

Pushing the Mekong Delta's agricultural products towards the sea

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According to the Resolution No. 21 by the Political Bureau and Instruction No. 14 by the Prime Minister in early 2004, Permanent Steering Committee for the Southwestern region in coordination with Ho Chi Minh City Social Sciences Institute held a scientific seminar on looking for a breakthrough to strongly and sustainably push the Mekong Delta development and to keep pace with the national general development trend up to 2010 – 2015 period.

The seminar was held with participation of about 300 scientific officers, leaders and managers of provinces and cities and senior revolutionary comrades. The Committee and Institute unanimously approved the plan to concentrate on solving two breaking issues: the surmounting of existing shortcomings in the socio-economic infrastructure, especially traffic and irrigation and set-back in education and training as to improve production capacity and labor skills.

For over last 05 years, as instructed by the Secretariat of the Party's Central Committee and the Prime Minister, Central Departments and Offices, 13 provinces and cities of the Mekong Delta have attempted to overcome obstacles, gradually surmounting shortcomings in road and air traffic, irrigation and education and training, strongly boosting the Mekong Delta's socio-economical growth, regularly increasing the GDP on a yearly basis and considerably improving the people's lives. However, such very achievements are still unfit, incomprehensive and unsustainable as compared to the Mekong Delta's development demand and rich potentials. Practically, the Mekong Delta is less developed than some provinces and areas nationwide. Especially, the issues on the isolation and product output are still in being, which are typically evidenced by the half-done construction of the national highway connecting the Mekong Delta with Ho Chi Minh city, lack of synchronism, the uncompleted construction of Can Tho airport, the 2010 slow-paced opening of international airway, the fact of unimproved seaway, the remaining difficulties in the operation of Can Tho and Cai Lui sea port for vessels of 3.000 – 5.000 tons. Presently, cargos transported primarily from the Mekong Delta to Ho Chi Minh city – Ba Ria-Vung Tau are still shouldered on the National Highway 1A, which results in the wastefulness, traffic gridlock, low effectiveness and cargo congestion. Hence, the surmounting of the issues on sea ports and international airports is considered to be a crucial solution as to break through the isolation and promote the Mekong Delta's development and integration with the whole country and the world.

The construction investment in the improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river via Quan Chanh Bo channel in Tra Vinh province has officially been approved by the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Transport on November 11 2007. The construction project with the investment capital of VND 5 trillion is scheduled to be completed in around 4-5 years, heartening up the Mekong Delta's provincial people against the isolation and pushing the Mekong Delta's cargos towards the sea and promoting the Mekong Delta's integration with the whole country and the world.

The approved improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river has been assigned to Portcoast Consultant Corporation (Portcoast) – Nippon Koei (Japan) association and DHI (Danish

Hydraulic Institute) – a sub-consultant to implement the detailed design study and managed by Vietnam Maritime Administration of the Ministry of Transport in coordination with Tra Vinh provincial People’s Committee.

As to be in service of the national master project, nearly 374.3 areas of land have, up to end October of 2009, been withdrawn as proposed by Tra Vinh provincial People’s Committee. The total area of more than 374.3 hectares of nearly 773 households has, up to end October of 2009, been withdrawn as launched by Tra Vinh provincial People’s Committee. The overall compensation for clearance reaches VND 151 billion inclusive of the investment in technical and social infrastructure. Also, the planning of 03 settlement areas in Giong Gieng hamlet, Dan Thanh commune, Bao Sen and Dinh Cu hamlets, Long Khanh commune (Duyen Hai district) has been implemented by Tra Vinh provincial People’s Committee. On December 19 2008, the construction layout planning of phase I have been assigned to the project Management Board by Tra Vinh provincial People’s Committee.

Since the total length of channel to be dredged as to shape a navigational channel to the Bassac river is, as scheduled, of 40km, of which the Bassac river section is of 6km, Quan Chanh Bo channel section is of 19km, Bypass canal section is of 9km and the sea channel section is of 6km, there should be 11 soil disposal areas with an area of 874.8 hectares of 1.147 households for a dredging soil volume of nearly 18-22 million m³. The compensation with a value of more than VND 230 trillion and resettlement for 1.147 households have been launched by Tra Vinh provincial People’s Committee. The construction layout planning of phase II have been assigned to the Project Management Board of Vietnam Maritime Administration by the province on September 18 2009.

Especially, the hydrographic and topographic survey work for Bypass canal, Quan Chanh Bo channel, the Bassac river and Dinh An estuary and blasting work for the construction with an area of nearly 2.000 hectares have been organized by the Management Board of the improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river.

Up to end October of 2009, the initial preparation and tender organization for the improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river have been completed, fundamentally. This is a national focal project aiming the construction of navigational channel which can allow full-load 10.000 DWT and partial-load 20.000 DWT vessels to navigate on the Bassac river as scheduled by 2015. Also, the project will play a significantly important role in further pushing the Mekong Delta’s agricultural products towards the sea, strongly fostering its sustainable socio-economic development and considerably improving the local people’s lives.

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(Translated by Portcoast)