

Somali MPs postpone petroleum law debate

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BAIDOA, Somalia Sep 8 (Garowe Online) - The interim parliament in Somalia erupted in fervor Saturday after some members of parliament refused to open debate on a controversial petroleum bill proposed by the government of Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi.

Today's parliament session was adjourned abruptly after loud disagreement erupted inside ADC Hall in Baidoa, 250km northwest of Mogadishu, sources said.

Lawmakers were handed documents detailing Prime Minister Gedi's proposed Petroleum Law, which the government hopes parliament to open debate on and ratify as soon as feasible.

Several MPs refused to open a new debate when lawmakers were still pushing for accountability with Gedi's interim government.

Several of Gedi's Cabinet ministers and senior security officials have been questioned by lawmakers or requested to appear in parliament in recent weeks.

MP Awad Ahmed Ashare told the BBC Somali Service today that the government has not introduced budget legislation into parliament over the past three years, so lawmakers are "unaware" of government expenditures.

He said it is vital for parliament to continue pushing for accountability to keep track of the government's revenues and expenses.

MP Ashare said lawmakers will debate an oil bill only after security is restored throughout the country and a final answer is received from major U.S. and European companies who have prior concession rights in Somalia from the 1980s.

Somali lawmakers' refusal to open debate on the proposed Petroleum Law coincides with reports of political friction between President Abdullahi Yusuf and Prime Minister Gedi over resources and the country's finances.

Yusuf and Gedi are pushing for two separate agendas in the matter concerning exploration of Somalia's natural resources, with Yusuf wanting to ratify a deal he signed last year with a major Chinese state-owned company.

Source: Garowe Online