

MONSTER OCCASION... Energy Affairs Minister Dipou Peters (left) and Coega Development Corporation chief executive Pepi Silinga are dwarfed by the 85m-high crane. They are standing next to one of the three blades, each 45m long and more than 3m high at its widest point.

Picture: BRIAN WITBOOI



Stadium world first a step closer

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MANDELA Bay moved a step closer yesterday to being the first city on the globe to provide "green" electricity for a Fifa World Cup.

Led by Energy Affairs Minister Dipou Peters, a crowd of close to 100 – including foreign investors and engineers – visited the site of the first wind-turbine being erected in a R1.2-billion investment at the Coega industrial development zone.

But the occasion stayed at ground level as the wind was too strong for any of the compo-

nents to be lifted by one of the biggest cranes in the world.

Nevertheless, those attending the occasion had the opportunity to see the massive size of a single pylon, its blades, and the turbine assembly which comprises the first of 25 units.

The centrepiece yesterday was the crane, imported by specialist company Vanguard at a cost of R70-million, the tallest of its type in the world and one of only seven in existence.

It extended vertically to 85m – but even at that height, the top of the crane was still 55m below what will be the top of the blades when the installation is complet-

ed by the end of the month.

Standing close to the crane, and dwarfing the VIPs, were the three huge blades which will be mounted 95m above the ground and extend for a further 45m to make up the total ground-to-top height of 140m.

A giant turbine – to which the blades will be attached – also dwarfed the guests, who were told that the first pylon, blades and turbine and their installation were costing R38-million.

By the end of the project, the total investment by Belgian-based Electrawinds and its partners will be R1.2-billion and the Coega wind farm should be one

of the biggest in Africa.

It will provide 5.7 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, enough green energy to power about 1 700 households for a year.

"The electricity to be generated by the first unit is on schedule to be connected to the Eskom grid and fed to the Mandela Bay World Cup stadium in time for the first match in June," said Electrawinds business development director Jan Dewulf.

They are in the final stages of negotiating a contract with Eskom, and that should be completed by the end of May. "Then we can plug the green power into the stadium in a world first."