

DAILY HANSARD

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THE THIRD MEETING OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT

FRIDAY 2 AUGUST 2024

ENGLISH VERSION

HANSARD NO: 214



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TABLE OF CONTENTS
THE THIRD MEETING OF THE FIFTH SESSION
OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT
FRIDAY 2ND AUGUST, 2024

<i>CONTENTS</i>	<i>PAGE (S)</i>
MINISTERS' QUESTION TIME.....	1-6
MOTIONS	
MOTION FOR THE ADJOURNMENT – DEFINITE	
MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	
PERSONAL EXPLANATION BY DR MATSHEKA.....	7-8
Establishment of Diverse Business Ventures in Agricultural Land <i>(Resumed Debate)</i>	9-10
Revamping Selebi Phikwe Economy <i>Motion(Resumed Debate)</i>	11-12



Friday 2nd August, 2024

THE ASSEMBLY met at 9:00 a.m.

(THE SPEAKER in the Chair)

PRAYERS

* * * *

MR SPEAKER (MR SKELEMANI): Pray be seated! Order! Order! Honourable Members, good morning. Now that we are quorated we may start our business with Minister's Question Time.

MINISTERS' QUESTION TIME

MINISTER OF HEALTH

THEME: DETERIORATION OF MENTAL HEALTH

Asked the Minister of Health:

- (i) whether he is aware that there seems to be a pattern of increasing murder, suicide, passion killings and similar tragic events across the country;
- (ii) whether his ministry does not consider these gruesome events to be symptoms or end results of a situation of worsening mental health within the nation;
- (iii) if any study been undertaken to determine the state of mental health nationally, especially post COVID-19 and in consideration of rising unemployment and tough economic conditions. If not, will the Minister consider commissioning such a study with a view to determining the causes of deteriorating mental health; and
- (iv) what does the Ministry of Health currently have in place in order to make the public aware of the importance of mental health as well as where and how they can seek help in times of need of mental health support.

MR M. BALOPI (GABORONE NORTH): Thank you Mr Speaker. Good morning to you and this House. Mr Speaker, I have question number one which is directed to the Minister regarding health. I will expand it. Is the Minister of Health aware of the increasing pattern of health deterioration in this country? We have started experiencing an increase of strange events. Most of these cases are suicide, murder such that a person

murders the entire family and there is also a growing rate of youth delinquency. It seems like all these events are caused by mental illness. Mr Speaker, we have raised constant concerns in this House that there seems to be a deep-rooted problem of drugs. Therefore, I believe we have to take it seriously and avoid our normal patterns where even a child could say things like, "you might be mad." Even in this Parliament or wherever, people can make remarks that a person might have some sort of mental illness. We might have made such remarks unconsciously without knowing that at the end, we might experience problems which we might fail to deal with.

Furthermore, this situation worsened especially post COVID-19 where most people lost their partners/spouses. Some of those who died were taking care of them financially leaving tough economic situations or a huge void in a lot of families. Some have lost the breadwinner in the family. Mr Speaker, I therefore want to know if the Minister is aware that all these issues are caused by the events I just mentioned. Does he have any plan to conduct a study which can speed up the process of addressing these issues? Mr Speaker, even us here, based on our actions, I am not only referring to the Honourable Members but everyone out there might have some kind of mental illness, it might be mild but you can see through actions that there might be some sort of mental illness. Mr Speaker, some people have a history of mental illness which was not deliberate but then we laugh at them. Sometimes we take them for prayers at our respective churches. Although prayers sessions are our faith, I think it is important Minister to address these issues, so what measures are you undertaking to address these issues especially mental illness? Furthermore can he share with the nation what measures they can undertake to address the challenges which currently exist at schools?

Last one Mr Speaker, I recently talked about one of the schools in the constituency I am representing, Ledumang Senior Secondary School, at which last year more than 500 students were suspended. They were suspended after they were found in possession of drugs at the school and selling them. What raised even more concern is that the class which can be said to be the cream of the school was the most affected. Mr Speaker, this informed me that our future is bleak. All this boils down to the issue of mental health. The stigmatisation I was talking about that there are negative remarks made like, "are you mad" Sometimes a person might



have a history of that illness and managed to stabilise it; imagine them hearing such a remark. Even those who believe the person has mental illness, expect the person to start acting strange. Mr Speaker, I therefore request that when the Minister responds to this question...

HONOURABLE MEMBER: Correction Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: I do not allow it, it is question time.

HONOURABLE MEMBER: The language used is not appropriate Mr Speaker.

MR BALOPI: Mr Speaker, we are talking about such things, sometimes we have to be careful of things which might affect...

MR KEKGONEGILE: Point of order. Thank you. Mr Speaker, before I can raise the point of order, the correction I wanted to...

MR SPEAKER: No, if you do not want the point of order, please take your seat!

MR KEKGONEGILE: The point of order I am making Mr Speaker is... hey! You are on my case today Mr Speaker, I do not know...

MR SPEAKER: No, if there is no point of order Honourable Member, take your seat!

MR KEKGONEGILE: I do not know what I have done. The point of order I am making is this Mr Speaker, when I requested for a point of correction, Honourable Balopi implicated that I have mental illness. I do not think that on its own is an appropriate way to address each other in this House, for someone who is representing people to be referred to as mad just because they are trying to correct. On top of that Mr Speaker, it is indecent to refer to people as mad, they are called people with a mental illness.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not understand you, are you saying they should not be called that because that is indecent or is it an insult or is it an unfamiliar Setswana word, or was there a modification made regarding that?

