



Introduction

After adjourning for a week Parliament met on 14 March 2017 and the major business of the House was debate on the BEAM report by the Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

Debate on Public Service Portfolio Committee's Report on BEAM

Members of Parliament took time to debate on the administration of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) countrywide. The majority of Legislators urged Government to do more in assisting the less privileged, not only through BEAM but to come up with other social welfare measures.

Responding to the first report of the Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare on BEAM, Public Service, Labour and Social Services Deputy Minister Hon. Eng. Tapiwanashe Matangaidze (ZANU PF Shurugwi South) said the programme was meant to reduce the number of children dropping out of school due to economic hardships. He also indicated that there were other action plans to complement BEAM to address the welfare of children such as the promotion of income generating projects (IGPs) like horticulture and market gardening at micro level in schools for the benefit of BEAM beneficiaries and other vulnerable children.

Minister's Response to Committee Report on Human Trafficking

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Edgar Mbwebwe (ZANU PF Chikomba East) responded to a report of the Delegation on the Bilateral Visit to the Parliament of Kuwait. He indicated that based on recommendations from the committee, Cabinet made the following decisions;

- i) The creation of a Fund to assist the victims;
- ii) Requested the Government of Kuwait to stop issuing Article 20 visas to our nationals;
- iii) The Foreign Minister would write to his Kuwait counterpart to convey the Zimbabwe Government's decision; and
- iv) The Ministry of Home Affairs to intensify investigations in order to bring traffickers to book.

After this response, Hon. Kindness Paradza (ZANU PF Makonde) expressed gratitude towards Government's efforts to assist the Kuwait survivors but pointed out that at least 50 women were still held up in Kuwait.

Presentation of Health Portfolio Committee Report on Village Health Workers (VHW)

Hon Paul Chimedza (ZANU PF Gutu South) then presented a report of the Portfolio Committee on Health and Child Care on the deployment, roles and responsibilities of the Village Health Workers/City Health Promoters in the

provision of Primary Health Care in Zimbabwe.

He highlighted that the Committee noted that since the Village Health Workers (VHW) programme was donor driven there was need for strong Government support in terms of adequate budgetary allocation towards the VHW programme starting from the 2017 budget allocation. The Committee further recommended that Government should immediately start working on innovative domestic health financing such as syntax in order to raise revenue to meet the demands in the health sector.

Question and Answer Session

On 15 March 2017 Parliament convened for the question and answer session. Hon Anele Ndebele (MDC-T Magwegwe) asked Deputy Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education if there was any policy in place to make sure that there was transparency when children are being enrolled under STEM. Hon Gandawa, in his response, highlighted that the Ministry's policy was that any student who achieves a grade of 'C' or better qualifies to have his or her education paid under the STEM programme and was not the prerogative of the headmaster to choose who benefits from the programme.

Hon. Leonard Chikomba (ZANU PF Gokwe Kabuyuni) posed a question to the Minister of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development if Government will open depots to ensure that they are accessible to everyone so that people bring their produce. Hon. Made said

Government would open satellite depots to enable farmers to take their produce to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) acknowledging that there were bad road networks for farmers to take their produce to distant areas.

Hon. Epmarcus Kanhanga (ZANU PF Guruve North) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development to inform the House on what the Ministry was doing to bring sanity in cases where beneficiaries did not have land and capacity and have converted inputs to personal use. Hon. Made said the issue had been reported to the police and the culprits have since been brought to book but alleged that he not aware of inputs that have been abused at the district level.

Debate State of the Nation Address presented by President Mugabe

On 16 March 2017 Parliament convened where the main business of the house was the debate on the State of the Nation Address presented by President Mugabe on 6 December last year.

Hon James Maridadi (MDC-T Mabvuku-Tafara) brought to the House evidence (one small dish, one large dish, transistor radio, a thread, binder and outer blanket) of under-declared imported goods that he said was militating against the growth of the economy. He explained how Chinese companies were importing materials into the country despite not paying duty and some of them not having bank accounts in the country. In his debate he demonstrated

how corruption was adversely impacting on the growth of the local industry. He reiterated the need for Zimbabweans to shun corruption and the need to grow economy. Hon. Joseph Chinotimba (ZANU PF Buhera South) echoed the same sentiments and reiterated the need to shun corruption and concentrate on economic growth through implementing ZIMASSET and the Ten Point Plan.

