

NAMIBIA BUSINESS REVIEW

Where Business meets ideas

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Sibeya linked to Namcor MD job

• TIRI MASAWI

SENIOR executive Victoria Sibeya is in contention for the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (Namcor) top job, as the state-owned oil company moves closer to appointing a new managing director.

Sibeya currently serves as executive for upstream exploration at Namcor.

Her possible appointment is subject to Cabinet approval after the board concluded the selection process and submitted its recommended candidate to the line ministry.

The recruitment process and recommendations were finalised in March.

Minister of Industries, Mines and Energy Modestus Amutse did not confirm Sibeya's name, but confirmed that the board has submitted its preferred candidate for approval.

"In that process, yes I can tell you that the interviews were concluded and the final short list was chosen. The board has submitted the final name of the leading and other candidates to my office. I am now in the process of making sure that we do this accordingly and get the process completed. I do not want to say or confirm names as that



> Victoria Sibeya

might jeopardise the process but we will soon have this issue approved by the cabinet," Amutse told the **Namibia Business Review** last week.

Namcor board chairperson Florentia Amuenje did not answer calls made to her but Amutse said he is satisfied with the recruitment process.

"As far as I have been briefed by the board, the advertising and interview process went well. I am happy with where we are now and we must move forward and make sure that we complete this process properly. It is important that we handle such a process with transparency and satisfaction of everyone," Amutse said.

Sibeya previously served as acting managing director from April to August 2025, where she led the company during a critical transitional period.

Sibeya yesterday said "I am not able to comment on anything to do with Namcor. I am sure you are aware of the procedures.

You can call our formal communications channels. They may be able to help you as I am not allowed to speak to the media directly," she said.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 2

Creatives call for a standalone arts ministry

• VERIPUAMI KANGUMINE

NAMIBIA'S creative sector is calling for an independent Ministry of Arts and Culture, arguing that the industry is being sidelined within the large education-led portfolio.

Before the current administration of President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, education and sport were run as separate ministries. Now they have been

merged into one large ministry but cracks appear to be already showing.

The push comes as the government acknowledges structural weaknesses, while education minister Sanet Steenkamp moves to secure full administrative control of all departments under her ministry.

The debate has taken on a clear economic dimension, with creatives pointing to a sector that

generated about N\$47 million from local and foreign film production last year, alongside 1240 temporary jobs worth N\$18.86 million in catering, transport, hospitality and production services during the 2024/25 financial year.

At the same time, presidential spokesperson Jonas Mbambo last week admitted to **Namibia Business Review** that the arts and culture portfolio is struggling

within the current structure, citing limited prioritisation, funding pressures and weak institutional coordination.

"We are actively considering measures to strengthen visibility, coordination and developmental impact," Mbambo said, adding that education pressures, serving more than 800 000 learners, continue to dominate budget allocation.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 2



> Minister of education, innovation, youth, sport, arts, and culture Sanet Steenkamp

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She was recognised for her work in the sector by receiving the Rising Star Award at the Big Five Board Awards for her contribution to Africa's upstream energy industry in May.

Sibeya is a geologist and energy sector specialist with more than 20 years of experience. She joined Namcor in 2006 as a geoscientist. At the time, she was the only female geoscientist at the company for six years.

She later progressed to asset manager in 2012. From 2015 to 2019, she served as acting executive for exploration and pro-

duction. She now holds the executive role in leading Namibia's hydrocarbon exploration portfolio.

If approved, the incoming managing director will replace former boss Immanuel Mulunga, who led the company for nine years before being fired, and is now facing corruption-related charges together with other executives.

The case involves 71 criminal counts of fraud, racketeering and corruption amounting to more than N\$480 million.

The charges stem from allegations linked to a military fuel supply arrangement with Enercon Namibia. The State alleges a multi-million-dollar credit scheme, sale of phantom assets, and bypassing of compli-

ance procedures. Namcor spokesperson Paulo Coelho said the company could not comment without board clearance. "We cannot comment on speculation until we get official confirmation from the board. Until such time, we will be unable to comment. I have no feedback," he said.

In the past three years, Namcor has had several acting managing directors.

Shiwana Ndeunyema served from April 2023 to January 2024 and is currently serving as an executive for business strategy and performance management. He also briefly stepped in after Mulunga's suspension.

He was followed by Lionel Matthews, former managing director of Nedbank

Namibia and advisor in the Ministry of Finance.

Bank of Namibia Governor Ebson Uangu-ta then served from January 2024 to March 2025. He was seconded from the central bank, initially on a six-month contract, later extended to a year.

Former deputy minister of finance Maureen Hinda-Mbuende led Namcor from August 2025 to February 2026 on a fixed six-month term. She was later succeeded by Mtundeni Ndafyaalako, who has been acting since March 2026. He joined Namcor in 2018 as a geoscientist and later became manager of new ventures before his current role as executive for upstream development and production. **NBR**

CREATIVE CALL FROM PAGE 1

STRUCTURALLY IGNORED

Playwright and actor Ndjamba Linyondi says currently the creative sector is being treated as a secondary function within the broader education mandate and stunting its growth.

