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Seklaoui: We have provided support to 173 development projects in 16 districts in the North, South and Beqaa

Khalil during the distribution of development contributions from the Regie to municipalities: We might face dangerous indicators if the stalemate persists

“There is an urgent need to form a new government that would rapidly take decisions to improve the economic and financial situations and launch important development projects.”

Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil warned on Thursday against “dangerous indicators” related to growth, deficit and public debt rates and to Lebanon’s obligations to launch the projects it was promised by international parties, if the current stalemate were to persist. Khalil’s statement came at a ceremony held under his patronage and during which several municipalities were granted development contributions from the Lebanese Tobacco and Tunbac Monopoly Department (knows as Regie or RLTT). He stressed that there was an urgent need to “form a new government that would rapidly take decisions to improve the economic and financial situations and launch important development projects.”

The RLTT’s President and General Director Nassif Seklaoui distributed the contributions to mayors of 14 municipalities from the South, the North and Bekaa. These contributions fall within the scope of the Sustainable Development Project launched by the RLTT.

In his speech, Minister Khalil declared “This event is a special indication of the relations between governmental institutions and civil society bodies, particularly municipalities and mukhtars. This is a leading experience in

turning the available capabilities of an institution into real development work within the scope of a strategy adopted and approved after being scientifically prepared at the RLTT Administration and after receiving the trust of the Ministry that included it in the adopted budget allocated to the RLTT.

Many consider that the RLTT's scope of work is limited to selling and receiving tobacco crops, managing importation and sales, and exporting tobacco products. However, this administration has proven that it can develop its work into efficient and real participation in the country's sustainable development. The RLTT Administration always has constructive suggestions aiming to develop this administration and enhance its contribution and participation with the various bodies."

Khalil considered that "the needs of municipalities and villages are important, in general, nowadays and such projects are not enough; but when they come from a party that is not directly responsible for supporting municipalities, the contribution has a bigger positive effect than any other matter." He continued, "We know that municipalities face very big challenges and suffer from many crises in terms of ensuring proper financing to undertake projects. However, the Ministry of Finance has committed to regularly pay the revenues from mobile phones, and when the payment will be transferred from the Ministry of Telecommunications, it will directly be transferred to each municipality and we will not tolerate any delay. We are also committed to transferring directly to municipalities the amounts due to them from the Independent Municipal Fund, which should be paid between October and November for year 2017."

He reminded, "This is part of the responsibilities that fall on the shoulders of political leaders in the country today, as well as on political officials regardless of their affiliation." He declared, "The biggest challenge is the stability and return to order of the political situation in the country and the work of the institutions. This is why it is urgent to speed up the formation of a new government capable of meeting and tackling the priorities that people need, focusing their work on them and rapidly taking proper decisions. This shall enhance our economic and financial situation, allowing us to move forward toward the launch of huge development projects that will activate the economy and increase investment, which shall consequently increase growth."

He added, "If the stalemate persists, we might face dangerous indicators related to the level of growth in the country as compared to important commitments, our deficit and debt rate, as well as to the obligations to launch the projects internationally promised to our country in CEDRE or the commitments between the Lebanese government and other international bodies that support Lebanon."

He considered that the “14 projects being currently funded by the RLTT reflect an assistance that strengthens the role of some municipalities hindered by their limited financial capabilities.” He stressed that “after monitoring the quality of these projects, we can say that we are covering a large area of people’s concerns, whether agricultural, cultural, educational or environmental, as well as needs that are specific to each village and city. The particularities of each city were taken into account when selecting these projects.”

Minister Khalil concluded by stressing that “the RLTT will continue to carry out similar projects, working on allocating wider budgets, if conditions improve, so it can assist even more beneficiaries in the coming years”

Seklaoui

Seklaoui indicated that “the RLTT has provided support to 173 development projects in 16 districts in the North, South and Beqaa governorates. The support of municipalities in their development projects is among the most important priorities within the RLTT’s plan for sustainable development. The projects vary from libraries, water ponds and wells, social halls and public gardens. They serve both the community and the farmer.”

He added “These projects are able to go on thanks to the trust of Speaker Nabih Berri and the patronage of HE Minister Ali Hassan Khalil. Today, we have developed a mechanism to closely monitor these projects and make sure they are efficient and beneficial to the entire society.”

He promised that the Municipal Support Project will cover “358 municipalities that undertake tobacco and tunbac agriculture”, renewing its commitment to “participate in achieving a real development for society”.

It is worth mentioning that the projects include: building a septic tank in Naqoura, providing a pickup truck for garbage collection to Mazraat Mushref, buying a water tanker truck and a Bobcat to Ayta el Jabal, building irrigation channels in Talhmeyra, buying a pickup truck and a Bobcat to Ihaat, undertaking the rehabilitation and paving of an agricultural road in Douris, building irrigation channels in Amara, building a social hall in Rayhaniya, opening an agricultural road in Barish, buying a power generator for Srifa, paving an agricultural road in Adshit/Marjeyoun, continuing the construction works of a social hall in Hayssa, opening agricultural roads in Kleiaa and providing a solar power system to the artesian well in Ayta Shaab.