

Durban a regional hub as SA Express uses Dube TradePort

Nompumelelo Magwaza

SA EXPRESS has concluded a deal with the Dube TradePort, home to Durban's King Shaka International Airport, which will establish a connection network to Southern African Development Community countries for both passenger and cargo carriers.

SA Express is a state-owned domestic and regional airline.

The agreement was announced by President Jacob Zuma at the official opening of the Dube TradePort in Durban on Thursday last week. In the next few months, flights between Durban and Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, and Mozambique will commence.

"Upon success of these operations, SA Express will expand further into countries such as Namibia, Malawi, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo," Zuma



SA Express will soon introduce flights to Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana from King Shaka International Airport near Durban.

said. He added that this decision was taken after months of market research with critical stakeholders.

"The research showed that Durban is not only a leading tourism destination but also a dominant sporting and conference destination for the region. The city has significant potential to develop air cargo flows between South Africa and neighbouring regional markets," he noted.

Last year Dube TradePort,

through the sponsorship of the Dubai-based airline Emirates, invested about R12 million in a fleet of six trucks that bring cargo from various parts of the country to be exported from King Shaka International Airport.

Emirates recently increased its number of aircraft and in September delivered 110 tons of offshore drilling equipment destined for the Durban harbour. The airline also projected it would provide a

90 percent increase in cargo capacity between Dubai and Durban.

The trade port also landed a deal with Thai Airways to transport equipment from Thailand for Toyota's Durban manufacturing plant.

SA Express chief executive Inati Ntshanga said the plans for the regional flight connections had received only a few approvals internally and the airline was waiting for bilateral discussions to start for regional expansion. He said the operations were expected to commence in the next six months.

The first routes would include Harare in Zimbabwe, Lusaka in Zambia and Botswana.

Ntshanga said the airline would also look at Malawi because two years ago Malawians indicated that they were keen for a secondary route straight into Durban, which

was cancelled a few years ago. Ntshanga said the new routes would require a partnership with airports, the province, several national ministries, and other stakeholders.

In his State of the Province address, KwaZulu-Natal Premier Zweli Mkhize announced infrastructural development that would include a road link to provide additional access to the cargo terminal and Dube TradePort from the N2 and the R102.

Within the past 22 months, the Dube TradePort, Dube Cargo Terminal, Dube Trade Zone, Dube City, Dube Agrizone and Dube iConnect have been completed.

In Zuma's State of the Nation address last month, he touched on the improvement of the movement of goods and of economic integration through a logistic and industrial corridor between Durban, the Free State and Gauteng.