"Namibia's creative sector holds immense untapped potential, yet it continues to operate on the margins of national development. For years, budgetary priorities have largely favored education, with arts and culture receiving only a small share of attention and resources."

He added "While education is undeniably vital, combining it with arts and culture under a single ministry has limited the growth, visibility, and strategic development of the creative industry."

Linyondi said that countries that have invested in their creative industries have seen tangible economic returns as the creative economy is recognised as contributing significantly to GDP, job creation, tourism and international cultural exchange.

He said that the gap in access to arts education and professional development opportunities only remain concentrated in a few institutions, leaving many regions without meaningful access to creative training programmes.

The filmmaker added that institutions such as the National Arts Council of Namibia are already making meaningful efforts to support the sector within existing limitations and need more support from the government and the private sector to unlock their full impact.

"For this reason, the establishment of an independent Ministry of Arts and Culture should be considered a strategic national objective. Such a ministry would allow for dedicated policy development, targeted funding, and focused industry growth, positioning the creative sector as a legitimate contributor to the economy rather than a peripheral activity," he said.

The creative industry created 1 240 temporary jobs earning about N\$18.86 million in catering, transportation, hospitality, crew, cast and production in the 2024/2025 financial year.

The ministry of education was allocated N\$28.7 billion during the national budget for the 2026/2027 financial year, prioritising education, national development and sports.

Subsidised tertiary education and school congestion alleviation received N\$2.8 billion, with N\$939 million having been allocated for developmental projects, while the sport, youth and national

service received N\$750 million.

Last year, the government injected N\$50 million into the creative arts industry in its 2025/2026 budget.

This year the ministry announced that it will invest N\$ 10 million to revive the popular Namibian Annual Music Awards (NAMAs) after Mobile Telecommunications (MTC) pulled out of funding and it lay dormant for six years.

SURVIVAL FUNDING

Poet and designer Patricia Uapunduka also calls on the stand-alone Ministry for Arts and Culture due to the lack of infrastructure for the creatives such as recording studios, equipment lending services and facilities and proper facilities for poets and performing artists to perform.

"I agree with the standalone ministry because art is not always recognised. We are always being left out especially regarding space, equipment that we need to create arts," she said.

She said that the poets and other creatives have been forced to fund their own events due to a lack of sponsorship and delay in response from the ministry.

She said there is a lack of recognition of smaller disciplines such as poetry as compared to other larger disciplines such as music which have platforms such as the NAMAs.

"We want a warehouse of equipment where creatives can pay a small fee for recording equipment and microphones," she said.

Visual artist and designer Jean-Claude Tjitamunisa said that a stand-alone ministry of arts and culture will allow the creative sector to bring in more money for the Namibian economy than what it currently has generated.

"The distribution of the budget is not fair, the creative industry is just as important as education. We need the stand-alone ministry that caters to the creative.

"If we have a stand-alone ministry, the creative sector will generate more revenue for the Namibian economy than what it currently is generating," he said.

The visual said that though there are scholarships available for the creative sector through the youth funding through the National Arts Council more needs to be mentorship and funding.

He said that the creatives need more opportunities through places of performance, sewing machines studios and skill development.

"Beyond places of performance it would be great to have places where people can receive skill development where if you're an upcoming fashion designer or visual

artist there are studios where one can rent for a fee per month," he said.

EDUCATION IS PRIORITY

Presidential spokesperson Jonas Mbambo admitted that the arts and culture are overshadowed within the current ministry structure and that the government is working towards improving the sector's viability.

"The concern is legitimate and increasingly evident. After a year of observing the operational realities within the current structure, it has become clear that Arts and Culture face challenges relating to prioritisation, institutional focus and resource allocation,"

"These concerns are therefore receiving serious attention, and the government is actively considering measures to strengthen the sector's visibility, coordination and developmental impact within the broader national agenda," he said.

Mbambo explained that the sector has not received sufficient infrastructure development, financing and implementation of programmes due to priority and budget allocation being given to the education sector which has to accommodate over 800,000 learners.

He said that though a stand-alone Ministry for Arts and Culture would allow for concentrated policy attention it will also face budgetary challenges.

The spokesperson added that the Ministry of Education is currently leading efforts to establish the necessary instruments to provide project grants, bursaries for Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) through related studies, funding for artists, partnerships and sponsorship.

He also noted that the government has administered funding support through the National Arts Council of Namibia which is expected to introduce a funding line for equipment, facilities and materials, with an allocation of approximately N\$2.5 million.

Mbambo said the government also plans the expansion of support for the creative and cultural industries with N\$50 million injection into the creative industries sector, which is currently being implemented through strategic tertiary institutions and partners with the Namibia Film Commission and the National Theatre.

"Despite financial constraints, the government remains the largest investor and supporter of the arts and creative industries sector in Namibia, both through direct funding and institutional development initiatives," he said.

