

HITACHI'S NEW HOME

THE OFFICIAL DISTRIBUTOR OF HITACHI CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY IN THE UAE AND HSC CRANES IN THE ENTIRE REGION, MIDDLE EAST CRANE EQUIPMENT TRADING BETS ON AFTER-SALES SUPPORT AS IT MOVES INTO IT'S NEW 10,000SQM FACILITY IN DUBAI

It's a facility that was a year in the making, at least a couple of years in the planning and more than a couple of million dollars in the outlay. And when we reach Middle East Crane Equipment Trading's new one-stop shop in Dubai Industrial Park, we realise the magnitude of the facility.

Leading us on a tour of his brand-spanking-new premises is a justifiably proud Wim Aernouts, director, Middle East Crane Equipment Trading (MECET), accompanied by Piet van Bakergem, general manager of Hitachi Construction Machinery Middle East.

"This facility is a one-stop shop which covers the entire gamut of our operations," says Aernouts. Those operations cover not only Hitachi construction machinery but also HSC cranes. While MECET is the Hitachi dealer for the UAE, it's mandate for HSC cranes is a wider one that spans the entire Middle East.

"It's no longer a case of a little here and a little there. Under the roof of this new premises it is one-stop shopping for everything Hitachi. So, from parts sales and machine sales to service and engineering, as well as training, this is Hitachi's new home in the UAE," Aernouts says.

For those who tuned in late to the Hitachi-MECET story that CMME has covered for a while now, MECET is a member of Belgium-based Luyckx Group and the official distributor of Hitachi Construction Machinery in the UAE and HSC Cranes in the Middle East.



MECET's new premises has a large yard, ideal for holding a stock of units. This has already made a positive difference to sales where customers required immediate delivery.

NEW-LOOK MECET PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE

Good things are afoot at the Hitachi-MECET combine for the future. According to MECET's Wim Aernouts, 2019 will also see the launch of a wheeled excavator and mining equipment.

"Wheeled excavators are gaining in popularity in the construction industry because they enable easy transportation of material on job-sites. We have also recorded a rise in demand for Hitachi's compact excavators, especially in landscaping and road

construction projects," he says.

Apart from bringing in new machines, MECET has also launched an online shop for parts. Customers can order the parts they need at the 'webshop' and can then pick these parts up at MECET's new premises under a "click and collect" system.

"What this does is eliminate delivery costs, because of which we are able to offer cheaper prices on the webshop. This makes it more attractive for customer to use our online platform to order their parts

and we think that this will soon be the preferred medium of obtaining most of the commonly-required parts once they get used to ordering online and then collecting it from here. Of course, we will continue to offer delivery to customers if they require it," says Aernouts.

MECET is also offering extended warranties and long-term maintenance contracts to customers and coupling this with product training, now that they training facilities at their new premises.

"Our standard warranty is of 2,000 working hours or one year with the option for an extension to 10,000 hours. When maintained properly, our machines can last up to 12-15,000 hours depending on how they are used and in what application. As we bring in new models, there will be a requirement for training customers on operating the machines and their control systems. We are able to provide this training on our own, as well as jointly with Hitachi and HSC," Aernouts explains.



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Their new multi-million-dollar facility in Dubai Industrial Park covers 10,000sqm and is MECET's new base, which used to be in Dubai Investment Park. With a warehouse, workshop, yard and an office building that incorporates training space, the new facility has everything a Hitachi or HSC crane customer would want in a single location, making it a single source of parts, service, support and back-up – or a "one-stop shop" as both Aermouts and Van Bakergem both point out.

MECET's facility at Dubai Industrial Park, built at an investment of a couple of million dollars over a year, was inaugurated by UAE dignitaries and officials from Hitachi and Luyckx.

"Continuity of operations is assured for our customers with an inventory of spare parts worth a couple of million dollars held at any time in the 1200sqm parts warehouse, which will hold over 3,500 units of the most-required parts," explains the MECET director.

"We have also allocated around 2,500sqm for our workshop and about 500sqm for the offices. The rest of the area, which is around 60% of the total, will be used for keeping stocks of machines."

Apart from general repair and maintenance jobs, the workshop is also capable of executing machine refurbishment and overhauling engines as well as having separate sections to work on hydraulic components.

Explaining the process further Aermouts adds: "After a customer takes delivery of his machine, he is in the complete care of MECET from there onwards. With our nationwide coverage in every corner of the UAE, this means that even if there is any requirement in a remote quarry in, say the mountains of Ras Al Khaimah, we will go to the customer's job-site with our mobile workshops.

