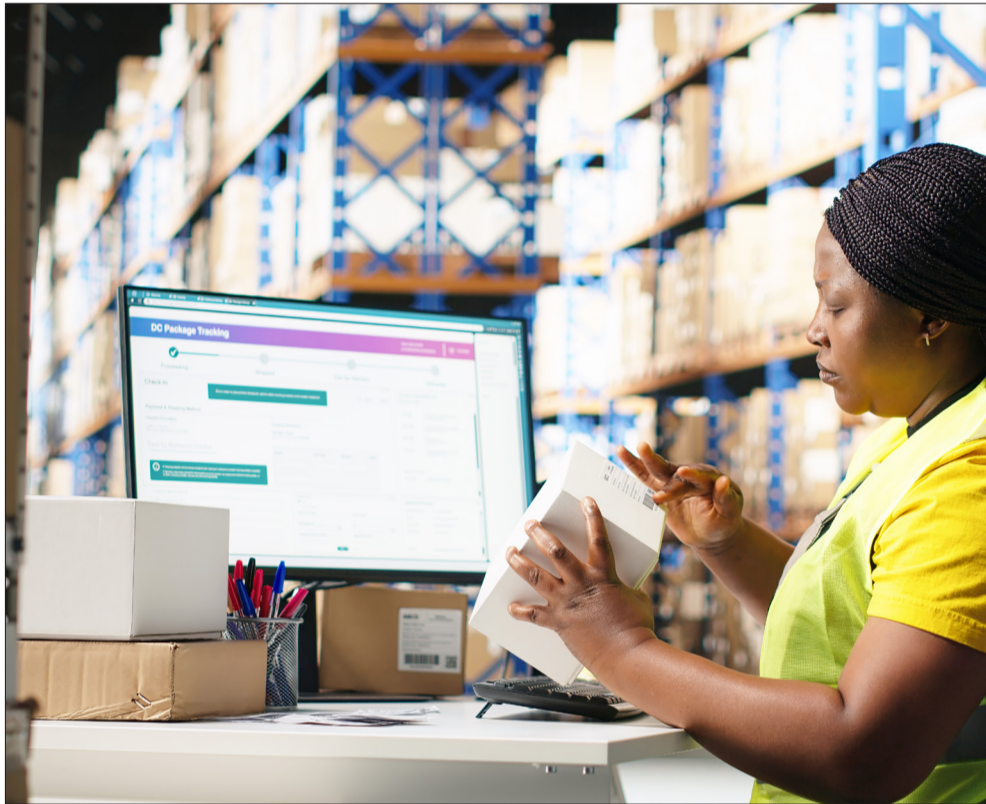
The figures resulted in a trade deficit of N\$2.3 billion during the month.

China emerged as Namibia's biggest export market, while South Africa remained the country's main source of imports.

Statistician General Alex Shimuafeni said the trade balance improved compared to the N\$5.2 billion deficit recorded a month earlier.

"In terms of goods, the country's export basket for March 2026 was mainly composed of commodities from the mining sector such as uranium, non-monetary gold, nickel ores and concentrates, and diamonds.

Fish was the only non-mineral product



among the top five exports," Shimuafeni said.

He said re-exports increased by 86.4% on a monthly basis and by 12.7% on an annual basis.

The re-export basket mainly consisted of nickel ores and concentrates, petroleum oils, ores and concentrates of base metals, textile products, and miscellaneous chemical products.

Imports mainly included petroleum oils, commercial vehicles, nickel ores and concentrates, passenger vehicles, and civil engineering equipment.

The NSA also said Namibia recorded a food trade surplus of N\$462 million, while beverages recorded a trade deficit of N\$190 million.

Vehicles were named the commodity of the month in the report.

According to the NSA, Namibia imported vehicles worth N\$979 million, mainly from South Africa, India and China, while vehicle exports stood at N\$48 million, mainly to Zambia. **NBR**

"Statistician General Alex Shimuafeni said the trade balance improved compared to the N\$5.2 billion deficit recorded a month earlier"



Meatco appoints Kativa as CEO of Northern communal area

• STAFF WRITER

The Meat Corporation of Namibia (Meatco) has appointed Thimoteus Kativa as the substantive Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of its Northern Communal Area (NCA) Subsidiary, based in Rundu, Kavango East.

His appointment is effective from 01 May 2026 on a five-year fixed-term contract.

Meatco said Kativa previously served as Manager of Livestock Procurement within the NCA Subsidiary. The company said he brings extensive experience and in-depth knowledge of Namibia's agricultural sector, with a strong understanding of agribusiness operations, the livestock and red meat value chain, as well as the dynamics affecting communal farming communities.

