



Press Release

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Dispense Budget Books to MPs on time

The timely release of the national budget books to MPs and the general public is an imperative step in fostering openness, quality and efficiency of the budget. ACCORDING to article 96 of the Parliamentary Standing Orders of 2007, the budget estimates are to be provided to the Members of Parliament (MPs) at least 21 days before the budget session starts.

This year's budget session is expected to commence on the 6th of May, 2014 starting with various committees on the 28th to the 4th of May. However, communication made between Sikika and some legislators on Friday 2nd May, 2014, established that the budget books were not provided to MPs as per regulations.

One should note that the last year's expenditure estimates were printed on over 1006 pages. Thus, the late submission of the budget proposal to the MPs might affect their work, which is to scrutinize the financial plans, and make it difficult to effectively consult with their constituencies. In addition, the MPs are at risk to unknowingly approve executive's budget estimates that do not address citizens' needs.

The articles 63 and 137 of the Constitution of Tanzania provide the National Assembly with authority, on behalf of the people, "to oversee and advise the Government of the United Republic and all its organs" before it fulfills its legislative role by formally authorizing the Government to incur expenditures in the next financial year. To effectively perform their approval role, MPs require sufficient time to go through those documents and discuss them with citizens, who are the government's sovereign. The aim, among other things, is to see if citizens' priorities have been adequately considered or whether adjustments should be made.

Thus, the Parliament should demand that budget estimates are submitted on time to provide a room for consultation with the citizens and to adjust the budget accordingly before it is passed. Likewise, the government must be accountable and provide MPs with the budget estimates to avoid the passing of budget items that do not reflect the reality on the ground.

We firmly believe that the timely submission of the budget estimates to the Parliament will help the legislators performing their constitutional role and advise the government on how to use national resources to the benefit "of the people and the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease" (Constitution article 9).

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