

Minister's Statements and Speeches

YEAR 2021

PUBLIC BILLS *Second*
Reading **THE**
SUPPLEMENTARY
APPROPRIATION (2020-
2021) BILL

(NO. XVI OF 2020)

(04.05.2021)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Supplementary Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill (No. XVI of 2020).

Question again proposed.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Supplementary Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill (No. XVI of 2020) makes provision for an additional amount of Rs150 m. under the vote of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this additional provision is meant specifically to finance expenditure relating to the activities of the MES and will supplement the grant required to finance its operations and its commitments. I would like to highlight the context which has led to the situation whereby this funding is being required. The 2020-2021 Budget was presented in a context of the Covid-19 budgetary constraints, where all Ministries/Departments and Statutory Bodies had to make cost-effective use of resources allocated to them. Against this backdrop, it was initially projected that the Ministry would be able to meet its financial commitments out of the allocated budgetary prepositions. As the House is aware, the COVID induced situations had major implications that led to the readjustment of the school calendar and the rescheduling of examinations. All national

assessments and examinations were rescheduled and SC/HSC Examinations are now expected to be completed by June 2021. Consequently, the pandemic also impacted on the budget, particularly with respect to the examination expenditure.

In line with education reform a new assessment, the NCE has been organised for the first time in Mauritius this year. The organisation of the NCE entailed preparation and printing of new Question Papers, the enlistment of services of invigilators and other exam personnel, their training, allowances for security services, the associated costs related to infrastructure and logistics.

Other factors that have contributed to the increase in examination expenses are: the foreign currency fluctuations with the pound Sterling being exchanged at a higher rate, increased in freight charges with respect to the transportation of question papers and scripts, strict compliance to sanitary protocol, requiring reinforced examinations logistics and additional number of invigilators, supervisors and markers. The recurrent budget of the MES has been reworked in light of the above and was estimated at Rs453.5 m. Up to now, the MES has been able to finance its recurrent budget from funds available in its accounts amounting to some Rs300 m., and thus, a shortfall of Rs150 m. has been noted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this supplementary amount will be needed to meet the expenses referred to above: Conduct and marking of PSAC, Grades 5 & 6 assessment, conducted marking of the NCE assessment, conduct of the SC/HSC Examinations including the cost of foreign exchange operations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would wish to conclude by drawing the attention of the House on the fact that the provisions for sponsorship of the Cambridge SC/HSC examination fees amounting to some Rs273 m. were already provided for in its budget for 2019-2020 and we carried forward for the payment of fees in 2021.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.