

PRIMARY & SECONDARY

GENERAL ISSUES

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION – SCHOOL MATERIALS DISTRIBUTION

(23.10.2018)

(No. B/892) **Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Foundation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the value of the school materials and uniforms distributed for the year 2018, indicating the criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries thereof.

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): Madam Speaker, for academic year 2018, an amount of Rs33,688,808 has been disbursed on the provision of school materials for some 18,302 children attending pre-primary, primary, pre-vocational and secondary schools for both Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have only one supplementary. Will the hon. Minister kindly ensure that at the level of the NEF, whether it is for school materials or the series of support that they are giving to those in absolute poverty, that there is at least some sort of mechanism to communicate to those people in the different *poches de pauvreté*? May I make a request to the hon. Minister to please look into this issue of communication?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I will look into it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, so as not to lose the time of the House, following the question that has been asked by hon. Rughoobur, I will ask that these suggestions be made at Adjournment time in Adjournment Matters because the object of a question is to dig into something which you think has not been done properly. So, I would appeal to hon. Members regarding suggestions that they have to make to Ministers to come under Adjournment Matters. Thank you. Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs Perraud: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what are the measures his Ministry is taking so that school materials and uniforms are not distributed late after school has resumed?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: I have taken it from the proposition of hon. Rughoobur. I will look into it. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: The question put by hon. Mrs Perraud, I do not know whether it is the same question which I am going to put. Very often, many eligible beneficiaries are not attended to. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether corrective measures are taken to see to it that they obtain the materials before school starts.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, the list of SRM beneficiaries are already with the officers and they are communicated usually by way of these people who are working on the terrain in the specific areas, but if they do not have the information, it is published already, we do publish that, we will make a communiqué. So, if anything else we can do, we will look into the matter. Last year, all the materials were being distributed in a very orderly manner and there was no criticism on the part of all the beneficiaries themselves. Most of the time, it is the people who think they are in the SRM, they can have these materials, but they do not fall in the criteria of SRM beneficiaries. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether a tender was floated for school materials and uniforms, which were retained for the supply for the year 2018?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, there is already a question regarding same which hon. Armanee has asked at the end of this session and maybe I will answer to it when it comes to me. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

PRIMARY & SECONDARY

GENERAL ISSUES

GOVERNMENT MEDICAL INSURANCE SCHEME- IMPLEMENTATION (23.10.2018)

(No. B/899) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the Government Medical Insurance Scheme, he will state if same has been implemented and –

- (a) if so, since when, indicating the -
 - (i) terms and conditions thereof;
 - (ii) selected insurance company, indicating the procurement method used for the selection thereof, and
 - (iii) total amount earmarked for the 50% Government contribution, indicating if same will be done through check-off or debited from the passage benefits of the employees, and
- (b) if not, why not, indicating if the civil servants will be refunded same with effect from January 2017.

Mr Boissézon: Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that the introduction of a Government Medical Insurance Scheme (GMIS) for public officers was recommended by PRB as far back as 2008. Subsequent Reports of PRB in 2013 and 2016 have maintained that this scheme be implemented with a view, among others -

- (a) to provide a healthy workforce in the public service, and
- (b) allow public officers to have access to a wide array of medical high-tech facilities among others.

In this connection, my Ministry has had several working sessions with representatives of stakeholders concerned, including the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Procurement Policy Office to discuss on the modalities for the implementation of such a scheme. Subsequently, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development gave its clearance for the scheme to be on a cost sharing basis, whereby Government's contribution would be 50% to match the employee's contribution of 50%.

I wish to add that since June 2016, my Ministry has been initiating actions to procure the services of a Consultant to design and work out a general framework for the implementation of the scheme on the basis of which bids could be invited. As such, three tender exercises have been carried out so far, but none has been successful due to non-compliance with mandatory requirements of the bidding documents, namely –

- (i) lack of sufficient number of responsive bids;
- (ii) lack of minimum of five years' experience in the management of medical schemes for large organisations, and
- (iii) non-filling of standard bidding forms, among others.

It has to be admitted that the implementation of the GMIS has been taking more time than expected due to the complex nature of the scheme and the size of the Civil Service and the inadequate response to tendering exercises. The three aborted procurement exercises for consultancy have shown that the scheme involves a number of technical issues and it would be very important to have expertise on how to elicit the best response from the market and get a more competitive offer instead of merely relaunching the procurement exercise.

