Cargo traffic shoots up at Entebbe

By Jacky Achan

From aviation statistics, as of 1991, Entebbe International Airport was handling 5,200 metric tonnes of cargo per year. But by last year, the airport was handling 55,000 tonnes of cargo annually, which has put pressure on existing infrastructure.

Entebbe International Airport is a major international airport. The airport is functioned by airlines from across Africa as well as some major international airlines from the Middle East and Europe. The Uganda Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) public affairs manager, Ignie Igunduura disclosed to the media recently that the traffic and cargo being handled right now is what had been predicted the airport would handle by 2019.

Now, with fast-increasing passenger and cargo traffic at Entebbe International Airport, the CAA has embarked on a multi-billion dollar plan to expand the country's only international airport.

Expansion work started at Entebbe International Airport with the construction of an expanded passenger terminal. The work is part of a four-phased airport scheme, which is also part of the 2014-2033 national civil aviation masterplan, which is reviewed and adjusted every five years. The phases of the airport scheme include the land site expansion, air navigation equipment upgrade, and construction of a modern cargo area.

According to Igunduura, the airport expansion plan is guided by statistical studies of cargo and passenger traffic. CAA annual growth figures project that cargo traffic is expected to rise to 172,000 tonnes in 2033. Today, the remodelling and expansion at Entebbe International Airport does include the construction of a computerised cargo-handling system.

The construction of a new and modern cargo-handling facility will be undertaken in two phases. The first being the

Arrivals at Entebbe Airport. The airport is functioned by airlines from across Africa, as well as some major international airlines

CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW AND MODERN CARGO-HANDLING FACILITY WILL BE UNDERTAKEN AT ENTEBBE AIR PORT.

Airport workers offload a cargo plane. By last year, the Entebbe International Airport was handling 55,000 tonnes of cargo annually

construction of a cargo centre handling 100,000 tonnes up to the year 2023, which will double the current capacity. The second phase will be the expansion of the cargo-handling capacity to 172,000 metric tonnes by the 2034.

This project, which is part of the entire expansion venture, is to be financed by a $200 million loan from China's Export-Import Bank and the China Communication Construction Company will handle the site.

Beginning May, the CAA is also starting the installation of a double-form new baggage conveyer belt. The system is to be manufactured and installed by Vanderlande Industries BV of the Netherlands.

According to the company's outline, Vanderlande is the global market leader in baggage-handling systems for airports and sorting systems for parcel and postal services.

Vanderlande's conveyer belt systems are active in 600 airports, including 17 of the world's top 25 airports. This project is expected to cost $4.8 million and money to finance it has also been internally generated by the CAA.

Revealed among the capabilities of this modern and high capacity belt is the ability to track each specific bag, issue bag tags and increase the luggage loading speed.

Baggage handling and cargo handling are all part of ground handling services at airports, which also include check-in, aircraft cleaning, loading and offloading of food, plus beverages and provision of electricity backup to aircraft while they are at airports.

Other services include supply of water to the carrier, ferrying passengers to and from the aircraft, and maintenance of toilets. And for Entebbe International Airport, the ground handling services of which includes baggage handling and cargo handling are provided by three firms the largest being Entebbe Handling Services (Enhas).

It services are followed in magnitude by Dairo Air Services (DAS) Handling Ltd and then Air Uganda Handling Services (AUHS) .