

CARD SWIPING LIMITS
PAN warns businesses
against imposing minimum
card swiping limits
p. 10



MINING
Call to halt illegal
sand and gravel
mining in Namibia
p. 12



SCHENGEN VISA
Schengen visa
rejections for
Namibians
p. 18



THE BRIEF

News Worth Knowing

Local shuttle businesses face pressure from foreign vehicles



FRIDAY 16 JANUARY 2026

MAIN STORY



Local shuttle businesses face pressure from foreign vehicles

While temporary imports of foreign vehicles can help meet peak demand, they should not come at the expense of Namibian businesses, industry leaders and government officials have cautioned, as rising demand for shuttle and car rental services continues to expose capacity constraints in the local market.

Gitta Paetzold, Chief Executive Officer of the Hospitality Association of Namibia,

Crucial Dates

- **Bank of Namibia Monetary Policy announcement dates:**
 - * 18 February 2026
 - * 22 April 2026
 - * 17 June 2026
 - * 12 August 2026
 - * 21 October 2026
 - * 02 December 2026
- **Namibia Oil and Gas Conference 18–21 August 2026 in Windhoek**

said strict regulation is essential to protect local operators and ensure fair competition within the tourism and transport sectors.

She said all tourism-related businesses, including shuttle service providers, are regulated under the Namibian Tourism Act and are required to register with the Namibia Tourism Board.

“All tourism-related businesses, including accommodation providers, tour operators and shuttle operators, must be registered with the Namibia Tourism Board to ensure they comply with guidelines and maintain quality assurance,” Paetzold said.

Paetzold acknowledged that Namibia’s relatively small market can face fleet shortages during peak travel periods, making temporary use of foreign-registered vehicles unavoidable in some instances.

“In high season we do not always have enough capacity. In those cases, operators must apply for special permits with the Roads Authority and the NTB to obtain temporary licences,” she said.

However, she warned that allowing unregulated foreign operators into the market undermines Namibian businesses, reducing value addition and job creation.

“All local shuttle operators register and

rely on fair business opportunities. It is unfair when other operators enter the market without following the rules and regulations of our authorities,” Paetzold said.

Minister of Works and Transport Veikko Nekundi outlined the legal framework governing the operation of foreign-registered vehicles in Namibia, drawing a distinction between private use and commercial transport.

“If you bring a vehicle into Namibia for private travel, you only need a cross-border permit,” Nekundi said. “But if you are transporting people or goods within

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Namibia for commercial purposes, you need a carportage permit.”

He said Namibian-registered shuttle companies using foreign-registered vehicles must comply with permit requirements and are prohibited from picking up passengers domestically without authorisation.

“That vehicle cannot pick up passengers unless it has the proper permit. A driver may have a cross-border permit for personal use, but domestic transport for reward requires a carportage permit,” Nekundi said.

Nekundi said domestic transport for reward is tightly regulated to ensure local businesses remain competitive. Foreign vehicles may only operate temporarily under permit systems and for clearly defined purposes, such as cross-border transport.

“All you need a carportage permit for

is when you are using a vehicle to pick up a person or an object from one point in Namibia and drop it at another point within the same jurisdiction. That is not otherwise allowed,” he said.

Both Paetzold and Nekundi said compliance with the permit system is critical to maintaining the integrity of Namibia’s transport and tourism sectors.

“We fully support measures to ensure the right quality of service is provided and that Namibian businesses benefit before foreigners take over,” Paetzold said.

Nekundi added that Namibia’s regulatory approach aligns with international practice.

“You can go to South Africa, the same law applies. You can go to Botswana, the same law applies. This is not just Namibian law; it is standard across other states,” he said.



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Blue Telecommunications secures CRAN approval for OneWeb services in Namibia

Blue Telecommunications (Pty) Ltd, a licensed subsidiary of Radio Electronic (Pty) Ltd, has received regulatory approval from the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) to deploy Eutelsat

OneWeb services in Namibia.

Eutelsat OneWeb operates a Low Earth Orbit satellite network designed to deliver high-performance, low-latency broadband connectivity, particularly in areas where terrestrial networks are limited or unavailable. The service targets enterprise, government, maritime, aviation and critical infrastructure users.

Francois du Toit, Chief Executive Officer of Radio Electronic, said the approval marked a significant milestone for both the company and the country.

“This is a proud moment for Radio Electronic and for Namibia. Securing regulatory approval enables us to introduce Eutelsat OneWeb’s advanced LEO connectivity to the country for the first time,” du Toit said.

“This achievement reflects our long-standing commitment to innovation, bridging the digital divide, and supporting Namibia’s growth in the digital age.”

