

Inadequate political and parliamentary accountability

In this article we focus on political accountability.

During numerous presidential speeches, corruption is mentioned but nothing radical and/or transformative has been undertaken (partly due to protection of vested interests) to embark on a systemic and holistic approach to reduce corruption.

No Presidential Commission of Inquiry Report about corruption cases (more than 10) has ever been released for public consumption. The declaration of Parliamentarians' financial and business interests have been undertaken three times, with the latest characterised with secrecy and very limited transparency, because it is not open for public scrutiny. Perceptions in the media, as illustrated by President Hifikepunye Pohamba's daughter who received a bursary from the Chinese government as well as allegations of political influence in securing major construction tenders, do not auger well with public perception that conflict of interest is at play at the highest leadership level.

Another example is the alleged association between our current President and a Chinese business leader who has been charged with numerous cases of fraud and money laundering. Is our President compromising his leadership position due to his association with the latter businessmen?

DISTRUST HAS A CHAIN EFFECT

What is important to realise is even if these allegations are not true, it has a very damaging effect on the public's trust in leaders if such leaders do not provide proof to refute such allegations with facts and clear their names with absolute certainty in their credibility. Namibians are losing trust in, and respect



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for political leaders and it has a chain effect on the rest of society where people tend to demonstrate increasing distrust of each other socially and in business dealings.

The executive dominates the legislative. Most parliamentarians are also Cabinet members, creating perceptions that Cabinet members (the executive) are accountable only to themselves (the President appoints them).

The proportional representative system, which makes the whole country one constituency, with parliamentarians representing all voters and no constituency in particular, does not ensure public accountability.

The quality of Parliamentarians is illustrated in the limited public debates about bills. Sometimes there is no quorum in Parliament, legislative oversight, e.g. years of delays in sorting out legislative minefields, and inefficient regulations are created.

In some newspapers it has been reported this week that ministers were not available for answering questions in Parliament. In effect, it means that parliamentary accountability cannot be fulfilled.

References

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