

BUSINESS FORUM MAGAZINE

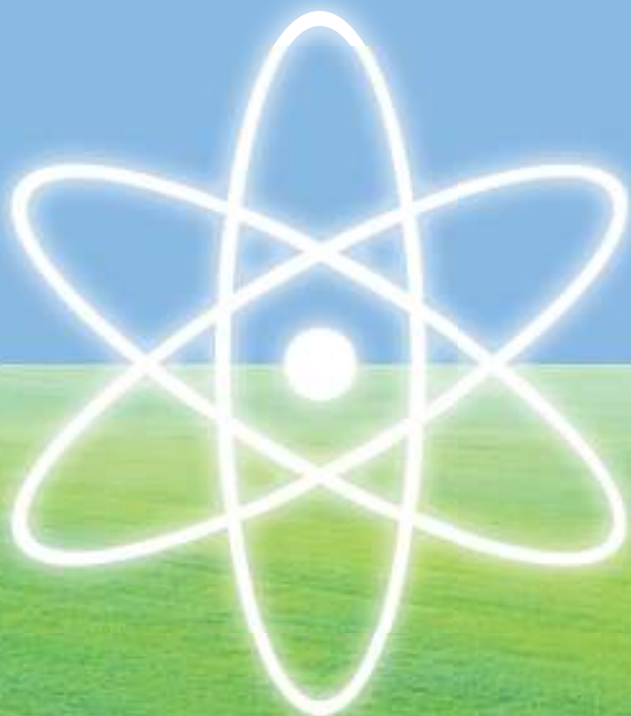
VIETNAM

Business Forum

THE VIETNAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY - **VCCI**

VOL. 02, NO. 5 (1313), MAR 9 - 22, 2021

ISSN 1859-0632



FDI ATTRACTION Positive Signals for 2021

An aerial view of a green tractor with a yellow tank, spraying a large green field. The tractor is moving from left to right, leaving a trail of white spray behind it.

*Effort for Modern,
Adaptive and
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Agriculture*

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VIETNAM BUSINESS FORUM

Published by VCCI

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Available on Vietnam Airlines

Licence No.58/GP-BTTTT dated February 18, 2020

Printed by the Trade Union Printing Company

PRICE: VND25,000



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VIETNAMESE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Aggressive in Business, Compassionate in Everyday Life



Ms. Truong Thi Mai - Member of the Politburo, Head of the PCC's Commission for Mass Mobilization and VCCI President Vu Tien Loc present flowers to outstanding women entrepreneurs

Not only making great contributions to economic development, Vietnamese businesswomen also take the lead in carrying out social responsibility, promoting gender equality and social progress. Characterized by self-reliance, intelligence and agility, female entrepreneurs are an important resource for the country's socio-economic development.

ANH MAI

"Today, Vietnamese businesswomen are not only talented, beautiful, brave, and intellectual, but also have golden hearts for national development and social progress. Their success and contributions to socio-economic development and national construction are undeniable. They actively participate in voluntary activities and inspire compassion among their employees, as they see it as a part of honest business philosophy," said Dr. Vu Tien Loc, President of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), at the Vietnam Women Entrepreneurs Meeting Program 2021.

Vietnamese women are always appreciated for their diligence, dignity, speech and conduct. In the current Industry 4.0 era, women have become "sparkling flowers" as they are not only meticulously doing housework but also showing their talent, wisdom and energy along with their skills in the



☞ market, becoming successful businesswomen and contributing more significantly to economic development.

According to statistics, about 24% of enterprises in Vietnam are owned or led by women, higher than the Southeast Asia average of 8%, ranking No. 19 out of 54 countries in the Female Entrepreneurship Index (FEI), and ranking No. 7 among 54 countries in women entrepreneurs.

Many women-owned enterprises have achieved impressive and creditworthy business results in the international arena. Outstanding female entrepreneurs include Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao - CEO of Vietjet Air, Thai Huong - General Director of Bac A Bank and Chairwoman of TH Group, Cao Thi Ngoc Dung - President of PNJ, Nguyen Thi Nga - President of BRG, and Mai Kieu Lien - President and CEO of Vinamilk.

Among 25 businesswomen in the Asia Power Businesswomen 2020 recently released by Forbes Magazine, Vietnam has two: Truong Thi Le Khanh - Founder and President Vinh Hoan Corporation (VHC) and Nguyen Bach Diep - President of FPT Retail. They were chosen among elites in many countries in the region, such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore, China and Vietnam, across many different industries. Their names, brands and corporate reputation affirm their success and gain widespread recognition.

While some women entrepreneurs have built, managed and run Vietnam's top brands and elevated these brands to challenge international brands, a vast majority of women-owned businesses are small and medium in scale. Notably, women owned about 30% of micro and small enterprises. Among household businesses, more than 50% are women-owned.

According to many experts, if they own technology, women-owned enterprises can completely boost business operations to develop more strongly.

In particular, according to Dr. Vu Tien Loc, while the Covid-19 pandemic is causing strong and negative impacts on the global economy, including Vietnam, domestic enterprises, especially women-led ones that employ many female workers, are resilient to external changes and play a significant role in the Government's success of achieving double goals.

"Women are the ones who decide the future of Vietnam's economy," he added.

