

After years in the planning, the new international airport at La Mercy, which forms part of the Dube TradePort (DTP), is on schedule and is rapidly becoming part of the Durban skyline, reports Airports Company South Africa (Acsa) communications manager for Durban International Airport (DIA) **Colin Naidoo**.

The new airport, which is due for completion in 2010, will include a 7,5-million-passenger-a-year terminal and a 3,7-km runway, that will accommodate the latest new-generation large aircraft, including the A380 Airbus and Boeing B747.

Space has also been allocated for the potential lengthening of the runway to 4 km.

Although the capital cost of the project was originally estimated at R6,7-billion, a negotiated acceleration programme amounting to R400-million has increased the capital cost to R7,2-billion since the contract for the project was signed in June 2007, and about R2-billion has been spent on the project to date.

Meanwhile, the airport, which has been referred to as King Shaka International Airport by the national government, will need to undergo a name application process in order to obtain its new name. The name changing process will be managed by local or provincial government.

Airport Under Construction

Naidoo says that construction work is taking place at about six areas across the site.

Work has begun on the construction of the northern ramp of the elevated roadway to the departures level. The casting of concrete for the multi-storey parking area is under way, and includes the casting of the retaining walls of the cargo building.

In addition, concrete slabs have been poured for the terminal

New international airport taxis towards takeoff

ROZANNE CLOETE | FEATURES REPORTER



TERMINAL BUILDING STAGING AND DECKING

The arrivals level of the terminal building is under construction

building arrivals hall and work on the air traffic control tower and the lift shaft is also progressing.

Naidoo says that the design and construction of the cargo building are going well, while the preparations for the runways and taxiways are scheduled together with the road-bed preparation.

He states that the trade zone area is being cut-filled and bush clearing is in progress.

Two hundred earthmoving equipment vehicles have already moved some four-million tons of earth on site.

About 100 park homes are

currently on the construction site, housing a number of contractors and their staff. There are over 2 100 contractors and subcontractors on site.

Naidoo mentions that the runway and taxiways comprise a 400 000-m² area, which is equivalent to 100 soccer pitches. The terminal floor area of the new airport will take up 103 000 m², while the earthworks on the project constitute a 5,8-million-cubic-metre construction area.

The project will require 100 000 m³ of building material, as well as 4 700 t of structural steel, which is half of the amount

that was used to build the Eiffel tower, in Paris.

An estimated 230 000 t of asphalt is also being used for construction.

The initial 19 500-m² domestic and international passenger terminal, complete with retail concession opportunities, will initially provide for 18 passenger aircraft stands.

Boosting Capacity

Situated about 30 km north of the Durban city centre, and located between the N2 on the east, the R102 on the west, the

• To page 62

• From page 60

Tongati river on the north, and the Umdloti river to the south, the primary objective of the new airport is to provide for direct long-haul international flights to and from Durban, and to accommodate the province's rapidly expanding domestic passenger business.

DTP CEO **Rohan Persad** adds that the new airport will offer passenger terminals with the possibility of long-term expansion, as well as a state-of-the-art cargo facility and a modern, automated unit loading device system.

The airport will provide comprehensive facilities for police, the military, VIPs, and general aviation and aircraft maintenance operation. It will be developed to handle 7,5-million passengers in the beginning, and more than 45-million passengers by 2060.

An air traffic control tower, a fuel farm and related infrastructure will comprise the rest of the airport, which forms part of the

ongoing DTP development.

Government-owned Acsa is responsible for the construction of the new airport, and will also be responsible for the operation, management and maintenance of the airport once the project has been completed.

The airport forms part of Acsa's R19,3-billion infrastructure upgrade of its ten airports over the next five years.

Dube TradePort Development

The La Mercy area, which is home to the DTP site, is located in the northern sector of the eThekweni municipality, and comprises a site of 2 060 ha, substantially larger than that of the current airport, which spans 560 ha.

Persad says that DIA will be decommissioned and redeveloped following the completion of the DTP.

Meanwhile, the development of the DTP is ongoing.

The DTP company, a KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) provincial government-established

section 21 public company, is driving the development initiative in response to the need for improved air passenger and air freight facilities in KZN.

Funded by the province's Department of Economic Development, the DTP company believes that the project will unlock extensive economic opportunities. These include global manufacturing, logistics, trade and tourism.

The DTP is an infrastructural development that will combine the airport with an adjacent trade port, consisting of a trade zone linked to the airport's airfreight component, a support zone consisting of hotels, conference facilities and business parks, as well as an agricultural zone, which includes land for the cultivation of high-value farming products and facilities designed to promote agricultural production and export.

"All the earthworks in the trade zone and cargo terminals are complete. Once the development is complete, private-sector tenants of the trade zone will install their facilities," says Persad.

An integrated agricultural export zone, or agrizone, comprising about 20 ha of developable land, will also be part of the DTP and will include land for the cultivation of high-value farming products and the provision of facilities designed to promote agricultural production and export.

Persad adds that the agrizone master plan is in its final stages of development.

Further, a support zone, comprising a number of nodes, is to be developed as part of the DTP to meet the expected demand for facilities associated with major airports, such as nearby offices, hotels, conference facilities, business services and tourist transit accommodation.

An information technology platform is also being developed as part of the DTP to provide

a platform for trade and transport.

Meanwhile, the DTP company has started an air services programme, with international airliner Emirates already committed to a daily scheduled service.

He adds that the DTP company is also negotiating with international airlines Air France, British Airways and Jet Airways with regard to air service programmes.

Legal Controversy

Despite progress on the project, the development of the new airport has not been without challenges.

Acsa, together with the DTP company, has a team on site that is working with the contractor, the Ilembe consortium. The consortium consists of major shareholders Group Five, WBHO, Total Facilities Management Corporation, as well as a large group of KZN empowerment organisations.

Controversy arose in 2007 over the project's bidding process, which excluded the Indiza group, led by construction firm Grinaker-LTA, from building the new airport.

The basis for this exclusion was that the group did not meet certain tender requirements.

Speaking to *Engineering News* earlier this year, Grinaker-LTA parent company Aveng CEO **Carl Grim** said that the Ilembe consortium was appointed the preferred bidder, without the Indiza group's bid having been fairly adjudicated.

After claiming that the correct tender processes were not followed and that its document was unfairly excluded, Grinaker-LTA challenged the ruling that was made by the joint adjudication committee and the Acsa and DTP board.

In March this year, however, it lost a case to obtain an interdict on the construction of the airport, which meant that construction on the project by the Ilembe consortium continued without disruption.

ENGINEERING NEWS COUPON ON PAGE 76 E135452


DIVERSE - DYNAMIC - DEPENDABLE













Tel: (031) 714 2000 | Email: admin@sanyati.co.za

Web Site: www.sanyati.co.za

No two zebras have the same markings.