

Meat Board

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“study projects” without going through tender procedures. The name of the child of one of the senior managers who landed herself a lucrative bursary to study at Stellenbosch has also been supplied.

Contacted for comment, Meat Board General Manager, Paul Strydom, refused to discuss the allegations, saying that he first needed to know who the sources and the authors of the letters were, which Namibia Today is in possession of, before commenting on allegations.

“I am not in a position to answer you now,” said Strydom. “Tell me who those people are or who wrote those letters which you claim to have in your possession before I discuss these things with you. Bye.”

Namibia produces some of the best red meat in the world, grown in a natural environment, with animals eating natural vegetation, uncontaminated by growth stimulants, antibiotics or animal by-products.

Namibia's red meat is validated by an assurance scheme, known as the Farm Assured Namibian Meat Scheme, FANMEAT, which is the first comprehensive scheme of its kind in Africa. FANMEAT falls under the Meat Board of Namibia.

The scheme validates the production process, starting on the farm and continuing to the consumer. It ensures that the product is safe, healthy and of prime quality.

Education

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The Ministry of Education has been the perennial receiver of the biggest share of the country's national budget since independence in 1990, followed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

This year, the Ministry of Defence is the second biggest recipient, having been allocated over N\$3,014 billion, followed by the Ministry of Finance, which has received just over N\$2,6 billion.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, which received just over N\$2,5 billion this financial year will see its total allocation increase to N\$8,171 billion over the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, from 2010/2011 to 2012/2013.

Housing, sanitation and rural development have also received a considerable share of the budget, which will increase to over N\$2,8 billion over the MTEF. This is in line with the SWAPO Party government's policy of promoting rural development.

Over the MTEF period, over N\$257 million is earmarked for the provision of proper sanitation infrastructures in rural areas and in small towns, villages and informal urban settlements, bringing the total allocation to this sector to N\$2,869 billion over the MTEF.

The National Housing Enterprise, NHE, will receive N\$50 million over the MTEF to speed up the provision of low



Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila.

income housing. Moreover, NHE will work together with the Government Institution Pension Fund, GIPF, to expand housing schemes for civil servants in un-proclaimed areas.

“This will not only give a boost to the housing provision programme, but it will also help attract skills to rural areas and thus support quality health care and education service delivery in rural areas. It will also support the use of our local savings towards supporting local development,” said Minister Kuugongelwa-Amadhila.

Natural unfortified wine has increased by 16 cents, sparkling wine by 51 cents, fortified wine by 31 cents, clear malt beer by N\$3,79 to N\$50,20 per litre of absolute alcohol. No tax concessions are proposed this year.

The total expenditure envelop for the MTEF amounts to N\$85,668 billion, and consists of N\$68,802 billion operational

expenditure, while N\$14,558 billion will be accorded to the development budget.

Old-age grants have increased from N\$450 a month to N\$500,00 per month. There are over 155,847 beneficiaries at the moment. Orphans and Vulnerable Children's grants have been increased by N\$30,00 per month, and school

feeding programmes are being expanded to reach over 200 000 orphans and vulnerable children by 2013, from the current 160 000.

Caption:

Budget allocation per ministry and agency as tabled by Finance Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila on Tuesday.



Outgoing IUM's Vice Chancellor Dr David Namwandi delivering his farewell speech. Photo by Uapi Ngava.

Namwandi bids farewell to staff

THE International University Of Management (IUM) Vice Chancellor' Dr David Namwandi on Wednesday this week bade farewell to the institution in acceptance to his call by President Hifikepunye Pohamba who appointed him as Deputy Minister Of Education last Sunday on the occa-

sion of the 20th anniversary of Namibian Independence.

The New Vice Chancellor, Virginia Namwandi whom the University's Governing Council appointed as “Acting” Vice Chancellor is the “first student of the Institute Of Higher Education,” the forerunner to the IUM and a founding member

of the university. Until recently she has been the registrar.

Dr Namwandi was elected by the SWAPO Party Electoral College as one of its 72 proposed members to the National Assembly in the General Election of last year in which SWAPO Party walloped to an overwhelming two-thirds ma-

majority. The more salient changes in the university are that the former Deputy Chairperson, Dr. Helen Nkandi-Shiimi becomes the Chairperson of the Governing Council while Bishop Kleophas Dumeni becomes the Chancellor, while the Deputy Vice Chancellor becomes Professor E Taylor.

Obama

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nounced the Afghanistan “surge.” Obama made no mention of plans to begin withdrawing troops in July 2011. On the contrary, he stressed that the US occupation in Afghanistan will continue indefinitely.

“The United States of America does not quit once it starts on something,” he told the troops. “You don't quit, the American armed services does not quit, we keep at it, we persevere and together with our partners we will prevail.”

In his speech nearly four months ago, Obama insisted that the time frame for beginning a US withdrawal was essential in that it demonstrated that “America has no interest in fighting an endless war in Afghanistan.” His failure

to mention it to the troops on the ground there strongly suggests that the American ruling elite has no intention of leaving the country.

