

## Chairman's message

Dear reader,

This newsletter will be published at quarterly intervals to provide you with information regarding the activities and initiatives of the CPB.

It is recalled that CPB, under the Public Procurement Act 2006 (as amended) Section 8, is responsible for approving the award of major contracts exceeding the prescribed amount as specified in the Schedule to the Act, by Public Bodies after due process.

The process includes vetting the bidding documents received from Public Bodies at pre-bidding stage, setting up and overseeing the Bid Evaluation Committees to final Technical Review of same leading to approval of awards.

The present Board decided to implement various initiatives with a view to expedite the process without compromising on the vigorous scrutiny of the bidding process. This entails better collaboration and engagement with the Public Bodies, so that at the outset the bidding documents are well prepared and which neither warrant unnecessary addenda, nor requiring lots of clarifications.

The timeline from vetting to bid evaluation, that is, from the time of receipt of a bidding document from the Public Body, to floating of bids, to the opening of bids, followed by evaluation of same, review by the technical committee, to approval of award, is being reviewed to expedite the whole process.

The other innovation is to go paperless, that is, to work online for all communications, for processing of bids received to evaluation of bidding documents.

The Board is in the process of preparing a set of Codes of Conduct and Ethics for the Board Members and the staff of CPB.

In parallel, the Board has launched a call for Registration of Interest from experienced Evaluators to enlarge its pool of experts for expeditious vetting and evaluation.

This Newsletter and those to follow will keep you updated on projects in hand at each and every step of the process as well as all initiatives being taken to ensure that award decisions are made in all transparency, fairness, expeditiously and represent the best value for money.

To conclude, I recall that this is a communication tool and is open to you, too, for feedback, comments, appreciation or suggestions.

Happy reading.

Chairperson, CPB

Raj H Prayag PDSM

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*"We can no longer afford to sustain the old ways when we know there are new and more efficient ways of getting the job done."*

**Barack Obama**

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## Public procurement landscape in the Republic of Mauritius

The Central Procurement Board (CPB), established under the Public Procurement Act 2006 (PPA) proclaimed in 2008, and succeeding the Central Tender Board (CTB) is one of the three major institutions in the Mauritian public procurement landscape. The two others being the Procurement Policy Office (PPO) and the Independent Review Panel (IRP), being respectively responsible for policy making and considering applications for review from aggrieved bidders.

The CPB is responsible for the approval of award of major contracts by public bodies, as defined in the PPA. All public procurement exercises not falling under the definition of major contracts are handled at the level of their respective ministry and/or public body, which are also governed by the PPA.

The CPB is run by a board of six members who are appointed by the President of the Republic acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. Composed of a Chairperson, two vice-chairpersons and three members, the board operates on a full-time basis and is supported by a team led by a Chief Executive. The staff of the CPB is composed of two main *streams* namely the conventional administrative support (comprising HR, registry, finance, stores) and a technical team (Engineers, Manager Procurement and Central Procurement Officers).

For the last financial year, the CPB has handled seventy-five projects, considered as major contracts, and approved the award for fifty-two, to the tune of thirteen billion rupees (MUR 13 Bn).

### Welcoming Foreign Delegations.

#### Estonia – Information System Authority

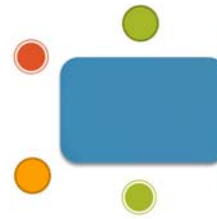
On 18 July 2018, a delegation from Estonia in the context of the G2G agreement between the Government of Mauritius and Government of Estonia paid a courtesy visit to the Chairman. Members of the delegation were mainly from the “Information System Authority of Estonia”.

They shared with us the success story of the digitalization of their public administration, a small country of 1.3 million population arising from a very precarious situation after the restoration of independence in 1990.



Discussions were also held on the possible assistance from Estonia for the digitalization project of CPB through the bilateral agreement.

