

Praise For Defence Minister But ...

THE recent turmoil in the Caprivi is of concern to all Namibians, not only because it has brought an end to peace and tranquillity in the Republic of Namibia even if confined to only one particular region, but also because it has brought to light differences between ethnic groups in Namibia, which should not under any circumstances be underestimated.

Since the uprising many allegations have been made regarding the unconstitutional behaviour of both military and police. These allegations, although serious, have until recently been downplayed. The announcement by the Minister of Defence, admitting that security forces may be guilty of breaches of fundamental human rights enshrined in the constitution is to be welcomed as being the sign of a mature Ministry that is prepared to face criticism and not to hide behind extraordinary powers given to the President in situations such as these. It is hoped that the Minister and his officials will deal with the matter in an open and transparent manner in order to assure Namibians, even though the police and military are there to maintain law and order, they will do so in a responsible manner and not at the expense of innocent citizens of Namibia.

Apart from this it is still disappointing to read that neither the Minister nor the government recognises that people detained in terms of the emergency regulations clearly retain a right to legal representation provided for in the Constitution. It would therefore be proper of the authorities to inform the detainees of their right to legal representation and then to guarantee such legal representation. The government should do so before being called upon to do so by a court of law.

Muyongo is using the general dissatisfaction of the people of Caprivi in order to promote his personal aims and ideas. Unfortunately he has found fertile ground in the Caprivi where many

of the people are dissatisfied and disillusioned with the lack of development and support from the government.

Rightly or wrongly, this perception persists. Government should take note of this and should accept that the people of the Caprivi are different to the other ethnic groups in Namibia and that they have the right to practice this difference within the confines of our constitution.

Development does not only mean that which government interprets it to be, but also what the people of a region think is suitable for themselves and should not have its focus in one region at the expense of another. Much more dialogue needs to take place. Disturbance of the kind now experienced will be to the detriment of the country, the government's relationship with the people of Caprivi and

will hinder further economic and social development in the area.

Government also needs to be more sensitive in its involvement in the appointment of chiefs who are not acceptable to that chief's people, the appointment of staff in the military and the police who do not speak the language or understand the culture of the people in the region.

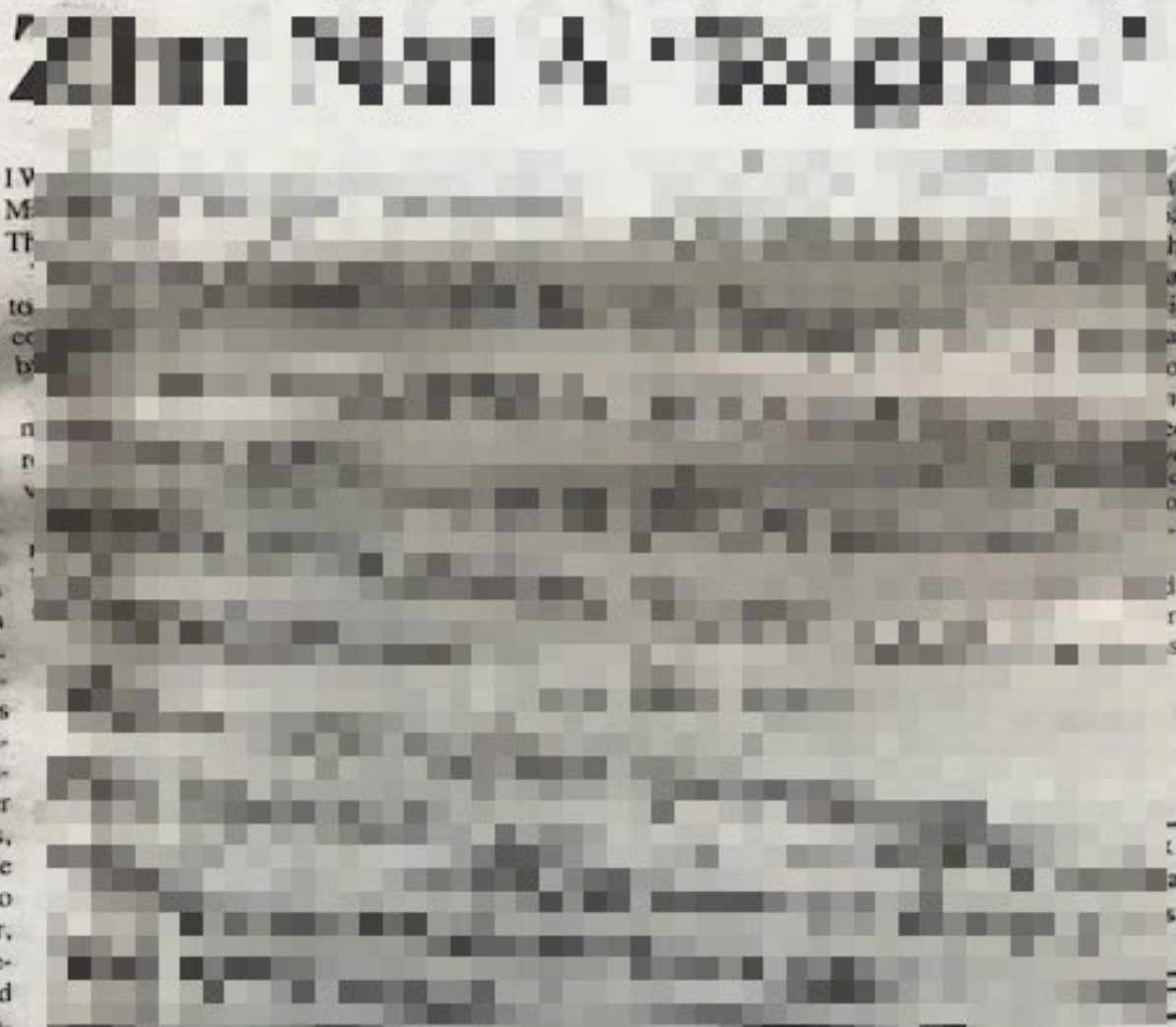
The recent behaviour by police and military is

seen by many people in the Caprivi as portraying the dominance of one ethnic group over others.

This is unfortunate and should be avoided at all costs.

It is imperative that the Caprivi be part of the general development of Namibia if it is to regard itself as an integral part of Namibia.

P F Koep
Windhoek



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