The US President's visit came as the American military is preparing another bloody offensive in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar Province, one that will bring US troops into urban combat in the crowded city of Kandahar, with its population of 900,000.

Quoting a “senior military official,” the Associated Press reported Monday that US-led forces will launch the offensive in June, with the aim of driving the Taliban out of Kandahar City, the former capital of the Taliban, before the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in August.

Even before this offensive, the casualty rate among occupation troops has risen sharply. The number of US troops killed in Afghanistan during the first two months of

this year rose to 57, double the number killed in January and February of 2009, when 28 died.

The number of wounded has soared, reaching 381 in the first two months of 2010, compared to 85 during the same period last year, an increase of nearly 350 percent. Just in the first six days of this month, 44 US troops were wounded, an average of over seven a day. This compares to 50 US soldiers and Marines wounded in the entire month of March last year.

With both the coming Kandahar offensive and the traditional spike in fighting that takes place in the summer, these escalating casualty rates are expected to rise even more steeply.

While the US media, citing administration officials, has largely portrayed Obama's meeting with Karzai as a sharp exchange based upon US impatience with long-standing corruption in the Kabul puppet regime, there are strong indications that there were more pressing and immediate concerns.

In particular, there is anger within Washington over Karzai's recent trips to Iran and China, which are seen as a challenge to US dominance in Afghanistan.

“He's slipping away from the West,” the *New York Times* quoted a senior European diplomat as saying.

The weekend before Obama landed in Afghanistan, Karzai was in Tehran celebrating the Persian New Year with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. While there he also met with Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This follows Karzai's

welcoming Ahmadinejad on an official visit by the Iranian leader to Kabul early this month.

Under conditions in which Washington is pursuing an increasingly bellicose policy towards Iran, demanding increased sanctions and increasingly floating threats of military aggression, this rapprochement between its Afghan client regime and Tehran represents a slap in the face to the Obama administration.

During his own trip to Afghanistan earlier this month, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates made the unsubstantiated allegation that Iran is providing unspecified aid to Afghan forces resisting the US-led occupation and threatened US retaliation.

Of similar concern is a three-day trip that Karzai made to China last week. Washington has indicated resentment over Chinese investments in the exploitation of Afghan natural resources and other areas of the country's economy, initiatives that it sees as somehow illegitimate because of Beijing's refusal to support US military operations in the country.

In an editorial entitled “China's role in Afghan dilemma,” published on March 25, on the eve of Karzai's visit to Beijing, the official *China Daily* bitterly expressed a diametrically opposed position, accusing Washington of exploiting its military presence, and the pretense of fighting terrorism, to dominate the country and its economy and threaten Chinese interests.

“The US has a huge number of troops in Afghanistan that provide security for its assistance projects,” the paper stated. “America gets pri-

ority in project selection because it offers ‘protection’ to the Hamid Karzai government. Its economic input is aimed at paying for its military operations. In contrast, Chinese enterprises face great risk while working for Afghanistan's reconstruction and encounter fierce international competition in getting a contract. Unlike the US, Chinese investments are mainly in roads, hospitals and schools, and come without any riders.”

The editorial continued: “The US has an offensive counterterrorism strategy, in which Afghanistan is being used as a pawn to help it maintain its global dominance and contain its competitors. China, on the other hand, pursues a defensive national defense policy and wants to have good relations as a neighbor of Afghanistan.”

In an unmistakable warning, the editorial stated: “China cannot stay oblivious to the Afghan issue. The chaos caused by the war in Afghanistan is threatening the security of China's northwestern region.”

USA Today published a series of revealing interviews with Afghans on their response to Obama's visit, indicating that they saw it within the prism of US geopolitical interests and conflicts with rival regional powers.

The paper quoted Majib Rahman, a civil engineer, who said that Obama “wanted to show that troops will be here for a longer time. He wanted to show their presence to Iran, to China, to Russia—to show them their dominance in the region.”

Similarly, Mohammad Khan, a member of the Afghan parliament, told *USA Today* that Obama had come “to scold Karzai for recent visits to Iran, Pakistan and China.”

“In the private talks, (Obama) must have pressed on these issues,” he said. “It's not possible to maintain two strategies: to have friendship (with the Americans) and to make plots with America's enemies.”

And Shamsuddin Fazeli, 50, who has sold fuel to US forces during the occupation, said that the US military was in Afghanistan not to fight terrorism but to assert US interests in the region.

“The Taliban are a small group. If Obama and the international community really wanted peace, they would have it in two months,” said Fazeli. “They found (former Iraqi president) Saddam Hussein in a basement in the desert, but why haven't they found Osama bin Laden, (Taliban leader) Mullah Omar? That means they're not serious about peace. They want to change Afghanistan into a battlefield to conduct attacks on other countries.”

Clearly the US war in Afghanistan, now in its ninth year, is stoking far wider geopolitical tensions and sowing the seeds for what could prove a far bloodier and wider conflict. Obama's sudden visit to Kabul was driven in no small part by concern that despite his military “surge” and the continuing sacrifice of US troops, US imperialism could still face a steadily deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and, ultimately, loss of control to its rivals. **WSWS**

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