Madam Nguyen Thi Tuyet Minh, Chairwoman of the Vietnam Women Entrepreneurs Council (VWEC) under the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), once said that in order to achieve certain business success, each woman must experience numerous difficulties and challenges. In addition to common difficulties that all entrepreneurs face, prejudices about women's entrepreneurship are a major barrier to them. Most women-owned enterprises are small and micro, with limited ability to find customers and deploy business resources like access to capital, information, knowledge, support programs and policies. VCCI's surveys showed that women-owned businesses are currently facing many difficulties, especially in finding customers and adapting to market fluctuations.

To overcome these difficulties, women entrepreneurs need to be proactive and constantly learn to improve their qualifications, knowledge and skills, and become more professional in corporate governance, she said. At the same time, it is necessary to flexibly use public services to ease their workload when they are too busy with their business affairs, make well-prepared plans and good management skills to promptly respond to uncertainties occurring in the business and on the market; and improve information technology prowess to manage their companies anywhere and anytime.

In addition, women-owned enterprises can increase their participation in associations and business networks to connect with partner networks, to share and to gain business experience. ■



Delegates attend Vietnam-India trade-investment promotion conference

Fostering opportunities for trade and investment cooperation between Vietnamese and Indian small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) is the primary content of discussions at the recent Online Conference on "Fostering Trade - Investment Cooperation between Vietnamese and Indian SMEs".

GIANG TU

Emphasizing the importance of boosting Vietnam - India SME cooperation, Vietnamese Ambassador to India Pham Sanh Chau said that the two sides have all favorable conditions for developing more extensive cooperation. Vietnam is one of the few countries in the world to have a positive growth of nearly 3% in 2020. It ranks fourth in Southeast Asia by GDP and is expected to surpass the Philippines soon to become the third-largest economy in the region (after Indonesia and Thailand). The 13th National Party Congress of Vietnam, successfully wrapped up recently, outlined the development path of Vietnam not only for five



Vietnam, India Foster Trade and Investment Cooperation for SMEs

years but also for many years to come with the goal of making Vietnam a developed country by 2045. Vietnam is a politically stable country, so foreign investors in general and those from India, in particular, are completely assured when doing business here. The private economy in Vietnam is increasingly developing and becoming an important driving force of the national economy.

"India and Vietnam have long-standing friendship, with many common strategic points. India is one of three comprehensive strategic partners of Vietnam and Vietnam is one of the pillars of India's Look East Policy. In economic and investment relations, the two sides have potential cooperation in automobile and parts, construction, textile and garment, steel and agricultural processing, especially after they opened direct flight routes in 2019," he added.

Sharing the same view, Mr. Pankaj Kumar Gupta, President of India Industries Association (IIA), said that IIA is the representative body of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) established in 1985 with 10,000 members and now has 57 divisions across Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand and neighboring states. MSMEs are the backbone and engine of growth of the Indian economy where 633.4 million MSMEs account for about 30% of its gross domestic product (GDP) and 48% of export value and create 110 million jobs. He hoped the cooperation with Vietnam will benefit MSMEs of both countries and believed that Vietnam is cooperating comprehensively with India to resolve trade barriers.

"Vietnam's increasingly important role in global supply chains has the potential to further strengthen

India-Vietnam relations. Some large Indian firms such as Reliance Industries Ltd, Adani, Mahindra, Shapoorji Pallonji and Hinduja Group expressed their interest in doing business in Vietnam. And, Indian industrial companies are also seeking business opportunities in Vietnam in energy, mining, agrochemical, sugar, tea, coffee, and automobile industries. There are many reasons for them to invest in Vietnam such as high market access, open investment policy, free trade agreements, economic growth, political stability and low labor costs, while the workforce is young. Indian partners want to establish more effective investment and trade cooperation with Vietnam," he said.

Mr. Nguyen Hoang, Deputy General Secretary of the Hanoi SME Association, said that India is currently one of the 10 most important partner countries of Vietnam in terms of trade and investment. SMEs account for 98.3% of all corporate entities in Vietnam, with 600,000 companies, contribute 40% of GDP and employ 50% of workers. The Hanoi SME Association was established in 1995 with 3,000 members active in many industries. We hope that bilateral ties will facilitate investment and business cooperation between Vietnamese and Indian SMEs.

According to Vietnamese Trade Counselor in India Bui Trung Thuong, in 2020, despite being heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, Vietnam - India trade value reached over US\$10 billion (based on data provided by the Ministry of Industry and Trade of India). India imported US\$5.55 billion worth of goods from Vietnam and India exported US\$4.49 billion of goods to Vietnam. Vietnam is India's 17th largest trading partner and 4th in ASEAN, after Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia, while India is one of the 10 most important trading partners of Vietnam. The two countries have strong potential to strengthen investment and business cooperation, especially in supporting industries, auto parts, motorbike, textile, footwear and consumer goods.

An official from the Foreign Investment Agency (FIA) under the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) said, as of December 2020, India had 294 valid investment projects in Vietnam with a total investment capital of US\$898.65 million. India currently ranks 26th among countries and territories investing in Vietnam. ■



Increasingly Consolidated and Diversified



UAE Ambassador Obaid Saeed bin Taresh Al Dhaheri and VCCI President Vu Tien Loc at a business meeting at VCCI Headquarters

In recent time, the friendship and good cooperation between Vietnam and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been increasingly strengthened and diversified. The two countries have continued to cooperate closely and effectively on issues related to politics, diplomacy, trade, investment and tourism, while increasing the visits of senior leaders and the business community and friendly exchanges between the two countries.

