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By Alan Snel

Construction workers Wednesday installed the last beam of the \$375 million arena being built behind the New York-New York garage on the Strip, marking a milestone two days ahead of schedule.

"Rick, hoist that beam!" yelled Monte Thurmond, project executive for Hunt-Penta joint venture, the contractor building the 20,000-seat arena set to open April 1, 2016.

Two workers, Mike Dyke and Jason Luis, stood at the top of the arena and bolted the 25-foot steel beam into place.

"That, ladies and gentlemen, is a topped-off building," Thurmond said, adding that lunch is ready for the construction workers.

Executives with MGM Resorts International and Los Angeles-based Anschutz Entertainment Group, the 50-50 partnership that is building the venue, were on hand to mark the ceremony.

County Commissioners Steve Sisolak and Mary Beth Scow also joined company officials and several hundred construction workers to sign the final beam for the "steel topping off" event.

With the building more than half-built after a May 1, 2014 groundbreaking, officials offered updates on several fronts:

AEG is negotiating with several international brands for the naming rights deal for the building. Several companies have been signed up as founding sponsorship partners such as Coca-Cola, Toshiba and Schneider Electric, while others are negotiating with AEG to become the sponsor for the beer, technology and bank categories.

It will take about four more months for workers to close the exterior skin of the building, Thurmond said.

Seventy-five percent of the arena's suite inventory has been committed, said Mark Faber, AEG senior vice president for global partnership.

Parking and traffic plans will be unveiled to the public closer to the arena's opening.

"Traffic is an issue. But they convinced us that it will be difficult but workable," Sisolak said.

There are 425 workers on site, and 700 to date, Thurmond said.

The arena's first events are still being put together. "The question is, 'What is the first act?' and 'How do we tie them together?'" said Mark Prows, MGM Resorts senior vice president for arenas.

The arena is going to host events such as Ultimate Fighting Championship events, boxing matches, concerts and college basketball games. It's also a driver in businessman Bill Foley's efforts to start a National Hockey League team in Las Vegas.

Foley was scheduled Wednesday to meet fans to discuss his initiative at Sunset Station in Henderson.

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