

Shelved bill returning to parliament



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THE PARLIAMENTARY Ad-hoc Committee appointed to scrutinize and carry out consultations with stakeholders on the Bill for the Commercial Government Business Enterprise is expected to take this Bill back to Parliament next month.

The Bill seeks to centralize all State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) under the jurisdiction of a single ministry.

This Bill was shelved during the last session of Parliament after it was felt by members

that it required more scrutiny and consultation.

It was the Leader of Opposition, Ishmael Kalsakau, who proposed in parliament that the Bill will only be supported if the government withdraws it and allow it to be reviewed and reintroduced to parliament to be passed.

The Ad-hoc Committee was then appointed by the Speaker of Parliament.

In an interview with Kizzy Kalsakau from 96 Buzz FM, the Leader of Opposition

said the issue raised a few eyebrows when the Bill was brought initially to parliament.

"We have considered that perhaps the greatest evil in these state owned enterprises not operating effectively is political interference and its governance structure.

"And some of us are of the view that the sooner we get rid of political interference, the more productive these companies become.

"But of course it needs

more careful scrutiny.

"We need to talk to all the stakeholders.

"They need to be invited to comment upon the merits of such a piece of legislation because at the moment there is that stark fact, which is the non profitability of a lot of these companies.

"Some might be for good reason due to market indicators and some might be due to political interferences.

"But we need to address the problem, which is how to

make these companies become focused on making profits and those profits being returned to Government so that the Government can exercise its social responsibility by providing service delivery to the people," Leader of Opposition, Ishmael Kalsakau said.

Some of the State Owned Enterprises are Air Vanuatu, Airports Vanuatu Limited, National Bank of Vanuatu, National Housing Corporation, Vanuatu

Agriculture Development Bank, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation, Vanuatu Commodities Marketing Board and Vanuatu Post Limited.

Mr Kalsakau said, while there are still many issues to be addressed, this legislation starts off in the right direction towards stopping companies from doing social service, removing politics and making sure that people that are qualified and experienced manage these businesses.