DUC HUY

The statistics of the UAE show that the annual bilateral trade between Vietnam and the UAE has been maintained at a high level: in 2017 it was US\$10.3 billion; in 2018, US\$8.19 billion; in 2019, US\$8.16 billion. In 2020, due to the serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the two-way trade decreased to about US\$5 billion. However, according to the assessment, this will likely reach over US\$10 billion in the near future. Notably, Vietnam often records an annual export surplus to the UAE, making the UAE Vietnam's largest export market in the Middle East and Africa region, and one of the top export markets of Vietnam in the world (the trade surplus of Vietnam in 2017 was US\$9.4 billion; 2018 was US\$7.3 billion; 2019 was US\$6.9 billion).

Meanwhile, the UAE is promoting extensive investment through many projects in Vietnam. These include the oil and gas exploration projects of Mubadala Petroleum Group worth nearly US\$400 million, the seaport project of DP World Group at US\$360 million, the project of Ha Long Star hotel and tourism complex by Nakheel Group worth nearly US\$550 million, along with many other investment projects implemented by Emirates Airlines, Dubai Investment Group, and Dubai Export Group.

In addition, more and more companies and corporations based in the UAE in factories, industrial complexes, construction sites and commercial centers receive a large number of Vietnamese skilled workers, along with house workers, who have made an important contribution to the development of the UAE.

As a positive bridge between the business communities at home and abroad, over the past years, the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) has always actively coordinated with ministries, industries and localities to create favorable conditions for businesses to increase trade promotion. "Vietnam attaches great importance to good traditional friendship and wishes to further promote economic, trade and investment cooperation with the UAE - as one of the important markets of Vietnam in the Middle East - North Africa region. VCCI always creates favorable conditions for foreign investors, including UAE investors and enterprises, to conduct business investment activities in Vietnam," Dr. Vu Tien Loc, President of Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), said in a meeting between enterprises of the two sides.

Notably, according to the UAE embassy in Vietnam, Expo 2020 Dubai (postponed to 2021) to be held in Dubai from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 will be an opportunity for Vietnam to enhance promotion of the country's image and people, agricultural products, foods, aquatic products and many other famous products to the international community. This is also an opportunity for Vietnamese businesses to promote business and investment activities through forums, seminars, cultural and artistic exchange activities, through which they can find suitable partners as well as sign important contracts. It is very special that the Expo, to be held for the first time in an Arab country of the Middle East-Africa region, will create effective cooperation between Vietnam and partners in the region as well as in the international community.

During the development of the country for nearly five decades, the UAE has gained many high international rankings. According to the Global Ease of Doing Business Report of the World Bank, the UAE ranks top among the Arab economies and among the top 10 nations in the world, one of the few leading countries in the world that have synchronous and modern infrastructure quality; ranks third in the world in the index of technology application in the Government's development. The UAE is also one of the top 20 countries in the world in terms of attracting foreign direct investment, along with many preferential incentives to attract investment in free economic zones located near modern seaports and airports, with an increase in purchasing power of more than 9 million people from 200 different nationalities living, studying and working in the country. ■

FDI ATTRACTION

Positive Signals for 2021

Despite complicated Covid-19 pandemic developments, many large-scale FDI projects arrived in Vietnam in early 2021. Vietnam is increasingly becoming a bright candidate for transition of the value chain in Asia and a really bright actor of the regional economy.

THU HA

Accommodating major investors

According to the Foreign Investment Agency (FIA), foreign investors spent US\$5.46 billion to invest in fresh and existing projects and buy shares in the year to February 20, equal to 84.4% of the value in the same period of 2020. Foreign direct investment (FDI) projects disbursed US\$2.5 billion in the period, up 2% year on year.

By industry, foreign investors invested in 17 industries. The processing and manufacturing industry drew the most FDI funding with over US\$3 billion, accounting for 55.7 % of the total registered FDI funding, followed by the electricity production and distribution sector with US\$1.44 billion or 26.5% of the total. Real estate and science-technology followed with nearly US\$485 million and nearly US\$153 million, respectively.

Notably, in the first months of 2021, many giant FDI projects were invested in Vietnamese localities like Hai Phong, Bac Giang, Quang Ninh and Dong Nai. On February 5, Quang Ninh Economic Zones Authority awarded investment license to the US\$30-million Lioncore factory project. In the first quarter of 2021, the authority was expected to guide investors to complete procedures for obtaining investment certificates for six new investment projects and one existing expanded cashew project with a total registered capital of over US\$200 million. These projects are engaged in the processing and manufacturing industry.

In Hai Phong City, in the early days of February 2021, the People's Committee also licensed LG Display Vietnam Hai Phong Co., Ltd to invest US\$750 million in LG Display Hai Phong Project. Previously, in Dong Nai province, in the first 13 days of 2021, 11 FDI projects, including three fresh projects and eight existing projects, were licensed to invest more than US\$226 million in the province, the highest in the same period of time in five years in the province.

Besides, some other big projects were licensed in the first two months of 2021, including US\$1.31 billion O Mon II Thermal Power Plant (Japan), US\$312 million expanded Radian tires manufacturing project (China) in Tay Ninh province, and US\$270 million Kodi New Material Vietnam project (Singapore), which manufactures tablets and laptops in Bac Giang province.

Minister of Planning and Investment Nguyen Chi Dung said, in the coming time, this foreign investment will add new production capacity to the economy to spur growth. This is also the time Vietnam must select and invest in high technology without compromising the environment.



Feasible target of US\$28.5 billion FDI fund in 2021

Given early positive signals, the target of US\$28.5 billion of registered FDI funds and US\$19.9 billion of spent funds is completely within reach, according to experts.

