

Vietnam is a country that has many potentials for tourism development: favorable climatic conditions, many scenic splendors, unique cultural traditions and festivals, many historical remains, cheap and industrious labor force and hospitable people.

After the economic reform was started, the tourism industry in Vietnam developed steadily. The amount of foreign visitors to Vietnam increased from 250,000 in 1990 to 1.52 million in 1998, while local tourists rose from 1 to 9.6 million during the same period. The tourism infrastructure was also improved remarkably.

Cần Thơ province, with its Cần Thơ City, airport, river port, research institutes and Cần Thơ University is an economic and cultural center of the Mekong Delta. The



ON THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CẦN THƠ TOURISM INDUSTRY UP TO 2010

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tourism industry in Cần Thơ has great potential for development based on geographically favorable position and abundant natural resources. In recent years, the Cần Thơ tourism industry has started to develop. It hosted 105,000 visitors (including 1,800 foreign ones) in 1990 and some 200,000 visitors (45,165 foreigners) in 1998. Annual tourism receipts and payment to the provincial budget are on the increase. The development of Cần Thơ tourism, however, isn't as fast as in other provinces. There are only a few tourism-magnetic places. Most of them are small and not attractive, even in the eyes of local residents. That is why most tourists spend only a day and a night in Cần Thơ.

On Feb. 20, 1999, the Government issued the Tourism Ordinance that was effective from May 1, 1999. A National Tourism Board chaired by a Deputy PM was also formed with the aim of working out a national tourism action program. The Cần Thơ government has made a plan to develop tourism industry for the next decade and communicated the Tourism Ordinance to personnel of the in-

dustry. To take part in this effort, we want to estimate here the situation facing the Cần Thơ tourism and suggest some measures to tap potentials and resources for development of this industry in Cần Thơ.

1. Situation

a. Recent developments of the Cần Thơ tourism are due to the economic reform policy. Particularly, Instruction 46/CT-TW by the Politburo and Decree 45/CP issued by the Government on June 22, 1993 defined tourism development as an important strategy to develop the economy. In 1993, the Cần Thơ Service of Tourism was formed and tourism was considered as essential to the provincial structure of industry. These facts reflect full attention paid by the Government and VCP to the tourism.

- Cần Thơ, as an economic and cultural center of the Mekong Delta, is one of 14 provinces and cities where the Government plans to develop their potentials for tourism. It is also defined by the General Department of Tourism as one of important tourism centers of the country and as a bridge between HCMC and

provinces in the Mekong Delta, especially Hà Tiên, An Giang and Phú Quốc island.

- Tourism facilities are increasingly improved and many sectors have engaged in supplying tourism services. Regular training courses in managerial skills are given to personnel of tourism agencies. In 1993, there were 14 hotels with 397 rooms in Cần Thơ and these figures in 1998 were 34 hotels and 945 rooms. It's estimated that the total sales made by hotels and restaurants in Cần Thơ would reach VND499.7 billion, increasing by 13.5% a year on average; the added value made by these concerns would reach 269.9 billion (price of 1994) or 347 billion (current price), increasing by 14.4% annually and representing 3.75% of the total added value realized in Cần Thơ.

- Regardless of effects of the Asian financial crisis, the growth rate of Cần Thơ economy was rather stable. The personal income increased from US\$251 in 1990 to 392 in 1995 and is estimated at 530 by 2000.

- Labor cost in Cần Thơ is cheap. The workforce, including skilled one,

is rather large. There are many areas with potential for tourism could be developed into large tourism centers.

b. Besides these advantages, however, the Cần Thơ tourism industry is facing many obstacles to its development:

- There is no outstanding resort, recreational center and ecological tourism site in Cần Thơ. Full attention hasn't been paid to the task of restoring historical and cultural remains. Local festivals and carnivals aren't diversified enough to attract tourists. Many favorable areas have been allotted to the tourism authori-

ties to be developed into tourism resorts but the business performance of these resorts is poor.

- Up to now, the tourism authorities couldn't work out a long-term strategy to develop the tourism industry with the result that tourism facilities weren't developed properly and most efforts just aimed at building new hotels or giving a face-lift to old ones. These efforts aren't even included in the overall development strategy.