"For example, the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) is expected to roll out a

Local Content Creation Programme during the 2026 financial year, while the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN) has collaborated with the Directorate of Arts on initiatives such as the Namibian Music Awards," he said.

FULL CONTROL

Namibia Business Review reported in April that the Minister of education, innovation, youth, sport, arts, and culture Sanet Steenkamp is pushing for full control of all the departments under her ministry.

Education minister Steenkamp says the new structure is still fragmented, with departments operating in silos instead of as one system. Steenkamp told the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Youth, Civic Relations and Community Development last week that the ministry has been trying to get a new structure approved for about a year through the Office of the Prime Minister.

"We wanted full integration. For example, we want Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund's (NSFAF) human resources to be the same as the ministry's," she said.

However, she said the NSFAF was approved as a separate department, with its own structure and 91 staff members.

She wants all departments fully integrated to improve efficiency and management.

Steenkamp said the current setup creates duplication, especially in procurement and human resources.

Steenkamp said some departments, including sports, youth and national service, are also still operating separately.

"Those departments were approved on their own and are not integrated with finance and administration of the ministry," she said.

She said this means the ministry is still not operating as one system, as originally planned. "It's still departmentalised.

We wanted one procurement system and shared skills, but that has not happened," she said.

She added that while a structure has now been approved, it is not what the ministry had hoped for.

"We have a structure, but it's not what we wanted," she said. Public policy analyst Ndumba Kamwanyah warned that fully merging all departments may not bring the efficiency the minister expects.

He said a larger structure could weaken accountability.

"When things go wrong, it becomes harder to know who is responsible," he said. **NBR**



Prime Minister orders spending cuts as debt rises



"Namibia's taxpayers deserve a public service that is lean, skilled, digitally enabled and relentlessly focused on service excellence"

• STAFF WRITER

PRIME Minister Elijah Ngurare has called for tighter fiscal discipline, stronger accountability and a shift toward results-based budgeting, warning that the government must move from spending to measurable impact.

Ngurare made the remarks on Monday at the official opening of the 2026/27 Budget Reform Roll-Out Workshop at Windhoek Country Club and Resort.

He said the budget reform agenda reflects a commitment to serving Namibians effectively.

"The fact that we have gathered here today speaks volumes about how seriously we embrace the reform agenda laid out in the National Budget presented to Parliament on 26 February 2026," he said.

He added that the budget theme was more than rhetoric.

"The budget's theme – People, Productivity and Prudence – is not a slogan. It is a governing philosophy, which we must henceforth translate into standard operational procedure," Ngurare said.

ECONOMY UNDER PRESSURE

Ngurare warned that Namibia's fiscal environment has become more challenging due to global developments.

"The 2026/27 National Budget of N\$87.9 billion... was tabled against a backdrop of recovering global conditions and a resilient domestic economy. Since then, however, the global environment has changed rapidly following the ongoing war in the Middle East," he said.

He said the developments are already affecting inflation, trade and growth.

"For Namibia, this has three important implications: higher imported inflation through fuel and food prices; increased pressure on trade and the external position through higher shipping and import costs; and weaker growth prospects through softer external demand and tighter financial conditions," Ngurare said. He stressed that fiscal discipline is now essential.

"These developments reinforce the need for policy discipline, resilience and reform," he said.

DEBT AND DEFICIT CONCERNS

Ngurare also pointed to rising debt levels and the need for tighter control of expenditure.

"At the time the budget was presented, the public debt was recorded at N\$174.6 billion, representing 65.2 percent of GDP," he said.

He said the government must meet its deficit reduction targets.

"The Government has committed to reducing the fiscal deficit from 5.5 per cent of GDP in 2026/27 to 3.3 per cent by 2028/29," Ngurare said.

He added that the adjustment is not optional.

"This is not simply a technical adjustment in our fiscal tables; it is a strategic national imperative," he said.

Ngurare warned that achieving fiscal targets would require strict spending control.

"The debt trajectory... requires N\$2.3 billion in annual savings during the current MTEF period to come from expenditure restraint," he said.

SHIFT TO OUTCOME-BASED BUDGETING

The Prime Minister said the government must move away from measuring spending and instead focus on results.

"For too long, public sector performance has been measured by what we spend rather than what we achieve," he said.

He said success must be judged by outcomes.

"A hospital's performance cannot be judged solely by its recurrent budget; it must be judged by patient outcomes. A school's allocation is not its measure of success: the quality of learning is," Ngurare said.

He said eight ministries will pilot outcome-based budgeting from 2026.

"This is why we are piloting Outcome-Based Budgeting in the following eight (8) selected OMAs... from the second quarter of 2026," he said.

Ngurare said he will closely monitor the results. "I will be paying close attention to those reports," he said.

He also warned against diverting development funds.

"The virement of resources from development budgets to fund recurrent operational expenditure... must be brought to end," he said.

"Capital investment is the engine of long-term growth."

PUBLIC SERVICE EFFICIENCY

Ngurare said productivity in the public service must improve, especially given the size of the wage bill.

"The civil service wage bill remains one of the most significant drivers of our re-

current expenditure," he said.