According to a report by the Foreign Investment Agency (FIA), in the first two months of 2021, the transition of the Investment Law 2014 and the Investment Law 2020 affected greenfield and existing foreign investment projects in Vietnam. The 2020 law, effective from January 1, 2021, has created a large opening to attract investors to Vietnam. Accordingly, the law has notable changes in investment incentive policies. Compared to the old regulations, the new rule adds new industries to the scope of preferential investment incentives, like products formed from scientific and technological research being categorized in the list of industrial products supported and prioritized for developing tertiary education and manufacturing medical equipment. New policies on beneficiaries of investment incentives are adjusted toward more focus on high-tech and innovative startup projects.

Furthermore, advantages also come from the continued improvement of infrastructure of industrial parks, export processing zones and economic zones across the country. By the end of 2020, the Prime Minister also approved 19 coastal economic zones covering a total area of about 871,000 ha.

In addition, free trade agreements such as the EU - Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) have opened a new, broad and comprehensive cooperation direction for Vietnam.

In addition to positive impacts created by policies and guidelines of the central government, localities are very actively preparing to accommodate investors. They have reviewed and adjusted their plans for economic and industrial zone development to ensure available land for new projects, focusing on mobilizing enterprise resources to develop technical infrastructure of industrial zones. They also quickly grasp new developments to provide timely, effective support for investors to deal with emerging matters, facilitate their investment and increase their appeal to investors.

In 2021, the Ministry of Planning and Investment will also conduct a FDI project review, focusing on assessing regulatory compliance, environmental protection and anti-transfer pricing. Incentives for FDI enterprises will be further reviewed and planned to cut supports for low-tech, energy-consuming, environment-polluting projects. ■

Flexibly Meeting Needs of Japanese Investors

Japanese companies tend to expand their investment and build more business bases in Vietnam although they may face a lot of difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their investment needs have changed a lot, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

HUONG LY

Mr. Takeo Nakajima, Chief Representative of JETRO in Hanoi, said that given the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, business operations of Japanese companies in Vietnam were considerably affected. Up to 52.8% saw a profit decline and 30.1% suffered losses. Indeed, compared to other countries in the region, companies in Vietnam performed better. In addition, 49.6% forecast an operating profit, while 20.3% expected balanced business operations.

Furthermore, while investors are shifting their investment priority, Vietnam is currently emerging as a favored destination for Japanese businesses. Up to 50% of companies appreciate Vietnam's market advantage and 46.8% have plans to expand their business in Vietnam in 1-2 years although the rate of expanding companies is lower than in 2019. Anyway, this was the fourth-highest rate in the Asia-Pacific.

Despite strong confidence in the country as a new destination for relocated investment waves, 6.1% said they planned to scale down their operations or move to other countries.

Demand for change

The JETRO representative said the survey unveiled some changes Japanese companies wanted. Regarding the business method, 49.5% will review their sales units on fears of Covid-19 contagion and 16.3% blamed on changes in the business environment. Regarding future business development, 22.3% of manufacturers planned to reevaluate purchasing places because of the Covid-19 pandemic and changes in the business environment. They wanted to change vendors and Vietnam ranked fourth among their choices, accounting for 4.3%. After changing vendors, Vietnam was the top choice, accounting for 18.8%.

According to Mr. Takeo Nakajima, many Japanese businesses expressed their interest and desire to cooperate with Vietnamese technology and startup companies to add value to their products and services. They also wanted to employ local supply chains to support

their business activities, but Vietnam's supporting industries have yet to meet their high demands.

Besides manufacturers of semiconductors, telephones and components, and air conditioners, Japanese medical companies are also looking to move to Vietnam.

Notably, the JETRO survey showed that companies that assessed cheap labor costs as an advantage were fewer than last year. JETRO's chief representative added that increased labor costs, rising layoffs and low localization rate of Vietnamese enterprises are seen as challenges by Japanese companies. Wage growth slowed down but remained high.

In addition, the advantage of low cost (purchasing cost and labor cost) was no longer attractive to Japanese firms when they planned to expand investment in Vietnam.

Mr. Do Nhat Hoang, General Director of the Foreign Investment Agency (FIA) under the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), said Vietnam needs to solve the challenges and bottlenecks to woo high-class FDI investors and flexibly meet the new demand of foreign investors. The solution is to review slow-moving and ineffective projects to revoke bad ones to dedicate the land fund for new investment projects; and train high-quality human resources for digital, information technology, applied information processing, electronics - telecommunications, mechanical engineering, manufacturing, and supporting industries. ■



46.8% of Japanese companies plan to expand their business in Vietnam in the next one or two years

Vietnam Affirms Dual Goal amid Covid-19



In the context of Covid-19 and the difficulties and challenges facing the world and Vietnam economies, the current central task of ministries, branches and localities is to effectively implement the "dual goal" of containing the pandemic outbreak and keeping the economy on track.

Reporting on the implementation of Resolution 01/NQ-CP and the socio-economic situation in February and the first two months of 2021 at the regular meeting of the Government of Vietnam in February 2021, Minister of Planning and Investment Nguyen Chi Dung raised many recommendations to continue promoting socio-economic development.

Minister Nguyen Chi Dung emphasized that amidst the evolving difficulties and challenges that Covid-19 presents to the world and domestic economy, the current key tasks of ministries, sectors and localities are to effectively realize the "dual goal" of both preventing and combating the pandemic, protecting the people's health, and at the same time resuming socio-economic development in a new normal state; completing the socio-economic development plan and State budget estimate set by 2021; in which it is necessary to raise determination and focus strongly on the implementation of the tasks and work according to the set objectives. It is necessary to overcome stagnation in performing tasks, especially the slow progress due to Tet holidays, speed up work and progress related to production, business and investment activities of businesses and people.

