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### Gov't awards 4 offshore oil exploration licences

**THE** government has awarded four new licences to explore for oil and gas off its Mediterranean coast, weeks after Eni's giant Zohr gas find piqued fresh international interest in the area.

The state gas company EGAS said in a statement it had awarded one licence to Britain's BP and one to Italy's Edison. A consortium involving BP and Eni's Egyptian subsidiary had also picked up a bloc as had another consortium involving Eni, BP and France's Total.

EGAS head Khaled Abdel Badie told **Reuters** after the announcement that Egypt was preparing to launch a new bidding round for offshore gas exploration in the Mediterranean in the first half of 2016.

The EGAS statement said the new concessions would see the companies making total investments of at least \$306 million, conducting seismic studies and sinking eight discovery wells.

Eni announced in late August it had discovered the largest known gas field in the Mediterranean off the Egyptian coast.

The Italian company predicts the Zohr field could hold 30 trillion cubic feet of gas, covering an area of about 100 square kilometres (39 square miles). The Zohr find will encourage oil majors to look more carefully at the eastern Mediterranean region, which has yielded some significant discoveries in recent years.