

Airports: first impressions count

By DR SANI ŞENER

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DR SANI ŞENER is co-founder and chief executive officer of TAV Airports Holding and TAV Construction, the fourth biggest airport construction firm in the world. Since leading the Istanbul Atatürk Airport project, he has been the Chief Executive Officer of TAV Airports Company, which has fast evolved into an airport construction and operation holding group that manages 11 airports and 31 airport-related subsidiary companies. In 2010, he was selected the "Investment Relations CEO of the Year in Turkey" by Thomson Reuters and Acclaro.

Airports are a vital part of a nation's infrastructure, as well as a visitor's first impression of their host country; it is on this basis that TAV Group designs, finances, builds, and operates airports in Turkey and its surrounding region.

At TAV, we have always sought to design and operate intelligent airports. Our first was Istanbul Atatürk Airport, Europe's 8th in terms of passenger numbers, where we began by operating the international terminals in 2000. After winning the tender to operate the airport for 15 years in 2005, TAV formulated a new business strategy, positioning itself as a regional company operationally and a global company financially.

Following its well-received IPO on the Istanbul Stock Exchange in 2007, TAV is now in partnership with global industrial players throughout the world. In 2010, TAV fulfilled its strategic goal by operating 10 airports in the region: in Georgia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Tunisia.

The company's most recent project is Madinah airport. In conjunction with Al Rajhi and Saudi Oger, two of the major players within the region, we have recently signed the agreement with the Civil Aviation Authority of Saudi Arabia. We are proud that our eleventh airport is in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, one of the major economies of the Middle East. Madinah, along with Mecca, is the most prominent city in the Islamic World.

A global player

TAV's strength lies in the ability to sustain healthy long-term growth, and to avoid investments that surpass our operational and financial capacity. At the same time, our success depends on our global workforce of more than 20,000 employees. Turkey and our target region have a very young population and we are striving to make the best of it. We continuously aim to create employment opportunities for young Turkish citizens - engineers, entrepreneurs and finance professionals - through new investments. I believe that increasing employment for the young generation, the greatest asset of our nation, is one of the most important responsibilities of senior executives.

A further 22,000 men and women work for TAV Construction, responsible for some of the most

important projects in the region, such as the Qatar/Doha International Airport Terminal Complex, one of the world's largest airports, the Oman/Muscat International Airport, and the Libya/Tripoli International Terminal.

Looking to the future, our growth will focus on emerging markets that yield higher returns. As well as the Middle East, Africa, Russia and the CIS, we will also explore opportunities in Europe.

Being a global company offers advantages as well as risks. But our achievements would not have been possible if we had not been ready, willing, and able to adapt to globalization. By choosing not to remain local, we have grown rapidly in 10 years, weathering several crises along the way. We survived those crises unscathed by adapting quickly to change. Another factor behind our success has been our investment in human resources. Our experienced management team is made up of individuals who have the necessary qualifications to ward off crises of any nature. Confident of our ability to adapt quickly and our global human resource pool, we have set the new goal of increasing the number of passengers we serve from 48 million in 2010 to 100 million by the year 2020. This will represent a major increase in passenger numbers in just one decade.

Although globalization has made capital, information and technology transfer much easier, cultural transfer is still a major challenge. Our success stems from our ability to adapt to the working practices wherever we do business. We have benefited greatly from our historical heritage, cultural proximity to our target region, and our capacity to operate in the international arena.

TAV offers the same quality standards regardless of the country it is operating in, regardless of that country's wealth.

As said, airports are the gateways to a nation, and as such must possess the very best quality. Furthermore, ever-stricter standards imposed by international aviation organizations require airport operators and contractors to comply with the very highest standards. At TAV, we adhere to the highest international standards, and in ways that reflect the TAV brand in the best possible light. At the same time, our goal is to make sure that the country in which we operate in provides the very best services and creates the very best impression on those using its airports.