According to Bron Sykstus, Regional Account Manager at KVH Industries, which is partnering Radio Electronic, the approval also represents a first for the company, whose partner has now secured regulatory clearance for land-based LEO deployment, extending connectivity beyond maritime applications.

Eutelsat said the collaboration would contribute to improving broadband availability, performance and affordability across

Namibia.

“We are pleased to celebrate this milestone alongside Radio Electronic and Eutelsat. This is the first time a KVH partner has secured regulatory approval for land-based LEO deployment, underscoring the strength of our partnerships and the growing relevance of OneWeb services,” Sykstus said.

With the approval in place, Namibia joins a small group of early adopters of LEO satellite connectivity in Africa, positioning the country for improved digital inclusion and broader technological advancement.



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Embracing vocational education as a catalyst for youth employability and skills development in Namibia

By Junias Erasmus

Namibia stands at a critical juncture in its efforts to prepare young people for meaningful participation in the labour market.

The recent release of the Grade 11 and Grade 12 national examination results has once again ignited public debate about the effectiveness of the education system in responding to the realities of youth unemployment and skills shortages.

While academic excellence continues to be celebrated, the results reveal that a large number of learners do not meet the requirements to progress along the traditional academic pathway, leaving many young people uncertain about their future prospects.

This reality highlights the urgent need to reposition vocational education as a central pillar of Namibia's development agenda.

The most recent examination outcomes show that less than half of Grade 11 and Grade 12 learners qualified to progress to higher academic levels, meaning that the majority will not continue through conventional academic routes.

In several regions, even fewer learners met the progression criteria, underscoring persistent inequalities and systemic challenges within secondary education.

These outcomes are not merely indicators of academic performance; they are reflections of a broader structural problem in which the education system remains overly oriented toward university preparation, despite the fact that the labour market cannot absorb



Vocational education offers hands on, industry relevant skills that align more closely with the needs of the economy.

all academically trained graduates.

Against this backdrop, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) emerges as a strategic and practical response to Namibia's youth employability challenge.

Vocational education offers hands on, industry relevant skills that align more closely with the needs of the economy.

Rather than focusing solely on theoretical knowledge, TVET equips learners with competencies that enable them to transition directly into employment or self employment. In economies that have successfully embraced vocational pathways, young people are better integrated into productive sectors and experience smoother school-to-work transitions.

Vocational education should not be perceived as an option of last resort for learners who do not excel academically. Instead, it must be recognised as a respected and viable pathway to economic participation and social mobility.

Namibia's economy continues to require skilled artisans, technicians, technologists, agricultural specialists, ICT practitioners,

and service professionals.

These skills cannot be supplied through academic education alone. Strengthening vocational education is therefore not only an educational necessity but an economic imperative.

Encouragingly, recent examination outcomes suggest that more learners are performing better in technical and vocational subjects, indicating growing acceptance and engagement with skills based learning.

This trend demonstrates that when learners are exposed to practical, relevant training, they are more likely to succeed and remain motivated. Vocational education also fosters critical life skills such as problem-solving, adaptability, entrepreneurship, and work discipline, attributes that are essential in a rapidly changing labour market.

To fully harness the potential of vocational education, Namibia must move beyond policy rhetoric to decisive action.

This includes investing in modern training facilities, strengthening the capacity of vocational instructors, and deepening partnerships between training institutions and industry.

Employers should play an active role in shaping curricula to ensure alignment with labour market needs. Equally important is a national effort to change societal

perceptions that continue to privilege academic education over technical and vocational pathways.

The recent Grade 11 and Grade 12 results should serve as a wake up call rather than a point of despair. They present an opportunity to re imagine an education system that values diverse talents and multiple pathways to success.

By embracing vocational education as a core component of youth development, Namibia can transform educational outcomes into employability, dignity, and sustainable livelihoods.

Ultimately, vocational education is not about lowering standards; it is about broadening opportunity. For Namibia to unlock the full potential of its young population, vocational education must be positioned at the heart of national development, as a catalyst for skills development, economic resilience, and inclusive growth.

** Junias Erasmus works in the Financial Sector. He is a Management Scientist and Operational Researcher, a Strategic Scholar & a Motivational Speaker. This article is written in his personal capacity. For inquiries, contact him at Junias99@gmail.com*



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PAN warns businesses against imposing minimum card swiping limits

The Payments Association of Namibia (PAN) has warned that the continued practice by some businesses of imposing minimum spend requirements for debit and credit card payments is illegal and violates national payment regulations.

PAN said it has observed cases where merchants either restrict card usage based on transaction values or add surcharges to card payments, practices it

said undermine the integrity of Namibia's National Payment System.