In addition, March is the last month of the first quarter, the month to focus and actively implement the tasks and solutions set out to promote production, economic growth, and completing at the highest level the socio-economic development tasks of the first quarter and the whole year.

In this spirit, Minister Nguyen Chi Dung proposed a variety of tasks and solutions. First of all is strictly implementing instructions on prevention and control of the pandemic, raising awareness and responsibility to promote adequate communication on epidemic

prevention measures.

It is necessary to promulgate guidelines and processes for the unified production and circulation of goods and means between pandemic and pandemic-free regions; take measures to support the distribution and consumption of pandemic-free goods, especially for agricultural products in the short term. It is needed to promote cooperation and negotiation to buy vaccines and research into vaccines in the country; and accelerate the implementation of vaccination, especially for priority areas and groups of people.

It is also necessary to continue implementing a rational expansion of fiscal and monetary policies to promote economic growth and control inflation. It is expected that the Covid-19 pandemic will still cast a shadow on the world economy for at least the first half of 2021 and until vaccination is widely available.

Therefore, it is necessary to maintain an open monetary and fiscal policy; improve the effectiveness of coordination between monetary, fiscal and price

policies in order to control inflation, support production and business activities. Ministries, branches and localities actively monitor the situation, and analyze and propose supporting policies for those facing difficulties caused by the pandemic, especially the service, tourism and transport sectors.

The country also needs to focus on supporting production and business, especially developing the domestic market. For agriculture, forestry and fishery, it is necessary to closely monitor weather changes, especially in the case of drought and saltwater intrusion, in order to have solutions to ensure water storage to serve production and daily life of the people, strengthen the implementation of measures to prevent and control the pandemic on livestock, poultry and aquatic animals, to completely handle the pandemic and prevent new outbreaks from arising.

We also need to focus on development and application of high technology, digital transformation in activities of social life; develop e-commerce, increase support for businesses to implement goods distribution on e-commerce platforms and electronic payment application in the online environment.

Ministries, central and local agencies, especially the heads of all levels, need to lead, direct and firmly implement the disbursement of public investment capital as outlined in the Decrees of the Government.

It is necessary to step up the diversification of import and export markets on the basis of continuing to closely monitor the Covid-19 pandemic developments in partner markets; reviewing and identifying types of goods that countries are in need of import; take advantage of opportunities to promote the restructuring of export and import markets, gradually reduce the dependence on one market. We also need to proactively study trade policy changes of major partners and impacts on import and export activities of Vietnam.

It is urgent to promote effective and selective attraction of foreign investment, proactively reviewing mergers and acquisitions, especially businesses operating in core and strategic fields that have a great impact on the economy and society, to ensure favorable conditions for attracting foreign investment capital, while proactively protecting domestic enterprises, preventing investment to avoid taxes, affecting the reputation of Vietnamese goods. ■

Vietnam to Reduce Many Taxes and Fees in 2021



Government cuts many taxes and fees to support aviation industry

Many taxes and fees will be further reduced in 2021 and the Ministry of Finance has proposed extending the deadline for paying VND115 trillion of taxes and land rents.

In late 2020, the Ministry of Finance issued Circular 112/2020/TT-BTC on rates of charges and fees supporting business operations and social security in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, 29 fees and charges will be reduced by 50 - 100% from January 1 to June 30, 2021, including fee for utilizing environmental data; evaluation fee of construction investment project, evaluation fee of technical design; fee for construction estimation; and franchising fee for operation of airports or

customs airport entry/exit fees for foreign flights.

Specifically, the fee for issuing passport, exit permit and AB stamp will be reduced by 20%; the fee for granting citizenship identity by 50%; the industrial property fee by 50%; the fee in the health sector by 30%; the vehicle fee for transportation business by 10-30%; the fee for food safety and hygiene by 10%; the assessing and issuing fee for international tour business licenses and domestic tour operation by 50%; and customs fees and airport entry/exit fee applied to foreign flights by 10%.

From July 1, 2021, the rates will resume as before the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

Environmental tax on aviation fuel slashed by 30% in 2021

Together with the above 29 types of fees and charges, on January 20, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly agreed with the proposal of the Ministry of Finance when it issued Resolution 1148 in support of the aviation industry.

Accordingly, the environmental duty on aviation fuel will be VND2,100 per liter, applied from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021. The rate will be VND3,000 per liter from January 1, 2022. This resolution officially took effect from January 1, 2021.

Railway infrastructure fee cut by 50%

By February 2021, the Ministry of Finance issued Circular 12/2021/TT-BTC on collection, declaration and payment of the use fee on railway infrastructure, which will be reduced by 50% to support those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, the railway infrastructure fee proposed by the Ministry of Finance will be slashed to 4% from 8%. Railway transport companies will declare the charge to tax authorities and settle payment to the State budget. This circular will be valid through December 31, 2021.

Also in February, the Ministry of Finance issued Circular 03 on exemption and reduction of corporate income tax applied to science and technology companies specified in the Government's Decree 13/2019/ND-CP on science and technology firms.

According to the Circular, the rate and duration of preferential CIT exemption or reduction are specified as follows:

Science and technology companies are entitled to CIT exemption or reduction under Clause 1, Article 12 of the Government's Decree 13/2019/ND-CP dated February 1, 2019: Tax exemption for four years and a 50% reduction for the next nine years.