He said reforms in medical aid, procurement and digitalisation are necessary.

"These are structural necessities," Ngurare said.

He called for a more efficient and modern public service.

"Namibia's taxpayers deserve a public service that is lean, skilled, digitally enabled and relentlessly focused on service excellence," he said.

INVESTMENT AND REFORMS

Ngurare said economic growth depends on private sector participation and regulatory reform.

"No government can spend its way to prosperity," he said.

He urged ministries to speed up reforms. "I encourage all relevant OMAs to fast-track the enabling bills and regulatory instruments that will signal to investors... that Namibia is open, credible and competitive," he said.

CLOSING WARNING

Ngurare ended with a strong call for accountability in implementation.

"These will not be aspirational documents, but a signed commitment document from all Executive Directors," he said. He warned that the government would track performance closely.

"Our policy decisions must also be consistent in their implementation," he said.

"To every delegate in this room: you have one day. Use it well. Namibia is watching, and Namibia deserves your very best," he said. **NBR**

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Only 63 pass while 387 fail new learner's licence test



• STAFF WRITER

OUT of 450 applicants, only 63 have passed Namibia's new computerised learner's licence test, as stricter digital assessments have reduced the success rate to 14%.

This was revealed by Works and Transport Minister Veikko Nekundi during the official launch of the Computerised Learner's Licence Testing Method and the Book and Pay system at Okahandja on Monday.

"So far, 450 applicants have been assessed, with a current pass rate of 14%," he said.

Nekundi said the figures reflect the impact of the newly introduced system,

which he described as a necessary step to strengthen integrity in learner testing.

"This is not a concern but proof that the system is restoring integrity," he said.

The new system replaces traditional paper-based testing with a fully computerised platform designed to reduce cheating, eliminate exam paper leaks, and improve efficiency.

"This initiative introduces a secure, standardised computerised testing system nationwide," Nekundi said.

"It will prevent paper-based test leakages, deliver instant results, expand daily testing capacity, and strengthen data security and system integrity," he added.

Alongside the testing system, the

government has also introduced a Book and Pay platform that allows applicants to schedule and pay for learner's licence tests online.

"Applicants can now book tests remotely, choose any NaTIS office, date, and time, reduce travel costs, and pay through flexible, convenient methods," Nekundi said.

The system is currently being piloted at the Okahandja NaTIS Centre, where it has already gone through testing over the past two weeks.

The centre is now operating four daily testing sessions, with a capacity of 18 applicants per session.

"The Okahandja NaTIS Centre will offer four daily testing sessions, with a capac-

ity of 18 applicants per session," he said.

The government says the system will be rolled out to Gobabis, Karibib and Keetmanshoop next, before expanding to all NaTIS centres nationwide.

A total of N\$1.2 million has been invested in the pilot phase so far, with an additional N\$25 million earmarked for national rollout across 43 NaTIS centres and 288 testing units.

Nekundi said the investment is aimed at improving road safety, strengthening system integrity and modernising transport services.

"This is an investment in the safety of our people, the integrity of our licensing system, and the efficiency of our transport sector," he said. **NBR**

Government urges protection of workers as AI grows



< Labour Minister Fillemon Wise Immanuel

• STAFF WRITER

NAMIBIA has called for stronger global regulation of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, warning that the technology must not deepen inequality or shift burdens onto vulnerable workers.

This was said by Labour Minister Fillemon Wise Immanuel during his address at the 114th International Labour Conference held on 8 June 2026 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Immanuel said AI is rapidly reshaping global labour markets and production systems, but stressed that outcomes depend on policy choices rather than technology itself.

"Technology does not determine outcomes; but policies and institutions do," he said, welcoming the Director-General's report on AI and decent work.

He said the future of work must be actively governed.

"The future of work must be deliberately governed, not left to chance," Immanuel said.

Immanuel said AI presents both opportunities and risks for workers, including productivity gains and new forms of employment, but also threats to rights and equality.

"Artificial intelligence is reshaping production systems and labour markets," he said. He warned that without safeguards, workers could be negatively affected.

"Without adequate safeguards, AI risks shifting burdens onto vulnerable workers and deepening inequalities," Immanuel said.

The minister said Namibia is already integrating digital tools into public institutions as part of its broader digital transformation agenda.

"This aligns with Namibia's National

Digitalisation and Skills Agenda," he said.

He pointed to recent reforms at the Social Security Commission, which introduced digital systems to improve service delivery.

"Although the transition affected 65 positions, no workers were retrenched; instead, retraining and upskilling were prioritised," he said.

Immanuel said many developing countries lack the infrastructure and capacity to fully benefit from AI and warned that inequality could widen without international support.

"We therefore call for stronger international cooperation, capacity-building, technology transfer, and financing," he said. He stressed that AI governance must be guided by global labour frameworks and social dialogue.

"We encourage Member States to establish tripartite AI advisory mechanisms," he said.

The minister also raised concern about the impact of conflict on workers in occupied and war-affected territories, saying decent work cannot exist under such conditions.