MR BALOPI: Mr Speaker, Member of Parliament for Maun East Honourable Kekgonegile did not understand me. I did not say people can be referred to as mad, I never said they can be called mad or that the word mad is appropriate. I was saying people are using this indecent word of mad and there is a need for public

education. If he is saying I am calling him mad, then turn to say people should not be referred to as mad, then we have a problem. If he could be implicating that I am saying that he is mentally challenged, and I have used the word mad to refer to other people, then I would understand him. He is calling himself mad because I never said that. Only for him to then turn and say it is an indecent word, I would have said that he is mentally challenged. That is the challenge we are facing, but I was not implicating. I said, you can see that it is the challenge that we are experiencing. Mr Speaker, you are the father of this House. When you try to comment then someone interjects, culturally interjecting when an adult is talking attests that there is a problem. I do not know what kind of problem it is. Those who are listening to us outside can see that we are losing our culture in this House if you speak and some interject.

HONOURABLE MEMBER: Who are you referring to as an elder?

MR BALOPI: No, the Speaker as the father, as an elder. This person is a leader at his party. Mr Speaker, I want to conclude by saying, it is very important Minister that the stigma and using denting words is not a good thing. You often hear people saying "this person is mad, or where they are from they are mad; they are from a family of mad people." I am using words that exist. We should start educating the public that it does not mean if there was someone that was mentally challenged, that household is done for. We should also conserve our culture, and start knowing that a child or a person is raised by the community that they live within. We should mention it because it is associated to health, if something happens in a certain household and other parents see that this is wrong and reprimand those children, it is possible to cause conflict between the parents to children who were reprimanded and those that did the reprimanding. This could cause problems in our households associated to mental illnesses.

Minister, how much are you doing? I know that there are hospitals, but public education. As we did exceptionally well during COVID-19 and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, how much are we stretching our programmes, mindset and ideas as Ministry of Health to prevent this challenge. Thank you, Mr Speaker. Once again, I apologise for how it all started Mr Speaker. I take it that you have forgiven me Uncle.

ASSISTANT MINISTER OF HEALTH (MR LELATISITSWE): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also



thank the member who asked the question. What are you saying Hikuama? When I speak, you should keep quiet. Firstly, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Boteti constituents for continuing to trust me. Mr Speaker, the issue that we are discussing here that people are depressed and end up where Honourable Balopi mentioned, that eventually we experience a lot of murder and suicide cases, it is evident that there is an increase on these cases in Botswana. I heard Honourable Balopi suggesting that as the Ministry, we must investigate to find out what causes these issues. Investigations have been conducted across the country, both globally and internationally. Investigations have been conducted relating to depression that people end up being put on medication to control depression. All the studies that were conducted globally give the same results. They show that using drugs, abusing alcohol, and not resolving issues when discussing them can affect mental health and the person ends up being sick. They end up being our patients at Ministry of Health. A lot of studies were conducted and the findings are the same.

Mr Speaker, the issue before us does not affect Ministry of Health alone. It is for us all as Batswana. if you recognise that the person you are with is not well, assist them. In the past, people stayed in extended families, and when a child got depressed, uncles and aunts would meet and intervene in the matter while there is still time. Nowadays children are not disciplined. Those are the things that cause depression, that a child ends up thinking that they are not taken care of and there is no one to talk to.

As the Ministry, we are also encouraging people to try their level best. These issues lead children to drugs. These are the studies that were conducted nationally and globally, and they still show that parents are not close to their children. They do not even ask the whereabouts of their children. In the past, these cases were not many because they were dealt with before they escalate. Mr Speaker, even their economy causes depression that people end up being in hospitals. The Ministry of Health passed a Mental Health Bill in Parliament, where all Members of Parliament were present and supported it Mr Speaker. It entails care given to patients dealing with mental health; how to address or handle them. My ministry also commemorates mental health day every year. Mr Speaker, this we do to remind Batswana that this issue exists and continues to grow. Therefore, you must refer to social workers or rush to our hospitals

whenever you note such a case. You will note that Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development placed social workers in villages across Botswana as a way of dealing with mental health related issues so that people do not end up being hospitalised. Ministry of Health also has nurses who specialise in mental health across Botswana Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, these are some of the factors that prove that mental health is one of the issues that Ministry of Health takes serious. Anyone who is in that stage automatically becomes our responsibility, so we will try our best to make them recover their mental state so that they can carry on with their day to day businesses. Mr Speaker, my ministry normally holds some campaigns which addresses issues of mental health. I highlighted that such issues not only come as a result of health related issues but emanate from our families. So it is very important to trace the root cause.

Mr Speaker, it is very important to trace these issues from the roots so that youth may understand that it is possible for them to encounter Gender Based Violence (GBV) when they grow up... We should also thank the first lady, Atsile's mother for standing against GBV related issues as they are a major cause of mental health issues where people end up admitted in our hospitals. For this reason, this issue is not solely the responsibility of Ministry of Health but Batswana at large. For example; Kekgonegile may buy an iPhone for his child only to discover that his neighbour's child is depressed and hates their parents thinking they do not love them. They might go as far as attacking his child just to cease that iPhone which may affect their live as they grow up. These are pressures of life, these are what you can pick from the studies conducted looking at mental health issues.

Honourable Balopi, studies were conducted and that information which indicates possible causes of mental health is available in the public domain. You will note that hospitals can only help to treat mental health to keep these signs under check. Therefore, Magosi, families, politicians including Batswana are required to pay attention to how they may pressurise their neighbours because that alone may end up causing mental health problems to a point where they end up being hospitalised. However, my ministry continues to inform people about mental health as it is clear that it is possible for any individual with depression to reach a stage where they are admitted in our hospitals.



Mr Speaker, mental health affects all of us so you may give them a chance to comment. This is not a matter of asking questions but also contribute since we all know that depression or loss of mental health can land one in our hospitals. I thank you.

