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East Timor plans first onshore bid round

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The Democratic Republic of Timor Lesté (East Timor) is planning its first bid round for onshore acreage toward the end of this year.

The country's Minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Alfredo Pires, said recently that his department is considering adding an onshore acreage release to the proposed next round of offshore permit bidding.

Timor Lesté has known onshore oil and gas seeps, particularly along the south coast where 20 such occurrences have been documented. Several have been exploited by the local population by digging pits and bailing out the oil for domestic use.

The region was of prime interest to the Japanese during its occupation of Timor during WWII.

An Australian company called Timor Oil NL had leases granted by the Portuguese colonial government over the region during the late 1960s and early 1970s until the country's annexation by Indonesia in the mid-1970s.

Despite this the seepages have never been officially explored.

Details of the new bid round are expected late this year or early 2015.

Pires said his government planned to create a special consortium that will be allocated part of the onshore areas to undertake exploration under a production sharing contract.

He added that Timor Lesté wanted to take leadership and initiative in exploring onshore and in getting some economic partnerships and momentum going.