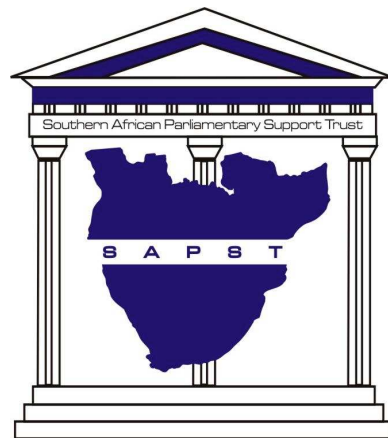




PARLIAMENTARY

ROUND UP: BULLETIN NO. 20 - 2010

Bulletin for Wednesday 20 October 2010



PLENARY SESSION IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Questions without Notice

Appointments of Ambassadors, Provincial Governors and Judges

Following an undertaking by the Acting Leader of the House, Hon. Prof. Mutambara, last week, most Ministers attended the question time in the House yesterday, Wednesday 20 October 2010. The Acting Speaker of the House of Assembly, Hon. Nomalanga Khumalo, commended the Ministers. This was against a backdrop of poor attendance by Ministers in the previous sittings of the House. Last Wednesday the Speaker, Hon. Lovemore Moyo, appealed to the Acting Leader of the House, Hon. Prof. Mutambara, to convey the House's dismay to Cabinet on the Ministers' absence. It is hoped that this trend will continue in future sittings of the House. Question time is very crucial to backbenchers, because it provides them with an opportunity to raise policy issues that affect their constituents to the Executive.

The most topical issue during the question and answer session yesterday related to the policy and constitutionality of the appointments of ambassadors, governors and judges. Questions on this issue were raised by Hon. Mazikana (ZANU PF) and Hon. Mwonzora (MDC-T), respectively. The Acting Leader of the House, Hon. Prof. Mutambara, said the policy is expressly defined in the constitution and in particular Constitutional Amendment No. 19 for the current political dispensation of inclusive government. On the constitutionality aspect of it, he said only the Supreme Court can make a determination on the matter. He encouraged political parties in the inclusive government to solve their differences internally and this did not go down well with MDC-T MPs. They interpreted this as a veiled reference to the action taken by the Prime Minister who wrote to the EU, UN, S.A. etc dismissing the unilateral appointments made by President Mugabe.

Distribution of Textbooks

Hon. Kanzama raised a question regarding the slow distribution of text books in rural schools. However, the Minister of Education, Sports, and Culture, Hon. Senator Coltart was not in the House. The question was therefore redirected to the Acting Leader of the House, Hon. Prof. Mutambara. In his response, he said government was in the process of distributing the text books to all primary schools in the country but was facing logistics challenges and hence the delays in some areas. On the suggestion by Hon. Kanzama if the MPs could assist with transport, Hon. Prof. Mutambara said MPs should liaise with the ministry of education officials.

Distribution of the Road Fund

The Minister of Transport, Communications and Infrastructural Development, Hon. Goche came under fire from MDC backbenchers concerning the distribution of the Road Fund. The backbencher who first raised the question, Hon. Tachiona Mharadza (MDC-T Masvingo West) alleged that there was favouritism in the distribution of the Fund as the bulky of the money was allocated to councils in the Minister's Province; \$2.5 million to Bindura and \$500 000 to Chaminuka both in Mashonaland Central, at the expense of other councils that received, on average, less than \$50 000. The Minister said he was not involved in the distribution of the Fund, as this was the function of the Zimbabwe National Road Authority (ZINARA). He said in distributing these funds, ZINARA are guided by requests made by local authorities and the acquittal by the local authorities of previous allocations. Backbenchers heckled the Minister and refused to take his response

Outstanding Payments to Farmers by GMB

Hon. Editor Matamisa (MDC-T Kadoma Central) quizzed the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Made on the outstanding payments by GMB to farmers who delivered grain to the national granary as far back as 2008. The Minister acknowledged the outstanding payments and said to-date his ministry had paid 75% of the farmers. To pay off the outstanding farmers, he said GMB required an amount of \$11 million and Treasury had made an undertaking to provide the funds.