MR KEKGONEGILE: Supplementary. Thank you Mr Speaker, let me greet Honourable Members and the nation of Botswana. Minister, we hear and agree with you that mental health is not solely the responsibility of Ministry of Health. We used to have joint ministerial or inter-ministerial GBV initiatives in the past. So when talking about mental health, do you have it? If not, do you not think time calls you to establish it? If at all you have it, what are the responsible ministries, can you give us an update regarding progress and how it operates?

Secondly, the truth is that Government can never manage to do everything on its own, we have Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) out there with capacity to assist with issues of mental health on everyday basis. It is evident that mental health is growing at an alarming rate and it is caused by various factors. So as a ministry or Government, do you not think time calls you to declare this a national crisis but prioritise and address it?

Lastly, mental health institutions; we normally take mental health patients there for treatment and all the sorts. When are we going to upgrade them? Right now, Letsholathebe Mental Institution looks like prison; it is not in a proper state that can provide various kinds of treatment from different experts. So when are you going to provide different experts because this institution is not only responsible for providing medicines? Thank you Mr Speaker.

MR LELATISITSWE: Thank you so much Mr Speaker. I appreciate the Honourable Member's contribution. It is true Mr Speaker, mental health issues affect Government and all Batswana in various ways. We also know that due to pressures of life, some may end up engaging in robbery and land in prison as a result. When they get there, they are rehabilitated to learn to accept challenges and thereafter, they go back home well equipped to face reality. Mr Speaker, my ministry usually has joint Gender Based Violence (GBV) initiatives which include different ministries. Our approach is to build a different mindset so that if you meet anyone that you do not agree with, you should not think that you have more powers to abuse them. That is mental health though it is not under our ministry. They are also undertaking the same initiatives to try to reduce depression. Even

when we go around during our campaigns, we invite all these departments including the police, social workers and psychiatrists. We hold joint campaigns because we understand that empowering a person... We also invite Magosi to these campaigns because cultural issues can also affect the mind. I believe we know someone in this House who ran away from his family who wanted to remove his teeth as a cultural practice. He ended up running away and grew up under his uncle's care. He is here, he was afraid of cultural practices. Right now he has teeth while others had their teeth removed. He was escaping cultural practices. If it were not of that, we know that culturally his teeth would be removed. He escaped to his uncle and lived...

HONOURABLE MEMBER: Point of order Mr Speaker.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: ... (Laughter!) ...

MR SPEAKER: What is out of order?

MR HIKUAMA: Mr Speaker, here is my point of order. Honourable Lelatisitswe is talking about people of a certain culture. I think it will be out of order to joke and speak ill of other people's culture. I think it can cause chaos and unrest. So ask him to stop talking about people's cultures that they respect. I am one of the people who are born into cultures that remove teeth. I am one of them and I am not ashamed of that culture. That my parents did not do that because of reasons or circumstances best known to them, I do not think that should be used in Parliament as a joke. It might offend those who are not here. He thinks he is taking a swipe at me but he is rather offending the people of that culture.

HONOURABLE MEMBER: He did not say he is referring to you.

MR HIKUAMA: He is saying someone in Parliament.

HONOURABLE MEMBER: 'Someone'!

MR HIKUAMA: Yes, he is saying 'someone in Parliament'. Among all the people here, the only person whose cultural practices include teeth removal is Hikuama. There is none among you who comes from a culture which practices teeth removal. So it is clear who he is referring to.

My point of order is that he should stop undermining other people's cultures and indirectly attacking them because that cannot promote peace and stability in the country. When you are a Minister, part of your



responsibility is ensuring that you are nurturing peace and tranquillity in the country and unify our people.

MR SPEAKER: Now we are going into a debate which I do not know...

MR HIKUAMA: My request is that he should cite relevant examples not the ones that can offend those who are not listening to him here. Thank you.

MR SPEAKER: Maybe I did not understand when you spoke. From what I heard, I do not think any culture was being undermined. It is possible for one to disagree with their cultural practices and if not careful, it can distress him/her.

MR LELATISITSWE: Thank you so much Mr Speaker. Maybe Hikuama thought I am joking when I raised the issue of culture. Mr Speaker, there is a young lady at Tonota. According to our Sekhurutshe culture, when this young lady was supposed to be married, her uncles asked for a lot of cattle. Since this bride to be's parents had passed away, she then concluded that her uncles do not want her to get married and she committed suicide. Mr Speaker, do you see what culture can do? Culture is culture. When her uncles demanded 10 cattle from the groom, she concluded that they do not want her to get married. She wrote a letter before committing suicide that 'they did not want me to get married since my parents are dead.' Do you see what culture can do? That is culture. That is why I was citing that example that sometimes when you instruct a child to do something; nowadays children can refuse and that is not undermining anyone.

HONOURABLE MEMBER: ...(Inaudible)...

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: ...(Laughter!)...

MR LELATISITSWE: Bakgatla also used to circumcise men. They were circumcising before the advent of... but some rejected that. That is culture. This means that there are some people who do not support culture and some do. It can also contribute to depression. Do not worry Honourable Member. I was not even aware that you are the one who ran away when a cultural practice had to be performed on you. You revealed yourself to the nation and I am not party to that.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: ...(Laughter!)...

MR LELATISITSWE: Honourable Kekgonegile asked a wise question. His question was on the availability of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The

Ministry of Labour under Honourable Mokgethi donates to NGOs to continue raising awareness of GBV. GBV is part of mental health issues. Ministry of Health also funds some NGOs to conduct public education on drug use. We have funded a lot of them in this country.

Honourable Member, we are already implementing your idea and I appreciate that you also realise that as a ministry, we cannot win this battle alone.

Upgrading of mental health institutions; I believe you and I visited Letsholathebe Primary Hospital in Maun. Its design, especially where depressed patients are admitted, is bad. I accept that. Even while we were in Maun, I said the company that is refurbishing that is on site.