This circular takes effect till March 1, 2021.

Extended deadline for payment of VND115 trillion of land tax and rent proposed

To extend the tax payment deadline for entities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Finance submitted Document 11/TTTr-BTC, dated January 22, 2021, on the scheme for drafting the decree on extended deadline for land tax and rent, applicable in 2021, to the Government.

In particular, the Ministry of Finance submits to the Government for approving the policy on delayed payment of value-added tax, corporate income tax, personal income tax and land rental for enterprises, business households and individuals affected by Covid-19 pandemic. The amount of tax and land rental to be extended was estimated at VND115 trillion.

Specifically, the ministry proposed extending the payment of value-added tax of VND68 trillion for five months, from January to June 2021; corporate income tax of VND40.5 trillion in the first quarter and second quarters; VAT and personal income tax of VND1.3 trillion applied to business households and individuals until December 31, 2021; and land rent of VND4.4 trillion in the six-month period of 2021.

The Ministry of Finance asked the Government for permission to elaborate the decree, which will be effective from the date of signing.

In addition, on February 4, the Ministry of Finance submitted to the Government an instruction on permits for excluding the fund spent for the fight against Covid-19 pandemic when determining taxable corporate income under Clause 8, Article 3 of Resolution 128/2020/QH14 of the National Assembly on the State budget estimate in 2021.

In addition, the Ministry of Finance is reviewing and assessing applied solutions to provide advice and put forth proposals regarding tax and fee to competent authorities.■

More Than 8,000 Businesses Established in February

The Ministry of Planning and Investment said, 8,038 companies were established in February 2021 with a total registered capital of VND179,737 billion, down 12.3% in companies but up 85.6% in investment value over the same month of 2020, down 20.3% in companies and up 15.9% in value over January 2021.

Companies registered to invest VND720,407 billion in the first two months of 2021, up 12.4% year on year, including VND334,821 billion from new companies (up 52.2%) and VND385,586 billion from 6,522 active companies (down 8.4%). On average, a company registered to invest VND18.5 billion in the period, up 46.4% year on year.

As many as 18,129 companies were founded in the first two months of 2021, an increase of 4% over the same period in 2020. They registered to hire 172,844 workers, up 9.7%. Meanwhile, 11,033 companies resumed operations, down 7.6% year on year.

According to the report of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, from January to February, 33,611 companies became inactive, up 18.6% year on year. Of the sum, 21,636 companies registered to halt operations for a definite time, 8,380 companies suspended operations to await bankruptcy, 3,595 companies completed bankruptcy procedures. The highest growth of bankruptcies was seen in electricity, water and gas production and distribution (220%), transportation and warehousing (53.2%) and mining (50%).

Thu Ha

Vietnam Faces New Trade Protectionism Instruments

Dr. NGUYEN MINH PHONG

The 2017-2020 period witnessed the resurgence of trade protection, with many new tools applied globally.

Since the financial crisis in 2008, the world added 4,000 new trade protections, including trade remedies, tax hikes, local barriers, subsidies for export fees, and discrimination.

In principle, to protect trade, countries can use a combination of tariff and non-tariff protection measures. Public discontent to unemployment resulting from globalization and trade liberation is believed to be the core of increasing protectionism, with new protectionist tools being applied commonly.

First of all, global trade rules allow members to impose export restrictions if they help mitigate their food shortages and environmental risks, whether such restrictions can hurt net food importers and even cause severe food shortages.

According to the WTO Report, the lack of global regulations on export restrictions has led to at least 30 new barriers, introduced by countries such as China, India, and Ukraine from October 2010 to April 2011, compared to 25 barriers in the previous 12-month period. These barriers include quotas and export tariffs. According to the WTO, the above import restriction measures are given for a variety of reasons, such as protecting the environment or ensuring the supply and prices of agricultural products in the domestic market. However, using such measures to solve these matters is dangerous. Governments may be involved to use export restrictions to change their advantage in merchandise price or to increase production in a way that is detrimental to other countries.

China, which now accounts for 97% of the world's rare earth supplies, justifies that environmental concerns and resource depletion have forced Beijing to limit exports despite facing legal challenges in the framework of the WTO.

The second protection instrument is cumbersome customs procedures. This results in increases in costs, loss of business opportunities and even discourages exporters or goods that need to be imported.

Besides, they utilize technical barriers, stricter standards and requirements on quality, hygiene, safety, labor, environment, origin and health-related products.

These standards facilitate international trade by helping foreign buyers assess product specifications and quality. But if they are too different from country to country, they may have to adjust their production processes. In addition, requirements for product testing in the importing country to ensure that the products comply with technical and safety regulations of that country expose exporters to more rigorous testing procedures or higher testing costs for this testing process.

The devaluation of local currencies makes exports cheaper and imports more expensive. This is an effective tool for protecting the goods of the country where the tool is used.

Direct export subsidies help reduce export prices and increase domestic competitiveness relative to imported goods.

Antidumping investigations, with purposefully higher import duties and allegations, may help producers in a certain country against trading partners accused of selling goods at a price lower than production cost.

According to the WTO report, 311 safeguard measures were initiated around the world from January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2015. Among 5,448 trade remedies in the world, antidumping accounted for 4,757 cases. The level of G20-issued trade restrictions was highest since the 2008 global financial crisis. G20's report on trade measures showed that G20 economies, accounting for 90% of global GDP, applied 145 new trade restriction measures from mid-October 2015 to mid-May 2016, or an average of 21 measures per month, much more than the 17 measures a month in the previous 7-month period, of which anti-dumping measures accounted for most. Previously, a month witnessed about 15 measures in place. 21 trade restriction measures a month are also considered highest in a month since 2011, when trade restriction measures hit record high.

