

Week-Ending 25 February 2017



INTRODUCTION

When Parliament met on 16 February 2017 the main business of the day was the debate on the National Competitiveness Commission Bill. The Bill which is currently in its second reading seeks to address the nation's diminished business competitiveness and therefore, to restore the ease of doing business.

Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Industry and Commerce, Hon. Edmond Mhere (ZANU PF Masvingo Central), angered Members of Parliament when he read a committee report saying people rejected the Bill during public hearings, but later made recommendations that it must be passed.

The majority of Members of Parliament who contributed to the debate were against the Bill saying it was a waste of time and

resources. Hon. Tapiwa Mashakada (MDC-T Hatfield) said the ease of doing business could not be resolved by creating a commission, but by solving policy inconsistencies, reconstructing industry and manufacturing and exploring fiscal and monetary policy issues.

Hon. Ronia Bunjira (MDC-T Harare Metropolitan) said public hearings were poorly attended with one person attending in Harare and those who attended in Mutare said it was a useless law.

Hon. Thabitha Khumalo (MDC-T Bulawayo East) said there were no financial resources to support the proposed commission. She further argued that the proposed commission was not necessary given there was no industry to talk about in the country.

On 21 February 2017 the session commenced with a plea from Hon Psychology Maziwisa (ZANU PF Highfield West) asking Parliament to wish President Mugabe a happy birthday. However, this was blocked by Opposition legislators who argued that the National Assembly was not a political gathering.

The Deputy Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare Hon. Tapiwanashe Matangaidze then presented a Ministerial Statement on Social dialogue discussions between Government, business and labour. He said the following issues were discussed and agreed on as possible ways of stabilising the economy.

1. Promotion of investment;
2. Diaspora engagement;
3. Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals,
4. Implementation of Special Economic Zones;
5. Import substitution through implementation of Statutory Instrument 64 of 2016 on control of goods, that is, the open general import licence;
6. Decrease in local tariff and utility costs which make locally manufactured products expensive. The aim is to ensure that locally manufactured goods are affordable while also being of good quality;

Hon. Auxillia Mhangagwa then presented the first report of the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services on service delivery by the

Registrar-General's Department. The committee recommended that

1 More than thirty percent of the resources drawn from the Retention Fund should be channelled towards service delivery, for example the mobile registration exercise, by not later than 31st December, 2017

2 All infrastructure in Districts such as Nkayi, Binga and Sanyati should be completed within the end of the year

3 There is need to recognise and respect the authority of Traditional leadership as required in the issuance of primary documents all the times.

4 There is need for the Ministry to sensitise and educate the public on the need to acquire primary documents by not later than 31 December, 2017

5 There is need to embark on mobile registration programmes so as to reduce the distance travelled by clients as a way of improving service delivery.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

On Wednesday 22 February 2017, Hon. Amos Chibaya (MDC-T Mkoba) expressed concern over lack of commitment by Ministers to attend Parliament sessions. He cited that out of 40 Cabinet Ministers only three were in attendance when Parliament began. However, the Acting Speaker reiterated that the Speaker of Parliament had written to President Mugabe over the issue.

Continuing with the business of the day, Hon Thokozani Khuphe (MDC-T Bulawayo Metropolitan). asked the Leader

of the House, Hon. Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa about Government's involvement in the procurement process for the biometric voter registration kits. Hon Mnangagwa highlighted that Government had agreed to provide US\$17 million required to buy the equipment. He said the process was independent as ZEC was in the forefront of identifying equipment needed.

Hon. Joseph Mapiki (ZANU PF Shamva South) asked Minister of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, Hon. Joseph Made about the state of preparedness in terms of dryers, procurement of maize as well as the silos to store yields for this year. Hon. Made said the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) was in the process of ensuring that silos do not have leakages so that no moisture would affect the produce. He urged farmers that are going to sell their maize to GMB to open bank accounts for accessibility.

Hon. Amos Chibaya directed a question to Vice President Hon. Mnangagwa on what measures Government has put in place to ensure that doctors resume their duties as they were on strike. In response Hon. Vice President Mnangagwa highlighted that Government and doctors were in conversation to ensure their grievances were addressed.

CONCLUSION

After a few questions from Members of Parliament, Parliament adjourned and is expected to sit today in the afternoon at quarter past two O'clock.