On mental health issues, Athlone Hospital was constructed in such a way that there can be many deaths in the hospital. If a person is depressed they can hang themselves, he or she can do many things. The contractor is on site, we are trying to correct that situation. As Honourable Members, you passed the Mental Health Act in this Honourable House.

As I was saying, I will not retract the words that culture plays a role in mental health issues. I can give you studies Honourable Hikuama so you can read for yourself so that you can see which people have been terrorised by culture. In some instances, you were shown a girl and told to marry her without your consent. Some people relocated, going to other areas saying "I was given this man and told that he is my husband", probably an older man, and it is said "this is your man today." Such things can make people depressed. You should not think that when we say that, we are undermining our cultures. There are many good things we can benefit from culture Honourable Member. Do not be intimidated by culture issues. If I can tell you our Sekhurutshe culture, you may be shocked, but we love it. Thank you.

MR LUCAS: Thank you Mr Speaker. Even though the Honourable Minister is responding like he is playing, this is a serious issue that Honourable Balopi has tabled. Mr Speaker, Botswana has proved to be one of the unhappy nations according to reports from Happy Planet Index. We are said to be very low. We are in the same league with countries like Afghanistan, Somalia and Zimbabwe. Honourable Minister, since you were on point that it is not only the Ministry of Health, as Government have you at some point tried to contact Happy Planet Index to identify the things that



mostly lead to sadness in Botswana? Have you had that conversation? If you have not had it, do you not see that maybe it is important that you engage those who did this research so they can help you to identify the reason for this massive sadness in Botswana? Then when you know the cause, you would be able to make the interventions that can address this situation.

Secondly Honourable Minister is that, there are other reasons that are visible even when investigations have not yet been done. If you meet many Batswana, they highlight that they are not happy because they are unemployed. Others went to school but they are also unemployed. Others indicate a great need, sometimes even for sorghum. Such issues about this great need of life resources, what do you intend to do soon to deal with them because they can lead to depression? Where people ultimately become as Honourable Balopi was saying; some become overly aggressive, killing and doing all sorts of negative things.

What do you intend to do soon to deal with the things that lead to unhappiness in Botswana? Botswana is depressing because it looks like sadness is everywhere. You can find this sadness in people who are unemployed...

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Lucas, please these are supplementary questions, not statements.

MR LUCAS: I am concluding Mr Speaker. I want to highlight that they have to start being serious and deal with the things that make Batswana unhappy, which is documented by the Happy Planet Index. Thank you.

MR LELATISITSWE: Thank you Mr Speaker. The Honourable Member who is on the floor was lecturing social work at University of Botswana (UB). He is the biggest social worker in this country. When you see a social worker in your constituency, you should know that he or she is a product of Honourable Lucas. It is one of the ways to alleviate the anxiety of Batswana by sending social workers throughout this country Mr Speaker.

We introduced programmes that we give to social workers so they can assist Batswana. I believe that like he was highlighting what the Happiness Index is highlighting, some of it is caused by pressure from developments. If development overwhelms people, it can also lead to depression. Things change quickly. I think that you are a social worker, you know these things. It can bring a lot of pressure, finding the whole world having phones within a short period of time. That can bring change. When you

travel to other countries that are bigger than Botswana, you find that they do not have the things that are in Botswana, they are gradually getting there. That change can lead to massive depression. I am not against these issues. You can see that Government of Botswana has educated many people while the Botswana market was not growing. We find that people have information that they have nowhere to use. They end up being depressed which makes them to be unhappy like you are saying. I think that we can talk all day if we want to talk about Batswana's happiness. We have to use your graduates so that everyone can use this knowledge where they are so they can fill the gaps like you were saying.

We hear you, the other reasons I think other ministries are listening, when they get to the ministries, they will respond to the points that you addressed. I think I answered you Honourable Member. Thank you.

MR BALOPI: Thank you Mr Speaker. I have been listening to the Honourable Minister and Honourable Members responding to these issues. One issue that he addressed is that this issue starts from home, and goes to our jobs. Honourable Minister, this issue that ministries can work together, in your view is that not necessary? I know who you are talking about in other ministries like social work and others. I wonder if Ministries of Local Government, Labour and Home Affairs, Finance and Health, face this massive challenge, which I liken to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and COVID.

As it is in Botswana, mental illness is starting to spread in our country, do you not think that you can discuss this issue at ministry level, even though I am aware that decisions are taken somewhere? There are financial matters, labour related and health issues like we have been saying. Do you not think you can do that?

The issue of families Mr Speaker; for example, as we are currently preparing for elections, the greatest abuse is felt by the politicians. I have never heard of counselling offered before going for the primary elections, general elections and post elections. The families of those politicians are the ones who are going to suffer the most following the outcomes of the elections, perhaps after losing.

As we engage in these political discussions, do you not think it is crucial to provide adequate education? We are facing a widespread issue of depression. There should be dialogue and empathy. We should avoid



using names and anything else that could affect the emotions of politicians' families. Do you realise that this behaviour is abusive towards a colleague and does not reflect well on them before the nation? These actions may inadvertently undermine their pride and loyalty to politics, potentially affecting their children, households, and families. As a Minister, are you aware of the long-term impact of these actions? How can you advise other Honourable Ministers within ministries on safeguarding each other? Let us avoid actions we will later question or regret. Instead, let us focus on initiatives we can support and lead.

Mr Speaker, this is a significant issue. I heard the Minister mention that they are hosting trainings, seminars and even family fun day events to engage with these individuals. I want to see a comprehensive campaign, similar to the detailed discussions we had about HIV/AIDS and COVID. It should not appear as routine work done by social workers and other people. With those words Mr Speaker, I believe we have discussed this matter thoroughly. I urge the Minister to address these issues promptly. I appreciate the comprehensive comments from other Honourable Members.