The association said such conduct is in direct contravention of Visa International Operating Regulations and Mastercard rules.

“PAN has learned that some merchants are adding a surcharge to card transactions or are setting minimum or maximum transaction amounts as a condition for accepting debit or credit

cards for payment,” the association said.

“Such practices have a negative impact on consumers and are in direct violations of Visa International Operating Regulations and Mastercard Rule 5.11.3.”

PAN reminded merchants that all valid debit and credit cards must be accepted without discrimination and treated in the same manner as any other payment method. No additional costs may be passed on to consumers, and card payments must be honoured regardless of the transaction value.

The association said acquiring banks have been instructed to ensure that merchants under their supervision comply fully with card operating rules. This includes preventing the application of surcharges or the enforcement of minimum or maximum purchase amounts for card transactions.

According to PAN, penalising consumers for using cards unfairly shifts the cost of electronic payments onto the public and discourages the use of safe and convenient cashless payment methods.

“Carrying around large amounts of cash poses a risk to the individual. With a debit or credit card, consumers can pay for goods and services in a safe and secure manner,” PAN said, adding that card payments also offer a faster and more convenient way to shop.

Members of the public have been encouraged to report non-compliant merchants to PAN.

Where violations are confirmed, the association may notify the relevant acquiring bank, which is required to ensure that the merchant immediately discontinues the practice. Persistent non-compliance could result in remedial action under the Payment System Management Act of 2023 or sanctions in line with card operating rules.

The warning follows earlier statements by the Bank of Namibia (BoN), which has cautioned merchants against enforcing card swiping limits and stressed the responsibility of the banking industry to prevent minimum or maximum purchase restrictions on card transactions.



Call to halt Illegal sand and gravel mining in Namibia

By **Indileni Ndeshipanda Daniel**

I am deeply concerned by the continued increase in illegal sand and gravel mining activities across various parts of Namibia.

These activities are being undertaken without the required Environmental Clearance Certificates issued by the Environmental Commissioner, as stipulated under the Environmental Management Act, 2007 (Act No. 7 of 2007).

Additionally, I wish to remind all individuals, businesses, local and traditional authorities that any sand and gravel mining activity must be preceded by an environmental impact assessment, environmental management plan and the issuance of an environmental clearance certificate from the Office of the Environmental Commissioner.

I have noted major compliance issues in this regard with some individuals and



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A practice that is unlawful and a direct violation of the country's environmental laws.

businesses irresponsibly mining sand without the necessary certification. A practice that is unlawful and a direct violation of the country's environmental laws.

Illegal sand mining poses danger to the environment, people, livestock and wildlife, such as land degradation, erosion of riverbanks, destruction of wetlands and agricultural land like mahangu fields.

Illegal sand mining also results in visual and landscape scarring, leaving behind unsightly excavations that degrade the natural beauty and aesthetic value of

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Illegal sand mining poses danger to the environment, people, livestock and wildlife, such as land degradation, erosion of riverbanks, destruction of wetlands and agricultural land like mahangu fields.

affected areas. Such impacts threaten water and food security, grazing land and biodiversity.

The open pits left behind by illegal sand mining operations fill with water during the rainy season like now, posing a serious risk to wildlife, livestock and human beings, particularly children.

While I acknowledge the growing demand for sand and gravel driven by national development priorities of new roads, housing and other infrastructure, development cannot come at the cost of irreversible environmental degradation.

Proper regulation of sand and gravel mining is therefore essential to balance economic development with environmental protection.

In this regard and in response to the foregoing challenges, the government through the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism will soon be undertaking stakeholder engagements in

all regions on the draft sand and gravel mining regulations under the draft Environmental Management Amendment Bill.

The regulations are a needful ingredient in the implementation and enforcement of the Environmental Management Act.

I therefore encourage the public and stakeholders to attend environmental public consultations and workshops, such as these regional engagements, to provide their local inputs to the draft regulations and to understand the legal requirements for mining sand and gravel. I call upon all Namibians to desist from the irresponsible and unregulated illegal sand and gravel mining and to comply fully with the existing environmental laws.

****Indileni Ndeshipanda Daniel is a lawmaker and Cabinet Minister responsible for environment, forestry and tourism.***



Parliament urges tighter AI regulation amid growing digital risks

Namibia's Parliament has warned that weak regulation and a lack of accountability in artificial intelligence (AI) could pose serious risks to democracy and human life, amid the rapid expansion of digital technologies.

The warning was issued by the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Phillipus Katamelo, who said parliaments around the world are developing national AI laws, but stressed that technology cannot be regulated effectively in isolation.

