



Local News

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REPORT: President Sleiman asks MP Salam to form new government



President Michel Sleiman asked on Saturday MP Tamam Salam to form the new government.

MP Tamam Salam held a meeting with President Michel Sleiman and Speaker Nabih Berri, at Baabda Palace.

Following the meeting, Salam said that he will form a national unity government, calling for sparing Lebanon the political schism.

In this context, Salam stressed the need to agree on a new electoral law, hoping that the political leaderships will hold further positive parliamentary consultations "in light of this critical phase".

Salam extended his thanks to all the parliamentary blocs and MPs, noting that Mikati telephoned Salam, congratulating him and highlighting the need to work hand in hand in order to serve the country's interest.

This comes after the second round of the binding parliamentary consultations to name a prime minister ended at Baabda Palace with 124 deputies nominating MP Tammam Salam as Prime Minister.

The consultations began with a meeting held between Lebanese President Michel Sleiman and Zahle bloc's members who named MP Tamam Salam as Prime Minister.

Lebanese Forces also held talks with Sleiman, upon which LF MP Georges Adwan delivered a word in this regard.

MP Adwan said that the Lebanese Forces nominated MP Tamam Salam for premiership, reiterating LF's support of the formation of a technocrat government that respects the Baabda Declaration.

For its part, Kataeb party nominated MP Tamam Salam, hoping that the new government can restore stability and hold the elections in Lebanon.

As for the Unity of the Mountain bloc presided by MP Talal Arslan, it showed its support for MP Tamam Salam's nomination.

Arslan said that the bloc has faith that MP Salam will be able to unite the Lebanese people and protect Lebanon from regional conflicts.

MP Emile Rahmeh also held talks with President Sleiman, upon which he delivered a word saying that he nominated Tamam Salam for the premiership, wishing him success in his mission.

MP Rahmeh added that MP Sleiman Frangieh contacted him on Friday and gave his bloc the freedom to nominate whom it wants.

Meanwhile, MP Michel Pharaon of the Free Decision bloc said after meeting with President Sleiman that the bloc nominated MP Salam, stressing that priority should be given to staging the elections.

As for the Armenian Consensus bloc, it showed its support for the nomination of MP Tamam Salam for the premiership.

For his part, MP Ahmed Karami nominated MP Salam for the premiership, saying that the reason behind Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati's resignation is the formation of a new government capable of addressing the current situation in Lebanon.

MP Karami was followed by the Baath bloc which named MP Tamam Salam to head the new government.

Baath bloc MP Assem Qanso said that his bloc supports the formation of a sovereign unity government.

As well, the Syrian Socialist National Party bloc nominated MP Tamam Salam as Prime Minister, expressing wary optimism for the formation of a national unity government.

The Armenian bloc held talks with President Sleiman, upon which it nominated MP Tamam Salam for premiership, wishing him success and hoping for the formation of a national unity government.

For his part, MP Imad al-Hout of the Jamaa Islamiya showed his support for MP Tamam Salam's nomination, urging the ministers of the new government not to run for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Meanwhile, MP Salam received a phone call from the Baabda Palace at around 1:00 p.m. confirming that he will officially be named Prime Minister-designate.

As for the independent MPs Marwan Hmadeh, Antoine Saad, Fouad al Saad, Robert Ghanem, Boutros Harb, Nicolas Fattouche, Mohammad Safadi and Robert Fadel, they all nominated MP Tamam Salam to form the new government.

Shiite group Hezbollah, its allies and pro-Western rivals on Friday backed Sunni politician Tamam Salam to be Lebanon's new prime minister, handing him an overwhelming parliamentary endorsement to form a government.

Salam was endorsed by more than 80 of 128 members of parliament in [the first day of talks](#) held by President Michel Suleiman to nominate a successor to Najib Mikati.

Mikati resigned last month after two fraught years in office during which he sought to contain sectarian tensions, street violence and economic fallout from the civil war raging in neighboring Syria.

Salam's main task will be to steer the fractious country towards a parliamentary election which is due in June but is now widely expected to face delays.

Mikati resigned following a cabinet dispute with Hezbollah and its allies - who brought him to power in early 2011 - over extending the term of a top security official and preparations for the parliamentary vote.

A former minister from a prominent political dynasty, Salam won the backing on Thursday of the Saudi- and Western-backed March 14 political coalition after talks brokered in Saudi Arabia.

Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, whose seven parliamentary seats hold the balance of power, also backed him.

A Sunni Muslim, as all Lebanese prime ministers must be under the country's confessional distribution of power, Salam is seen as close to March 14, but independent enough to be acceptable to Hezbollah's March 8 bloc.

Parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, whose Shiite Amal movement is part of the March 8 coalition, threw his support behind Salam on Friday and called on all political sides to work together.

But a source in March 8 warned that despite overwhelming support, it "might still be months" before the former culture minister can form a cabinet acceptable to all sides.

SYRIA DIVIDES LEBANON

March 14 groups mainly Sunni and Christian parties which pushed, with U.S. and European support, for Syria to end nearly three decades of military presence in Lebanon in 2005.

It has strongly supported the revolt against President Bashar al-Assad in neighboring Syria, where the United Nations says 70,000 people have been killed and 400,000 refugees have poured into Lebanon, a country of just 4 million.

March 8 has backed Assad's campaign to crush the uprising, which began with mainly peaceful protests but descended into a civil war which reduced parts of its main cities to rubble.

Lebanon itself has been shaken by the violence, which has spilled across the border into the Bekaa Valley and inflamed tensions in the northern city of Tripoli between Sunni Muslims who actively support the Syrian rebels and members of Assad's minority Alawite community.

Dozens of people have been killed in the northern city of Tripoli in waves of street fighting since 2011.

The influx of mainly Sunni refugees is politically sensitive in Lebanon, whose rival sects fought a civil war from 1975 to 1990.

Before his resignation, Mikati called for international aid to help Lebanon deal with the impact of the ever-growing number of refugees.

President Suleiman called this week for refugee camps to be set up inside Syria itself, under United Nations auspices, to ease the burden on Syria's neighbors.

Born in 1945, Salam is the son of former prime minister Saeb Salam. His grandfather served under the Ottoman Empire and the French colonial mandate. He himself was a cabinet minister in 2008 and 2009.