MR LELATISITSWE: Thank you Mr Speaker. Honourable Balopi has provided advice that I will present to the Minister of Health, Dr Dikoloti. He suggested a national campaign on mental health. I also urge all Honourable Members to discuss this issue in their constituencies, households, and with Magosi. We should evaluate whether our cultural values still serve us well. As politicians, we must recognise that our campaign language can sometimes be oppressive and shocking. For instance, phrases like, "They are so full, they are even vomiting," have been used by some politicians.

HONOURABLE MEMBER: ... (Inaudible) ...

MR LELATISITSWE: Yes, statements such as those Honourable Reggie. Those words may hurt someone and make them feel insulted. Honourable Members, let us try to protect other people's feelings because sometimes it seems as if politicians do not have emotions. Words can incite conflict among those around us Honourable Mmolotsi. As an experienced politician, you know that if my nephews heard certain words, they might end up fighting. They might think we are fighting instead of trying to convey a message. I recommend that we safeguard each other and protect each other's emotions. Thank you Mr Speaker for the time.

MR REATILE: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, we should thank Honourable Balopi for this question and for responding to it with such passion. In life, there are people who suffer from depression and require appropriate institutions to help manage their emotions. I never knew the extent of this issue until a friend asked us to take him to a psychiatric hospital. When we asked why, he expressed that he was suffering from depression. So, we took him there. Since he went there, he was assumed to be crazy. However, he came back fine, not crazy at all. He is an engineer who has lived in Canada, and he asked to be taken there. Honourable Member, have you considered having facilities where individuals with depression can be treated, a place other than Lobatse, as Lobatse often breeds slanderous comments when you go there. I thank you Mr Speaker.

MR LELATISITSWE: Thank you Honourable Member. I am grateful that you were responsive to someone seeking help. Honourable Members, when someone is overwhelmed with emotions, they can feel it. However, in our Setswana culture, when someone tries to express how they feel, some people laugh at them. I thank you Honourable Reggie for what you did. It is true Mr Speaker that when someone is depressed, we, as health practitioners, can admit them and stay with them until they feel better. The only problem is our Setswana ideology where someone who finds themselves in these hospitals is often referred to as crazy, as the Honourable Member indicated.

Mr Speaker, we are trying to educate our children that these individuals are our clients, and we want them to feel better.

We are building a rehabilitation centre in Serowe to admit those who have suffered from depression and turned to drug abuse. Our goal is to help them recover and reintegrate into society free from drug abuse and harmful activities that could endanger their lives and livelihoods.

Mr Speaker, depression affects everyone, including engineers and highly educated individuals, as the Honourable Member mentioned. It does not discriminate and can impact one's education. We are nearing the completion of our rehabilitation centre and our intention is to provide help to everyone suffering as Honourable Reggie described, before they return home. Thank you Mr Speaker.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION BY DR MATSHEKA

DR MATSHEKA (LOBATSE): Greetings Mr Speaker. Greetings to you all Honourable Members of Parliament.



Honourable Speaker and Members of this House, as per Standing Order 43.1, I approached the Speaker to seek consent to deliver a personal statement. I met with the Speaker on the 31st of August, to share the personal statement that I will be making. As per the rules, I was granted permission to make the statement as I hereby do.

Mr Speaker, I am making this statement as I noticed consistent and passive references to the events that happened to me in the various innuendos made in defence of injustice done to a citizen of Botswana and a Member of the National Assembly of Botswana. I think such incidents cannot be defended by any Member of Parliament (MP) nor Executive or Cabinet.

Mr Speaker, today marks exactly two years since my arrest and detention by the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS). Mr Speaker, I took an oath in this House to defend and protect the Constitution of Botswana in order to ensure the peace and tranquillity of this country. We all love our country irrespective of the positions we occupy in society. I would like to put on record that I am indeed nearing the end of my term as a Member of Parliament for Lobatse Constituency, and will not seek reelection into this House. In economics Mr Speaker, we call it free entry and forced exit. I was abused and forced to exit.

I want once again, to thank the young and old people of Lobatse for the faith that they placed on me to be their Member of Parliament. Little did they know Mr Speaker, that it would be the same people that they had put in power who would cause me pain and frustrate the developments of our town. I will use any opportunity to thank the people of Lobatse, and indeed the whole country.

Mr Speaker, I was born and raised in a democratic and peaceful Botswana. I would like future generations to repeat these words and confirm that we bequeath a healthy and vibrant democratic state where there are no threats to one's life when they hold a different view from others and even authority. It can never be in a democratic state where people and even representatives in this House are afraid to participate in debates for fear of marginalisation. We are citizens first and then we can belong to any formation that is legally recognised.

For the record Mr Speaker, I was born in Mahalapye, exactly where the bus rank is today. I also had the privilege of growing up in Kazungula where my late

father was working in Kasane. I spent my youth days in Lobatse and Molepolole. I stayed at Mokgalong Ward, at Mr Mahatelo's place, and completed my secondary school at Kgari Sechele. Molepolole indeed Mr Speaker, is my second home. My mother even worked at the Co-operative. Bakwena are saddened by what happened.

I have never at any stage in my life been suspected nor asked to account for any wrong doing. I still do not do any wrong to warrant arrest by law enforcement, let alone the DIS. I have lived peacefully and contributed to this economy and country for the past 40 years. I am still contributing and hope to set an example to young people to follow in our footsteps and not succumb to hatred and jealousy. To young people, I say to you, your future is in your hands, you can only change things if you stand up.