In the light of the above, my Ministry has reconsidered its strategy and has had consultation with other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance, the Financial Services Commission and the Procurement Policy Office. It is now proposed to adopt a new procurement procedure in line with Directive No. 25 issued under Section 7 of the Public Procurement Act with a view to secure the services of an insurance service provider for the design and implementation of the Government Medical Insurance Scheme by way of an early market engagement. This matter is still under consideration. As such, the Government Medical Insurance Scheme is yet to be implemented. In view thereof, the issues raised at parts (a) (i) and (ii) and (b) of the question do not arise.

Concerning part (a) (iii) of the question, an amount of Rs50 m. has been earmarked in the Budget for this financial year and an amount of Rs200 m. is projected yearly for Financial Years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 as Government contribution to the scheme.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: The Minister admitted himself in his reply that this is taking much time, and civil servants are still awaiting these measures to be implemented. Can the hon. Minister give us a time frame? I know that he has the problem of consultancy, but we do have insurance companies in Mauritius dealing with health.

Mr Boissézon: Madam Speaker, I cannot give a time frame. In fact, we have to know that Directive No. 25 allows, and I will quote: 'As the Public Procurement Act does not prohibit

public bodies to hold pre-procurement engagement with the market they may, therefore, conduct market consultation prior to inviting bids following a transparent process.’

So, we shall have market consultation. I cannot tell the time that it will take to have the consultation because we have to meet all the service providers on the market to ensure that nobody is left on the side of the road. In fact, we have already earmarked Rs50 m. for this year and we hope that very quickly we shall be in a position to launch the tender.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister assure the House that before the end of this mandate, there will be implementation of this very important measure?

Mr Boissézon: No, I cannot because it takes time to have consultation. As I said earlier, it is a process of a very complex nature and we have to learn the technical issues.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Having heard the Minister addressing a lot of difficulties for implementing this medical scheme, can he inform the House why friendly countries like India, France and Singapore have not been approached to give a helping hand to implement the Government Medical Scheme Insurance?

Mr Boissézon: In fact, we had open tenders and companies from abroad could have tendered for the project.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the Insurance Scheme itself, will it be mandatory for employees to subscribe to it or will it be voluntary?

Mr Boissézon: As I said previously, it will be voluntary.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Abbas Mamode!

PRIMARY & SECONDARY

GENERAL ISSUES

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON DRUG TRAFFICKING RECOMMENDATIONS – MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

(16/10/2018)

(No. B/804) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking in Mauritius, he will state the composition of the Ministerial Committee set up to look into the recommendations thereof, indicating the number of –

- (a) meetings held as at to date, and
- (b) recommendations implemented as at to date.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in the Communiqué issued following Cabinet Meeting of 03 August 2018, it was publicly announced that I would chair a Ministerial Committee to look into the recommendations of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking relating to the strengthening of the institutional framework and the review of relevant legislation, after necessary consultations with relevant stakeholders. The Ministerial Committee comprises of –

(i)	Hon Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	-	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
(ii)	The Rt Hon Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	-	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
(iii)	Hon (Mrs) Fazila Jeewa- Daureeawoo, GCSK	-	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
(iv)	Hon Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	-	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
(v)	Hon (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun- Luchoomun	-	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
(vi)	Hon Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, SC	-	Minister of Tourism
(vii)	Dr the Hon Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	-	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
(viii)	Hon Prithvirajsing Roopun	-	Minister of Arts and Culture

(ix)	Hon Marie Joseph Noël-Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	-	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development
(x)	Hon Maneesh Gobin	-	Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms
(xi)	Hon Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	-	Minister of Youth and Sports
(xii)	Hon Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	-	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
(xiii)	Hon Purmanund Jhugroo	-	Minister of Housing and Lands

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, the Ministerial Committee has, so far, met on one occasion on 16 August 2018 to chart the way forward for the timely implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the Ministerial Committee decided to set up –

- (a) a Task Force under the chair of the Director General of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, to coordinate the implementation, by the relevant investigative agencies, of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking and its annexes, in relation to –
- (i) further enquiries that the Commission has earnestly called for in a number of identified areas;
 - (ii) those cases where names have been mentioned;
 - (iii) cases where the Commission has drawn attention to but has not been able to gather sufficient evidence to investigate into, and
 - (iv) any other matter not mentioned in the Report but which might be related to the above, and
- (b) a Committee under the chair of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service and comprising representatives of Ministries/Departments/Organisations concerned to look into the legal/institutional/administrative issues contained in the Report of the said Commission of Inquiry.