Kativa also served as a Board Member of the Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU) from 2017 to 2023. He is currently an Executive Member of the Kavango East Regional Farmers Union,



> Thimoteus Kativa

a position he has held since 2017.

He holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) obtained from the Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute (ESAMI) in 2023, a Bachelor of Agricultural Management from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), completed in 2016, and a National Diploma in Agriculture obtained from Neudamm Agricultural College in 2002.

Speaking on his appointment, Kativa said: "I am deeply honoured by the confidence placed in me to lead the Meatco NCA Subsidiary at this important time.

My focus will be on strengthening stakeholder confidence, stabilising operations, and working collaboratively with producers, employees, clients, and partners to support the long-term sustainability of the business." Meatco's Interim Chief Executive Officer, Albertus Aochamub, welcomed the appointment. "The entire Meatco Group leadership congratulates Mr Kativa on

his appointment. We are confident that he will drive the strategic objectives of the NCA Subsidiary in alignment with Meatco's broader mandate of building a profitable, sustainable, and producer-centred business," Aochamub said.

He added that the appointment comes at an important operational transition period for the subsidiary.

"On 10 April 2021, Meatco NCA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Zambezi Abattoir and Meat Processing Company (ZAMCO) to operationalise and stabilise the Katima Mulilo Abattoir after ZAMCO, which had initially been awarded the lease to operate the facility, encountered challenges in fully operationalising the abattoir," he said.

Aochamub further said: "Over the past five years, Meatco NCA has played an important role in maintaining operations, supporting producers, and sustaining market access within the region." **NBR**



EDITORIAL

Who will police the police?

Transparency in the civil service is a very important aspect of a moral commitment to truthfulness and a cornerstone of democratic accountability.

It is designed to transform public administration from a closed bureaucracy into an open, responsive system.

Transparency or commitment to such serves as a mechanism for reducing corruption, enhancing efficiency by exposing bottlenecks, and building public trust.

It is important that those that hold the moral high ground of society be seen to be following the philosophy of transparency to its logical conclusion.

In instances where institutions serve the greater generality of the public, they ought to give a feeling that they are open, fair and transparent.

It is even more important to have institutions that bind themselves to the same codes and beliefs that they hold others to.

This week we wake up to some disturbing revelations of alleged mal-administration within the City Police - a vital arm of the City of Windhoek that handles the most important aspects of safety and security of the residents.

Most residents find solace in knowing that day and night they have city police that they rely on and are efficient and devoid of any negatives.

We understand that the city of Windhoek has launched an investigation into these allegations in a manner that is set to bring sanity and clear and deal with such.

The city promises that they are taking this as a very important tissue that deserves all the attention.

That alone is commendable and one hopes the City will get to the bottom of such accusations.

They have potential to dent an otherwise good brand that many Namibians align to and trust.

It is also important that the City reveals the findings of such an investigation publicly when completed to maintain the clean image of the City Police that many are proud of.



We understand that the city of Windhoek has launched an investigation into these allegations in a manner that is set to bring sanity and clear and deal with such"

Southern Africa entering different minerals cycle of value addition



• TOM ALWEENDO

Southern Africa is entering a new minerals cycle.

This one is different from earlier booms. It is driven not only by construction in China or commodity traders in London, but by the energy transition, digital infrastructure, defence supply chains and a global search for secure sources of critical minerals.

That gives Namibia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) a rare opportunity.

For too long, African economies have carried the costs of extraction while others captured the deeper industrial value. More local processing, more skilled work, stronger suppliers and better infrastructure are legitimate development goals.

The question is not whether value addition is needed. It is how to make it work.

Recent developments in Zimbabwe show the direction of travel. Zimbabwe has tightened lithium export rules, introduced quotas and pushed companies towards local lithium sulphate production before a planned concentrate-export ban in 2027.

The first lithium sulphate exports from Chinese-owned mine Huayou in Zimbabwe show that African countries can move beyond the mine gate when ore bodies, investors, policy direction and processing capacity align.

That matters, and it proves that beneficiation is not a dream. It can be done.

But implementation matters. A successful processing facility is not created by regulation alone. It needs reliable electricity, water, environmental systems, skilled technicians, transport links, finance and customers. Value addition is therefore an industrial programme, and not only a legal requirement. Namibia is already part of this debate.

In 2023, the country restricted exports of unprocessed lithium and other critical minerals. It also has a strategic partnership with the European Union (EU) on sustainable raw materials and renewable hydrogen, with local value addition among its stated aims. Namibia's advantages are real: uranium experience, port access, renewable energy potential, mining skills, political stability and a reputation for responsible investment. These strengths should be used more deliberately.