"Where there is power, there must also be accountability. You cannot allow systems to exercise power without putting safeguards in place," Katamelo said.

He pointed to the role of the International Telecommunication Union

(ITU), describing it as a United Nations agency with 194 member states and more than 1,000 companies, universities and international and regional organisations involved in global digital transformation.

Katamelo said while the ITU plays a central role in facilitating international connectivity, spectrum allocation and technological interoperability, it lacks explicit provisions for ethical oversight.

"When you read further, its core mandate says to facilitate international connectivity in communication networks, allocate radio spectrum and satellite orbits, and ensure seamless technological connections. But there is nothing of ethical accountability within that statement," he said.

He contrasted this with multilateral



The National AI Strategy promotes ethical AI adoption across key sectors through a decentralised approach, while complementary legislation such as the Data Protection Bill addresses data privacy issues critical to AI systems.

platforms such as the Commonwealth, which he said allow countries to share best practices and strengthen democratic institutions through collective frameworks.

Katamelo argued that global digital bodies should be held to similar accountability standards.

“For them to access power at an international level, they must also have safeguarding mechanisms that hold institutions accountable,” he said.

He warned that the absence of accountability in digital governance could undermine sustainable development and threaten democratic systems.

“If we don’t do that, we are losing sustainable digital transformation. Instead of enhancing our lives, it could endanger them. For short-term gains we are allowing this, but in the long term it becomes a serious threat to democracy itself and to human life in general,” Katamelo said.

He called on the ITU to expand its mandate to include moral and ethical responsibility alongside its technical functions.

“As a UN organisation, its principles

should not only be technical. There is also a moral and ethical responsibility in maintaining digital transformation,” he said.

Katamelo delivered the remarks at the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth, held in New Delhi from 14 to 16 January 2026.

The comments come as Namibia currently lacks comprehensive, enacted AI-specific legislation. As of January 2026, governance of artificial intelligence relies on a recently launched National AI Strategy, draft legislation and related policy frameworks.

The National AI Strategy promotes ethical AI adoption across key sectors through a decentralised approach, while complementary legislation such as the Data Protection Bill addresses data privacy issues critical to AI systems.

A Draft AI Bill is under development to establish ethical standards and accountability mechanisms for AI deployment, alongside the Data Protection Bill of 2023 and the Cybercrime Bill, which aims to counter technology-enabled and AI-related threats.



How FNB Namibia's 2025 Pricing Strategy Is Redefining People-Centric Banking

In today's fast-evolving financial landscape, one truth remains constant: people want a bank that truly gets them. A bank that meets them where they are, understands their daily realities, and innovates to create a real impact.

FNB Namibia has stepped decisively into that space with a bold new pricing structure that signals more than a refresh of fees. It signals a shift in philosophy and takes affordability and accessibility beyond compliance into human-centred innovation.

With its 2025 pricing update, FNB Namibia has placed one message at the centre of its strategy: Help Changes Everything.

A Pricing Strategy Puts Namibians First

While the new pricing structure features many new highlights, the key among them

is that there will now be zero charges on all local (Namibian) card swipes, a historic first for the Namibian market.

For many Namibians, this isn't a small change. It's meaningful relief amongst rising costs, enabling customers to transact safely and affordably without the hidden costs that often discourage card usage.

"At FNB Namibia, we believe banking should be simple, fair, and in touch with the real lives of the people we serve," says Mbo Luvindao, CEO of FNB Retail Banking. "This pricing update is not just about lower fees — it's about creating real value and building trust with Namibians across every region and walk of life."

Leading Innovation Through Customer-Centricity

Behind the updated pricing is an

extensive strategic review grounded in one principle: solving for the customer. The bank studied how Namibians transact, what barriers they face, and how financial tools could better support their daily decisions.

The result is a model designed to increase ease, reduce costs, improve accessibility and empower customers to embrace digital channels with confidence, from rural entrepreneurs to young professionals navigating digital banking for the first time.

Supporting Businesses With Heart And Strategy

FNB's customer-centric focus extends beyond individuals. FNB Business Banking is tailoring its support to reflect the realities of Namibia's economic engine, from micro enterprises to corporates shaping national growth.

"Our pricing strategy isn't just about numbers — it's about people," says Philip Chapman, CEO of FNB Namibia Commercial Banking. "We're proud to lead with heart and to offer a banking experience that meets Namibians where they are. We believe that no two businesses are the same, which is why our 2025 pricing is designed to provide real help that drives sustainable growth by reducing cost

barriers and supporting businesses where it matters most."

Far from being a routine annual adjustment, the bank's pricing model is part of a long-term commitment to building a globally competitive Namibia by creating a banking environment that enables entrepreneurship, supports financial literacy, and strengthens the foundation for inclusive economic growth.