The Task Force comprises of –

- (i) the Director General of the Independent Commission Against Corruption;
- (ii) the Commissioner of Police;
- (iii) the Deputy Solicitor General;
- (iv) the Director General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority;
- (v) the Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit, and
- (vi) the Director of the Integrity Reporting Services Agency.

I am informed that the Task Force started work soon after it was set up and has met on several occasions to develop the necessary strategy and plan of action to fulfill its mandate.

Madam Speaker, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking contains some 460 recommendations. The Committee under the aegis of the office of the Secretary to

Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service has held several working sessions with representatives of Ministries/ Departments/Organisations concerned with a view to expediting the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report.

So far, around 80 recommendations have already been implemented. Implementation is ongoing on some 120 other recommendations.

The full implementation of about 95 other recommendations would require either new legislative measures or amendment to existing legislation.

In regard to the remaining recommendations, consultations at the level of Ministries/Departments/Organisations are ongoing as their implementation requires in some cases –

- (i) major policy decisions;
- (ii) a thorough study of the legal implications;
- (iii) concurrence of the Service Commissions;
- (iv) a review of the existing organisation structures by the Pay Research Bureau, as well as the creation of new grades;
- (v) an assessment of the merits of the recommendations made in the Report as opposed to the prevailing arrangements which are considered to be adequate and in some cases, the implementation of the recommendations is not considered to be feasible or practical, and
- (vi) substantial financial resources for which provision has not been made in the current Budget.

Madam Speaker, with a view to ensuring constant monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations, a permanent secretariat has been set up at the level of my Office.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the report has been made public since July this year and since then there have been three Committees that have been set up –

- (i) the Ministerial Committee;
- (ii) the Committee chaired by ICAC, and the last one
- (iii) the Committee chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet.

Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister since the report has been made public, how many concrete enquiries have been started by the Police?

The Prime Minister: Well, as I said, there is a Task Force which has been set up where the different agencies which I have mentioned are coordinating and sharing information. So, you do not expect enquiry to start now and to be completed tomorrow. You have to give time. So, I can assure the hon. Member and the House that the work is ongoing. Enquiries are being conducted and people are being called to give statements. Therefore, in due course, whenever they will come to a conclusion, of course, I will be able to inform the House and the public also about the outcome.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, why has the hon. Prime Minister not included the Ministry of Social Integration when we know that drug is *avant tout un problème de moyens*

and people of lower means are more prone to be afflicted by the drug problem? Why then has hon. Wong Yen Cheong not been given a seat to the Ministerial Committee? Why?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, of course ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Hon. Bhagwan!

The Prime Minister: I can understand that the hon. Member has never formed part of any Government before, but anyway, that is lack of experience. Of course, we cannot have a Committee of Ministers comprising of all the Cabinet. If we had to include not only the Ministry concerned, every Ministry is concerned. But this Committee, of course, co-opts as and when required Ministries which are relevant pertaining to the issues that we are discussing.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister with regard to three of the main recommendations of the Commission, the National Drug Policy Commission, the *Juges d'Application des Peines* and the Drug Offenders Administrative Panel, what is the fate now proposed for these three main recommendations?

The Prime Minister: Well, all this will be analysed. We are looking into all these recommendations. As I said, there are certain recommendations which will require fundamental changes in the law. Fundamental changes with regard to institutions and we cannot just like that take a decision and say: we go and implement. We are looking at all these recommendations.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the overall consensus in Mauritius and the way forward to wage war on drugs is through a holistic approach. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Ministerial Task Force will take on-board the findings submitted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and crimes with respect to implementation of the National Drug Master Plan?

