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Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil said on Wednesday that he hoped “a new government would be formed in the coming few days”, considering that “the political, social and economic situation cannot tolerate more delay without substantial reasons.” He stressed on the need to work during the next stage on “controlling chaos, waste and corruption”, reducing the deficit and launching “a real fiscal reform”.

Khalil was speaking at his office in the Ministry during the hand over of financial contributions from the Regie to developmental projects in 16 villages in the South, North, and Bekaa. The ceremony was attended by the Regie’s President and Director General Mr. Nassif Seklaoui, members of the Board of Directors, and the concerned heads of municipalities.

Khalil made a brief statement: “Once again we stress, with the Regie, on the importance of having public institutions contribute to the development in the country. The irony is that one of the institutions viewed by the public as

negatively affecting society, since it is related to smoking, has turned throughout years of hard work into an institution influencing development operations in the country. It has succeeded in harmonizing between its role and responsibilities in supporting farmers and protecting this sector and the national interest and economy, and its social role through the different projects it is undertaking.”

He added: "In the past years, the Regie has been tackling the needs of a group of villages involved in the agriculture of tobacco and other crops, through contributions that may not be sufficient, but are certainly leaving a very positive and important mark within local communities".

Khalil noted that the 16 projects are "small, but they play an important role in people's lives through their diversity. Our objective with the Regie's administration in the coming period is to enhance its role and potential, while closely working on its closer involvement in issues related to people's lives."

He continued: "Unfortunately, over the past few months, we have experienced a government stalemate, which may have delayed the achievement of many programs and goals that we hope will be approved by the next government. Currently, we are entering a new phase that we hope will witness the formation of a new government that must be formed shortly because the political, social, economic, and financial situation can no longer afford any delay without substantial reasons.”

He added: "Once the new government is formed, we have to move fast towards the adoption of programs aimed to restore people's confidence in the State and its roles, especially on the economic and social levels."

He promised to launch with municipalities, once governmental work is back to its pace, real work plans focusing on ensuring the full rights of these municipalities".

In this sense, he said: "We have prepared the decree on the full amounts due to municipalities and we managed, despite difficult circumstances, to provide the funds. But this matter is currently pending, waiting for the decree to be issued shortly by the concerned parties in order to proceed with the payment.”

Khalil continued: "This is one of the issues that would not have been delayed until now, had the government been regularly performing. This is also true for dozens of projects that cannot bear further delay. It is important to activate the functions of the State' through its public institutions and various roles, which requires serious efforts to control chaos, waste, and

corruption, reduce our deficit and put ourselves on the path of real fiscal reform. This is a matter that can no longer be avoided and should be courageously tackled.”

Minister Khalil ended his statement by saying that "the Regie is one of the institutions that gives great hope that ,when intentions are good and when each person bears his responsibilities in accordance with the law, we can always achieve the best when it comes to the work of the State’s administrations.”

Seklaoui

Seklaoui stated "in addition to its economic role, the Regie plays a developmental and environmental one. This role was initiated years ago and we are reaping its benefits today." He stressed that "the sustainable development strategy was not mere ink on paper; the Regie was able to direct its contributions to respond to the needs of farmers through the municipalities, in addition to its other priorities such as fighting smuggling, improving products’ quality, creating productive workplaces, fighting child labor, implementing women empowerment programs, reducing energy consumption, waste sorting, etc.”

He indicated that "in recent years the Regie has been able to support 178 municipalities in the North, South, and Bekaa,” adding "We have seen the positive results of this support and its developmental effects on farmers and concerned municipalities".

Contributions

It should be noted that the contributions included the following villages: Tal Abbas Gharbi, Sa’din, and Samuniya in Akkar, Khirbet Selem, Kafra, Haddatha, and Rmeish in Bint Jbeil, Al Ain, Qusranba, and Ali Nahari in Bekaa, Taiba, Shab'a, and Qantara in Marje’ioun, Tura and Sal’a in Tyre, Nabatiyeh Al Fawqa in Nabatieh.

The projects covered by these contributions included the construction of public and social halls, the construction of retaining walls, the construction or rehabilitation of ponds, water reservoirs, and irrigation channels, the

equipment of artesian wells, the purchase of garbage trucks, the construction of agricultural roads, etc.