"Decent work cannot flourish under occupation, conflict, or war," he said.

He reaffirmed Namibia's support for international peace frameworks and labour rights protections.

Immanuel said Namibia supports the view that AI must serve workers and not replace human dignity.

"We uphold the ILO's founding principle that 'labour is not a commodity'," he said.

He added that AI should be shaped into a tool for inclusive growth.

"In doing so, we can ensure that AI becomes a force for shared prosperity, inclusive labour markets, and social justice," Immanuel said. **NBR**



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National Council urged to improve oversight on executive



> Lukas Muha

• STAFF WRITER

NATIONAL Council chairperson, Lukas Muha, has called on members of Parliament to strengthen oversight of the executive and ensure government institutions remain accountable, transparent and responsive to citizens' needs.

Muha made the remarks on Monday during the National Council's Standing Committees Annual Planning and Budgeting Session for 2026/2027 in Otjiwarongo, held under the theme "Enhancing Parliamentary Oversight and Participatory Democracy."

"In Namibia, members of Parliament play a vital role in shaping our democracy. We are entrusted with making laws, representing the people, overseeing the executive, and safeguarding democratic values," Muha said.

He said parliamentary oversight is essential to ensuring that the government delivers services to citizens.

"It is Parliament's duty to oversee the Government on behalf of the people while promoting accountability, transparency, good governance, and service delivery. Oversight prevents misuse of power and resources and protects citizens' rights and interests," he said.

Muha said standing committees remain central to Parliament's oversight work and should closely scrutinise budgets, monitor government institutions and ensure they fulfil their mandates.

"Reports tabled in Parliament must be impactful and provide recommendations that guide the Executive and influence Government actions. It is in this way that Parliament influences the work of Government," he said.

He urged committee members to strengthen their knowledge of the sectors they oversee and remain committed to holding the executive accountable.

"Members are therefore encouraged to read widely, and seek additional information. Kindly, collaborate with colleagues as you execute your role. Above all, remain dedicated to holding the Executive accountable," Muha said.

The National Council chairperson also called for greater monitoring of parliamentary recommendations and proposed the development of a tracking system.

"I therefore urge the Implementation and Coordination Committee (ICC) of the National Council to innovate and develop a 'dashboard system' in order to follow up on reports and ensure that our recommendations are acted upon," he said.

Muha further highlighted the shortage of parliamentary researchers, saying the lack of specialised support staff weakens Parliament's oversight function.

"Researchers, legal advisors, and financial experts are essential to strengthen oversight, yet Parliament remains under-capacitated in the area of research. It is time for our organisational structure to evolve in order to meet these needs," he said.



> Emmai Muteka

National Council vice-chairperson, Emmai Muteka, said the planning session should focus on producing meaningful outcomes that improve the lives of ordinary Namibians.

"The decisions we make here will determine whether our people simply hear about development or truly feel it in their everyday lives," Muteka said.

She said parliamentary oversight should not be viewed as a routine exercise. "The theme before us, Enhancing Parliamentary Oversight and Participatory Democracy, is not just a phrase, it is a call to action. Let us not view it as a routine exercise, it is the backbone of accountability," she said.

Muteka urged lawmakers to ensure their plans are rooted in the needs of citizens.

"Planning, therefore, must rise above the ordinary. It must be bold, intentional, and deeply rooted in the needs of our people," she said.

She also challenged members to focus on tangible results.

"We cannot afford delays, and we cannot afford disconnection. The work we do here must speak to the realities on the ground. It must respond to the expectations of the people we serve. And most importantly, it must deliver outcomes that are visible, meaningful, and lasting," Muteka said.

"Because in the end, leadership is not defined by discussions, it is defined by results," she added. **NBR**



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CRAN receives 624 appeals over Starlink rejection



> **Minister of Information and Communication Technology**
Emma Theofelus



> **Elon Musk**



> **Mufaro Nesongano**

• STAFF WRITER

A TOTAL of 624 people have filed applications with the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) requesting it to reconsider its decision to reject Starlink Internet Services Namibia (Pty) Ltd's bid to operate in the country.

Earlier this year, CRAN turned down Starlink's licence application after finding that the company had failed to meet key regulatory requirements, including the provision requiring at least 51% Namibian ownership.

In a statement issued on Monday, CRAN confirmed that it had received numerous reconsideration applications following its decision on Starlink's licence application.

"The Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) wishes to inform the public that it has received applications for reconsideration following CRAN's decision relating to the licence application submitted by Starlink Internet Services Namibia (Pty) Ltd," the regulator said.

CRAN said all applications would be processed in accordance with the Communications Act and applicable regulatory procedures.

"CRAN acknowledges the public interest in this matter and wishes to assure all stakeholders that the reconsideration applications received will be handled through the established legal and regulatory processes," said CRAN executive for communication and consumer relations, Mufaro Nesongano.

The rejection of Starlink's application sparked significant public interest and debate over internet connectivity, investment and regulatory compliance.

At the time of the decision, govern-

ment maintained that Starlink's application failed to satisfy both affirmative action requirements and certain security-related regulatory provisions.