### The Board reconstituted.



On the 16th of June 2018, the Board was reconstituted with the appointment of a new chairperson Mr. R.H. Prayag,

PDSM and that of a new member Mr. S. Aboobakar, OSK.

The two Vice-Chairpersons namely Messrs. Krishna Mauremootoo and Hiren Rambhojun, OSK as well as the two members Mrs. Sharda Dindoyal and Mr. Kirsley Bagwan were reappointed for a second term.

#### Vision

To be the model for efficient and effective public procurement in Mauritius

#### Mission

To ensure value for money in public procurement and timely acquisition through a fair and transparent process

#### Core Values

Transparency - Integrity - Ethical Practice  
- Equality/Fairness – Accountability

### Seychelles

On 21 June 2018, the CPB welcomed a delegation from Seychelles, on a study visit to Mauritius. The delegation was headed by Mrs. Elsie Morel of the Procurement Oversight Unit.



During the interactive session held information was exchanged between the two sides on the institutions dealing with public procurement and the procedures laid down in the respective laws of the two countries.

## **CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

This Newsletter is the first being published by this Board since its coming into operation. Forthcoming newsletters will provide valuable statistical data of procurement undertaken through the CPB. Data revealing the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the CPB and of the system in place, and which would have been very useful to the Board in initiating measures to improve the efficiency of the procurement process.

Faced with new challenges, the Board is reviewing its short term and medium term strategies, which are geared towards reducing significantly the procurement lead time (from receipt of biddings documents for vetting until approval of award) and expediting the implementation of projects in the public sector. With the further strengthening of the procurement system programmed for the medium term, especially the roll out of e-procurement, the public procurement landscape is expected to undergo a major transformation and result in further costs and time reduction as well as increased transparency.

### **E-Procurement**

In line with Government's plan towards a fully-fledged digital society requiring increased use of ICT in public administration, public bodies will be required, by the end of July 2019, to carry out public procurement electronically on the Government e-Procurement System (e-PS). The paper-based procurement process will be phased out when it is expected that Public Bodies will move to paperless procurement after the e-PS roll out.

## **Initiatives to expedite procurement process**

### **Reducing the Procurement Lead Time**

The criticism most often leveled against the CPB is with regard to the time taken for the vetting of bidding documents and the evaluation of bids. This is true to some extent, as it has been noted that in quite a few cases the procurement lead time has been excessively long.

The Board has set as one of its main objectives, a reduction in the procurement lead time by reviewing the vetting procedures and revisiting the arrangements in place for evaluation of bids and approval of awards.

#### Vetting of Bidding Documents

It has been noted that the unduly long time taken to clear bidding documents, in the majority of cases, has been mainly due to the poor quality of the documents submitted, resulting in lengthy exchange of correspondence and meetings to have the documents in an acceptable shape.

With a view to attending to the problem, some measures have been introduced; Incomplete documents with flaws are returned forthwith and the days count starts from the date the CPB is in receipt of the hard and soft copy of the complete set of the bidding document, detailed estimated cost, procurement plan and check list for vetting.

The Board has also reviewed its internal procedures with a view to avoiding delays in the examination of bidding documents.

#### Evaluation of Bids

The evaluation of bids also has been taking unduly long time in quite a number of cases. This has been mainly due to:

- ⇒ Lack of control on the works of the BECs;
- ⇒ Absence of any time frame for the completion of evaluation and the submission of the evaluation report by the BECs;
- ⇒ Evaluators from Public Bodies attend BECs only outside normal working hours due to their workload within their organisations; and
- ⇒ Major flaws in the bidding documents, which render the tasks of evaluators difficult and complicated at times.

With a view to avoiding delays and exercising better control on the works of the BECs, the following initiatives have been taken by the Board:

BECs are given a maximum of 15 working days to complete the evaluation exercise.

Technical Committees to review BEC reports are given three working days to report to the Chief Executive for recommendations to the Board.

