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Uganda: MPs Approve More Sh100 Billion for State House

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BY HENRY MUKASA AND MARY KARUGABA, 19 APRIL 2012





Parliament has approved an additional sh100b for State House as opposition MPs raised alarm the supplementary expenditure disregarded emergencies that should have got urgent attention from Government.

State House requisitioned for an additional Sh81.86b for recurrent expenditure on top of sh57.76 that was appropriated in the budget; which amounted to a 41.62% increment.

State House further asked for sh10.148b, on top of sh8.8b that was budgeted for, to cater for shortfalls in the development budget, reflecting an increment of sh114b.

The budget committee which scrutinized the supplementary budget request observed in its report that most of the items for which funds were being sought for are of a predictable nature and could have been provided for within the normal budgeting process. It cited utilities, travel and staff training.

Vice chairperson, Remigio Achia on Tuesday told parliament presided over by the Speaker, Rebecca Kadaga that the minister for the presidency told the committee that the planned budget for State House was sh190b but the ministry of finance had provided only sh56b "which was totally inadequate."

"He further noted that the increase in the recurrent expenditure was as a result of an increase in the number of guests and travel by the President. This is due to the Presidents involvement in regional and international issues such as Somalia," the report read by Achia said.

However, opposition MPs led by their leader Nandala Mafabi pointed out that the constitution only allowed supplementary expenditure for "unforeseeable expenditure" yet most of the items receiving money were predictable yet the emergency ones like the strange "nodding disease" had been left out.

Alice Alaso (FDC) has proposed that sh4b is diverted from State House to cater for the health conditions of the children in the North. "If we MPs seated here cannot find money for those children, nodding, tied under trees with saliva flowing out of their mouth that will not be justice. I don't care what you use the money for in State House for now. I care for what you do for the children of Uganda who are suffering," Alaso stated.

However, state minister for Finance Aston Kajara said Government had secured an initial Sh2.7b for nodding disease.

MPs also approved classified expenditure of sh16.7b to fight terrorism and sh11.84b for the ministry of Foreign Affairs to pay contribution to international organisations like African Union and the Commonwealth. Another Sh6.78b was cleared to cater for expenses for Heritage Oil Arbitration case in London while Sh20b was approved for compensation of people who lost property during the war in the North.

Other funds were for ministry of trade (4.8b), Makerere University (sh16.7b), Mbarara University (sh89.6b), local government (sh2.71b), water and environment (sh5.0b) and Uganda police (sh10.74b). The ministry of trade with use the money to pay fees to COMESA, Makerere will use the funds to settle outstanding staff pension with NIC while Mbarara University will boost pay for expatriate staff.

The ministry of local government will use its allocation to meet a shortfall in UPE capitation grants while the ministry of water will construct a gravity water scheme in Kanungu and the police force with be enabled to meet contractual obligations.

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