

### USJ lecture looks at benefits of a Senate

BEIRUT: Forming a Lebanese Senate is a chance Lebanon has to seize, said President of the French Senate Gerard Larcher on Wednesday during a lecture at Universite Saint Joseph in Beirut.

The lecture was organized by the university and by Justice Minister Ibrahim Najjar and was dubbed "The Senate and its Role in the French Political System."

Larcher talked about the benefits of the Senate or upper house Parliament in France and stressed that it was a necessity for Lebanon. "A bicameral system of Parliament is a matter discussed in any country that looks forward to a bright future," he said.

A bicameral system is one that divides the legislative power into two houses: an upper house, the Senate, and a lower house. It is adopted in several countries such as France, Britain and the US.

Larcher explained that the Senate reinforced democracy because it looked into subjects the Parliament did not take into consideration, passed just laws regardless of the temporary situation, and was independent and permanent.

He added that only the Lebanese could decide when to form a Senate and offered France's support in case they did.

Najjar also gave a speech at the gathering in which he recalled that the Taif Agreement mentioned forming a Senate in Lebanon. He however wondered what role the Senate would play if it could only prolong the sectarian system without leading to the formation of a true bicameral system.

"Why should we wait to elect a first Parliament on national nonsectarian bases before we can form a Senate?" he also asked.

The 1989 Taif Agreement, which helped put an end to the Lebanese Civil War, mentioned a bicameral system where the Parliament would be elected on a nonsectarian basis and sectarian representation would be transferred to the Senate. All religions would be represented in the Senate and it would be presided over by a figure the Druze sect. – *The Daily Star*