- The cooperation between the tourism authorities and other governmental bodies in the province is too weak to help the tourism industry compete against tourism agencies from other provinces and solve internal problems.

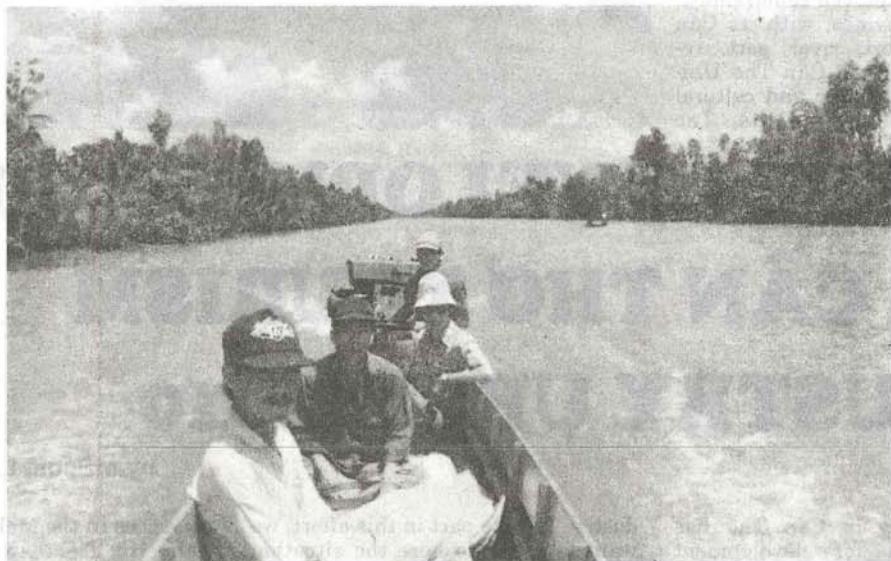
- Many officials failed to realize the importance of tourism industry to the process of transforming the provincial structure of industry. Many others lack managerial skills. That is why the Cần Thơ tourism agencies could only provide tourists with food and accommodation, instead of sup-

plying a wider range of services, and most potentials for tourism development haven't been tapped properly. And as a result, foreign tourists missed the chance to enjoy the proper cultural and recreational tourism which local conditions could provide them with.

- Cần Thơ tourism agencies, in spite of their efforts, failed to control a stable market share and pay full attention to domestic tourists and Vietnamese expatriates with the result that their tourism receipts weren't as high as expected.

ism activities couldn't be confined to a specific locality. A tour could lead tourists through many cities and provinces, from HCMC to Cần Thơ, Kiên Giang and An Giang for example. In addition, internal tourism should be linked with international tourism in order to offer high-quality and unique products to tourists, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of local tourism agencies.

- Developing the ethnic tourism besides tourism centers: Tourism agencies should develop tours that help tourists get access to local cultural traditions and customs, espe-



2. Targets planned for the period from now to 2010

a. General target:

A strategy to develop the Cần Thơ tourism industry in the coming decade should aim at transforming the structure of industry of Cần Thơ without causing damage to the natural and cultural environment. This general target includes the following contents:

- Linking the Cần Thơ tourism with the national tourism industry and the task of protecting the environment: In developing the tourism industry, full attention must be paid to both positive and negative effects of tourism activities. Tourism could create new jobs and generate new sources of income but it could also cause damage to social order, political stability, the environment and national traditions.

- Tapping reasonably all potentials and cooperating with all partners, both local and foreign ones, to develop the tourism industry: Tour-

cially to ethnic communities in remote areas with a view to improving local living standard.

- Improving incessantly the skills of officials working for the tourism industry: Training courses in various subjects should be given to tourism officials in order to enhance their skills in foreign languages, management and planning and their work ethic. This army of tourism officials should have ability to protect national interests, and local environment and traditions; and prevent excessive exploitation of tourism potentials and discriminatory practices against foreign tourists.

b. Targets for the period 2000-2010

The following are estimates of future development of the Cần Thơ tourism industry in the next decade:

- Number of visitors: It's estimated that Cần Thơ will host 110,000 foreign tourists and 440,000 local ones by 2000. These figures will be 200,000 and 900,000 by 2005; and

350,000 and 1,4 million by 2010 respectively.

