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PRESS RELEASE
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MINISTER OF EDUCATION BRIEFS PARLIAMENT ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The Minister of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), Dr. Minkailu Bah has on Tuesday 08th November, 2016 briefed MPs on the challenges that are being faced by the education sector in the country. It was streamed live on SLBC TV & Radio.

After he had briefed the House, the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, SBB Dumbuya commended the Minister for doing a good job, and also said that he had no scintilla of doubt in his capacity to sanitize the education sector.

During the course of the briefing, the Minister informed the House about complaints he had received from the University authorities regarding students who had failed to take their exams on weak excuses such as not attending lectures, ill-health and the death of their relatives.

He also said that for the past two years, Government had paid subsidies to schools, noting that some schools had received over Le 200 Million based on the lists they submitted to MEST. But, upon the verification of those lists via registers and class lists, the principals and vice-principals concern had to disappear.

He recalled the unprecedented distribution of teaching and learning materials by the National Electoral Commission during the course of the emergency re-opening of schools. He also said that the management of teachers now rests with the Teaching Service Commission, situated at 7 Priscilla Street in Freetown.

On the issue of ghost-teachers, he said that he had removed over 6,000 teachers from the payment vouchers, thus saving Le 42 Billion per annum for the Government of Sierra Leone, since he started the fight in 2008. That he had also stopped the payment into the accounts of 75 persons, some of whom had resigned since 2011, including his relative that had travelled overseas. He remarked that “the State is in search of funds, yet others are siphoning them, using dubious means”.

He revealed that, since that meeting in Parliament where the Education Committee is investigating the operations of alleged fraudulent accounts opened in certain banks, and its subsequent publicity regarding the Albert Academy, over 150 requests have been made to delete names from the vouchers.

He later spoke of falsified certificates of BECE, WASSCE, and University Degrees, noting the use of scratch-cards to verify true results, and the dismissals of teachers both at FTC and MMCET for unprofessional conduct and academic fraud.

In another development, the Parliament of Sierra Leone has deferred debate on the “Community Health Practitioners’ Act 2016”, because of the absence of the Parent Act. It is a Private Member’s Bill that is being piloted by Hon. Mohamed Lamin Mansaray from Koinadugu.

The Bill aims to provide a broader understanding of the work of Community Health Officers, otherwise known as the frontline health workers that are delivering essential primary health services, including surgeries, child care, and mental health throughout the country.