



Lebanon Cabinet Approves First Offshore Oil, Gas Licensing Round

By Robert Tuttle - Dec 27, 2012

Lebanon authorized its first offshore oil and natural gas licensing round at a cabinet meeting today as the nation sought to catch up with neighbors [Israel](#) and Cyprus in developing fuel reserves.

The qualifying round for companies interested in participating will start Feb. 1, Minister of Social Affairs Wael Bou Faour said at a press conference in the capital [Beirut](#). A list of qualified explorers will be issued by March 31 and they can place bids starting May 2, he said.

Exploration will proceed in waters close to those of Israel and Cyprus, where [Noble Energy Inc. \(NBL\)](#) found gas. The Leviathan field, discovered in 2010 in Israel's deep waters, was the world's largest find of its kind in a decade.

Lebanon, which passed an oil and gas law in 2010 and appointed a six-member petroleum board last month, faced political divisions that have delayed action on energy exploration.

Revenues from oil and gas reserves may help reduce its debt burden, the largest in the Arab world. The country's loans totaled \$56 billion, equivalent to 135 percent of its annual economic output.

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