

WNPC says it has completed negotiations and decided which of the four short-listed consortia will be recommended for the construction contract. There are, however, "one or two glitches," in the export credit finance to be ironed out. More important, arrangement of the \$285 million Eurocredit appears to be taking longer than expected (MEED 17:7:83).

Between 25 and 30 banks have been circulated by Saudi Arabia-based *Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation (Apicorp)*, which is acting as agent and a lead manager for the loan. A "satisfactory number" are reported to have expressed interest. The interest, however, is reported to be cautious, rather than enthusiastic, because of the "psychological ripples" caused by the precarious state of Sudan's economy and its debt problems. The establishment of the offshore escrow account to keep WNPC's finances outside the economy has done much to reduce the concern of some of the banks; for others it is said to have made the deal "too complicated for them to understand."

WNPC and Apicorp both maintain, however, that there is no reason why the loan will not eventually be fully subscribed. "There are no fundamental problems, it is really a question of timing," an informed source said. "It's an immensely complicated package, involving

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ance, which all have to be tied up so they can be put down on the table for signing on the same day."

IN BRIEF

o Exceptionally high Nile levels and bad silting have led to the main turbines at the Roseires dam being shut down, cutting off most of the Blue Nile grid. Power will be supplied to strategic installations such as the satellite station, telephone exchanges and state security offices and, if possible, hospitals.

o Khartoum province secondary schools have been closed following riots partly inspired by electricity shortages.

o President Nimeiri has accused striking judges of receiving funding from abroad to continue what he called their "political strikes" (MEED 19:8:83).

SYRIA

Soviet Union wins power job

The contract to build the Widian al-Rabi steam turbine power station, south of Damascus, has formally been awarded to a Soviet company, local sources say (MEED 21:1:83). This follows the with-

drawal of Japan's *Mitsubishi Heavy Industries* — low bidder at \$150 million — Sweden's *Asea Atom* and Switzerland's *BBC, Brown Boveri & Company*, after the expiry of the bids' validity.

The contract's technical terms suggest that some of the power equipment for the two by 150-MW plant will be bought from western firms.

Construction of a two by 60-MW petroleum coke-fired power station at Homs is also certain to get the go-ahead (MEED 1:4:83). As the coke has a high sulphur content, the station will probably incorporate a process to extract the sulphur, which can then be used at the Homs fertiliser factory.

Finance for the schemes has not yet been decided, but is likely to come from other Arab countries. During the stations' construction, gas turbines will be installed to supplement the country's power needs. The Electricity Ministry had originally hoped the Widian al-Rabi plant would be finished by 1984; completion is not now expected until 1986.

IN BRIEF

o Pakistan has agreed to set up a joint ministerial commission for economic co-operation. Minister of State for Planning Kamal Sharaf is to sign the agreement and attend the first meeting of the commission in Islamabad.

o *Syrian Arab Airlines* is to operate five weekly flights to Frankfurt, West Germany. *Lufthansa* is to provide the same number of flights to Aleppo and Damascus from Frankfurt as part of a recent agreement.

TUNISIA

Oil discovered offshore

Oil has been discovered in significant quantities in the Gulf of Hammamet, 50 kilometres offshore. Concession operator is *Elf Aquitaine Tunisie*, part of France's *Societe Nationale Elf Aquitaine*.

The south Cosmos 1 well was tested in three reservoirs and flowed at a daily rate of 1,950 barrels, 2,162 barrels and 1,730 barrels through a half-inch bore, at 4,989-5,248 feet. The oil is high-grade 41° API. Further tests are needed before the reservoirs' extent can be determined, Elf says.

Elf has a 25 per cent stake in the Gulf of Hammamet/Cap Bon permit; other concessionaires are *Murphy Tunisia Oil Company* (20 per cent) and *Offshore Drilling & Exploration Company (Odeco)* (20 per cent) — both subsidiaries of the US' *Murphy Oil Corporation* — the US' *Samedan Oil Corporation* (20 per cent) and *Petrex*, a subsidiary of Italy's *Agip* (15 per cent). According to Odeco, the next well in the field is expected to be drilled in mid 1984.

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