

## FEATURE

# Sudan: compromise cabinet gets guarded welcome

NEW prime minister, doctors' leader Jizouli Dafallah, has warned that Sudan's relationship with the IMF must be "closely scrutinised." Relations with the US and Egypt will also be "reviewed" as part of a move towards a more traditional non-aligned foreign policy. As a first step in the latter direction, Sudan signed a protocol re-establishing diplomatic relations with Libya on 23 April.

The make-up of the 15-member cabinet, finally announced on 22 April, has provoked controversy and dis-appointment in Sudan. Western creditors, however, are generally pleased with the economic team now in place. Finance & Economic Planning Minister Awad Abdel-Majid, a Bank of Sudan (central bank) governor in the mid-1970s, is considered a "good man" by US State Department officials. Washington-based finance officials regard him as a "straightforward type" with the ability to deal with the country's economic and financial problems. At one stage on the board of directors of Barclays Bank International, Abdel-Majid has run an import business in Khartoum in recent years. Commerce, Co-operation & Supply Minister Sid Ahmed Sayed is a former Finance Ministry budget expert.

Apart from Dafallah's warning on relations with the IMF — and evident local pressure for the reinstatement of subsidies — few indications of the new government's economic line have emerged. The three priorities, Dafallah says, are to cement democracy, reach a settlement with the south and tackle the current economic problems. On 21 April, General Abdel-Rahman Swar el-Dahab — chairman of the interim military council, which retains supreme control — appealed for a further 430,000 tonnes in food aid. Over 1 million children were threatened with starvation, he said.

For its part, the World Bank is signalling confidence in the new government with plans to activate the already approved \$74 million loan for the Gezira agricultural rehabilitation programme. The project, originally in-

tended for Arab co-financing, had been "scaled back," officials told MEED, because of Sudan's arrears to Arab development funds (MEED 14:9:84). The core project will provide badly-needed foreign exchange for agricultural inputs and is expected to become effective within the next few weeks. The bank's board is also expected to approve a \$56 million credit for sugar rehabilitation within the next month. The IMF, meanwhile, is awaiting clearer signals from Khartoum regarding the new government's intentions.

These may be some time in coming, with the announcement of the cabinet adding fuel to controversy rather than dampening it down as had been hoped. No justice minister has been appointed, a reflection of continuing disagreement on whether Sharia (Islamic law), introduced by former president Nimeiri in 1983, should be abolished or merely revised (MEED 19:4:85, page 32).

## GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN

Formed 25 April 1985

**Prime Minister** Jizouli Dafallah  
**Deputy Prime Minister, Irrigation** Samuel Aru Bol  
**Foreign Affairs** Ibrahim Taha Ayoub  
**Defence** Brigadier-General Osman Abdallah Mohammed  
**Interior** General Abbas Medani  
**Finance & Economic Planning** Awad el-Karim Abdel-Majid  
**Commerce, Co-operation & Supply** Sid Ahmed Sayed  
**Energy, Industry & Mining** Abdel-Aziz Osman Moussa  
**Agriculture & Natural Resources** Sadiq Abdin  
**Information & Culture** Mohammed Beshir Hamed  
**Education** Bashir Hamed el-Toumi  
**Health & Social Welfare** Hussein Abu Saleh  
**Construction & Housing** Amin Mekki Medani  
**Public Service & Labour** Oliver Albino  
**Transport & Communications** Peter Gatkuth  
**Justice** no appointment

The new cabinet is intended as technocratic, compromise one, formed from those without party affiliations. Dafallah, as leader of the doctors' union, is considered a non-party man. Health & Social Welfare Minister Hussein Abu Saleh is leader of the Khartoum teaching hospital doctors, who were the first to come out on strike this year. Another prominent figure from the Gathering of National Forces for the Salvation of the Country, which organised the protests, is Construction & Housing Minister Amin Mekki Medani, the lawyer who defended Republican Brother leader Mahmoud Mohammed Taha, hanged in January for opposing the Sharia.

More controversial is the appointment of General Abbas Medani, national police chief at the time of the coup, as interior minister, and Bashir Hamed el-Toumi, a Muslim Brother, as education minister. Foreign Affairs Minister Ibrahim Taha Ayoub is a career diplomat, formerly ambassador to Kenya. Despite his association with the Nimeiri regime he has been critical recently. He has good contacts in Ethiopia — where he also served — with which the new government is also trying to improve relations.

Controversy has centred on the appointment to the cabinet of three southern politicians — all regional ministers under Nimeiri. Deputy Prime Minister and Irrigation Minister Samuel Aru Bol was a member of the political bureau of the Sudanese Socialist Union, while Transport & Communications Minister Peter Gatkuth was head of a caretaker government in the south in 1980. Public Service & Labour Minister Oliver Albino is also a former minister in the south.

Despite the new government's fresh attempts at negotiation, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) leader John Garang has dismissed it as a continuation of the Nimeiri military regime. The SPLA has renounced the truce announced at the time of the coup. The failure for the moment to end the fighting in the south has put paid to hopes that Chevron Corporation's all-important oil export pipeline and construction of the Jonglei canal can quickly be reactivated. The US and other creditors have reacted calmly to the new government's statements on the economy and foreign policy but will view with alarm the continuation of a conflict which has already done much to deepen Sudan's economic problems.

GILL LUSK in Khartoum  
 and JONATHAN FRIEDLAND  
 in Washington