

diamonds dry up

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By Andreas Thomas

Windhoek – Namibia’s marine diamond miner, Debmarine Namibia, continues to strengthen its capacity, as the Southern African country turns to the sea for diamonds with land-based diamonds expected to dry up within a decade.

It is now public knowledge that Namibia’s land-based diamonds are expected to run out within the next few years, and the main diamond miner, Namdeb, has confirmed plans to close some of its mines due to lack of diamonds.

Namdeb is in the process of ceasing operations at Elizabeth Bay by the end of 2018, with Daberas to follow suit by the end 2019, and Sendelingsdrift in 2020 and operations at Southern Coastal Mines expected to stop in 2022.

coast, which is expected to support the industry for the next 50 years.

Marine diamond production has been outperforming land-based mining. In 2016, Namibia produced 1,7 million carats of marine diamond compared to 403,000 carats produced on land.

It is for this reason that Debmarine plans to add another state-of-the-art vessel to its existing fleet. The company announced on Tuesday, November 21, that it is in the process of acquiring a new custom-built and fit-for-purpose offshore vessel.

It has signed a memorandum of understanding with a Norwegian shipbuilder to construct a new vessel at a cost of about R2bn (\$141 million).

The cost excludes the mission equipment that will be retrofitted afterwards. The new vessel is expected to enter service in the third-quarter of 2021.

At 176 metres, the new vessel to be built by Kleven Verft AS shipyard located in Ulsteinvik is expected to be the biggest offshore vessel in the Debmarine Namibia fleet.

The Norwegian shipbuilder has also constructed Debmarine's \$140 million deepwater diamond exploration and sampling vessel – mv SS Nujoma that joined its service in July 2017.

In a statement, Debmarine said the new vessel will also be the longest vessel to be ever built at Kleven shipyard.

Its current fleet consists of six mining vessels – SS Nujoma, Debmar Atlantic, Debmar Pacific, !Gariiep, Grand Banks and Mafuta.

Debmarine Namibia has been mining sea diamonds off the southern coast of Namibia since its inception in 2002. It is jointly owned in equal shares by the Namibian Government and De Beers.



“The challenge will be to remain focused on quality, timely delivery, cost containment and safe execution; while being cautious of complacency likely to be brought on by the successful execution of the previous vessel.

“We have confidence in the specialised ability of the contracted partner Kleven Verft AS managed through our project team and technical partners at De Beers Marine South Africa,” said Debmarine Namibia CEO, Otto Shikongo, in a statement.

DEBMARINE NAMIBIA DIAMONDS NAMDEB

NAMIBIA STRENGTHENS SEA MINING CAPACITY AS LAND-BASED DIAMONDS DRY UP SOUTHERN COASTAL MINES



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