Starlink is owned by South African-born American billionaire Elon Musk through his company, SpaceX.

Minister of Information and Communication Technology Emma Theofelus and then CRAN board chairperson Tulimevava Mufeti said a detailed assessment found that Starlink met only three of the six criteria required for approval.

"The government, through the authority, seeks to balance the encouragement of innovation and investment with the need to ensure full compliance with the legal and regulatory framework governing the sector," Theofelus said at the time.

CRAN has repeatedly stated that it supports the expansion of telecommunications services, particularly in underserved and rural areas, while ensuring compliance with Namibia's legal framework.

According to the regulator, Starlink was also found to be operating a telecommunications network and offering services in Namibia without holding a valid service licence, contrary to the Communications Act.

CRAN argued that the company's failure to comply with certain regulatory requirements, as well as its alleged failure to respond to a summons issued by the authority, raised concerns about its willingness to comply with future licence conditions.

The regulator further stressed that data sovereignty and national control remain central considerations in the regulation of telecommunications services.

According to CRAN, the Communications Act requires all licensees to operate in a manner that promotes the

public interest, safeguards national security and complies with legal and regulatory obligations. These include provisions relating to lawful interception, consumer protection and effective regulatory oversight.

The authority said Starlink's application did not sufficiently address these concerns.

"In this regard, the requirement for Namibian ownership and control serves to ensure that telecommunications service providers remain subject to domestic jurisdiction and are fully accountable to national authorities," CRAN said when announcing its decision.

The regulator further argued that Starlink's proposed operating model presented additional regulatory challenges.

"Starlink's proposed business model, based on satellite-delivered services with 100% foreign ownership, raises material regulatory considerations concerning jurisdiction, enforceability of compliance obligations and the ability of the Authority to exercise effective oversight as required under the Act," CRAN said.

Nesongano previously stated that Starlink had not met the ownership requirements prescribed under Section 46 of the Communications Act.

"Starlink does not comply with the ownership requirements prescribed under section 46 of the Communications Act, as the entity is wholly foreign owned.

Starlink also did not obtain an exemption from the statutory obligation mandating a minimum of 51% Namibian ownership," he said.

According to CRAN, the company satisfied only half of the required assessment criteria.

"Upon evaluation of the applications, CRAN found that the applicant only met

three of the six criteria required by law," Mufeti said.

Despite rejecting the application, CRAN acknowledged that Starlink could bring benefits to Namibia's telecommunications sector if regulatory requirements are met.

The authority noted that the satellite internet provider could help improve connectivity in remote areas where traditional telecommunications infrastructure is expensive and difficult to deploy.

CRAN said Starlink's entry into the market "is expected to enhance competition in Namibia's telecommunications sector by addressing coverage gaps, especially in areas where terrestrial infrastructure is costly and challenging".

The regulator also recognised the company's technical and financial capabilities.

According to CRAN, Starlink demonstrated "both financial capacity and technical expertise necessary to successfully execute its business case".

In addition, the authority said spectrum availability was not an obstacle to the application, noting that sufficient spectrum existed within the designated frequency bands.

However, CRAN maintained that the ownership and regulatory compliance concerns remained unresolved.

"Because of this, the application does not, at this stage, adequately satisfy the requirements relating to national defence, public safety and regulatory compliance," Mufeti said.

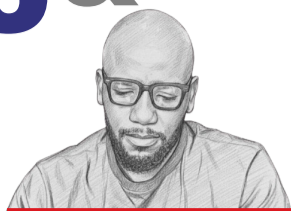
The reconsideration applications will now be assessed through the procedures set out in the Communications Act, with CRAN indicating that the matter will be handled through established legal and regulatory channels.

NBR



"Despite rejecting the application, CRAN acknowledged that Starlink could bring benefits to Namibia's telecommunications sector if regulatory requirements are met"





EDITORIAL

Arts cannot remain Namibia's stepchild forever

FOR too long, Namibia's economic discourse has been dominated by traditional sectors.

Policymakers continue to place their hopes in mining, agriculture, tourism and, more recently, green hydrogen and offshore oil. Yet while youth unemployment remains unacceptably high, a vibrant and underutilised engine for job creation sits in plain sight.

It is found in our recording studios, graphic design firms, fashion houses, film sets and digital hubs. The creative industry should no longer be treated as the neglected stepchild of the economy.

If Namibia is serious about rescuing its younger generation from economic exclusion, it must prioritise the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). They can no longer be dismissed as hobbies or side hustles.

Historically, the government has treated the creative sector as an afterthought. Art and culture have been pushed to the margins of national planning and viewed as entertainment rather than economic infrastructure.

This neglect is reflected in budgets and institutional arrangements. Arts and culture are currently housed within a large and overstretched ministry, where they compete for attention with education and heritage matters.

Such a setup dilutes focus. When a dancer is paid with alcohol or clothing, or a digital designer survives on irregular and poorly paid gigs, it reflects a system that fails to recognise creative labour as real work. That must change.