"Only in case of something really major, which would be very odd for a Hitachi, would the machine be transported back here. That's just a hypothetical scenario though, because we have made such advancements in our mobile workshops that we can do shoot around 89% of the troubles we may face onsite."

MECET's mobile workshop service fleet consists of five Sprinter vans and also a big Mercedes truck equipped with a loading crane at the rear. "This way, we can handle any major heavy component of the machines we sell," explains Aermouts.

Before the new facility was up and running, MECET still used to perform most maintenance jobs onsite using their mobile workshop fleet. But they also used customers' work premises on occasions. "All that has just moved into this one premises. With our new facility we have

gone up several notches in terms of the service that we can offer our customers" the director adds.

"In terms of manpower, we have here a large team of highly-professional staff, which is mix of service managers, service engineers, spare parts specialists, logistics experts and sales managers. Our staff strength is more than enough to enable us to meet the needs of our customers from all points of view. This is of course a joint facility for both Hitachi Construction machinery and HSC cranes."

Speaking from Hitachi's standpoint, Van Bakergem makes his positive reception of the development clear: "MECET's new facility is a tremendous help for us, because for many years Hitachi was invisible and had no face in the UAE. And now we've rolled up our sleeves again and dived into the market. Of course, if you have a professional dealer behind you, with a completely thorough and professional set-up like MECET now does, that is the key to success in any market.

"This is the ideal facility for us to face the future in the UAE and, of course, in combination with the field support out on the job-site locations, this is the back-up from north to south that we require in the country."

And the results are already showing, with some rental companies already buying Hitachi machines in anticipation of upcoming projects in 2019.

"They have moved early to be ready for the time when the machines are wanted



and have mitigated any ill effects that may arise due to possible long delivery times of some of the larger machines. Not all the large machines are immediately available at all times, and keeping this in view, one of our customers bought everything we had in stock in the larger Hitachi earth moving machines to be ready for projects coming up in the next few months. In the 60t and above category their fleet is entirely Hitachi," says Aermouts.

Van Bakergem explains further: "What

Wim Aermouts (centre), director of MECET, poses in the yard of his new premises with an official from his company and Piet Van Bakergem (right), GM, Hitachi CM, Middle East.

is significantly different for now over the past is that now that MECET has a yard, they are able to maintain some stock. There's a very healthy stock of Hitachi machines available for customers, and of course when Middle East customers have an appetite for machines, they want to take delivery of it right away.

This is now easier, as we can go to prospective customers and say the fast-moving models are now available. MECET can also anticipate on some of their loyal customers' requirements by looking into the future together, enabling us to order machines that have longer delivery times, to have them available when these machines are required."

Having a training set-up at the new facility is also great news for the future of the Hitachi-MECET combine, and Aermouts comments: "We will use our training facilities to constantly train and upskill our people, and we will also train our customers.

The trainings include classroom sessions delivered by our own training personnel, as well as trainers coming over from Hitachi to train both our staff and customers. Having fully equipped on-site workshops also helps support the classroom training, and we also have advanced teleconferencing facilities in our training areas to link up with experts in the Hitachi family form Japan and other regions worldwide.

"The training here will eventually cover the full spectrum, including operator training, technical and service training, as well as sales and other kinds of training."



ON-SITE SUPPORT FLEET-FOOTED SERVICE

Middle East Crane Equipment Trading (MECET) has put in place a rigorous programme to provide the service, maintenance and back-up to its customers in the UAE whenever and wherever required.

"MECET now offers broad coverage of the UAE and we have a bigger presence in the country with our new premises at Dubai Industrial Park. In terms of both sales and specially after-sales, there is a presence everywhere in the country. The focus is very much on providing service on-site to our customers," says Wim Aermouts.

This plan for total on-site coverage has already led MECET to put in place a fleet of service vehicles and technicians, spearheaded by Sprinter vans that carry a healthy supply of spare parts. The company has made such advancements in its mobile workshops that MECET technicians can solve around 89% of machine issues at the customers' job-sites, Aermouts points out.

And now, the mobile fleet has been expanded further with the additional of a heavier unit - a Mercedes truck, he adds.

"We already had the vans in our service fleet and now we have upped that mobile service capacity with the addition of a 12t Mercedes truck fitted with a loading crane, on which we have also installed a complete mobile workshop. There are also several service teams these vehicles will carry to the places where the machines are working," Aermouts adds.

"The vans and truck are like first aid kits for the machines," says Piet van Bakergem. "On-site service is of course par for the course in the business, but our advantage is that with parts cupboards built into the MECET service vans and truck, we can go in with many more frequently-required parts, ensuring high on-site availability and minimum downtime."