Besides, import prohibitions or restrictions are applied. However, countries tend to adopt measures to boost exports, such as offering low-interest loans instead of restricting imports because the effective scope and influence of financial and monetary policies is also somewhat limited. For example, Brazil imposes a 3%



export tax refund. China and India imposed import tax refunds on inputs used to make exports.

According to the WTO, out of more than 2,800 trade restriction measures recorded through trade policy reviews since October 2008, only 25% have been abolished. This represents a worrying increase in newly established trade restrictions, typically countries that signed G-20 commitments.

Recent WTO research showed that, in the past time, trade restrictions/protection measures applied by WTO members increased to a record. For example, in October 2018 to October 2019 alone, the trade value imposed by these measures totaled about US\$747 billion, the biggest since October 2012, up about 27% over the same period in 2018 (at US\$588 billion). This caused tensions in trade relations and rising instability in international trade.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has now defended a fair split of trade interests, asserting that globalization is not only positive, but triggers more inequality among different groups and among peoples.

To protect its interests, the United States is applying 80% of 31,000 trade protection measures in the world. New trade protection measures have been developed, such as weak USD policy, monetary policy easing, QE expansion, super-low interest rates, improved quality standards, and intellectual property, credit downgrade of trade partners and xenophobia.

The report by the WTO Trade Policy Review Body showed that, during the review process, 102 new trade protection measures are being applied by WTO members, including tariff increases and quantitative restrictions, tightened customs procedures, and increased import and export duties on goods. These import restriction measures are largely applied to minerals and fuel oil (17.7%), mechanical equipment (13%), machinery and electrical parts (11.7%) and; precious metals (6%). The body added that the increase of trade protection policies and measures need to be properly analyzed by WTO members and the international community as well, because they are causing negative effects on the growth of trade, employment and purchasing power of countries.

Trade protectionism will continue in the coming time, deeply divisive in globalization and trade in each region and in each country. The success of presidential candidates in favor of trade protection, bringing jobs back for native people and national interests above all, is a profound lesson and a main platform for them to attract voters. This means concerns about a new trade

war are slowly taking shape.

The Joint Statement of the G20 Summit on September 5, 2016 in the Chinese City of Hangzhou reiterated its opposition to trade and investment protectionism in any form; pledged to reduce or not adopt new trade protectionism and emphasized that ensuring mutual benefits for all parties is the primary means to prevent trade and investment protectionism.

In perspective, protectionism may be present for a while, but not for long because of the very consumer interests and the market economy law. In either case, the tariff and non-tariff protection instruments have a negative effect on Vietnam's export flows.

The new trade protectionism trend of countries will probably give Vietnamese exports (e.g. shipped to the United States) a price advantage in the near future. However, this advantage will possibly trigger counterfeiting of Vietnamese origin that may involve Vietnam in trade disputes and be subject to tariff measures on Vietnamese exports.

In Vietnam, according to the Ministry of Industry and Trade, by the end of 2018, Vietnam faced 144 trade defense cases initiated by 18 countries and territories, applied to Vietnam's exports. Among them, the United States started 27 cases, accounting for about 20%, the most among countries imposing trade remedies on Vietnamese goods. Turkey imposed the second most, with 20 cases (15%), followed by India (17 cases, 12%) and the EU (14 cases, 11%).

Anti-dumping lawsuits against pangasius and shrimp, defense tax on rolled steel and anti-erosion steel by the US, anti-subsidy on copper wire and stainless steel pipe by India; safeguard measures to steel by the EU troubled Vietnam in the international market.

In such a context, Vietnam needs to conduct comprehensive reforms, promote active international integration and ensure effective implementation of FTA commitments made by Vietnam. At the same time, the country also needs to diversify its markets, actively inform and support capable enterprises to overcome technical barriers from export partners. It also needs to build proper technical barriers to protect the market and national interests, and the domestic business community; increase the capacity to deal with trade defense lawsuits, and flexibly use safeguard, anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures to protect legitimate interests of domestic producers and inform businesses for quick response. ■



Working out Solutions to Network Congestion on HOSE

According to the State Securities Commission of Vietnam (SSC), the limited capacity of the Hochiminh Stock Exchange (HOSE) is the reason for order congestion in recent years.

In recent days, investors have complained about congestion of orders sent to HOSE when the liquidity reached VND14-17 trillion.

Some orders forwarded to HOSE by securities companies failed to input into the HOSE trading system since late December 2020, said the SSC. The SSC said that it quickly worked with HOSE and securities companies to assess the performance, work out reasons and put forth solutions to deal with existing problems to ensure the smooth operation of the trading system.

Investigations showed that order congestion was caused by various factors, but primarily the designed capacity of the HOSE trading system. The unexpected surge in trading order exceeded its limit on orders.

The SSC instructed HOSE to urgently study and deploy consistent solutions to ensure safe and smooth operation of the

system.

For the short term, HOSE has applied solutions to optimize the quantity of trading orders entered into the system like raising the trading lot from 10 shares to 100 shares from January 4, 2021 to reduce odd-lot orders to ease the trading system; coordinated and requested securities companies to review and minimize errors to avoid negative impacts on the system; performed internal reviews, controlled risks, and strengthened shift duty during peak trading times.

