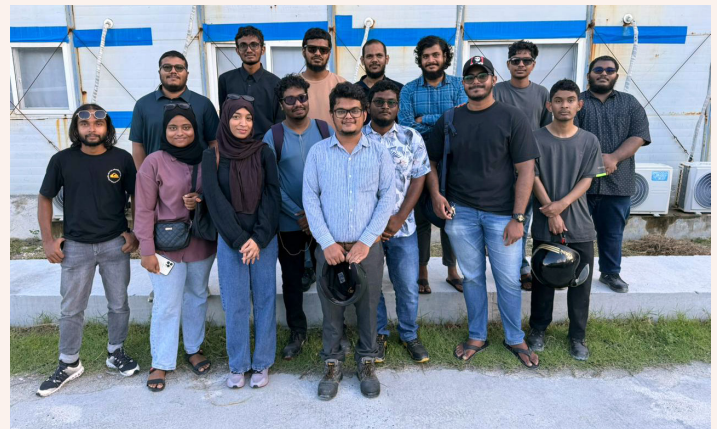


Advancing Infrastructure: The Velana International Airport Expansion Project



A total of 45 participants, comprising 43 students from the Civil and Architecture departments along with 3 staff members, took part in a site visit spanning three days on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th of September. To ensure a smooth and focused experience, the visit was arranged in batches of 15 members on each day. The group assembled in front of Velana International Airport and was transported to the construction site by the airport's shuttle service.

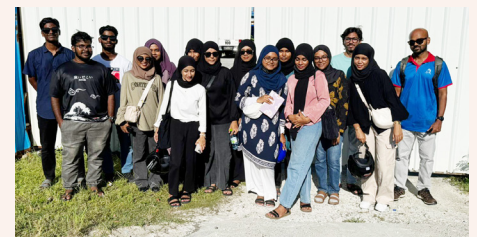
Project Overview

The Velana International Airport (VIA) expansion is a large-scale

infrastructure project in the Maldives, aimed at increasing the airport's capacity to accommodate the growing number of passengers. Initiated by the Government of Maldives and operated by Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL), the expansion is designed to handle 7.5 million passengers per year by 2030, with an investment of \$1 billion. The expansion includes a new passenger terminal, cargo facilities, fuel farm, runway, and seaplane terminal.

Key contractors involved include Saudi Binladin Group (SBG) as the design and build contractor for the terminal,

French multidisciplinary engineering company, SETEC as the designer responsible for Building Information Modelling (BIM), and Beijing Urban Construction for runway construction, among others. The project began in August 2016 and is slated for completion by 2025, though delays have pushed back the original 2022 deadline.



Safety Briefing and Protocols

A mandatory safety briefing, lasting approximately 20 minutes, was provided to all site visitors, outlining the rules and safety measures. Safety equipment, including helmets, vests, and safety shoes, was distributed before entering the site. Visitors were cautioned about ongoing work and the importance of adhering to marked safety zones. A representative from MACL and the SBG emphasized the importance of reporting accidents and following safety guidelines. Additionally, fire safety measures were highlighted, with sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers, and hose reels installed across the terminal, alongside emergency assembly points.



Key Insights from the Site Tour:

The tour was led by a mechatronics engineer who explained various aspects of the terminal's design and installation, including:

Runway Construction: The new runway, capable of accommodating larger aircraft like the Airbus A380, is a Code F runway with a length of 3400 meters and a width of 65 meters. This expansion is expected to resolve flight delays and increase aircraft accommodation from 8 to 21 planes at any given time.

Fuel Farm and Cargo Terminal: A significant part of the expansion is the development of a 37,000 square meter fuel farm with a capacity of 45 million liters of Jet A1 fuel, 100,000 liters of petrol, and 1 million liters of diesel. The cargo terminal, with a 12,000 square meter area, is designed to handle 120,000 tons of freight annually, featuring cranes and office spaces.

Mechanical Systems: The terminal's air conditioning and ventilation systems are designed to maintain comfort for passengers in a tropical environment. Advanced cooling towers, chillers, and air handling units have been installed to regulate air quality and temperature. These systems meet international standards for safety and efficiency.

Elevators and Escalators: Passenger lift and escalator systems are integrated into the terminal layout, optimized for heavy traffic. The glass lifts in the VIP terminal provide panoramic views, adding a unique architectural element to the design.

Fireproofing: The walls are made from non-combustible materials, including Rockwool insulation and concrete bricks with fire-expansion coatings. The structural steel is protected with concrete coverings and steel conduits for electrical wiring are coated with insulated paint to prevent fire hazards.

Building Cladding: Ultra-High Performance Fiber Concrete (UHPC) panels with waterproof coatings were observed, offering both fire resistance and thermal insulation.



Apart from these major constraints we also discussed about Construction practice and procedures used, structural framing system, water proofing techniques and various Floor systems.

The site visit provided valuable insights into the intricacies of airport construction, particularly in the design and installation of mechanical systems and safety features. The project is a testament to the importance of careful planning, coordination among contractors, and the integration of advanced technologies to meet the increasing demands of modern airport infrastructure. The visit emphasized the critical role of mechanical systems in ensuring operational reliability, energy efficiency, and passenger comfort in a high-traffic environment.

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