

# Materials handling **MASTERMIND**

Expertise and top-level skills are highly sought-after the world over, and bring with them innovative ideas and cost-cutting measures. Dovetailing with top-notch skills is DemcoTech's drive for delivering custom-designed materials handling solutions, GM Paul van de Vyver tells Nelendhre Moodley.



**This is especially pertinent now that the volatile global economy is driving the demand for mineral resources. New mining entrants and existing mining houses are rushing to satisfy this demand through new and expansion projects.**

Commodity projects across the spectrum are being given the green light, with mining houses searching for engineering expertise to deliver them cost-effectively and within tight timeframes.

With the US and European financial crisis still simmering, the resources sector continues to be mindful of spending wisely and is opting to employ engineering expertise irrespective of destination in the world, to ensure on-time and on-budget delivery, Van de Vyver says.

Materials handling specialist DemcoTech's reputation for delivering quality projects has increased its profile to the extent that 50% of its work is from international projects, including the design and execution of the bulk materials handling stage of diversified mining major Vale's export-import iron-ore port currently under construction in Malaysia.

"We have been involved in the project from feasibility study to the current implementation stage of bulk materials handling, including ship unloaders, stacker reclaimers and conveyor systems."

It is a long-term project that has expectations of developing beyond phase 1, which is scheduled for completion in 2013.

"This massive international project with an international client is a good reference point for DemcoTech," he notes.

Two views of operations at Letseng mine.



Other international bulk materials handling projects include work for the diamond sector, such as the design and engineering for the feasibility study for Boteti's AK6 diamond project in Botswana, and Gem Diamonds' Letšeng diamond mine in Lesotho, for which DemcoTech delivered a 1.6km overland conveyor system, tailings dump and rail-mounted stacker. This phase of the project was completed two years ago.

"The conveyor system is an 800t/h system located 3000m above sea level."

DemcoTech is also busy with the installation of a pipe conveyor system for a diamond operation in West Africa. Local engineering project house Consulmet has been contracted to deliver the project and subsequently sub-contracted this specialised pipe conveyor to DemcoTech.

Locally, the company is busy with a number of projects for the likes of Kumba Iron Ore, studies involving bulk materials handling for ash dumps for local power producer Eskom, upgrade and expansion of an import-export facility, including storage facility and a pipe conveyor system for logistics company Grindrod at Richards Bay.

Discussing the company's growth strategy, Van de Vyver reports that it includes merging engineering work and technology development with project management. DemcoTech is currently working on innovating technological development aimed at improving efficiency.

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"The quality of work from the South African industry is good but the pricing is not." Like others in industry Van de Vyver is concerned that the high cost of manufacturing, as a result of low productivity versus high labour cost, will become a deterrent to

doing business in the country and result in losses in export business. ○

- Established 15 years ago, the Johannesburg-based specialist bulk materials handling company offers services from concept design through to project completion.
- Services include conceptual design, feasibility studies, design, engineering, procurement, expediting, construction and commissioning.
- DemcoTech offers clients various contracting mechanisms ranging from EPCM contracts through to full lump sum turnkey project execution.
- \* Industries include power generation, cement, mining, metallurgical, manufacturing and port facilities.



A tripper at Sishen mine.