Distribution of Agricultural Inputs.

On this issue, Hon. Dr. Made informed the House that this current season there were no free inputs. Inputs funded by the government would be distributed through GMB depots across the country where farmers would buy them. Thus, GMB would be final access point of inputs as government has done away with the distribution committees which existed in the past. On Inputs sourced by the donor community, the minister said these would be distributed through a voucher system to ensure that the intended beneficiaries get these inputs.

ZESA Tariffs and Billing System

The Minister of Energy and Power Development, Hon. Elton Mangoma, updated the House on the government position regarding electricity tariffs. He said at the inception of dollarization, government took a position that in the absence of meter readings, ZESA should charge \$30 and \$40 for consumers in the high and low density suburbs, respectively. He further said that those consumers who have been paying their bills without meter readings taken but based on this policy should not be switched off. The Minister was responding to a question by Hon. Margaret Zinyemba (ZANU PF Mazoe

South), who wanted to know why the ZESA billing system was inconsistent and often inaccurate. The Minister further informed the House that government was working on a pre-paid system to solve problems associated with the current billing system.

Unpaid Workers

Hon. Felix Sibanda, asked the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare if the country's labour laws allow for a situation in which workers go for months on end without pay. He said this practice was rampant in the textile industry. The Minister, Hon. Paurina Mpariwa said government policy on this issue was guided by the Labour Relations Act. All workers should be paid at the duration specified in their contracts. She also informed the House that some companies, especially in those in the textile industry were failing to pay their workers due to lack of revenue because of cheap imports finding their way into the country.

Salary Incentives in the health sector

Hon. Dorothy Mhangami (ZANU PF – Gokwe) wanted to know from the Minister of Public Service why some workers in the health sector were discriminated against regarding salary incentives provided by the donor community. Hon. Prof. Elphas Mukonoweshuro, said the donors chipped in with incentives in order to retain critical health staff at a time when the health system had virtually collapsed in the country.

Veldfires and Deforestation

The Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Management, Hon. Francis Nhema was taken to task by backbenchers regarding rampant veldfires across the country. In response to Hon. Prosper Mutseyami (MDC-T Musikavanhu), Hon. Nhema said his ministry was doing all it can to deal with menace of veldfires. He revealed to the House that the situation was better this year as compared to last year where the country lost one million hectares of vegetation. For the same period this year, 250 000 hectares of vegetation have been destroyed. To-date, the Minister said 1 600 cases have been reported to the police. Hon. Nhema appealed to MPs to work together with his ministry to educate the public to desist from starting veldfires.

Regarding the issue of destruction of wattle and pine tree plantations in Manicaland, the Minister said he had engaged all stakeholders in the area to resolve the issue of farmers who were resettled on these plantations. Hon. Nhema said he had given instructions to District Administrators in the area to monitor the situation.

Dispute in district boundaries

The Minister of Local Government and Urban and Rural Development, Hon. Dr. Ignatius Chombo, said he was aware of disputes pertaining to district boundaries. His ministry

was working on measures to deal with the issue. A Commission will be appointed in due course to look at the issue and advise government accordingly. He was responding to a question by Hon. Ellina Shirichena (ZANU PF Mberengwa South)

Legislation Update

International Agreements and Protocols

The House of Assembly approved 11 international agreements and protocols in term of Section 111B of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. These were;

- Agreement on the Establishment of the Zambezi Watercourse Commission
- Loan Agreement between Government of Zimbabwe and Export-Import Bank of China relating to Zimbabwe's 2G and 3G National Network Rollout Project being implemented by Net One
- Convention on Wetlands
- Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasia Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
- SADC Protocol on Fisheries
- Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
- Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone layer
- Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species
- Basel Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal
- SADC Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement

Public Order and Security Amendment Bill

The Bill has reached Committee Stage in the House of Assembly. [This is a stage whereby the Bill is considered clause by clause by the House.] Hon. Gonese has proposed

further amendments to the Bill, some arising from public hearings that the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Home Affairs conducted early this year. It is anticipated that the Bill will be debated on Tuesday next week.

Adjournment

The House of Assembly adjourned to Tuesday 26 October 2010 at 1415 hours.