

## **MP calls for Freedom of Information Act**

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PARLIAMENT - Lobatse MP Nehemiah Modubule has called for the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act.

Modubule said the act would go a long way in ensuring that the public had access to information.

The understanding is that government is holding information on behalf of the public and it should not be a problem when the public want to access that information.

He made the comments when debating the draft broadcasting policy. On other issues, he allayed fears expressed by some of his colleagues that the advent of community radio stations had the potential to divide the nation.

He said the policy being discussed had a provision for rules and regulations that would call for higher standards of professionalism.

He also complained that the current arrangement relating to media coverage for political parties was favourable to the ruling party as the partys leadership in the person of the president of the country also president of the ruling party and his deputy, also chairman of the party were given unlimited access to the state media.

He suggested that leaders of other political parties be given the same treatment. Calvin Batsile of Kanye North observed that President Festus Mogae and his deputy were trotting the country officiating at election victory celebrations knowing that the state media would give them coverage.

He was also not happy that under the envisioned policy, the proposed regulator would consult only with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and devise ways of providing media coverage during elections day.

He said the commission was not independent enough to be entrusted with such a responsibility.

We just have to find means of involving political parties. Peter Siele, the assistant agriculture minister and MP for Ngwaketse South urged the minister responsible to double efforts in ensuring national coverage by state broadcasters.

He said the media played an important development role in the lives of the people, citing Australia, which uses radio to disseminate information on ways to develop agriculture.

On the envisaged community radio stations, Siele requested government to be vigilant when issuing licences.

We need to seriously scrutinise the objectives of such radio stations, he said. Oreeditse Molebatsi of Tswapong South hailed the introduction of community radio stations as a progressive move.

He expressed optimism that Batswapong, who have had to forfeit some development projects because of their nearness to Mahalapye and Palapye, would grab the opportunity and open a radio station to promote their culture.

I hope when they apply they would be allowed and not denied the chance because of their proximity to the two centres, he said. BOPA

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