The Prime Minister: Well, it is not a Ministerial Task Force, it is a Ministerial Committee. But I can assure the hon. Member that we are working with the UNODC. I must say that I really appreciate the collaboration of the experts of UNODC with whom I had the opportunity of interacting and discussing on the way forward. Yes, we will obviously take on-board the expert advice of UNODC.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, last question!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned the Committee headed by the Secretary to Cabinet which is already implementing some of the recommendations. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister when it comes to policy decision, do I take it that since this Ministerial Committee has met only once on 16 August, for the past two months, this Ministerial Committee has not been apprised of any report from the Committee as regards policy changes?

The Prime Minister: Maybe it is good that I can clarify. They are measures with regard to decisions that have already been taken by the Government even prior to the report of the Commission of Inquiry being made available to us and being made public. So, a number of things have already been done in terms of legislation, in terms of measures to be taken by different Ministries and so on - I do not want to go into all this - and then, there are some that are ongoing. But this is where we will require decision of Government where there are a number of issues, even recommendations made, which need to be analysed, to be discussed and eventually to see whether we go ahead as recommended or we go ahead in a different way or, as I said, there are certain recommendations that are not feasible, at least for now, but will have to be looked in the longer term.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/807 and PQ B/808 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister have been withdrawn.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY

GENERAL ISSUES

LA MARGUERITE & HEAVEN SHELTERS – MINORS – RELOCATION (17/07/2018)

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs R. Jadoo-Jaunbocus): Thank you, Madam Speaker, I wish to make the following statement in connection with the relocation of minors from Residential Care Institutions (RCI) also known as shelters La Marguerite and Heaven.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is in presence of more than some 30 complaints over the last few years regarding the management of shelter La Marguerite situated at Belle Rose and Heaven Children Centre at Paillote which were both operated by the Vedic Social Organisation.

The Fact-Finding Committee which was set up, was chaired in 2015 by Mr Denis Vellien and the report was given to the Ministry again in 2015. Then, we had the report from the Ombudsperson for Children 2015/2016 and in addition to that there was the report from the Director of Audit 2016/2017 which all highlighted the many shortcomings in the management of the shelters La Marguerite and Heaven Children Centre. Moreover, the Fact-Finding Committee Report made serious findings as abuse, physical abuse and moral abuse.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I am sorry! This is not the corrected version that I have. I think you are distorting the version which was approved by my Office, and I would kindly request you to come back to the version which was approved by my Office.

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Let me just verify. So far, everything has been as we have said.

Madam Speaker: No, but hon. Minister...

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Maybe there are two...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, the version that you submitted to my Office was corrected, and you have to go word for word according to the version which was approved by my Office. So, I would kindly request you to go back to the original version which was approved by my Office.

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for drawing my attention. In fact, yes, there was a rectified version. So, I will just go back to that. The same paragraph was fine. Now, going to the third paragraph, in spite of having been notified on, at least, four occasions on the said shortcomings, the Vedic Social Organisation failed to take remedial measures.

Consequently, with a view to ensuring the safety and security of the children placed in the shelters, La Marguerite and Heaven Children Centre, my Ministry to the following measures on 11 July 2018.

Firstly, the management contract between the Vedic Social Organisation and my Ministry, which was on a month-to-month basis, was terminated with immediate effect.

Secondly, all the children including two babies of the said shelter and centre were removed and placed in other shelters and residential care institutions run by the National Children's Council and other Non-Governmental Organisations.

Madam Speaker, in light of the foregoing and in pursuance of the provision of the Child Protection Act, my Ministry has acted in the best interest of the children.

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Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, the Ministerial Committee has, so far, met on one occasion on 16 August 2018 to chart the way forward for the timely implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the Ministerial Committee decided to set up –

- (a) a Task Force under the chair of the Director General of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, to coordinate the implementation, by the relevant investigative agencies, of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking and its annexes, in relation to –
 - (i) further enquiries that the Commission has earnestly called for in a number of identified areas;
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- (iv) the Director General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority;
- (v) the Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit, and
- (vi) the Director of the Integrity Reporting Services Agency.

I am informed that the Task Force started work soon after it was set up and has met on several occasions to develop the necessary strategy and plan of action to fulfill its mandate.

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Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service has held several working sessions with representatives of Ministries/ Departments/Organisations concerned with a view to expediting the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report.

