



Lebanon News

**Anti-Hezbollah moves sour Cabinet mood; Anti-Hezbollah moves sour Cabinet mood**

Joseph Haboush

706 words

18 May 2018

The Daily Star

DSTAR

English

© 2018. Web Middle East (Web Me) s.a.l

Beirut -- BEIRUT: The tightening noose on Iranian influence and Hezbollah in the region has put a damper on the optimistic outlook among Lebanese officials trying to form a new government swiftly. "The positive environment that presided over the discussions in forming a new government has been clouded by the new U.S.-Saudi measures," a political source told The Daily Star Thursday.

The U.S. imposed additional sanctions on Hezbollah members for the third day in a row, targeting five of its top officials, including Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah and deputy leader Sheikh Naim Qassem. In addition to Nasrallah and Qassem, the U.S. also imposed sanctions on Mohammad Yazbek, Hussein al-Khalil and Ibrahim al-Amin al-Sayyid.

The sanctions raise questions on whether pressure will be placed on Beirut and what kind of government should be formed, particularly after the encouraging domestic developments earlier this week.

Speaker Nabih Berri Tuesday paid a visit to President Michel Aoun, confirming his support for the president and describing the meeting as "positive." Separately, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea visited Prime Minister Saad Hariri also Tuesday after six months of cold relations.

Meanwhile, meetings were held between various politicians and MP-elects in an attempt to form parliamentary blocs ahead of the new Parliament's first session next week.

Hariri and former premier Tammam Salam met Thursday, with Salam voicing his backing for Hariri in the formation of a new government. "The first work for [Hariri] is the formation of a government, and I wish him all the best, especially since the country has no time to waste. We wish him good luck and we are by his side, always, in everything," Salam said.

A long-time ally of Hariri, Salam said: "My relation and alliance with [Hariri] remains strong and promising, so we will work together with all those loyal to the country in order to achieve security, stability, moderation, development and progress for Lebanon."

Despite the fresh sanctions on Hezbollah, Salam said he doesn't believe the formation of the next Cabinet will take long because those who impede a swift formation will "bear the responsibility of the hindrance."

Separately, Berri discussed the current situation with MP-elect Tony Frangieh who said "it's normal to start our visits with a visit to our first ally." Frangieh, the son of MP Sleiman Frangieh, said he was preparing a bloc that would be formed within two days.

As for the number of ministers Frangieh would be seeking in the new Cabinet, he said: "I think that when the sizes change, the quotas change in government, but we must wait and not anticipate ahead of time."

However, talks over who will be elected to the position of deputy speaker of Parliament remained a hot topic. With Berri widely expected to retain his post for the 26th year, two names are being circulated

for deputy – former deputy and current MP-elect Elie Ferzli and MP-elect Elias Bou Saab. However, local media reported MP Michel Murr might also be in the running. LBCI reported Murr said this would be left up to Berri. The position is being coveted by the LF who has proposed MP-elect Anis Nassar for the position, which is reserved for an Orthodox Christian. Frangieh noted his desire for the post to be held by a Marada MP but acknowledged it would most likely be given to a member from the largest bloc.

Free Patriotic Movement leader Gebran Bassil said his “Strong Lebanon” bloc will meet next week to discuss its pick for the speaker. An FPM statement said the discussions will revolve around “political matters” and “determine the position of the bloc in this regard.” Lebanon’s Parliament speaker is elected by a vote in which all MPs participate. The 128 newly elected and re-elected lawmakers will convene sometime in late May to determine the speaker.

MP-elect Henri Chedid meanwhile confirmed Thursday, following a meeting with Hariri, he was set to become a member of Hariri’s 20-member Future Movement bloc, after confusion over which bloc he planned to join. – Additional reporting by Hasan Lakkis

Document DSTAR00020180517ee5i0000c

### Search Summary

Text	anti-hezbollah moves
Date	In the last 3 months
Source	All Sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	All Languages
Results Found	1
Timestamp	18 May 2018 9:14