Hon. Prince Dubeko Sibanda (MDC-T BINGA North) added his voice to the debate saying he expected President Mugabe in his address, to have spoken to issues of lack of capital inflows in this country, bad and inconsistent policies that investors have been complaining about and issues about poor infrastructure development.

Minister's Response to Committee Report on SMEs and Informal Sector

After the debate, Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development Minister Hon. Sthembiso Nyoni responded to the report of the Portfolio Committee on Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development on the operational environment and economic contributions of Small and Medium Enterprises and the Informal sector in Zimbabwe.

She said her Ministry had embarked on formalisation of the SME sector in collaboration with other stakeholders and was in a process of developing the formalisation strategy of the sector which will avert informality and encourage people to formalise their businesses. She

further indicated that the zero draft had since been completed and her Ministry was now in the process of coming up with the first draft of the policy.

Question and Answer Session

On 22 March 2017 Parliament convened for the question and answer session which commenced with Hon. Dexter Nduna (ZANU PF Chegutu West) asking Deputy Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Services, Hon. Eng. Matangaidze about Government's policy regarding distribution of drought mitigation grain in urban areas.

In his response, Hon. Eng. Matangaidze said Government had already come up with mitigation strategies for the urban areas and was waiting for the outcome of the results from the ZIMVAC Urban Assessment Programme which have been presented to the Cabinet. Regardless, he said his ministry has since started distributing food in Bulawayo and Harare metropolitan and other areas.

Hon. John Holder (ZANU PF Zvishavane Ngezi) questioned the Minister of Lands and Rural Resettlement on Government's policy regarding people that were settled on farms in the year 2000 but are now being evicted by the courts and individuals. In her response, The Deputy Minister of Lands and Rural Resettlement Hon. Berita Chikwama explained that when a person is replaced or was allocated land during the 2000 period but do not have documentation, they should engage her Ministry so that they acquire correct

documentation. She however added that if one occupies land which belongs to someone else, they should vacate it.

Turning to the education sector, Hon. Joel Gabbuza (MDC-T Binga South) posed a question to the Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Social Services on Government freezing civil servants posts whilst there are other schools that have gone for at least two terms with inadequate teachers. Hon. Matangaidze highlighted that his Ministry was guided by treasury regarding the availability of funding before recruiting and deploying teachers.

Hon Thabitha Khumalo (MDC-T Bulawayo East) asked the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development if he was aware of the impact of not paying Cadetship scheme. In his response, Deputy Minister Gandawa acknowledged that Government owed universities US\$462 million and ministry was currently paying US\$30000 each month to universities to cover the debt.

Hon. Nelson Chamisa (MDC-T Kuwadzana East) directed a question to the Deputy Minister of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services to explain if political parties were allowed to own TV and radio stations. The Deputy Minister of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services Hon. Sen. Mathuthu said in light of digitalising process, there will be 12 stations and six of those stations will be open to anyone who wants to broadcast, regardless of which political party that

person belongs to or religious organisation they belong to.

Debate on the State of the Nation Address (SONA)

The SONA debate resumed on the 23rd of March with Hon. Zalerah Makari (ZANU PF Epworth) expressing gratitude over President Mugabe's speech saying it came at the right time. She hailed President Mugabe for introducing Statutory Instrument SI64 saying her constituency was now able to produce local products and was thus benefiting this policy.

Hon. Elias Mudzuri (MDC-T Warren Park) was however not of the same view. He further argued that the President left out a number of measures which should be implemented to ensure that the country has ease of doing business as well as the ability of the Executive to eliminate. The majority of Members of Parliament said the SONA address did not live up to the expectations of the people.

Conclusion

Parliament adjourned to Tuesday, 28th March, 2017 where the SONA debate will resume and Minister of Local Government Hon. Saviour Kasukuwere will give a response on the report of the Portfolio Committee on Local Government, Public Works and National Housing on Service Delivery by the City of Harare.