

Berri Calls On Cabinet to Meet, Issue Oil Exploration Decrees 25 Feb, 2015

The Daily Star - BEIRUT: Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri urged the Cabinet Wednesday to resume its meetings in order to issue two decrees necessary to launch exploration in Lebanon's offshore oil fields.

In the weekly meeting with lawmakers, Berri was quoted as saying that the Cabinet must "issue the two decrees related to oil."

The two decrees would define the number of blocks in Lebanon's exclusive economic zone and establish a revenue mechanism, as well as a tax policy for the country's nascent oil and gas exploration sector.

The speaker also called on Prime Minister Tammam Salam to "hold a Cabinet session as soon as possible, in order to reactivate the state's work according to the constitution's standards."

Salam had decided earlier this month to halt Cabinet meetings until the different political factions agree on a new mechanism for making decisions. The weekly Cabinet session scheduled for this Thursday is expected to be suspended.

Since President Michel Sleiman's term ended last May, the national unity Cabinet has been tasked with approving laws and decrees. The 24-member body requires unanimous approval to pass legislation, creating difficulties in getting decisions through the Cabinet.

Berri stressed that article 65 of the constitution should be the only basis for decision making in the Cabinet.

Article 65 of the Lebanese Constitution states that the Cabinet can only be activated if two-thirds of the ministers are present and that decision must be made unanimously.

However, in cases where a consensus cannot be reached, the constitution requires that a simple majority vote is conducted.