Namibia should not approach value addition as a defensive policy aimed only at stopping exports. It should approach it as a national competitiveness strategy. The objective should be to build mineral value chains that attract capital, survive price cycles and create durable Namibian capability.

That requires clear choices. No country can process every mineral to every stage. Not every deposit can support downstream industry. Not every processing plant will be competitive.

However, this does not weaken the case for value addition. It strengthens the case for doing it properly. The first step is to identify where Namibia and SADC have genuine advantage. Do we have enough raw and intermediate materials? Is power reliable and priced competitively?

Can water be secured responsibly? Are the logistics strong enough? Is there a buyer prepared to sign a long-term offtake agreement? Can the project meet environmental, social and traceability standards? Where the answer is 'yes', government should move with speed and confidence. Where the

answer is 'not yet,

The government should close the gap rather than abandon the ambition. This is where Namibia can lead. A mineral-by-mineral value addition framework would be more useful than a blanket approach.

Lithium, rare earths, copper, uranium and industrial minerals do not have the same economics. Each needs its own pathway. Some may justify early local processing.

Others may first require local services, transport, fabrication, technical training and supplier development before deeper processing becomes viable.

That is still a value addition. Too often the debate treats beneficiation as if it only means building a refinery or factory. It is broader than that. Local drilling services, engineering, environmental management, assay laboratories, component repair,

logistics, software, training and mine-site technology all build domestic capability.

These activities create firms and skills that can later support deeper industrialisation.

For SADC, the strongest opportunity may be regional rather than purely national. The region's minerals are spread across borders.

The DRC and Zambia have copper and cobalt. Zimbabwe has lithium. South Africa has manganese and platinum group metals. Namibia has uranium, port access, renewable energy potential and emerging critical mineral prospects. No single country holds all the inputs for a complete value

chain. A regional approach would therefore make practical sense. Processing corridors built around power, rail, ports, customs efficiency, shared standards and traceability could attract larger pools of capital.

They would also reduce duplication. It is better to have a few competitive regional facilities than many underutilised national plants. Global conditions support this direction. The EU has launched a critical minerals procurement platform, and the United States and the EU are deepening cooperation on critical minerals trade policy.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has warned that critical minerals refining remains highly

concentrated and that investment momentum weakened in 2024. Buyers want diversified, responsible supply. Africa can provide it, but only if projects are credible, traceable and commercially robust. This is also a message to investors. The old model of extracting minerals while leaving limited domestic capability behind has lost legitimacy. Governments and communities now expect more.

They want skills, suppliers, infrastructure, transparency, environmental care and a clearer link between mining and national development. Investors who understand this will be better positioned. They should treat value addition not as a burden, but as part of a stable operating environment.

Early investment in local capability can reduce political risk, strengthen social licence and create more resilient projects. The bargain should be clear. Governments provide predictable rules, efficient permits, infrastructure support and fair fiscal terms.

Investors provide capital, technology, training, transparent procurement and realistic value addition plans.

*** Tom Alweendo is the CEO of Alvenco Consultancy and a former minister of Mines and Energy**

ANALYSIS:

An overview of the beef industry

• ERASTUS NGARUKA

Agriculture in Namibia is a key sector of the economy on which over 70% of the population directly depends on as a source of food, income, employment, and social stability.

As a socio-economic pillar, it contributes about 5% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and is the largest employer in the country. The agriculture sector is primarily dominated by livestock production value chains, mainly cattle, sheep and goats. Moreover, other significant production value chains in the sector include those in crop, poultry, piggery, and charcoal production, among others. Despite hostile conditions, Namibia's agriculture sector has demonstrated considerable resilience over the years.

For example, the sector has been hit by adverse disruptions resulting from recurrent droughts, the Covid-19 outbreak and general economic hardships affecting the globe. This indicates that, despite its inherent weaknesses and threats, the Namibia livestock industry still strives to leverage its strengths and opportunities.

THE STRENGTHS

One of the critical strengths emanates from the existing governance structures that support the industry across the entire value chain, from production to consumption.

Namibia has a well-regulated livestock industry involving the Directorate of Veterinary Services (DVS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform (MAFWLR) as the custodian for livestock disease control, and the

Livestock and Livestock Product Board (LLPB) as a regulatory institution supporting the industry through compliance measures to secure and participate in established markets. In addition, farmers unions and their associates play a critical role by being a producers' mouthpiece and provide linkages to relevant services such as markets, inputs and information, among others. These structures enhance adherence to trade protocols and provide recognition on regional and international market platforms.

The greater part of the country is classified as an FMD-free zone, carrying an export status.