Mr Speaker, two years ago on the 2nd of August which is today, and after attending a virtual meeting of Parliament, Members of the DIS stormed my house with sirens and lot of cars to arrest me. I asked them why they were at my house, naturally they refused to state the reasons. The only thing that I shall hear when I got to their offices at Sebele, along the Francistown road, they further refused to identify themselves, it was quite strange, of course professing that their act does not allow for them to show their identity, but we know them now; we know them.

There was a young man that had come to see me after sending him for errands, who was also arrested, and was told equally that you will know when he is at Sebele. It is strange in our country Mr Speaker; it is not the Botswana that I have known for many years. They also arrested a lot of my network of friends, subjected them to torture and abuse, seeking to force them to implicate me in their own stories. It is important therefore Mr Speaker, to surround yourself with men and women of principle, otherwise they would have betrayed me. Sellouts Mr Speaker, feed out of dead carcasses.

I had actually heard way before Mr Speaker, that there was a plan to implicate me. I did not believe that this could happen in this country, but then again, many have been arrested before and denied freedom, only for nothing to happen. The culture of falsifying all fabricating charges or arbitrary arrest should not be acceptable for any reason, even political reason. Any system holding itself to the highest standard of the rule of law would not be so silent in the face of all that has been happening to citizens at the hands of the DIS. The silence beats me Mr Speaker, as well as many who hear statements about the commitment to the rule of law.



The whole situation started weeks before when the Director of the DIS went to address a Kgotla meeting in Lobatse. Even the District Commissioner did not have the courtesy of informing the local MP, because that was not the plan. The DIS, Mr Speaker, is responsible for the riots and damage to property that took place in Lobatse, it is not the people of Lobatse.

Mr Speaker, the principle of separation of powers is the cornerstone of a democratic and rights based Constitution. I stand here Mr Speaker, as a direct beneficiary of that basic principle. I witnessed, as did the whole country, and indeed the world, when it emerged that there were attempts to influence the court process to have me detained illegally. There were alleged calls that were made to a Judge of the High Court by a member of the Executive seeking to influence them to pass a judgement away from the law. It was even scary for me Mr Speaker, when the Judge made allegations against the Chief Justice. The Law Society Mr Speaker, joined the fray to voice against such conduct as unacceptable, to say the least. It is unknown what action was taken save to say a deal has clearly been made to sweep the matter under the carpet. There was no judicial inquiry into this grave matter. It is indeed as I have said before, business as usual. We start to doubt if there is indeed the rule of law. These type of things Mr Speaker, should receive the scorn of all those that profess to protect and defend the Constitution of Botswana. Where are the addicts of the rule of law when this happened within Government? Why do these things go unpunished in our country? They must receive the strongest condemnation from all proponents of the Constitution. They should never be rewarded as they currently are being rewarded.

Mr Speaker, I spent five days behind bars being moved around cells in Gaborone, from Tlokweng, all the cells you can imagine, sleeping on the floor and wondered what I had done to be treated like this by my own Government. I prayed and said the Lord will fight my corner.

Mr Speaker, as I was being driven to the High Court in Lobatse, the Botswana Television (Btv) was being called by the officers who had me in custody to make sure that they are at court. It was well staged by the DIS and Government, I hasten to say. They made sure to put leg irons on me and create the impression of a wrongdoer.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank those that stood with me during these trying times, and witnessed the worst

form of political persecution. It is the first in the history of Botswana that a former Minister, a legislator, has suffered this type of mistreatment.

Mr Speaker, let me thank those that stood with me, in particular, I would like to thank Ditshwanelo for reporting this clear case of arbitrary and forced detention to the United Nations. This is to bring awareness that not all is well as reported in my own country. I remain clear in my spirit Mr Speaker, and conscience about the falsehoods that were spread by the DIS and its handlers. I pray that Batswana wake up to this reality and accept that an injury to one is an injury to all, and nobody is safe until we are all safe. I thank you Mr Speaker.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: ...(Applause!)...

MR SPEAKER: Order! Order! Honourable Members, Order! Thank you Honourable Dr Matsheka. Let us proceed Honourable Members to Motions.

MOTION FOR THE ADJOURNMENT – DEFINITE MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Establishment of Diverse Business Ventures in Agricultural Land

(Resumed Debate)

MR SPEAKER: Order! Order! Honourable Members. Honourable Members, should note that this Motion is left with 25 minutes. When the House adjourned on Friday 15th March 2024, His Honour the Vice President, Honourable Tsogwane was on the floor debating and was left with three minutes 56 seconds. If you want to continue Your Honour, you still have three minutes 56 seconds.

HIS HONOUR THE VICE PRESIDENT (MR TSOGWANE): Mr Speaker, I have been looking to try and see if Ministers responsible for Agriculture are here because my hope is that after this Motion, they can respond. I do not know if the procedure is such that they have to respond to the Motion. In any case, I think it is a long time, one might not even remember what he has said and is bound to repeat a lot of things that he has said. Perhaps next time Motions should have a time limit, they should lapse if they take two sittings, because one may seek the records to check what they said, so that they do not repeat themselves.

In any case, this is in public domain that our policy allows all the things sought by this Motion under the



transformation to try to encourage Batswana to use their farms to benefit them. It is just something that is already there which is being done, which is being encouraged to all Batswana so that they can use their agricultural land to venture into businesses. I think...I do not know why the Motion is tabled in this manner whereas it is clear and publicly known, even the mover of the Motion, I do not know if the Minister did not explain these things in his response. All these things are allowed Mr Speaker and they are doable under the current transformation to try and encourage value chains. We even said that. People are allowed to use their agricultural land for fodder production and establish value chains. This is doable Honourable Members.

With those few remarks Mr Speaker, that is what the Government is doing and currently allowing as we speak. I thank you.

