DUBAI WORLD CENTRAL TARGET TO BECOME WORLD'S LARGEST AIRPORT ON TRACK

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The expansion of **Dubai World Central** (DWC) airport is on track said, government officials in Dubai yesterday.

Bids for a second phase that will allow the airport to accommodate an annual 26 million passengers are expected this month.

Contracts are set to be awarded in November, said Suzanne Al Anani, chief executive of Dubai Aviation Engineering Projects.

Currently DWC airport, Dubai's second, is capable of handling about 7 million passengers.

"The economy and what is going on doesn't have any impact on the forecast … there's no down scaling and there's no up scaling. We have a forecast regardless of the oil prices," said Ms Al Anani.

Arabian Gulf countries are facing budgetary pressures after a slump in oil prices that started in June last year.

The decline in the price of oil has been expected to affect infrastructure spending in the region.

However, Khalifa Al Zaffin, executive chairman of Dubai Aviation City Corporation, said that there

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would be no changes to the size of the project.

“No scale back. We are driven by growth,” he told reporters in Dubai yesterday.

Last year, Dubai said that it would spend $32 billion to expand DWC airport, eventually making it the largest airport in the world with a capacity to handle around 220 million passengers upon its completion.

The airport will also be able to handle 100 A380s at a time to accommodate Emirates’ expansion.

Mr Zaffin said that “by next year” work will start to expand the airport to accommodate 120 million passengers.

In June, the Emirates airline president Tim Clark said that his airline would eventually move from its current base at Dubai International to the new airport in Jebel Ali, removing any constraints on its growth.

Meanwhile, flydubai, Emirates’ sister budget carrier, is expected to move the majority of its operations from Dubai International Airport to the new airport by 2017.

Flydubai will start operating 70 flights per week from DWC on October 25. “DWC is the new frontier of aviation in the UAE,” the flydubai chief executive Ghaith Al Ghaith said this week.

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