MEDIA RELEASE

MTHATHA AIRPORT TO HOST AVIATION SECURITY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

On Monday 08 December 2008, the Eastern Cape Department of Roads and Transport in partnership with the Civil Aviation Authority will host an Aviation Security Awareness event at the Mthatha Airport.

The event will start in the morning at 7am before the boarding time to educate the flying public and airport users about airport security.

This initiative is also aimed at educating aviation industry and public on the following topics:

- Do’s and Don’ts of travelling
- Dangerous goods
- Prohibited items, with specific reference to LAGs
- Unruly passengers
- Unaccompanied minors
- Handling cargo

Mthatha Airport is one of the targeted airports in the country by the Civil Aviation Authority for its aviation security campaign scheduled from 8 – 16 December 2008 due to its growing potential.

In October 2008, Roads and Transport MEC Gloria Barry handed over the airport to contractors for a R60 million refurbishment, which is expected to create more than 100 jobs for local people.

The upgrade forms part of the Department’s Blue Skyway Aviation Strategy, which seeks to maximize the potential of the Bhisho and Mthatha airports and bring new life to the rural airstrips within the province.

The main objective of this strategy is to ensure adherence to the National Policy (White Paper on Civil Aviation of March 2005), where it is stated that government should not be involved with operating airports, but should encourage private sector involvement. Government, however, remains responsible for ensuring that airports contribute to the socio-economic development of the area.
Presently, Mthatha Airport is operating at about 30% capacity when it comes to passenger volumes with a scheduled flight by Air Link to Johannesburg.

The current situation necessitates this upgrade, which will include:

- New parking area for busses and car hire
- All buildings to be painted and repaired.
- New intersection with the R 61.
- Existing parking to be converted to a pay parking facility.
- New navigational system to be installed to enable flights to land at night.

The appointed contractors are led by Osmond Lange Ikemeleng Architects JV and they include Clarence Bobie & Partners, Eyesizwe Consulting Engineers, Njilo Njilo, Africa Dynamics, Ikwezi V3 and are expected to complete their work early in 2010.

This upgrade will:

- Pave way for a second airline between Mthatha and Johannesburg, including an evening flight. A future link to Durban from Mthatha is envisaged as soon as the correct type of service is developed. An important goal is to link Port Elizabeth to Mthatha via Bhisho with the service geared for faster movement between these three areas and to reduce the number of government vehicles on these routes.

- Contribute in tourism development in the region through improving access to the Wild Coast, which is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

- Contribute to local business development

- Facilitate connectivity with local businesses as people will now come directly to Mthatha instead of flying to East London and then drive for 3 hours.

Issued by
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