

Cabinet to deliberate on Neeeb

• SHELLEYGAN PETERSEN

DESPITE numerous concerns expressed over the bill, the government plans to go ahead with the national equitable economic empowerment bill (Neeeb), which is set to reach the Cabinet after June.

The executive director in the Office of the Prime Minister, I-Ben Nashandi, yesterday said the bill is currently with the Ministry of Justice's legal drafters.

The Neeeb, which seeks to promote

the economic empowerment of previously disadvantaged Namibians, has been widely criticised by many for only targeting a particular segment of the population.

"Once the drafting is done, the bill is submitted to the Cabinet for clearance, and then a responsible member of Cabinet is authorised to table it in the National Assembly for consideration," Nashandi said.

Justice ministry spokesperson Simon Idipo yesterday confirmed that drafting is expected to be finalised by the middle of the year.

"We will be submitting the draft to the Office of the Prime Minister as custodian by June this year," he said.

One of the most recent criticisms of the bill was expressed in a report commissioned by the government and the World Bank.

The report said the proposed bill of 2016 should be ditched, and that the procurement process should instead be used to address gaps in local content and ownership legislation.

The report further indicates it could

involve including certain requirements in bids or making local content part of bid evaluation criteria.

However, such local content requirements would need to be supported by suitable training and education programmes, as there is currently a skills shortage in Namibia's green hydrogen value chain, the report says.

In addition, it cautions against allowing ministry or state-owned entities to double up in order to gain additional ownership rights.

"There is no need to enact the Neeeb, which, in any case has been in draft form for several years without the apparent need for it to be enacted.

"Such local content requirements would have to be supported by suitable training and education requirements as there is a general skills shortage in the green hydrogen value chain in Namibia, whereas expats often command high wages and require visas and permits to be able to work in Namibia," the report reads.

TENDERS FROM PAGE 1

Pharma, GenMed, Econo Investments, Element Medical Suppliers, Afripharm Investments, and Ciron Drugs and Pharmaceuticals.

INFORMATION EXCLUDED

However, unlike previous awards that included the price per beneficiary company, this one only provided information on quantities and unit prices.

The latest tenders appear to be dominated by the same faction of medical contract beneficiaries which won big in January.

Sources believe this was deliberately done to avoid public scrutiny and the detection of cronyism in the awarding of tenders.

Smit, a Popular Democratic Movement parliamentarian, yesterday said disclosing figures helps to build public and stakeholder trust in the procurement system.

He said: "This obligation is stipulated in the Public Procurement Act of 2015, which requires that the CPBN provides a detailed report of the procurement process, including the name of the company awarded the tender, and the exact amount awarded."

Smit said the CPBN is mandated to ensure transparency and accountability in the procurement process and is explicitly required by law to disclose the exact amounts tenders awarded to companies are worth.

He said the board is mandated to ensure that the procurement process is conducted fairly and transparently, and in a manner that promotes competition, efficiency

address these concerns.

The tenders were signed off by CPBN acting chairperson Amon Ngavetene.

'RATE-BASED'

According to Immanuel Kambinda, the CPBN's acting executive of public procurement, the procurement process for pharmaceutical products was rate-based.

Bidders were required to offer unit rates for each item and bids were evaluated for each item, with the contract comprising the items awarded to the successful bidder.

Kambinda said: "The Ministry of Health and Social Services will purchase items on the unit rates offered by the bidders within the amount provided for on the financial certificate by the ministry and based on consumption.

"The purchaser reserves the right to increase or decrease the quantity of goods originally

specified, depending on the demand for the products."

The notified selected bidders had until Tuesday this week to accept the award, object, or ask for re-evaluation.

The notice did, however, not indicate the price values of the tenders to be awarded – only the unit prices.

'NO NEED FOR MORE TRANSPARENCY'

Political analyst Ndumba Kamwanyah says the CPBN's move is contrary to the principle of open governance and transparency.

"It is important for public institutions like the CPBN that they be seen to be transparent and open. This is because this institution is very important for Namibia and critical to the development of Namibia, because it allocates national resources," he said.

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This was revealed by a recent survey, she said.

"Employee wellness programmes keep your employees healthy and productive, helping you reduce this productivity loss," she said.

less sick days and overall perform better on the job."

According to Muinjague, businesses in Namibia have started signing up for physical wellness programmes as well.

"Physical health typically includes activities such as chronic disease management, nutrition counselling, and smoking cessa-

workforce, a healthy bottom line, and a network of peers from leading organisations to engage in a wellness dialogue.

Muinjague said workplace wellness is an investment which works like any other investment.

"You put in time and money in the hope of a more valuable outcome, which in this case is the health of your employees, their families and

to educate and incentivise employees to live healthier.

"By doing so, it could benefit your business in a multitude of ways.

"Employees who are healthier have fewer sick days and are more productive than their less healthy counterparts," she said.

Earlier this year, *New Era* reported that labour consultant and

CPBN spokesperson Johanna Kambala says the process is transparent, and there is no need for additional transparency measures.

She says the bidders were aware that they would be awarded based on the rate they proposed, and not on a fixed amount.

The awarded amount depends on the demands and needs of the health ministry, Kambala says.

"If 10 companies are recommended, it does not mean they are guaranteed that the ministry will order from them.

"The possibility that a quarter will pass without the ministry ordering from them is there. It is on the demand-and-needs basis of the ministry," she says.

Kambala says unit prices are equal to what companies would charge the ministry for the two years they would be contracted.

Sources have in the past complained that the tender board system is "contaminated".