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Seaport of Ho Chi Minh City: Invest in key points

Port development planning is one of the strategic key tasks that of which Ho Chi Minh City has been carrying out over the past years. The question now is to avoid the dispersion of resources; solving the infrastructures' weak connection; associate closely with the region's port. Said by Mr. Pham Anh Tuan – Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Portcoast Consultant Corporation after exchanging with DTTC:

Currently, the port system of Ho Chi Minh City with ships in the port of Saigon has always been the country's largest seaport for the volume of cargo coming in. From 2008 onwards, when the new Saigon Port completed relocating and put into operation at Cat Lai container port, the volume of containers coming in the new Cat Lai port has increased dramatically.

According to the ranking of The Journal of Commerce (JOC), in the top 50 of the world's largest container port in 2011, the port of Ho Chi Minh ranked 28. Currently ports in the Southeast Asia group (group 5) still undertake about 50% of the total dry cargo coming in, and in particular, the ratio of containers coming in takes about 65%.

In the coming years, the port system of Ho Chi Minh City will still hold an important role in the seaport system of Vietnam. Under the approved plan, the capacity of the port system of Ho Chi Minh City will reach about 105-132 million tons/year; and will reach about 160-271 million tons/year by 2030.

Reporter: - *Currently, the seaport system at Cai Mep – Thi Vai and the Hau river is developing rapidly. What is the competitive advantage and cargo attraction for the port system in Ho Chi Minh City?*

Mr. Pham Anh Tuan: - First of all, we need to talk about the perspectives, and plans in developing the seaport group 5 that has been approved. That is the development of the seaport system for the Southeast Asia region and the surrounding areas such as the South Central and Mekong Delta area.

On that basis, reasonably lay out seaports in the group with the purpose of promoting the synthesis efficiently; creating a balanced development, synchronizing between seaports and relating infrastructures; combine the promotion of industrial development and service as a driving force for the economic development; forming and developing international gateway ports and modern regional hub to meet the development trend of shipping, attracting a portion of transshipments of goods in the region.

With these objectives, the port system is associated closely with major rivers of the region in planning according to functions, service scope and sizes of ships capable of docking in the port.



Offloading of containers at Cat Lai terminal. Picture: La Anh

For example, the seaport of Vung Tau – Cai Mep will receive vessels over 50.000DWT and aims to receive vessels over 100.000DWT; carrying out the function of international transit, gradually reducing and terminating the dependence of our country goods coming into the regional transit port; ensuring goods through the economic region in the East of the Dong Nai river basin and a portion of goods from the South carried by large vessels above 50.000DWT.

The seaport of Ho Chi Minh City will receive vessels below 50.000DWT to ensure goods through the economic region in the West of the Dong Nai river basin. With seaport on the Hau river – the main port of the Mekong Delta – only limits receiving vessels of to 20.000DWT.

Remote marine goods are still transited through the Southeast Asia seaport group. The entire infrastructure network connection like roads, navigable channels...is currently invested by the State in accordance with this plan. With a view to regional development as above, aiming for a non-competition plan between regional ports but this port group competing with seaports from Southeast Asia.

- In order to motivate the development of seaports of Ho Chi Minh City, what issues do we need to focus and prioritize on?

- To facilitate operations for seaports, we need to pay attention to finalizing the investment in infrastructures connecting into invested port/harbor areas. Foremost we need to complete the sections, routes to Cat Lai – Hiep Phuoc port areas, maritime lanes through Soai Rap, for the long run is connecting railways into port areas.

There are plans to develop logistics service supporting the operation of exploiting seaports, in which we have to take note of the central areas in planning distributing goods at the back of the port. Further reduce customs clearance, actual inspection time of goods, clearance time, proceed to one-stop customs inspection.

It is easily seen that in the process of attracting investments in seaport development, if the planning area doesn't have connecting infrastructures it will be difficult to attract investors to invest in seaport development. Also in the process of exploitation, without transport infrastructure connecting seaports it will be difficult for goods to circulate. So foremost we have to solve these bottlenecks.

- Developing seaports and moving out to the East sea is a major policy of Ho Chi Minh City. What do we need to do to make this policy a competitive advantage?

- In many countries around the world, moving the port out to the estuaries is inevitable in order to meet the increasing demand for marine transport vessel size of the world's maritime. For example, Japan developed a new port in Yokohama in order to overcome the limitations of the port of Tokyo. Thailand developed a new port in Laem Chabang to take on the role as the country's main alternative to Bangkok port located too deep inland...

For a port city like Ho Chi Minh City, the strategy of moving out to the East sea is a consistent trend. To efficiently exploit seaports we need to focus resources, prioritize in finalizing investment in infrastructures connecting ports and consider investing in planned key points of seaports in order to avoid dispersion of resources.

- Thank you.

Done by Minh Tuan
(Translated by Portcoast)