The sector needs dedicated attention and stronger representation within government. Whether through a standalone ministry or a specialised agency, the creative economy requires focused leadership, modern intellectual property protection and a clear voice in national policymaking.

Structural transformation will also require a significant shift in funding.

Adequate and predictable financing is the lifeblood of any successful creative economy. While the Bank of Namibia has noted that the sector contributes between 1.5% and 1.6% of gross domestic product, the financial support available to creatives remains limited.

Artists and entrepreneurs do not need symbolic grants that barely cover production costs. They need access to venture capital, affordable financing and tax incentives that encourage private-sector investment.

Investing in the arts produces measurable returns. Central bank data shows that 327 local film productions between 2022 and 2024 injected N\$122.5 million into the economy and created 2 412 jobs.

Imagine the impact if targeted investment were directed towards recording studios, film production hubs and distribution networks across the country.

The global market also presents significant opportunities for Namibian creatives. International audiences are increasingly seeking authentic African stories, music, fashion and digital content.

Countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana have shown what is possible when creative industries receive sustained support. Namibia possesses similar potential. Our photographers, musicians, designers, filmmakers and animators can compete on the global stage.

However, talent alone is not enough. Government must address barriers that limit growth, including payment systems that make it difficult for freelancers and creators to earn income from international markets.

Ultimately, the creative economy offers a powerful avenue for generating wealth, creating jobs and expanding the tax base. It is youth-driven, adaptable and less vulnerable to automation than many traditional forms of work.

By formalising and industrialising creative output, Namibia can turn passion into enterprise, creativity into exports, and talent into sustainable livelihoods.

The government's upcoming National Development Plan 6 (NDP6) and the Cultural and Creative Industries Strategy must move beyond rhetoric and deliver meaningful action.

We must stop celebrating young Namibians only when they succeed abroad. We must invest in them at home, giving them the tools to build thriving businesses and create jobs for others.

The arts cannot remain Namibia's stepchild forever. It is time to give the creative sector the recognition, support and investment it deserves.



Africa rises with friends like China

• JOSEF SHEEHAMA

AFRICA stands at a critical moment in its economic development journey.

As global trade patterns continue to evolve, and economic alliances become increasingly important, African countries have an opportunity to strengthen their position within the global economy through strategic partnerships that promote industrialization, trade expansion, and sustainable development. One of the most significant opportunities currently emerging is China's decision to extend tariff-free access to African exports and the prospect of formalizing cooperation through the China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development Agreement (CADEPA).

In this context, Namibia and other African countries can deepen their engagement with China while simultaneously advancing the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Through stronger economic cooperation, African economies can accelerate industrialization, expand productive capacity, attract investment, and create employment opportunities that support long-term prosperity. Importantly, the strategic alignment of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Global Development Initiative (GDI), CADEPA, and AfCFTA presents a unique opportunity to transform Africa's economic landscape. Together, these frameworks provide avenues for infrastructure development, trade facilitation, technological advancement, industrial growth, and regional integration. China's engagement with Africa has contributed significantly to the development of transport networks, energy infrastructure, digital connectivity, industrial, and manufacturing capacity. Consequently, many African countries have improved their ability to participate in regional and international trade. Through CADEPA, these gains can be consolidated and expanded, creating a stronger institutional framework that aligns investment, trade, and development goals.

Furthermore, China's tariff-free policy represents a major breakthrough in Africa-China economic relations. As the first major economy to extend comprehensive tariff-free treatment to products from African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations, China is providing African exporters with unprecedented access to one of the world's largest consumer markets. This policy reflects a commitment to shared development and demonstrates China's willingness to support Africa's modernization through practical economic cooperation.

For Namibia, the significance of this development extends far beyond a technical adjustment in trade policy. Rather, it represents a strategic opportunity to transform key sectors of the economy. Agriculture, which remains an important contributor to employment and rural livelihoods, can benefit from expanded market access for products such as beef, mutton, grapes, and other agricultural commodities. As trade barriers decline, producers gain greater opportunities to reach international consumers and improve their competitiveness. At the same time, tariff-free access creates incentives for value addition and

agro-processing. Instead of exporting raw agricultural products, Namibia can expand food processing industries, develop cold-chain logistics systems, and strengthen agricultural value chains. As a result, greater economic value remains within the country while creating employment opportunities across production, processing, packaging, transportation, and distribution activities. The mining sector stands to benefit from increased investment and industrial upgrading. Namibia possesses substantial deposits of uranium, copper, lithium, rare earth minerals, zinc, and other strategic resources that are increasingly important in the global transition toward renewable energy and advanced technologies. Enhanced cooperation with China can support both resource development and downstream processing, thereby enabling greater participation in global value chains.

