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Commonwealth Games budget doubled

No allotment made for many essential factors in initial allocation: Minister

P. Sunderarajan

NEW DELHI: Faced with delays and escalating costs, the 19th Commonwealth Games, to be held here next October, received a major boost on Thursday, with the Union Cabinet deciding to more than double the budget allocation.

The budget has been hiked to Rs. 1,620 crore from Rs. 767 crore. The amount will be given as loan to the Organising Committee of the Games at the prevailing interest rate of the government.

Union Minister and Cabinet spokesperson Ambika Soni said the increase had become necessary due to several factors.

For instance, several new items that were essential for the successful delivery of the games but were not provided in the initial budget, such as sponsorship and television rights, security, ticketing, city operations, accreditation and sustainability and environment, are included now.

Likewise, there were changes in the scope of the work and cost escalation in respect of accommodation, catering, opening and closing ceremonies, rent for the office of the Organising Committee, risk management-insurance, protocol and CGF relations, communications, image and looks, technology and the Queen's Baton Relay.



Ambika Soni

There is a significant increase in the number of days of the Relay – from 136 to 240 days for the international leg and from 60 to 100 days for the domestic leg. The revised route for the relay now

covered all the 70 CGA nations and territories in the international leg and all States in the national leg.

Further, the number of volunteers required for the games has gone up to nearly 30,000, with concurrent increase in terms of cost of accreditation, catering, uniform and other such expenses.

Ms. Soni said the components of rent for the Organising Committee's headquarters and for technology alone accounted for a significant portion of the increase. The allocations for the two items were practically zero in the initial Budget. It has now been estimated that about Rs. 175 crore is required for the rent and Rs.

200 crore for the technology.

Replying to queries, the Minister denied that the increase in the budget would mean a waste of resources. Pointing out that the amount was being provided as a loan, she said the Organising Committee expected to generate revenue of about Rs. 1,708 crore.

The run up to the games has been mired in controversies with Commonwealth Games Federation CEO Mike Hooper at one time expressing serious concerns over the pace of the preparations. The matter was consequently resolved following detailed discussions between the top brass of the CGF and the Indian Olympic Committee.