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Mr NM (Gora) Ismail Abdoola Chairman, (centre) with left Ajith Heeralal, Group Financial Director and right Basie Van Wyk, Group CEO

03/03/2016

New Flagship head office for Lion Match Unveiled on the Durban Point

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The Lion Match Company this week officially unveiled a second iconic building in its home city of Durban – its new headquarters on the Durban Point Waterfront.

Located on the corner of Mahatma Gandhi (Point) and Signal Roads, the R80 million

new Lion Match Company head office comprises a three storey, 10 000m² mixed use development made up of a distribution warehouse, corporate offices and covered parking.

It is fronted by the company's iconic golden lion and has been designed to blend with its portside location with decks and sails and floor to ceiling glass that provides magnificent views over South Africa's largest and busiest harbour.

Chairman Gora Abdoola said that The Lion Match Company, which not only has a 98 percent share of South Africa's safety match market but is also active in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) space with well-known brands such as Duel, Loving Touch, Cherubs and Comfitex amongst others. The Lion Match Company is a proudly Durban company.

"We believe that Durban has a proud heritage. We bought The Lion Match Company because of its Durban base, so it didn't make sense for us to move out of Durban," he said.

The Fasic Investment Company, which has 520 shareholders from previously disadvantaged communities, bought The Lion Match Company from South African Breweries in 2001. It relocated its match manufacturing plant from the landmark Lion Match Factory in Umgeni Road to its factory in Rosslyn, Pretoria, when its location close to residential areas was no longer appropriate for health and safety reasons.

Abdoola said The Lion Match Company was one of the fastest growing companies in Durban and

had seen turnover grow from R200 million at the time of the acquisition to R1,5 billion this year. The company aims to reach the R5 billion turnover mark by 2020.

In addition to growing its product portfolio, The Lion Match Company has diversified and invested in a number of companies over the past few years and has acquired companies such as NSP Unsgaard, contract manufacturer Beige Holdings and Price's Candles from Sasol.

It also invested in healthy snack and biscuit manufacturer, Baketime in the United Kingdom with a view to growing its presence in the European market.

Abdoola explained that, after the company relocated its match factory from Durban to Rosslyn, there was a need for state-of-the-art offices in Durban. When deciding where to locate its new head office, there were three choices – Umhlanga, the Berea and the Point.

They opted for the Point Waterfront and the Lion Match Company became the first blue chip company to put down roots in the precinct.

"Our plan was to again create something iconic. We have three golden lion's here – including one on the roof that is visible to every ship entering or leaving Durban harbour and one at the front of the building," Abdoola explained.

He believes that locating the new Lion Match headquarters strategically on the Durban Point will act as a catalyst for other major Durban companies to base themselves in this part of the city. It will also kick start development of the precinct which has waned over the past few years.

To contribute to drawing footfall into the Point, Abdoola says they had decided to make the golden lion at the front of the building something of a tourist landmark – it will "roar" every hour on the hour. Construction of The Lion Match Company headquarters began two years ago.

It has a number of noteworthy design and "green" elements, according to architect Trish Emmett of Emmett Architects.

"It has been designed to maximise the site with the office building wrapped around the 2000 m2 distribution centre. It was designed so that the building faces the correct orientation to ensure that the sun does not shine directly into the front façade. On the east, fins have been designed to deflect the sun from shining into the building. Various other elements such as an environmentally friendly stone floor in the entrance and a state of the art air conditioning system have all been selected to reduce the impact on the environment," she said.

Abdoola added that plans were afoot to increase The Lion Match Company's presence on the Point. The company is currently negotiating to purchase additional land adjoining its new headquarters where it will locate a Lion Match Museum. The company was established more than 100 years ago and has a great deal of fascinating artefacts that will add another interesting dimension to the Point Waterfront. There are also plans to include a coffee shop.

Abdoola said that Lion Match had a proud heritage and was continuing to build this in Durban. It remained firmly on the acquisition trail and was looking to extend exports to Europe in addition to existing markets which include the Indian Ocean Islands, Mauritius, the DRC, Zambia and Malawi. He added that The Lion Match Company took pride in the fact that it had grown the company through the support of many long serving employees and looked forward to not only expanding a competitive enterprise but also to contributing to job creation in South Africa.



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