

Portcoast – A visionary Consultant

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In 2009, Vietnam has launched vessels with a capacity of up-to 4.000-6.000 TEUs to Thi Vai – Cai Mep terminal to accommodate cargos to be shipped to the U.S, which was previously a "day-dream" to many sea port consultants who are interested in the Southern Focal Economic Zone. Also, the large-scaled sea port infrastructure systems connecting Vietnam with regional countries and the world are gradually shaped by Portcoast Consultant Corporation (Portcoast).

Practical answer

One of the typical sea port projects consulted by Portcoast is the relocation planning of sea port No 5 and ports and shipyards on Sai Gon river, which is coupled with Thi Vai – Vung Tau deep-water port system development planning. As compared to foreign sea port consultants who get the better of financial potential and available experience, Portcoast is only a newly-equitized unit as well as a fresh sea port planning consultant. Yet, Portcoast has bettered itself over other sea port consultants to be assigned to undertake the above projects.

It was, actually, of very difficulty to relocate a series of main sea ports and shipyards out of the inner city. For evidence, Sai Gon port was, at that time, in improvement process on loan from Asian Development Bank (ADB). Also, Sai Gon Newport and Ba Son Shipyard were engaged not only in the economy but also in the national defence. In other words, it was against sea port consultants' will to relocate the sea ports and shipyards which are in stable operation. However, due to the ports located in the inner city where the traffic jams constantly happen, the road expansion in Ho Chi Minh city, especially the long-term sea port development and port relocation were in more and more urgent need. In 2005, the sea port relocation planning of Portcoast was, subsequent to many discussions at the seminars, approved by the Government, Departments and Offices, local Authorities and project Owners.

Correspondingly, the shaping of deep-water port outside HCM city is in better and better process as well. The sea ports in Cat Lai and Hiep Phuoc (HCM city) areas and typically Thi Vai – Cai Mep (Ba Ria – Vung Tau) area have, up to now, gradually been shaped to be a modern and large-scaled port system. This is one of the major challenges facing Portcoast which is regarded as a visionary consultant though.

Sai Gon Premier Container Terminal (SPCT) project invested in construction in Hiep Phuoc industrial Zone and undertaken by the joint-venture between P&O Port Ltd and Tan Thuan industrial promotion Company (IPC) and then assigned to DP World Group was in one-year slower operation progress than expected. In the project, Portcoast was assigned to implement the survey, project planning and basic design whilst the foreign consultant Maunsell AECO prepared the detailed design. Portcoast undertook the design report consultancy and review for foreign sub-consultants. In the detailed design implementation, Portcoast repeatedly warned foreign consultants of the very soft soil layer in Hiep Phuoc area, the alternatives as well as the soil settling time. As proposed by foreign sea port consultants, the period of time for the very soft soil layer consolidation was 3-4 months while it should have been increased 3-4fold as consulted by Portcoast. However, Portcoast's recommendation was taken into no account. In reality, the soft soil improvement at the whole construction area should have been carried out for 12-15 months. As a result, SPCT terminal project was in one-year slower progress than expected, producing the loss for the project owner.

05 years and large-scaled projects

Despite the fact that the equitization is indispensable for the national companies to undergo a vigorous change and break out of the State's subsidization, it is not easy for Portcoast to position the brand as a top sea port consultant in Vietnam. Meanwhile, Portcoast has been equitized for 05 years only – a period of time for existence and development to adapt itself to new changes.

The list of sea port projects consulted by Portcoast is enviously impressive in term of not only the number but also the scale. It is typically exemplified by the overall planning of Vietnam's up-to 2020 and 2030-bound sea port system, Van Phong international transit port planning – the start phase, CMIT, SSIT, SITV, SP-SPA, breakwater, cargo exporting port, Dung Quat No 1 Refinery Plant, the Integrated Steel Mill and Son Duong port Formosa Ha Tinh, etc. Almost all foreign owners in sea port field select Portcoast to be a consultant for their projects.

Regarding the sea port projects, the visibility is an essential factor for any sea port consultants due to their local, regional and continental connectivity. This is also a significant challenge to Portcoast as "being born late" for 5 years only and equitized for 3 years only.

In the 2008-2009 period of economic recession, which has considerably affected the contracts on cargo exporting/importing and sea port and ship operation, Portcoast still gains many gigantic achievements. Till now, Portcoast's turnover has reached VND 245 million, beyond all expectations.

Portcoast Consultant Corporation is formerly named Portcoast Enterprise and Port and Waterway Department belonging to Transport and Engineering Design Inc. South (TEDI South) under the Ministry of Transport. Subsequent to the 5-year equitization (from Dec 2004), Portcoast presently has 06 members, including: XCOM Co., Ltd, Cong Chinh A.C Co., Ltd, PCI Consultants, Anh Vu Geotechnical and Civil Engineering Co., Ltd, Dia Hai Co., Ltd and Global Media Consultant Co., Ltd.

At present, Portcoast's total asset value is of VND 271 billion (compared to VND 41 billion in the 1st year equitization) and the corporation-owned capital is of VND 120 billion. Up to the early December 2009, Portcoast's turnover has reached VND 245 billion, beyond VND 130-150 billion expectation.

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(Translated by Portcoast)