The disease control protocols and animal welfare practices in the country are in accordance with the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). Hence, Namibia has access to high-value markets such as the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Norway. Furthermore, the country continues to diversify and expand its markets, for example, China, the Middle East, West Africa, and lately the Mauritius' beef market.

Despite challenges emanating from climatic events, limited knowledge, technologies, and market complexities, the beef industry and farmers in general continue to display notable resilience.

In particular, the beef industry continues to sustain and expand its export markets while competing with other major livestock producing countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, among others. Namibian rangeland types are ideally suited for livestock farming, particularly cattle production

especially in the central and northern parts of the country. Thus, cattle are effectively raised mainly on the veld with minimal supplementation, under normal circumstances as opposed to costly

feedlot systems in other countries.

This free-range beef status is a critical selling point for

Namibian beef. Furthermore, Namibia has well-established and improved livestock breeding programs where various breeds are utilized to improve beef attributes sought by the markets.

WEAKNESSES

Generally, agriculture sector productivity is compromised or is not fully realized, especially in communal farming areas. This is due to various limitations related to the lack of knowledge and skills, access to improved technologies, inputs, access to finance or credit and land, among others. As a result, this increases the vulnerability of some farmers to threats and challenges faced by the sector.

Many farmers struggle or take longer to achieve optimal production and income levels, primarily due to high costs of production and limited expertise. For example, many communal and small-scale farmers located in remote areas face difficulties in accessing information, production inputs and markets for their products, or they incur higher production costs that ultimately limit productivity.

Moreover, access to productive land is another major limitation to the growth of agricultural production and livelihoods for communal farmers.

Another weakness is the slow or poor implementation of supportive programs for farmers. For example, the execution of the drought relief initiatives is perceived to be slow and less impactful at the time of need, or the provision of cropping services tends to be slow or cause delays in the cropping calendar. In addition, the absence of robust drought recovery programs that target livestock restocking, input acquisition, and market access support could cripple productivity or lead to the abandonment of farming areas, fuelling rural-urban migration.

OPPORTUNITIES

Namibia is party to regional and international trade agreements, which place it at global market platforms to leverage for greater market development and expansion.

The country is a net exporter of beef to regional and international markets, earning significant income for the economy. Namibia is the only African country certified to export beef to the USA and EU, and it has maintained these lucrative markets over the years. To this end, the demand for our beef continues to increase.

Recent examples include Germany expanding the distribution or the availability of Namibian beef in German steakhouses, and China's interest in reaching about 20 000 tones per month of Namibian beef supply.

One of the latest developments is the export of Namibian cattle to Mauritius, an opportunity emanating from the outbreak of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in South Africa.

This provides an opportunity to negotiate more long-term trade deals. Other

market opportunities exist, such as the Middle East and West African countries, among others.

THREATS

Generally, agricultural production is vulnerable to disruptions or shocks associated with climate, technology, markets, and politics, among others.

Common events that compromise productivity in Namibia include the recurrent droughts, floods, land degradation, pests, and diseases.

Land degradation is one major threat to sustainable production as large tracts of land in the country; especially communal areas have lost their productive capacity due factors such as overpopulation and overgrazing.

The main forms of land degradation in the country are bush encroachment and soil erosion amongst others. Furthermore, water scarcity is a common threat in the country, characterised by the high cost of water supply and salinity in various farming areas. In addition, the cost of electricity on farms contributes to higher costs of production and disruptions of certain farm operations such as on farm water supply.

In recent years, Namibian cattle farmers have been battling with outbreaks of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD).

However, the most significant threat to the meat industry is FMD, with progressive outbreaks in South Africa and Botswana. Should the FMD be detected in the free zone, then the consequences would be devastating, resulting in major losses in production, markets and income at all levels.

In addition, the global tension or the war in the middle east (Iran) is exacerbating the situation where the flow of oil and other agricultural supplies are disrupted. This situation has resulted in increase in prices especially for oil on which agricultural production is heavily dependent.

Namibia has just increased fuel prices twice in two months, and it is affecting transportation and energy supply in the sector, thus, increasing the cost of production and ultimately food prices amongst others.

In conclusion, the strengths and opportunities possessed by Namibia indicate that the country is striving to develop and sustain the industry, however, more still needs to be done to increase production and sustain growing markets.

Critical efforts should strive towards reducing production costs by developing local input industries such as veterinary medicine and livestock feed production, as well as subsidizing essential farm inputs.

Other areas of focus and improvements are rangeland restoration, farm water and electricity provision, production-oriented land reform approaches, access to affordable finance, capacity building, and enhancing participation and linkages of farmers to local and export markets. These interventions require coordinated efforts from all stakeholders to eventually achieve organized agriculture and sustainability.

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