

Orthodox law 'cannot pass': Mikati

BEIRUT: The Orthodox Gathering law cannot be adopted for the coming parliamentary elections scheduled later this year, Prime Minister Najib Mikati said Saturday.

"The Orthodox proposal for the parliamentary elections cannot pass because it violates the essence of Lebanon's existence and mutual coexistence," the prime minister said via Twitter.

The Orthodox law, approved this week by Lebanon's joint parliamentary committees, still has to pass a vote in Parliament if it is to be adopted.

The committee's approval of the proposal sparked criticism from its opponents, prompting Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to appeal to the country's political rivals and ask them to agree on a consensual law before passing the bill to vote in Parliament.

According to the draft law, which has been endorsed by Christian political parties and the March 8 alliance, each sect would elect its own MPs with the country as a single district.

Opponents of the proposal argue that the law is unconstitutional and would deepen sectarian division. President Michel Sleiman has indicated that he would challenge it in court.

In another tweet, Mikati called on all rivals to agree over another law that safeguards the country's coexistence.

"We must all think of ways to achieve real representation for all Lebanese sects through reaching an agreement on an electoral law that does not harm coexistence," the post read.

According to Mikati, the Orthodox proposal will provoke sectarian divisions in the country.

“The Lebanese Civil War failed to impose division among the people because they insisted on coexistence and overcoming their differences,” said Mikati.

“Are we required today to give in to another type of division or federalism?” he asked.

Mikati argued that the real target of the Orthodox law is to strike Lebanon’s unity, rather than ensuring fair representation for Christians in Parliament as the proposal’s supporters argue.

“If the apparent aim behind the Orthodox proposal is to give sects their rights [for fair representation], what it really does is strike the Lebanese unity,” the prime minister said.

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