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Madam Speaker, with a view to ensuring constant monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations, a permanent secretariat has been set up at the level of my Office.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the report has been made public since July this year and since then there have been three Committees that have been set up –

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Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, why has the hon. Prime Minister not included the Ministry of Social Integration when we know that drug is *avant tout un problème de moyens*

and people of lower means are more prone to be afflicted by the drug problem? Why then has hon. Wong Yen Cheong not been given a seat to the Ministerial Committee? Why?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, of course ...

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Madam Speaker: Please! Hon. Bhagwan!

The Prime Minister: I can understand that the hon. Member has never formed part of any Government before, but anyway, that is lack of experience. Of course, we cannot have a Committee of Ministers comprising of all the Cabinet. If we had to include not only the Ministry concerned, every Ministry is concerned. But this Committee, of course, co-opts as and when required Ministries which are relevant pertaining to the issues that we are discussing.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister with regard to three of the main recommendations of the Commission, the National Drug Policy Commission, the *Juges d'Application des Peines* and the Drug Offenders Administrative Panel, what is the fate now proposed for these three main recommendations?

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Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the overall consensus in Mauritius and the way forward to wage war on drugs is through a holistic approach. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Ministerial Task Force will take on-board the findings submitted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and crimes with respect to implementation of the National Drug Master Plan?

The Prime Minister: Well, it is not a Ministerial Task Force, it is a Ministerial Committee. But I can assure the hon. Member that we are working with the UNODC. I must say that I really appreciate the collaboration of the experts of UNODC with whom I had the opportunity of interacting and discussing on the way forward. Yes, we will obviously take on-board the expert advice of UNODC.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, last question!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned the Committee headed by the Secretary to Cabinet which is already implementing some of the recommendations. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister when it comes to policy decision, do I take it that since this Ministerial Committee has met only once on 16 August, for the past two months, this Ministerial Committee has not been apprised of any report from the Committee as regards policy changes?

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Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/807 and PQ B/808 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister have been withdrawn.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY

GENERAL ISSUES

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION – SCHOOL MATERIALS DISTRIBUTION

(23.10.2018)

(No. B/892) **Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Foundation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the value of the school materials and uniforms distributed for the year 2018, indicating the criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries thereof.

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): Madam Speaker, for academic year 2018, an amount of Rs33,688,808 has been disbursed on the provision of school materials for some 18,302 children attending pre-primary, primary, pre-vocational and secondary schools for both Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have only one supplementary. Will the hon. Minister kindly ensure that at the level of the NEF, whether it is for school materials or the series of support that they are giving to those in absolute poverty, that there is at least some sort of mechanism to communicate to those people in the different *poches de pauvreté*? May I make a request to the hon. Minister to please look into this issue of communication?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I will look into it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, so as not to lose the time of the House, following the question that has been asked by hon. Rughoobur, I will ask that these suggestions be made at Adjournment time in Adjournment Matters because the object of a question is to dig into something which you think has not been done properly. So, I would appeal to hon. Members regarding suggestions that they have to make to Ministers to come under Adjournment Matters. Thank you. Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs Perraud: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what are the measures his Ministry is taking so that school materials and uniforms are not distributed late after school has resumed?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: I have taken it from the proposition of hon. Rughoobur. I will look into it. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: The question put by hon. Mrs Perraud, I do not know whether it is the same question which I am going to put. Very often, many eligible beneficiaries are not attended to. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether corrective measures are taken to see to it that they obtain the materials before school starts.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, the list of SRM beneficiaries are already with the officers and they are communicated usually by way of these people who are working on the terrain in the specific areas, but if they do not have the information, it is published already, we do publish that, we will make a communiqué. So, if anything else we can do, we will look into the matter. Last year, all the materials were being distributed in a very orderly manner and there was no criticism on the part of all the beneficiaries themselves. Most of the time, it is the people who think they are in the SRM, they can have these materials, but they do not fall in the criteria of SRM beneficiaries. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether a tender was floated for school materials and uniforms, which were retained for the supply for the year 2018?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, there is already a question regarding same which hon. Armanace has asked at the end of this session and maybe I will answer to it when it comes to me. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

PRIMARY & SECONDARY

GENERAL ISSUES

GOVERNMENT MEDICAL INSURANCE SCHEME- IMPLEMENTATION (23.10.2018)

(No. B/899) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the Government Medical Insurance Scheme, he will state if same has been implemented and –

- (a) if so, since when, indicating the -
 - (i) terms and conditions thereof;
 - (ii) selected insurance company, indicating the procurement method used for the selection thereof, and
 - (iii) total amount earmarked for the 50% Government contribution, indicating if same will be done through check-off or debited from the passage benefits of the employees, and
- (b) if not, why not, indicating if the civil servants will be refunded same with effect from January 2017.

