Sudan aims to counter crisis with $1 billion sugar plant

By Mohamed Nureldin
NEAR ABU HEBERA, Sudan | Wed Jul 11, 2012 9:44am EDT

(Reuters) - Sudan started production on Wednesday at a much-delayed $1 billion sugar plant, its biggest industrial development for many years and a project the government hopes will help counter an economic crisis that is fuelling dissent.

The north African country has avoided the widespread social unrest that has ripped through the likes of Egypt or Syria, though tough austerity measures have triggered anti-government protests calling for veteran President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's government to resign.

The government is trying to cut food imports, which have fuelled inflation that rose to 37 percent in June and are eating into the state's dwindling budget.

Sudan lost three-quarters of its oil production - the main source of state revenues and dollars needed for imports - when South Sudan became independent a year ago.

Sugar is an important food item for the country's 32 million inhabitants, and boosting its production is a top priority. The country is one of the biggest African sugar producers but needs to import at least 400,000 tonnes annually.

At the launch ceremony, Bashir said the plant, which targets initial annual output of 150,000 tonnes, would help turn Sudan into one of the biggest sugar exporters.

He dismissed the anti-government protests.

"We tell those who are waiting... there will be no Arab Spring in Sudan. We have a hot summer in Sudan that will burn the enemies of Sudan," he said at the site of the plant some 170 kilometers (120 miles) south of Khartoum.

The White Nile Sugar Co was set up in 2004 but the plant's opening was delayed for several years, which Khartoum blamed on U.S. sanctions. Washington has imposed a trade embargo since 1997 for Sudan's role in hosting Islamist militants in the past.

At the launch ceremony, Bashir said the plant, which targets initial annual output of 150,000 tonnes, would help turn Sudan into one of the biggest sugar exporters.

Sudanese protest over cuts amid security crackdown
Sat, Jun 23 2012

Protests erupt as Sudan's Bashir unveils austerity plan
Mon, Jun 18 2012

Analysis & Opinion

Asylum tales: London museum hosts a tour with a twist

Is Africa Union justified in moving its summit to Ethiopia

The government hopes agricultural and mineral exports such as sugar, gold and silver will help replace oil revenues.

(Reporting by Khalid Abdelaziz and Ulf Laessing; editing by Keiron Henderson, John Stonestreet)
Growth worries weigh on Asian shares, commodities; gold tumbles

TOKYO - Concerns over global growth and weak demand pulled down Asian shares and commodities on Thursday, while gold slid as money continued to flow out of gold-backed exchange-traded funds.
Thomson Reuters is the world’s leading source of intelligent information for businesses and professionals. Our combined financial, tax, legal, and regulatory solutions help you understand and manage complex information and regulatory landscapes, fueling performance, and enabling innovation.

We offer our clients a comprehensive range of business solutions covering news, market data, regulatory compliance, corporate governance, tax, legal research, and investment management.

Our flagship platform, Eikon, provides financial information and insights through a network of connections. Elektron, our ultra-low latency infrastructure, enables electronic trading and data distribution. Accelus, our connected approach to governance, risk, and compliance, and WestlawNext, our next generation legal research platform, help our legal and compliance clients stay ahead.

Our global tax workstation provides comprehensive tax information and data to help businesses navigate international tax and compliance challenges.

Thomson Reuters is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity and excellence in our reporting. Our journalists are subject to an Editorial Handbook which requires fair presentation and disclosure of relevant interests.

Our media products include Thomson Reuters News and Markets, the Thomson Reuters IR360 event platform, and the RIAmerica news service.

Thomson Reuters is the world’s largest international multimedia news agency, providing investing news, world news, business news, business news alerts, personal finance, stock market, and mutual funds information available on Reuters.com, video, mobile, and interactive television platforms.

Thomson Reuters journalists are subject to an Editorial Handbook which requires fair presentation and disclosure of relevant interests.

NYSE and AMEX quotes delayed by at least 20 minutes. Nasdaq delayed by at least 15 minutes. For a complete list of exchanges and delays, please click here.