

By Felister Peter and Martha Majura, Dodoma

THE Parliament has approved by individual vote of 234 for and 66 against, the 19.6trn/- budget for the 2014/2015 financial year, cutting recurrent expenditures by 5 percent and reducing by 50 percent the funds allocated for purchase of government vehicles.

Winding up the budget speech, Finance Minister Saada Mkuya said that it wasn't true that the government was not considering the opinions given by the parliamentary standing committee on budget.

"We always consider advice on new sources of revenues but we cannot rush into them as we need to critically analyse them," she noted.

Mkuya said that the

government is working on proposals to embark on deep sea fishing though it requires a lot of investments.

Tabling the report of the Parliamentary Committee on Budget, Deputy Chairman, Festus Limbu said they have made changes on funds allocation for some ministries and government institutions in accordance with their importance.

Limbu said there were 23 requests for fund increment but only 15 have been

okayed. He said the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare have been given an extra 33.5bn/- of which 3bn/- will be mainly used to improve provision of medical services to expectant mothers and children.

He said that 25bn/- will be used for medicine and equipment distribution while the remaining amount will be used to pay the debt at the Medical Stores Departments (MSD).

He said the Ministry of

Works got an additional 14bn/- for the purchase of new passenger train engines. He said the move is geared at improving railway transport in the country. He said that 2bn/- have been added to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Sports to support employment creation through 'youth fund'.

The Deputy Chairman further said that the committee approved budget increment to the police force and Fire Brigade departments

under the Ministry of Home Affairs. He said that fire brigade got an extra 8.98bn/- which is meant for food allowance which has been increased to 6,000/- from 5,000/- per day. He said the police force received an extra 16.3bn/- for food allowance and uniforms.

"We have advised the government to prioritize agriculture, water, energy and minerals sectors," he said adding that one of the major challenges impending

implementation of budget is misallocation of funds.

In his response, Deputy Minister for Finance (Policy) said the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) will from the next financial year audit all the tax exemptions granted in the previous year.

He said the aim is to know whether the exemptions were used for targeted purposes.

"We have moved to remove all tax exemptions after realizing that we were losing billions and fail to

implement projects...we want to give relief to the tax payers as revenues collected from tax exemptions shall be directly used for development projects," he said.

The national budget for the 2014/2015 financial year is up by 1trn compared to the 18.2trn for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 2014. The budget was unveiled by Finance Minister Saada Mkuya on June 22nd June, this year.