In addition, sectors such as light manufacturing, textiles, leather products, construction materials, and consumer goods can leverage improved market access to expand production and diversify exports. Such developments would contribute to reducing dependence on primary commodity exports while strengthening economic resilience. CADEPA offers opportunities for greater investment in infrastructure and productive capacity. Efficient transportation systems, modern ports, reliable energy supply, digital networks, and logistics corridors remain essential components of economic transformation. Through coordinated investment and policy cooperation, Africa can reduce transaction costs, improve competitiveness, and strengthen regional connectivity. The relationship between CADEPA and AfCFTA is particularly important. While AfCFTA seeks to deepen intra-African trade and regional integration, partnerships with external economies can provide capital, technology, and market access needed to support continental industrialization. Therefore, the two frameworks are not competing initiatives but complementary mechanisms that can reinforce one another.

Moreover, as African countries strengthen regional value chains under AfCFTA, improved access to Chinese markets creates additional demand for African products. Equally, investments in infrastructure and manufacturing can increase productive capacity and support greater intra-African trade. The combination of regional integration and expanded international market access therefore creates a powerful foundation for sustainable economic growth.

From a structural economics perspective, Africa continues to occupy a relatively low position within global value chains. Many countries export raw materials while importing higher-value manufactured products. Hence, economic growth often remains vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations and external shocks. CADEPA provides an opportunity to address these structural challenges by supporting industrial upgrading, export diversification, technology transfer, and skills development. Thus, human capital development remains central to long-term economic transformation.

Governor demands greater community say in green hydrogen projects

• STAFF WRITER

IIKHARAS regional governor Goab Gertze has called for extensive stakeholder consultation on planned green hydrogen projects, saying development initiatives should improve lives, respect cultural heritage and ensure local communities are involved in decision-making processes.

Speaking at a stakeholder engagement programme in Lüderitz on Monday, Gertze said development should not be imposed on communities without meaningful engagement.

"We do not want development that arrives in the region as a finished idea, with communities only informed at the end," he said.

"We want development that listens, consults and respects both national ambition and local realities.

We want development that protects the environment, respects cultural heritage, creates opportunities for local people and leaves behind lasting value in the region."

His remarks come amid growing calls from traditional authorities in southern Namibia for broader consultations to balance the economic opportunities presented by green hydrogen projects with the protection of cultural beliefs, heritage sites and ancestral land.

The stakeholder engagement programme forms part of consultations aimed at gathering input on Namibia's decarbonisation agenda and green industrialisation plans.

Namibia is participating in the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) Industry Decarbonisation Programme, which provides access to up to N\$4 billion (about US\$250 million) in concessional climate finance to support low-carbon industrial development.

According to the Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme (NGH2P), participation



> Goab Gertze

in the programme marks an important step in the country's efforts to position itself as a global green energy player.

Namibia was selected alongside a small group of countries from dozens of applicants to participate in the initiative, which is backed by a US\$1 billion global funding facility aimed at reducing industrial greenhouse gas emissions in developing economies.

The programme provides concessional financing to support industrial decarbonisation and has led to the development of a Sectoral Transformation Investment Plan (STIP), which is being co-

ordinated by the government through the Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme.

Gertze said stakeholder engagement remains critical to ensuring inclusivity, alignment with national development priorities and the promotion of local participation.

He said one of the key measures of success for the green industrialisation agenda would be whether young people are adequately prepared to take part in the emerging industry.

"One of the most important tests of this agenda will be whether our young people are genuinely prepared to participate in it," he said.

He welcomed ongoing efforts by government and development partners, including the German government, to invest in training and skills development for Namibians seeking opportunities in the sector.

According to Gertze, green industrialisation should not be viewed only through the lens of large-scale projects.

"It is not only about one flagship project.

It is about the ecosystem around it," he said.

He said opportunities linked to green industrialisation extend beyond energy production and include engineering services, logistics, transport, fabrication, accommodation, maintenance, utilities, water infrastructure, port services, environmental management, digital systems, safety services and supply chains.

The governor said the success of the sector would also depend on whether small and medium-sized enterprises in Lüderitz, Aus and other parts of the region are able to participate in emerging value chains.

He noted that 90 students from the Iikharas and Hardap regions are currently enrolled at vocational training centres and are expected to enter the growing

green industrial and renewable energy sectors after completing their studies.

"We must continue to build local skills, technical readiness and practical pathways into employment so that this new industry is not observed from a distance by our youth, but entered by them with confidence and competence," he said.

The CIF funding is intended to help Namibia develop clean technology supply chains, establish green industrial clusters and expand critical public infrastructure needed to support industrial transformation.

The programme is also expected to attract additional investment from international development finance institutions, including the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank.

Speaking at the same event, Iikharas Regional Council chairperson Gerrit Witbooi said residents of the region support the proposed developments, provided they create meaningful opportunities for local communities.

"Skills development and enterprise development are important for our people," he said.

Witbooi said the region is looking forward to the establishment of shared infrastructure that can support both economic growth and community development.

"As a region, we welcome these discussions because infrastructure remains important for national and regional development," he said.

He added that companies operating in southern Namibia should make greater use of skills and expertise already available in the region.

Witbooi said local participation must remain a key consideration as the country advances its green industrialisation ambitions, ensuring that communities in project areas benefit from the opportunities being created. **NBR**

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