

Banjul, Gambia, December 8 (Infosplusgabon) - Gambian parliamentarians have questioned the country's Finance Minister as to why salaries of the President and Vice President did not reflect in the national budget, Infosplusgabon reported Friday.

The question was roundly raised as members of Gambia's parliament discussed the country's 2018 national budget estimates before approving it.

Finance minister Amadou Sanneh, in his reply, told the MPs that it was true that salaries for the president and vice president were not disclosed in the draft budget and concurred with members that they should be disclosed.

He informed them that it was a long time practice that these salaries were not disclosed.

He, however, promised to take the matter up with the country's personnel management office and that these salaries would now be disclosed for the interest of transparency.

As for budgetary allocations over national celebrations that were attached to almost all the ministries, they would now be put on hold for some while others were sliced to reasonable amounts.

Members argued that now, yes celebrations could go on but not at a cost to Gambian taxpayers.

The ruling coalition government recently celebrated President Adama Barrow's 2 December 2016 election victory which ended the 22-years dictatorship of former president Yahya Jammeh.

In his intervention on the budget debate, Saikouba Jarju, Member of Parliament for Busumbala constituency, said the National Assembly as an institution did not have mobility. "Yes, members were given vehicles by President Barrow" but that was not what he wanted.

He argued that MPs' vehicles should have come from the taxpayers' money and not on the good will gesture of a sitting president.

Jarju observed that in the past, the president used to give out gifts to MPs and make demands. "I am not saying that is what will happen but what if it happens?"

Recently, President Barrow personally gave out vehicles to the MPs without explaining their sources only saying they were generously from someone who wished not to be named.

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