The reaction from the public has been overwhelmingly positive, with many calling the new pricing a welcome relief in challenging economic times.

With other highlights of the strategy including a reduction in fees through alternative channels such as Cash@Till and Cash Plus, it's clear that the bank's commitment to helping is resonating across both individuals and businesses.

As digital adoption accelerates and consumer expectations evolve, FNB Namibia's approach sets a new standard: truly modern banking is not just technologically advanced, it is empathetic, accessible, and tailored to the lived experience of the people it serves.

For more on FNB's pricing strategy, visit www.fbnamibia.com.na or any FNB branch near you.



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The banner features a vertical red bar on the right side. At the top, the Namibian flag is partially visible. Below the flag, the text 'Fly Namibia' is written in large, white, bold letters, with 'our most recent edition!' in smaller white text to its right. Further down, the slogan 'We rise by lifting others.' is displayed in white. Below the slogan, there is a call to action: 'Click below to read the latest issue of FlyNamibia Magazine — your onboard guide to travel inspiration, aviation and proudly Namibian stories.' At the bottom of the banner, there is a white button with a right-pointing arrow and the text 'READ ONLINE'. The bottom portion of the banner shows a collage of FNB staff members in uniform, smiling, against a background of the Namibian flag.

Schengen visa rejections for Namibians

By Ian Coffee

For many Namibians, Europe represents a gateway to new possibilities, whether for business, education, or cultural exploration. Yet, the journey often begins with a critical hurdle: securing a Schengen Visa.

This is not a mere formality; it is a compliance-driven process where even minor oversights can lead to rejection. In 2024 alone, 14.5% of Schengen Visa applications were denied, amounting to 1.7 million refusals globally.

For Namibians, this means that without meticulous preparation, the dream of attending a conference in Berlin, negotiating a deal in Paris, or exploring opportunities in Amsterdam can quickly turn into a costly setback.

Understanding why these rejections happen, and how to prevent them, is the first step toward ensuring your European plans succeed.

The reasons are consistent and unforgiving. False or forged documents trigger automatic refusal and can lead to a 5 year ban. Unclear travel purpose, such as vague itineraries or missing proof, signals risk to consular officers.

Insufficient financial means, often evidenced by weak or inconsistent bank statements, is another common cause. Invalid travel insurance, failure to meet the €30,000 coverage requirement, or lack of Schengen-wide validity result in immediate rejection.

Finally, weak ties to the home country, no job, property, or family evidence,



A practice that is unlawful and a direct violation of the country's environmental laws.

raise concerns about overstays. Previous visa violations or alerts in the Schengen Information System compound the problem.

These are not clerical errors. There are structural weaknesses in the application process. Each one reflects a failure to anticipate compliance standards.

A standard Schengen Visa costs €90 (+- N\$ 1725.00) per adult. Add courier fees, appointment scheduling, and time invested in preparation, and the sunk cost of a failed application becomes significant.

For executives, the real cost is higher: cancelled meetings, missed negotiations, and reputational damage. When rejection occurs close to travel dates, recovery options are limited. Express processing, where available, adds €70–100 (additional N\$ 1,300 - 1,900), but cannot override fundamental compliance failures.

The complexity of Schengen regulations is often underestimated. Requirements vary by applicant profile, travel purpose, and destination country. Consulates apply strict scrutiny, and minor inconsistencies can derail an application.

Professional agencies mitigate these

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A standard Schengen Visa costs €90 (+- N\$ 1725.00) per adult. Add courier fees, appointment scheduling, and time invested in preparation, and the sunk cost of a failed application becomes significant.

risks by ensuring complete, consistent documentation, validating financial proofs, and aligning itineraries with declared purposes. They understand biometric protocols, insurance compliance, and the nuances of consular expectations.

For organisations, outsourcing this process is not an expense; it is a safeguard. It prevents wasted fees, protects executive schedules, and ensures adherence to evolving regulations. With European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and Entry/Exit System (EES) introducing new layers of control, the margin for error will shrink further. Agencies equipped with expertise and digital tools will become indispensable.

Visa compliance is not an administrative detail. It is a component of corporate risk management. A rejected application is more than a lost opportunity; it signals procedural weakness. For decision-makers, the question is straightforward: Do you have the systems and partners to ensure mobility without disruption?

The cost of professional assistance is negligible compared to the financial and reputational impact of failure. In global mobility, prevention is not optional.

It is the only rational strategy.

****Ian Coffee is the Chief Operation Officer IBN Immigration Solutions Namibia. Legal Immigration Expert***

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