

Optimism on Government Formation Next Week as Lebanese Await Damascus Summit Outcome

Contributed by Naharnet
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The new cabinet is expected to be formed next week, according to well-informed sources, although a media report said that both majority and opposition are sending positive messages despite lack of consensus that could push government formation forward.

As Safir daily reported Saturday that last week's meeting between PM-designate Saad Hariri and Free Patriotic Movement leader Gen. Michel Aoun at Center House was fruitless.

It said the two men didn't discuss names or portfolios and their meeting was only focused on attempts to "build trust" and "turn the page of the past."

As Safir's report came as well-informed sources told An Nahar and Al Liwaa newspapers that the cabinet "could see light next week amid a positive atmosphere on the Arab level."

The sources added that Hariri could present to President Michel Suleiman during an expected visit to Baabda palace the new government lineup.

Suleiman's visitors also quoted the president as saying that "the positive (results) of the (Damascus) summit should be interpreted with a quick formation of the government."

Meanwhile, Speaker Nabih Berri's representative MP Ali Hassan Khalil and Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah's assistant Hussein Khalil are in Damascus to ask Syrian officials about the results of the summit between Saudi King Abdullah and Syrian President Bashar Assad on Thursday.

Al-Hayat newspaper quoted well-informed sources as saying that Abdullah and Assad agreed to awaken the Lebanese into the necessity of forming the new government and remove all obstacles.

Berri, meanwhile, told pan-Arab daily Asharq al-Awsat that he clings to his decision not to make any statements pending a clearer picture on the cabinet issue.

However, sources close to Berri said that the speaker's decision to call for a parliamentary session on Oct. 20 for the election of parliamentary committees, chairmen and rapporteurs means he is giving early signs for the need to form the government before that date.

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