

PHOSPHATE MINES PROJECT STUDIED

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[Text]

AMMAN — A feasibility study on the Shidieh phosphate mines project, which is targeted to boost the mine's total annual production to 9 million tonnes by the turn of the century, has been finalised and work on the site will start within the next month, according to the project's director general Sameh Madani.

Mr. Madani said the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) has floated tenders for the installation of high voltage cables to the site as part of the project's infrastructure. A 27-kilometre asphalted road will also be built to link Al Mudawarra with Ma'an, some 260 kilometres south of Amman, Mr. Madani added.

Actual work on the long-term project, which aims at tripling the annual production of 3 million in 1991 to 9 million, is expected to start with the next two months after the Jordan Phosphates Mines Company (JPMC) has conducted an assessment on the feasibility study, Mr. Madani told the Jordan Times on Monday.

In an earlier interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Mr. Madani defined the project's goal as being to optimise the Shidieh's rock phosphate with the latest technical ways and at the lowest possible cost. The mine is estimated to have 100 years of reserves according to geological experts. Infrastructural plans for the project are currently underway.

Mr. Madani explained that the project underwent a three-phase plan to pave the way for its establishment:

A preliminary period which ended in mid-1984 to study the mine's potential of rock phosphates, possibilities for the production of fertilisers, as well as transportation and storage means available at Aqaba port.

— the project's feasibility study which has almost been completed and which included field work on drilling out samples and testing them, and experimenting on means to raise the raw material potentials for chemical industries

— to prepare the project's engineering designs and tender documents for implementing the project. The JPMC is currently preparing the project's working plans.

The mines are situated in the southern region of Jordan, 60 kilometres from Ma'an.

An executive committee for the project, under the chairmanship of Minister of Trade and Industry Rajai Muasher, has been following a clear cut policy for the project and has made maximum use of Jordanian expertise in areas related to mining, phosphate marketing, long-term planning and infrastructure related works, he continued.

Railway

According to Mr. Madani, the committee has started to market

the project to various Arab and international funds and to brief them on the project's goals. He said that the project's preliminary study on transport concluded that a railway would be the best method of transporting the mineral and he added that the proposed Shidieh-Aqaba railway could form the nucleus of a national line to link the country's south with the north and to other neighbouring countries.

He explained that the storage facilities to be erected at Aqaba will be used to store the imports of all materials needed for the final phosphate products and its derivatives and to export the mineral.

He said that after extensive studies to locate a housing site for the mine workers, the project's committee in principle decided to erect all housing facilities adjacent to the mines. Having all the project's workers living next to the site means that the production line will be operational on a 20-hour basis with three daily shifts, Mr. Madani said.

He said that studies on providing electricity to the site and making available potential subterranean water were also completed. Mr. Madani expects that the project would create around 2,200 job opportunities for workers in areas related to the project's technical, chemical and supervision aspects, as well as transportation, storage, handling and marketing.