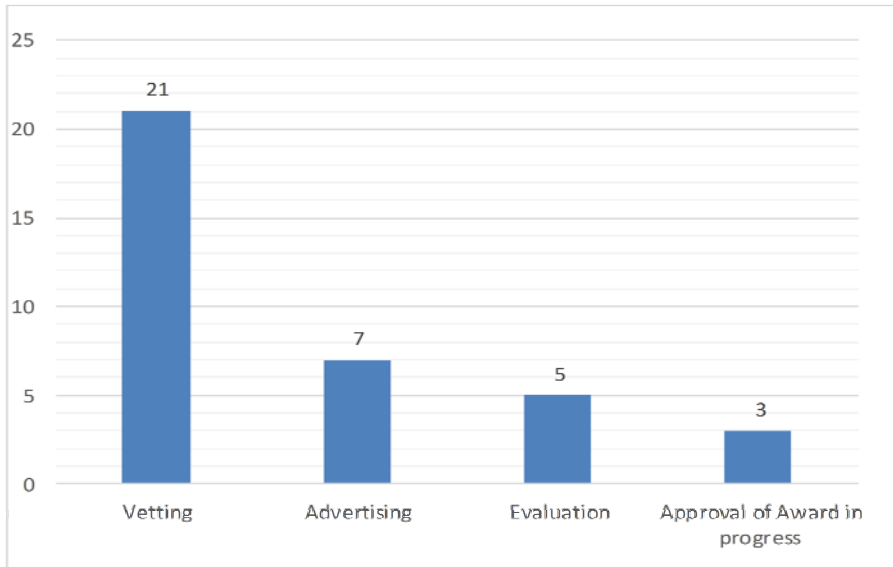
Works of the BECs are closely monitored. A post-evaluation brief is envisaged to "evaluate evaluators"

Evaluation criteria contained in the bidding documents are being subjected to greater scrutiny internally and discussed with representative of the Public Body at the time of vetting to ensure that they are clear, unambiguous and reasonable and will not constitute a problem at the time of evaluation.

The database of evaluators is being updated. Subsequently Expressions of Interests (EOI) have been launched to attract a wider range of professionals and this will contribute to capacity building.

## PROJECT STATUS

As at 30 July 2018, the CPB was handling 36 procurement projects falling under the category of major contracts. Out of those, 21 projects were at vetting stage, seven at bidding stage and eight at evaluation stage (graph below).



The Board is also working on a dashboard that will, at a glance, give to our stakeholders and the public at large a faithful representation of where each public procurement project, in respect of major contracts, lies. This dashboard will soon be published on our website and we encourage one and all to visit us regularly on the following link [cpb.govmu.org](http://cpb.govmu.org)

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information and visit our website for additional information.

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## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Public procurement is getting more importance with the scaling up of development activities. With significant rise in national budget every year, the value of public procurement has also gone up.

Transparent use of public funds needs to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and economy to achieve value for money in public procurement.

The CPB needs to improve its performance further in order to play a greater role in improving public procurement management. But for that, CPB needs to be strengthened. It is very heartening that the CPB is functioning with a shortage of staff with however the new onus to implement its plan to overcome all existing limitations.

Various endeavours are in the pipeline or already initiated with a view to achieving the objectives set, namely:

- Regular Staff Meetings : to boost up morale, get everybody on board, strengthen the sense of belonging to the organization and get full commitment and participation in any change process envisaged.
- Preparation of a Code of Conduct and Ethics for Board members and Staff of CPB: enhance the standards in the delivering of duties and improve public perception of the institution.
- Business Transformation Strategy: revamp the business process and align people, process and technology.
- Digitalisation Project : go paperless, increase transparency and traceability while expediting processes.
- Training of Evaluators : raise standards and harmonise bid evaluation.
- Engaging with Stakeholders : proactively address issues before starting the vetting of bidding documents



Staff Meeting