

# THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

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## Companies lining up to buy Lebanon's gas data

BEIRUT: More companies are expected to buy the oil and gas data from Lebanon as companies line up to bid for the first round of a prequalification tender in February, the CEO of Britain-based Spectrum said Wednesday.

"The government, Spectrum and PGS generated a revenue of over \$90 million from the sale of data to the companies. There are daily and weekly meetings in several capitals to review this data to make bidding in the tenders," David Rowlands told The Daily Star over the telephone.

Basically, the data contains detailed information about the geological structure and carbon on the shores of Lebanon as well maps of all the areas that were surveyed by the high-capacity seismic vessel, M/V Polar Duke.

The vessel has surveyed 3,000 square kilometers southwest of Lebanon, near the maritime border with Cyprus and Israel.

"There has been lot of activity among companies since the Energy and Water Ministry set dates for the tender this year. The companies are trying to put together partner groups to drill for gas fields in Lebanon," Rowlands explained.

Energy and Water Minister Gebran Bassil insists on granting the licenses to extract gas to a consortium of companies instead of allowing one company alone do the work in the oil fields.

"We had companies which came to our office in London to inquire about the prospects of oil and gas in Lebanon. We also had four meetings in Dubai this week to discuss the same subject," Rowlands said.

The six member Petroleum Administration is currently making all the preparations to launch the tender in the coming few months.

But Bassil said recently that the members of this committee were not authorized to reveal any information to the press or contact the companies.

The committee is designed to hammer out the conditions for the tender and review all the technical and legal details.

The committee communicates with the Energy and Water Ministry, which will negotiate with the companies.

Rowlands stressed that the actual drilling and gas exploration would begin up to 2017 if

everything went according to the plan.

The total maritime area that will be surveyed is 22,000 square kilometers, meaning that gas levels could be higher than initial estimates show, Rowlands said earlier.

“Over the next six months, I anticipate more selling of the technical data. In addition to the data, we’ll prepare reports and then sell them to interested parties,” he added.

Rowlands said Spectrum had several months ago sent teams to scout additional Lebanese areas to explore the possibility of oil onshore.

But he added that Spectrum would get a clear idea about the prospects of oil on Lebanese shores at the end of this year because it is easier to assess the size of gas offshore.

Bassil expressed confidence Tuesday of finding substantial oil and gas inside Lebanese territories.

But some experts fear that the political wrangling and the sharp debate over the election law could delay the work of the Petroleum Administration.

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