- Tourism receipts: Total receipts will increase from VND65 billion in 1998 to 112 billion by 2000; 208 billion by 2005 and 798 billion by 2010.

- Hotel room: The amount of hotel rooms in Cần Thơ will rise to 1,200 (including 500 standard ones) by 2000; 2,900 (700 standard ones) by 2005 and 4,140 (1,080 standard ones) by 2010.

- Required investment: To achieve above targets, the tourism industry needs an investment of VND115 billion for the period 1996-2000; 195 billion for 2001-2005 and 650 billion for 2006-2010.

- Workforce: By 2000, the industry needs 2,210 workers (50% of them are well-trained ones). These figures rose to 4,770 (70% well-trained) by 2005 and 7,220 (90% well-trained) by 2010.

To realize these planned targets, various strategies are needed. The following are our suggestions about them.



3. Development strategies

a. Strategic tasks

- Developing tourism products marked with cultural and social features.

- Offering tourism products that are appropriate to demands of both local residents and foreign visitors.

- Diversifying tourism products, including cultural, ethnic and ecological tours in order to make the best use of tourist attractions of the Mekong Delta.

- Cooperating with tourism agencies in HCMC and other provinces in

the Mekong Delta to expand potential markets, tap all resources for development, and organize inter-province tours and round-the-ASEAN tours in the future.

b. Basic strategies

+ Strategy to develop major markets: Besides attracting foreign tourists coming to HCMC, the market of local tourists should be considered as the major one for tourist products offered by the Cần Thơ tourism. To achieve this aim, the Cần Thơ tourism should joint domestic and international tourism associations, and conduct advertising and marketing campaigns. For the time being, the Cần Thơ tourism should establish co-operative relations with tourism agencies in HCMC and neighboring provinces.

+ Strategy to develop new products: This strategy aims at developing special, diversified and high-quality tourism products. With a small number of historical remains and a shortage of funds for their restoration, if the Cần Thơ tourism fails

- Round-the - Delta tours leading tourists from HCMC to fruit orchards on the outskirts of Cần Thơ, floating markets on rivers, festivals in An Giang and Sóc Trăng, bird sanctuaries in Cà Mau and Đồng Tháp, scenic splendors in Hà Tiên and Phú Quốc, etc.

- Business and recreational tours, in cooperation with HCMC tourism agencies, helping foreign businesspersons get access and gather information about potentials in the Mekong Delta.

+ Strategy to develop the tourism infrastructure: Infrastructure is a necessary condition for attracting tourists. The tourism authorities could mobilize capital from various sources to develop major projects (tourism centers, first-class hotels, etc.) and encourage private persons invest in the tourism industry.

+ Strategy to train tourism officials: The tourism authorities had better make plan to train and retrain tourism personnel by giving on-the-job courses or sending officials to make study in tourism schools in Vũng Tàu and HCMC or in foreign countries. To carry out this strategy more actively, the Cần Thơ tourism authorities could build a tourism school of their own, or ask the Cần Thơ University to establish a faculty of tourism to supply tourism officials to Cần Thơ and other provinces in the Mekong Delta.

+ Strategy to build cooperation between governmental bodies: Tourism is an industry concerning activities of several governmental bodies, including police, communications and transportation, sport, information and culture authorities, therefore it's necessary to build a good cooperation between them with a view to facilitating the development of tourism industry.

In 1998, the Vietnamese economy faced many difficulties and challenges, and the Cần Thơ tourism industry couldn't develop well. However, many favorable conditions have made their appearance: the development of tourism industry in the region and all over the world as well, achievements of the economic reform, joint efforts of central and local governments and the General Department of Tourism, the introduction of the Tourism Ordinance and the establishment of the National Tourism Board. These conditions can help the Cần Thơ tourism industry accelerate its development in the next decade and contribute to the transformation of local structure of industry■