

OIPINION BY JEREMIAH NAMBINGA

THE REALITIES OF THE COUNTRY'S FINANCIAL PREDICAMENT

The state of the nation's financial position is not as sound as it should have been, considering 26 years of our independence. While the concept of economic redress against the background of historic inequalities which came about as a result of apartheid has been the subject of much discussion over the years, with government promising to formalize measures and mechanisms to this end, the government plan, in its current format, risks further damaging an already ailing economy, and destroying or discouraging a true practice of entrepreneurship.

A number of procedures have already been put in place over the years to address past injustices and inequalities in an attempt to level the playing field. They include affirmative action requirements, monitored by the Employment Equity Commission, Grooming tenderpreneurs, commissionpreneurs, the Big man syndrome and imposing levies on private companies to promote vocational educational training.

If these, and others, have not helped advance the cause of reducing disparities, then we need to go back to the drawing board to determine why these are not working, and do our homework properly before advocating a measure, NEEF bill which clearly will not address what is intended in any case.

The government of the republic of Namibia is repeatedly reported broke or bankrupt. For some reason, the former and current presidents with their teams are living in total denial that they are directly responsible for the country's financial situation, while spending tax payer's money on expensive and regular trips that brings nothing than just disgrace to service delivery and socio-economic development. The president has been warned and cautioned several times that the tax payers money is being misprioritised in terms of government's expenditures.

We have somehow started planning our national development priorities on the wrong note. Instead of widespread consultation prior to putting pen to paper, government simply came up with a development plan of its own. This is an already expensive exercise which could be reversed politically, in which case it must all start again from scratch.

After 26 years of independence, during which a new set of elites have benefited handsomely, in turn widening rather than narrowing the gap between the haves and have-nots, therefore it is high time we focus our combined efforts only on the presently disadvantaged sectors of the country.

President Geingob has started off as if paying back the efforts by his friends that have been behind his presidential election campaign. His administration introduced 3 new ministries that are just not relevant to the country's economic growth. Such administration comes with costs, such as minister and deputies' salaries, permanent secretaries, directors, and other administrative staff, office rentals, purchase of new vehicles and their maintenance, office furniture and equipment etc. All these could have been just departments or

directorates in the existing ministries, such as the Social Welfare in the Labour Ministry, instead of a Poverty Eradication Ministry to mention but just a few examples. In an economy that was already ailing, the portfolio of the vice presidency is also insignificant and it has costed the country's already struggling coffers to shrink.

Geingob further went ahead by appointing the so-called his A team with higher salaries and perks. The appointment of two deputy ministers in some ministries was also a wrong move and all that comes with costs. All these ongoing ill-conceived acts are dragging the country's coffers deep into regrettable crisis, as will be realized in the foreseeable future.

Politicians did, with no shame increase their already higher salaries and benefits. This has serious costs and financial implications to the state coffers.

Also, the increase of the National Assembly seats, from 72 to 104, was for the sole purpose of benefiting SWAPO Party in terms of financial allocations per seat, after having worked out a strategy of rigging elections, and in so doing securing for itself majority of seats in Parliament. All these have negative financial impact of Government coffers.

This proves to every mindful Namibian that, the elites are more concerned about their stomachs than the masses they claim to represent.

Corruption has been repeatedly raising and mostly on public procurement, where the majority of the service providers rely on. The high levels of extreme poverty among a small population of less than three million, demonstrate that Namibia is socio-economically, politically, morally and financially bankrupt and corrupt.

The ongoing social exclusion and discrimination are both major causes and consequences of the high levels of poverty being encountered in an Independent Namibia by numerous social groups, such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, indigenous people, persons living with disabilities and the elderly. Having fallen into poverty traps, these groups are regularly exposed to systematic stigmatization and discrimination on the grounds of their poverty stricken status, which perpetuates and aggravates their situation even further.

Analysts and commentators have repeatedly strongly emphasized that Namibians have to look at the priorities in our country. They are echoing many other critical voices on the subject. The immediate priorities include the drought situation, property prices, and unemployment. There is a huge demand for housing and food production. There is a huge demand for employment. There is a huge demand for adequate healthcare and there is a call for major improvements in our education system.

Every year the unemployment rate increases, because of school dropouts and school leavers after Grade 12, who cannot go further with their studies. We have a crisis with national debt increasing rapidly, the fuel prices, and with the currency exchange rate against other currencies.

They further said all these factors add up to put the country under immense socio-economic pressure. They further mentioned the water crisis the country faces and the fact that half the population must still use the bush, because of a lack of proper sanitation facilities. One

doesn't need to be a genius rocket scientist to see that most of the government priorities such as the new OPM office and the parliament building do not weigh up against all the above mentioned national priorities".

Legislators need to think critically, by looking at Namibia beyond their lifetime, Namibia beyond their bank accounts, farms and all the materials they have accumulated through questionable means. Go back and look at the crises the country faces and look at the merits and demerits of a new parliament against that and decide for themselves what is more important.

People are allowed, by law to ask their constituency representatives whether something has been dealt with at committee level and whether consultations have taken place. There is an ominous lack of citizen participation in pertinent matters, which leads to people air their concerns only on social media. Therefore, parliament should provide platforms for the electorate to make their input in crucial matters.

There is no hope of a medium or long-term solution to the existing inequalities or deficiencies through what would simply be an injustice. There is only short-term political gratification for some, and more wealth for others, unless we change the way we run the affairs of the country.

The way in which to change the plight of disadvantaged Namibians is through a quality educational system, and support for further opportunities in terms of training and qualifications in order to upscale and develop expertise and competencies, do away with Ethnicity, tribalism, regionalism, nepotism and other social and political evils destroying this nation.