

The improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river

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By end 2009, the Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung has officially launched the construction commencement of the improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river.

This is a national focal project which aims at the construction of a more stable navigational channel for full-load 10.000 DWT and partial-load 20.000 DWT vessels to navigate on the Bassac river. The project will, following the completion, facilitate larger vessels to navigate on the Bassac river and economize the cargo transport cost of the Mekong Delta's provinces.

Speed up the Mekong Delta

The whole navigational channel, from the Bassac river to the estuary is of 40km long, of which the river channel section is of 6km long, Quan Chanh Bo channel section is of 19km long, Bypass canal section is of 9km long and the sea channel section is of 6km long. The entire project is located in Duyen Hai and Tra Cu district, Tra Vinh province. The total dredging volume for shaping a new channel and improving the existing channels is of about 28m³ (bottom elevation of -6.5m in Chart Datum). So as to ensuring the stability of the navigational channel operation, a bank protection dike of about 36km long is proposed to be constructed as studied by the consultant. There are 02 breakwaters with a length of 2.500m each to be located at the estuary so as to shelter from waves and prevent from mud/sand. Additionally, the new channel is to be located across the existing National Highway No. 53 as a main traffic axis of Duyen Hai district.



Based upon the construction investment planning of the improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river, the Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung has requested Tra Vinh provincial authority to strictly inspect the planning and carefully work out the development opportunity of ports, port areas and complexes and industrial parks in order for maximum operation and benefits upon the navigational channel operation, sustainably speeding up the provincial socio-economical growth.

On December 27th 2009, the Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung has officially launched the construction commencement of the improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river.

In order to smooth the road traffic, one ferry named Ta Ni ferry and one bridge are to be constructed upon the project (the ferry via Bypass canal in the National Highway No. 53 to be shaped first and the bridge to be constructed later). Meanwhile, 02 embankments are planned to be built as to be in service of road traffic (the Southern embankment with a length of about 5km from the National Highway No. 53 to the provincial road No. 913 to be constructed first and the other sections to be built later). In purpose of being in service of the work construction process,

one 500T barge berth is planned to be constructed at the downstream of Quan Chanh Bo channel. The barge berth comes out as to serve the local cargo export/import as well as the navigational channel maintenance and operation process.

The Bassac river channel project is financed from the Government bonds with a total investment capital of over 5 trillion. The channel is scheduled to be put into operation by end 2011 and satisfy cargo throughput capacity of 22 million tons/year as to be in service of cargo export/import of the Mekong Delta.

Enhancing competitive advantage of agricultural products

Presently, the volume of exports/imports of the Mekong Delta wins about 15 million tons/year. However, the river and sea port system in this area is underdeveloped. For evidence, Can Tho and Cai Cui ports – two major ports of Mekong Delta can accommodate vessels of about 3.000 – 5.000 tons only due to the instability and regular deposit at Dinh An estuary from Can Tho port to the sea with a depth of about 6 – 7 m only at spring tide and 3 – 4 m at neap tide. Annually, Vietnam Maritime Administration has to spend VND 14 – 15 billion in dredging Dinh An estuary in order for 5.000-ton vessels' navigation. Yet, the channel is re-deposited following about 2 – 3 months only. For this reason, 70% – 80% of exporting cargo volume of the Mekong Delta has been shouldered on Ho Chi Minh city port complex by road whilst the other is exported via Ba Ria – Vung Tau port system. This results in more pressure on the National Highway No. 1 and No. 51 and roads in Ho Chi Minh, more traffic gridlock and accidents and other social losses. The exporting/importing of cargos via transit ports has increased the cargo cost in the Mekong Delta of up-to USD 170 – 180/container or USD 7 – 10/ton as a result of arising transport and storage cost. The highly increased and extended transport time has lessened the competitive advantage of the Mekong Delta's agricultural products.

The Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung highlights that the improvement project of navigational channel to the Bassac river is a national focal project which aims at the construction of a more stable navigational channel for 10.000 – 20.000 ton vessels to navigate in/out the ports on the Bassac river. The project is deeply crucial and meaningful to the socio-economical growth of not only the Mekong Delta but the country also, opening a bright opportunity for the Mekong Delta's development. Accordingly, cargos will be directly transported to foreign countries without any transit at ports outside the area, easing the pressure on road traffic and increasing the competitiveness of cargos and gains of enterprises and farmers.

The project will, subsequent to the completion, help lessen cargo transport cost by \$180/container or \$7 – 10/ton. The shaping of a navigational channel via Quan Chanh Bo channel will considerably facilitate cargo transport of the Mekong Delta and enhance the competitiveness of aquatic and agricultural products for the whole area.

According to Mr. Ho Nghi Dung, the Minister of Ministry of Transport, the arising cost and delay time as a result of the use of Ho Chi Minh city ports for exporting/importing cargos for the Mekong Delta is currently too high. Such tendency and pressure are continuously increasing since the rate of direct export/import via the Mekong Delta ports accounts for about 32% only of cargo throughput. Each cargo vessel can shoulder an average of about 3.800 tons only whilst each cargo vessel navigating in/out port complex No. 5 can handle 9.600 tons on average. Correspondingly, if Dinh An channel or Quan Chanh Bo channel can allow 10.000- ton vessels to navigate day and night, Can Tho port and ports navigating on the same channel can initially compete with Ho Chi Minh city ports.

