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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 657**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 03/03/2023**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 6 OF 2023**

**Dr S S Thembekwayo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

What (a) urgent steps has he taken with regard to the South African students who are part of the programme to study in Russia and who are now forced to move in with friends after being evicted from their residences due to non-payment and (b) are the further relevant details?

**NW729E**

**REPLY:**

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)’s programme does not have any students who have not received stipend payments. The Stipend payment of the Department’s programme is being processed by the South African Mission in Russia and their stipends for February 2023 have been processed. The South African mission in Russia is currently processing the March stipends.

With regard to other scholarship programmes not administered by the DHET, there has been constant communication with the Provincial Government of Mpumalanga (the province) which has sponsored the 221 students in question with full scholarships at Russian universities and had previously faced stipend payment challenges. The Department has also had periodic joint meetings with the Province, The Department of International Relations and Corporation (DIRCO) and South African Mission in Russia to ensure that the scholarship awardees are assisted with scholarships related challenges. The purpose of these engagements was to put in measures that would expedite a solution for the affected students.

Mpumalanga Province has recently indicated to the Department that all accommodation, tuition, and stipend challenges that their scholarship awardees were facing have been resolved. Furthermore, the Province has indicated that it has approved diversions to approve support for students who have contravened the scholarship contract and those who have gone beyond their contract period.

At a meeting of 27th February 2023, the province indicated that it is reviewing an additional list of students who submitted a complaint through DHET of not receiving their funds. At the same meeting the province indicated that it is reviewing the submitted case as according to their records all student matters pertaining to stipend payments had been resolved.