MR LEUWE: On a point of procedure Mr Speaker. Thank you and good morning Mr Speaker. Last time I requested that we should perhaps be informed of members who are connecting virtually so that we can see if we form a quorum when we add them to our number. If you look around, it is sad, people went outside. We do not know how many are connecting virtually so that we can form a quorum. Can we be alerted on that so that we can assist Mr Speaker. Thank you.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Leuwe. We are quorated. There are six who have joined virtually. Our clock is ticking and I said the Motion was left with 25 minutes. I think it is time to call upon Honourable Letsholo to reply to the debate.

MR LETSHOLO (KANYE NORTH): Thank you Mr Speaker. Good morning Honourable Members. Mr Speaker, this Motion has already been tabled and presented so I would like to shoot straight to thanking Honourable Members who commented on this Motion which I presented before this House. Let me indicate that as we might recall, all Honourable Members who had the opportunity to debate on this Motion supported it. They indicated that they believe it can benefit the nation even more.

To remind others Mr Speaker, we explained that... or rather as His Honour the Vice President said, there is a part of the Motion which is being implemented. If we recall, when I presented the Motion before this House, I indicated that although this Government allowed Batswana with agricultural land to venture into

some other business in 2019, the guidelines were that they should be related to agriculture. Therefore, this Motion seeks to add other ventures that are not related to agriculture such as diverse meat production, filling stations, spas and others which I shared when presenting this Motion. So, I was adding on to those which were already there.

Mr Speaker, since I indicated that all Honourable Members supported the Motion I presented, I would like to respond to a few. It shows that...the Honourable Minister responsible for land supported this Motion. He indicated that it would reduce waiting lists because if a person has a farm or arable field, they can venture into other various businesses without having to apply for another piece of land to establish the other business...

MR MANGWEGAPE-HEALY: On a point of elucidation Mr Speaker. Thank you Honourable Member for Kanye North going to Kanye East now. I would like to profusely applaud you for bringing this Motion because if you look at our challenges and you said to foster inclusive economic growth in Botswana. Take the capital city Gaborone as an example, maybe Mmamashia or Boatile, you will recognise that most Batswana sold their lands (*masimo*) because their economy did not allow them to develop them as they wished doing what is called change of land use, because there is an economical challenge on a lot of people. I want to commend you and say if those people did not encounter that challenge they could have managed to use their land which...

MR SPEAKER: Order! Order! Sorry Honourable Healy, the quorum has collapsed.

...Silence...

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Healy.

MR MANGWEGAPE-HEALY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me not use most of your time Member of Parliament, I wanted to commend you that if this was passed in the past most Batswana could have had an opportunity for wealth, those are ways of wealth that we always hear of. I want to commend you and the constituents of Kanye that they saw it important to return you to Parliament because you represent people, and you want to change the lives of Batswana including the constituents of Kanye. Thank you Honourable Member of Parliament (MP).

MR LETSHOLO: Thank you Honourable Healy, what



you just said is true. Mr Speaker, while we are still talking about reducing the waiting list of land applicants that was mentioned by Minister Mzwini as he was agreeing with this Motion, I am taking this opportunity to commend the Government of Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) for reducing the waiting list for land applicants as we saw an example last time in Ngwaketse in Kanye, which was evident that, we managed to meet the set target by the Government of allocating 100, 000 plots. We must indicate that, that is something we must commend and our wish is for another target to be set so that Batswana can be assisted with plots. Mr Speaker, the other Member of Parliament that showed that he supports this Motion is Honourable Leuwe and gave an example that he believes that it is going to be very beneficial to his constituents because they have *masimo*(fields) by the road that they could turn into filling stations.

MR SPEAKER: According to me the quorum has collapsed again. The Vice President (VP) and Mokgatla have gone out.

...Silence...

MR SPEAKER: You may continue.

MR LETSHOLO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was still saying, Honourable Leuwe indicated that he supports this Motion and how it can benefit his constituents. I believe that they are not the only ones, even others will benefit from this Motion. Mr Speaker, the other person that commented is Honourable Kedikilwe, who expressed his supports the Motion. He explained that his constituents love Honourable Letsholo a lot. If he was around I would tell him to pass my regards to Mrs Kedikilwe because he indicated that she is in a good relationship with Honourable Letsholo. Honourable Moatlhodi also expressed his support for the issue that I put before Parliament, indicating that, he accepts the past Motions from Member of Parliament for Kanye North, and requested that the constituents of Ga-Maila ensure that the Member of Parliament Honourable Letsholo return to Parliament in October. I cannot see him here, but I did explain to him that they heard him Mr Speaker, I did that through primary elections. Constituencies like Makapane, Maisane, Taueshele, Molapowabojang, Lotlhakane East and even Ga-Maila, believe that the Member of Parliament Honourable Letsholo should be a candidate for general elections. Mr Speaker, I would like to thank him for the beautiful words about the Member of Parliament Honourable Letsholo.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity again as I am concluding to accept that Honourable Mzwini promised that if the Parliament passes this Motion it will be implemented quickly. There are other Members of Parliament who stated that other Motions took time to be implemented, he confirmed that as soon as Parliament accepts this Motion, he will implement it. Mr Speaker, with that because there is not much to say about this matter as we all support it in one accord I request this House supports this Motion as it was read Mr Speaker. I so move.

Question put and agreed to.

REVAMPING SELEBI PHIKWE ECONOMY

Motion

(Resumed Debate)

MR SPEAKER: Order! Order! Honourable Members, the debate on this Motion is resuming. When the House adjourned on Friday the 1st March 2024, Honourable Nkawana was on the floor debating and he was left with 1 minute 29 seconds. Honourable Nkawana.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: He is not around.

MR SPEAKER: If he is absent, it means he cannot be here. The floor is open.

...Silence...

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition (LOO), you may reply to the debate.

