

partner, is expected to spend \$371m to upgrade the airport and develop it into a West African hub. (*PANA, Lagos 14/11*) **Aviation Minister sacked p. 17155**

IN BRIEF

Libya: *Libyan Arab Airlines* has been holding talks with the four leading aircraft manufacturers in the world to beef up its fleet with some 25 new jet planes. The planes, with a capacity range of between 100 and 350 passengers, will be purchased alongside four cargo planes with a capacity of about 100 tonnes.

The airline said it had embarked on a programme to train and build the capacity of its personnel including pilots, engineers, technicians and other senior managers in order to face up to the challenges of competition.

The company said it had also devised an ambitious plan to extend its service network to cover the majority of the African airspace, up to **South Africa**, most of the European cities, China, India, Pakistan, Japan, the Philippines, Canada and the US. (*PANA, Tripoli 9/11*)

Rwanda: The government is to liberalise the ground handling services at Kigali International Airport, currently handled by *Rwandair Express*.

Linking the liberalisation with the highly publicised Free Trade Zone to be constructed at Nyandungu, about a kilometre from the airport, the director of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Joshua Mbaraga said he anticipated a boost in business at the airport. (*The New Times, Kigali 16/11*)

PORTS AND SHIPPING

Djibouti

The tiny state of Djibouti is setting out to be East Africa's main port.

The tiny but strategic Red Sea state of Djibouti is working all out to become the Horn of Africa's main regional shipping terminal over the next few years, *AFP* reports from Djibouti.

The expansion of Doraleh port, about 10kms (six miles) south of the capital, entails construction of a 2km container jetty for deep-water anchorage, allowing an additional 1.5m offloads a year, officials say.

Located at the southern end of the Red Sea on the Gulf of Aden, Djibouti, a former French colony, is a key staging post between the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal shipping route through to the Indian Ocean.

It is also home to the largest overseas **French** military base and the only US military base in Africa.

The port, with four container terminals and 10 cranes, currently has the capacity to handle 10m tonnes of general

cargo and 400,000 container units per year and the upgrade will mean a significant boost in cargo traffic, officials say.

In 2000 the government went into partnership with **Dubai's DP World**, one of the world's largest container port operators.

DP World says the new port will be operational at the end of 2008.

The construction for \$400m of the new container terminal in Doraleh was launched officially in mid-November, and with its extra offloads should knock Mombasa in **Kenya** off its perch.

The first phase of the upgrade, a \$130m oil terminal, was launched in February, with a capacity of 370,000 m3 and 200 lorries a day.

The expansion is expected to improve access to the region, especially Africa's main trading bloc, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), which counts 21 countries and 400m inhabitants.

"Djibouti is the main entry point for COMESA," said its secretary general, Festus Mwencha. "In 10 or 15 years we hope that we will be able to go from Djibouti right to the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, we have plans for access, notably rail," he said.

"The port of Doraleh will allow Djibouti to have a new clientele: very big ships coming directly from Europe or Asia," carrying 10,000 to 12,000 containers," Thierry Marill, the Djibouti-based Secretary General of the Marill Establishments said.

"Raw materials can get to Djibouti, which will allow processing businesses to play their role, create jobs and which means in the medium term more industries," he said.

On top of the development of the port a duty-free zone is being set up, which should open the way for setting up new companies.

"Our ambition is to promote Djibouti as the gateway for investors to Africa and of exit for African producers towards other continents' markets," said Zeinab Kamil Ali, who manages the port authority and Djibouti as a duty free zone. (*The Ethiopian Herald, Addis Ababa 28/11*) **New port at Dorale p. 16798**

IN BRIEF

Egypt: The Suez Canal has recorded a new daily cargo record – 76 boats carrying 2.8m tonnes on October 26th. Crossing fares for the 76 vessels were expected to exceed \$13m, a new profit record. (*PANA, Cairo 27/10, Business in Africa 31/10*)

Morocco–Spain: A final decision to launch a ferry route between the Canary Island of **Fuerteventura** and Morocco's southernmost port of Tarfaya has been taken. The new line, which is to transport both persons and goods, is to be inaugurated no later than summer 2007, the autonomous government of the Canary Islands announced. (*afrol News 22/11*)

ROADS AND RAILWAYS

Africa

Deficient transport facilities are a significant factor in Africa's poor trade performance.

A route designed to become a vital link between West and North Africa runs north from Dakar (**Senegal**). It is meant to connect all the way up to Tangier (**Morocco**). It is good up to about 100km from the **Mauritanian** border, when the new surface runs out, giving way to axle-breaking potholes. At the wide Senegal river, dividing the two countries, it stops. Funding has been promised for a bridge, but the project is not expected to materialise before 2011. Trucks queue for one of two ferries that operate at limited periods in the mornings and afternoons.

Driving south, things are no better. The route through the narrow territory of **Gambia** to reach Senegal's southern part again requires a ferry crossing. Studies have been done for a \$400m bridge, but so long ago that they now need updating. The paucity of transport connections, especially in Africa's tropical regions, is the most obvious obstacle to integration, both on a continental level and within countries.

After decades of underinvestment, those railways that exist are generally run down, slow and unreliable; roads are insufficient, mostly unpaved and often impassable in the rainy season; ports are often substandard; and container terminals short of capacity.

From the days of independence in the 1960s, ambitious plans have been hatched for trans-African highways criss-crossing the continent. But cross-border networks have been slow to materialise.

"The political will is not always in evidence," comments Gilbert Mbeshherubusa, director of the African Development Bank's infrastructure department in Tunis.

United Nations' economists say investment in physical transport links to open up trade has to go hand-in-hand with efforts to tackle "soft" barriers – borders that close down, impromptu road blocks by security forces or Customs officials, red tape and corruption. Plans promoted under the New Partnership for Africa's Development