Mr Boissézon: Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that the introduction of a Government Medical Insurance Scheme (GMIS) for public officers was recommended by PRB as far back as 2008. Subsequent Reports of PRB in 2013 and 2016 have maintained that this scheme be implemented with a view, among others -

- (c) to provide a healthy workforce in the public service, and
- (d) allow public officers to have access to a wide array of medical high-tech facilities among others.

In this connection, my Ministry has had several working sessions with representatives of stakeholders concerned, including the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Procurement Policy Office to discuss on the modalities for the implementation of such a scheme. Subsequently, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development gave its clearance for the scheme to be on a cost sharing basis, whereby Government's contribution would be 50% to match the employee's contribution of 50%.

I wish to add that since June 2016, my Ministry has been initiating actions to procure the services of a Consultant to design and work out a general framework for the implementation of the scheme on the basis of which bids could be invited. As such, three tender exercises have been carried out so far, but none has been successful due to non-compliance with mandatory requirements of the bidding documents, namely –

- (iv) lack of sufficient number of responsive bids;
- (v) lack of minimum of five years' experience in the management of medical schemes for large organisations, and
- (vi) non-filling of standard bidding forms, among others.

It has to be admitted that the implementation of the GMIS has been taking more time than expected due to the complex nature of the scheme and the size of the Civil Service and the inadequate response to tendering exercises. The three aborted procurement exercises for consultancy have shown that the scheme involves a number of technical issues and it would be very important to have expertise on how to elicit the best response from the market and get a more competitive offer instead of merely relaunching the procurement exercise.

In the light of the above, my Ministry has reconsidered its strategy and has had consultation with other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance, the Financial Services Commission and the Procurement Policy Office. It is now proposed to adopt a new procurement procedure in line with Directive No. 25 issued under Section 7 of the Public Procurement Act with a view to secure the services of an insurance service provider for the design and implementation of the Government Medical Insurance Scheme by way of an early market engagement. This matter is still under consideration. As such, the Government Medical Insurance Scheme is yet to be implemented. In view thereof, the issues raised at parts (a) (i) and (ii) and (b) of the question do not arise.

Concerning part (a) (iii) of the question, an amount of Rs50 m. has been earmarked in the Budget for this financial year and an amount of Rs200 m. is projected yearly for Financial Years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 as Government contribution to the scheme.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: The Minister admitted himself in his reply that this is taking much time, and civil servants are still awaiting these measures to be implemented. Can the hon. Minister give us a time frame? I know that he has the problem of consultancy, but we do have insurance companies in Mauritius dealing with health.

Mr Boissézon: Madam Speaker, I cannot give a time frame. In fact, we have to know that Directive No. 25 allows, and I will quote: 'As the Public Procurement Act does not prohibit

public bodies to hold pre-procurement engagement with the market they may, therefore, conduct market consultation prior to inviting bids following a transparent process.’

So, we shall have market consultation. I cannot tell the time that it will take to have the consultation because we have to meet all the service providers on the market to ensure that nobody is left on the side of the road. In fact, we have already earmarked Rs50 m. for this year and we hope that very quickly we shall be in a position to launch the tender.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister assure the House that before the end of this mandate, there will be implementation of this very important measure?

Mr Boissézon: No, I cannot because it takes time to have consultation. As I said earlier, it is a process of a very complex nature and we have to learn the technical issues.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Having heard the Minister addressing a lot of difficulties for implementing this medical scheme, can he inform the House why friendly countries like India, France and Singapore have not been approached to give a helping hand to implement the Government Medical Scheme Insurance?

Mr Boissézon: In fact, we had open tenders and companies from abroad could have tendered for the project.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the Insurance Scheme itself, will it be mandatory for employees to subscribe to it or will it be voluntary?

Mr Boissézon: As I said previously, it will be voluntary.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Abbas Mamode!