MR KEORAPETSE (SELEBI PHIKWE WEST): Thank you Mr Speaker. It seems the quorum has collapsed. You will note that this Motion has a summary of all the issues that I talked about throughout the years I spent in Parliament.

The motion sought to request Government to consider reviving Selebi Phikwe economy through the mining industry. The first thing to do looking at the Department of Mines is to relocate the Department of Mines Headquarters to Selibe Phikwe. Some may think this thing cannot create jobs in Selebi Phikwe but the honest truth is that, it is possible. You will recall in the past that, we did not have the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP) at Selebi Phikwe but right now we have this department at small scale and that alone created jobs at Selebi Phikwe; we engaged attorneys who spend money



at Selebi Phikwe. Those offices have staff and some supply them with various materials. You will note that the headquarters is congested and you can see from the traffic so relocating it to the town will be decongesting the city. This means mine related services will be handled at the town.

Mr Speaker, the most important point is to prioritise Selebi Phikwe when it comes to base metal processing such as smelters, refineries and manufacturing facilities. This corresponds with what was called BCL Polaris II Strategy when BCL was operating. Therefore, it is important in terms of turning Selebi Phikwe into a manufacturing hub for base metals. I am impressed in the sense that, Special Economic Zone Authority (SEZA) announced that indeed Selebi Phikwe will become base for metal processing right after I talked about this issue. Yes, what they said differed a bit from what I had proposed but it is basically similar. It is exactly what I had proposed at Selebi Phikwe.

Honourable Manake took this issue lightly by asking how it can create jobs at Selebi Phikwe. Let me give an example; those who have visited Robben Island Museum know that former Robben Island prisoners who fought against apartheid will tell you what happened there. You will also note that the late Dr Michael Dingake who served there for 15 years, is one of their reference group. So in response to Honourable Manake's question; Shaft Number has depleted more or less since it is shallow. This means it is one of the shafts that can be used for museum and a museum can create jobs. How? Machine boys, *dichibase* and *dikurubos* can be employed at the museum to show people how they used to mine copper and deliver stock at Selebi Phikwe. Those who graduated from history, curators, archivists and management of museums can also work at Selebi Phikwe museum. How possible is this? You will note that museums are always surrounded by shops that sell souvenirs and other products and that alone can create jobs. It may also generate income since many people will develop interest when seeking to know about the history of Selebi Phikwe. So, Honourable Manake; yes, museum can create jobs and employ the people of Selebi Phikwe the same way museums from various mines operate in other countries. For example; Big Hole Museum or Kimberly Museum in Northern Cape, the Gold Mine Museum in Gauteng, south of Johannesburg and next to Booysens, and this is a venture by the Chamber of Mines which created jobs in South Africa. The same goes for Mining Museum in Namibia and

Britannia Mine Museum in Canada. So, Honourable Manake is at liberty to reject this Motion bearing in mind that she is denying former employees of Selebi Phikwe museum some jobs.

Mr Speaker, apart from museum, we have various events who boast about the concept of holding Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) just like Rwanda who hosts international conferences. Mr Speaker, I have requested us to consider this issue because we can host mine related conferences there. That is why I urge you to prioritise Selebi Phikwe the same way trade unions answered the call that requests them to hold most of their events at Selebi Phikwe. So, we are pleading with you Honourable Moagi to consider so that International Future of Mining Conference, bid to host, World Mining Congress, Mine Closure Conference and Mineral Processing Conference can be held at Selebi Phikwe. The people of Selebi Phikwe desired to host Botswana Mining and Energy Conference which started from the 13th to the 14th of March. Hosting was going to enable our hotels, lodges and other businesses to generate income at Selebi Phikwe. Subsequently, jobs can be created so prioritise this town Honourable Moagi for mining events as requested by this Motion. You will be denying Selebi Phikwe the opportunity to generate income if you reject it.

Mr Speaker, the 11th Parliament adopted the Motion I presented before Parliament which requested the House to relocate the Department of Mining and Geological Engineering and the Engineering and Technology or the College of Engineering and Technology from Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) in Palapye to Selebi Phikwe. What were the reasons? Selebi Phikwe has a mine where students can go for training. Shaft Number One that I talked about is not only suitable for a museum but also suitable for research. We know that in the past, Government sent Selebi Phikwe Technical College artisans for apprenticeship more especially those specialising in boiler making while others went to BCL for training. We know that the University of Botswana (UB) collaborates with Okavango Research Institute in Maun. However, other universities have satellite campuses outside their towns. We know the importance of a university when it comes to the economy of a town, as we know that Grahamstown has Rhodes University.

When you talk of Stellenbosch you are talking about Stellenbosch University. The Stellenbosch University



is an integral part of the Stellenbosch town. We know that part of Grahamstown's economy relies on Rhodes University.

That is why we are saying, part of the Selebi Phikwe's economy should rely on Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) satellite campus that will be set up in Selebi Phikwe. That is possible. BIUST has conducted studies and we want them to continue beyond that Mr Speaker.

In conclusion Mr Speaker, Selebi Phikwe was dealt a heavy blow by the mine liquidation. So we are saying, it is not all doom and gloom, there is something that can be done to resuscitate the economy of Selebi Phikwe. I heard Honourable Moagi saying that there are no plans to relocate the department. Yes, we are not saying there are plans, we are saying consider making a plan to relocate the Department of Mines. It is just a consideration.

You mentioned that mineral processing is not ideal for Phikwe business case but Special Economic Zones Authority (SEZA) holds a different view. They are rather saying the time must be prioritised.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Keorapetse, the quorum is gone.

MR KEORAPETSE: Oh! Have they left?

MR SPEAKER: Yes, when Honourable Member for Kanye left...

...Silence...

ADJOURNMENT

The Assembly adjourned at 11:07 a.m. until Monday 5th August, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.



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