PM kicks off Mekong waterway project

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Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung attended a ceremony December 27 to begin construction on a waterway passage to the Hau River for heavyweight vessels in the Mekong Delta's Province of Tra Vinh .

The Prime Minister said the major project plays an important role in the socioeconomic growth of the Delta.

A map of the new waterway passage to the Hau River for heavyweight vessels in the Mekong Delta's Tra Vinh Province (Map by Tuoi Tre)

Once completed in 2013, the 40-km passage running through Tra Vinh's Duyen Hai and Tra Cu districts will allow ships of 10,000-20,000 tons to travel in and out of ports on the Hau River.

The Vietnam Maritime Administration, under the Ministry of Transport, invested VND5 trillion in the project from the sale of government bonds.

At present, the volume of the Mekong Delta's import-export goods is estimated at around 15 million tons per year. The two largest seaports in the region, namely Can Tho and Cai Cui, are only capable of receiving vessels with capacities of 3,000-5,000 tons because the Dinh An channel about 8 kilometers from Can Tho port is usually filled with deposits of silt.

Hence, the depth in the channel is only around 6-7meters, and around 3-4 meters when the water ebbs.

The region's river and seaport system can thus only handle 20-30 percent of the Delta's goods volume, and around 70-80 percent of imports in the region must be transported to ports in Ho Chi Minh City by land.

This leads to more traffic gridlock in the city and accidents on Highway 1A. It also means increased transportation time, charges of over US$170 per container, and storage costs of over US$7.

The new project aims to reduce yearly transport fees by US$2.1 billion.

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