
Riyadh fast-tracks Jeddah airport deals

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It is reported that tenders on major construction contracts brought forward, with bidding for foundations to start in May.

One source said that Riyadh is accelerating development at King Abdulaziz International airport in Jeddah, with key contracts to be awarded in the coming months.

Tendering is being brought forward on all major construction contracts, with bidding beginning in May for the contract to lay foundations for the new terminal and a tender for the structural work to follow in the summer. Tenders for the construction of the main passenger terminal will be sent out later this year rather than in 2010, as the General Authority of Civil Aviation originally intended.

The source said that "We have been instructed to push ahead with the work by the highest authorities in government."

It said that "This is a prestige project and a vital one for Saudi Arabia's transport infrastructure. There is a lot of pressure to accelerate. Every package is being pulled forward if possible and the bidding process should be much quicker."

In early April, Gaca awarded the first key contract on the project to the local Almagani General Contractors. Gaca will pay the local group close to USD 500 million to carry out mass earthworks at the site and will begin almost immediately clearing the ground for the 600,000 square meter terminal building.

The source said that Almagani will excavate and remove a landfill rubbish dump. There is a lot of environmental work to be done at the site including removing this buried garbage. Almagani will clear the site, establishing a good working platform for the main construction work."

At the same time, Gaca is preparing to send out tender documents for the next main contract, for deep foundations on the project, including diaphragm walls, basements and tunnels. Bidding will begin in May, followed by tenders for the structural work itself.

One Gaca official said that "Progress has been good. We are about to start work preparing the ground and tenders to build the skeleton of the main terminal will be out by the end of the year."

Also due this year are tenders to supply baggage handling systems at the new terminal and to build a train system to carry passengers from one end of the building to the other. The train was introduced after Gaca decided on a more ambitious design for the new passenger terminal at Saudi Arabia's main aviation hub.

As reported in MEED on March 1st 2009, the design drawn up by France's Aeroports de Paris for a terminal occupying 600,000 square meters is 60% larger than the 375,000 square meters that was originally conceived. The enlarged building will accommodate 30 million passengers a year up from 25 million under the original design and is so large that it requires a light rail system to transport passengers around.

The greater ambition of the project means the terminal is not expected to open until 2013 or 2014, rather than 2011 as originally planned, explaining the government's eagerness to accelerate the bidding process and begin construction as soon as possible.

(Sourced from MEED)

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