For the medium term, the SSC told HOSE to study and propose a technical plan to ensure that the current trading system works smoothly until the new stock market information technology system (KRX) is officially put into operation.

The SSC will specifically guide and facilitate enterprises to temporarily transfer their listed shares from HOSE to the Hanoi Stock Exchange (HNX) to reduce the load on the HOSE trading system.

For the long term, the SSC will request HOSE and related units to quickly launch the KRX system and replace the current system as soon as possible to resolve system overloading.

"Currently, some experts have completed quarantine requirements in Vietnam and prepared to support Vietnam to put the system into operation," said the SSC. ■

D.A

Optimistic about Property Market Growth in 2021



Industrial real estate development is increasingly vital to accommodate manufacturers moving their production to Vietnam

Vietnam currently has a lot of advantages to boost the real estate market in the post-Covid era, said Mr. David Jackson, CEO of Colliers International Vietnam, a global real estate investment and trading group.

NGUYEN MAI

Vietnam's advantages from the trade war between China and the United States, its free trade agreements (FTAs) and its ability to control the epidemic outbreak are all good factors to attract supply chains to Vietnam. This has motivated investors, manufacturers, and logistics and warehousing operators in the region and the world to increase their confidence in Vietnam, despite existing difficulties in 2020.

"Demand from international investors will not decrease and many financial institutions will still focus on investment in Vietnam in 2021. Industrial property,

industrial zones and logistics are catching increasing attention from international investors as they are seeing Vietnam as a safe and well-regulated country with a large population expected to bring great potential and increasing consumer demand. Therefore, the industrial property market in Vietnam will be the most dynamic segment by 2021," he noted.

Besides the industrial property segment, the office segment is also expected to keep growing steadily in 2021. Right from the beginning of the year, this market has been very active, largely driven by customers in Vietnam. Many South Korean and Japanese investors and businesses are interested in the Grade A office segment. Currently, many investors and companies are actively carrying out their projects and supplying high-class offices in major markets like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. According to Cushman & Wakefield data, the emergence of the office market in Thu Duc City in the last three months of 2020 showed that this market will grow in the future. In the next five years, Thu Duc City is forecast to have an additional 390,000 square meters of office space of Grade A and Grade B, most of which will be in Thu Thiem New Urban Area.

Ms. Hoang Nguyet Minh, Director of Commercial Lease, Savills Hanoi, said many companies have flexed their working style and are renting offices economically and conveniently, with a focus on developing shared areas instead of having clear divisions. When renting an office, they tend to choose sustainable projects with carbon neutrality standards being a priority. Developers will have to incur additional costs to meet sustainability standards, but these "green" buildings will bring countless other benefits to all stakeholders. It is more likely that new environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards will begin to have a stronger impact on the real estate market, while new projects will focus on sustainability.

Due to the effects of the trade war and the Covid-19 pandemic, some large-scale multinational corporations (MNCs) in Asia are shifting their production facilities out of China to other countries or relocating part of their production to other countries, called "China + 1" strategy, to mitigate risks. The China + 1 trend will result in increased demand for industrial real estate, logistics services and offices in such markets as Japan (especially around Tokyo), Taiwan (China), India and Vietnam. Moreover, many governments are also encouraging real estate leasing businesses to adopt the "China + 1" strategy with new regulations, tax and manufacturing incentives. ■



OCOP

Effort for Modern, Adaptive and Sustainable Agriculture



Vietnam's agriculture has gradually deepened its strong international integration and globalization by utilizing free trade agreements (FTAs).

Meanwhile, in 2020, adversely hit by complicated and unpredictable developments of the environment, climate and the epidemic, the agricultural sector supported the economy to obtain great achievements even amidst unpredictable global economic fluctuations. To have a more comprehensive view of the agricultural sector's achievements in the past year and development directions in the coming time, the Vietnam Business Forum has an interview with Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development **Tran Thanh Nam**.
Minh Ngoc reports.

Could you introduce outstanding achievements of the agricultural sector in 2020?

In 2021 and subsequent years, the world and the region are forecast to witness complicated and unpredictable developments: slow economic growth; the trade war between major economies; the Covid-19 pandemic in important export markets of Vietnam's agricultural, forest and aquatic products such as China, the EU and the U.S. where disease control measures are taken to contain contagion, thus causing disruptions of global supply chains; and the enforcement of new-generation free trade agreements (FTAs) such as CPTPP and EVFTA - the most extensive and comprehensive integration of Vietnam ever. With its good supply capacity and extensive opening and integration, Vietnam has gradually affirmed its position in global agricultural, forest and aquatic markets to become a major supplier in the world agricultural market in terms of scale and commercial scope. The agricultural export value of Vietnam climbed from just US\$486.2 million in 1986 to US\$4.2 billion in 2000 and to US\$41.2 billion in 2020, with a trade surplus of US\$10.4 billion, an increase of 6.5% over 2019. Nine agricultural products earned over US\$1 billion from exports, with five fetching over US\$3 billion (woodwork, shrimp, vegetable and fruit, cashew nut and rice). By market, in the past year, the agricultural sector opened new markets for many export products. For example, fresh lychee was officially exported to Japan for the first time; rambutan to Taiwan; strawberries and pumpkins to New Zealand; and shrimp and catfish to Brazil.

Besides, carrying out Resolution 26-NQ/TW on agriculture, farmers and rural areas, the National Target Program on New Rural Development has significantly contributed to agricultural, farmer, rural area and socioeconomic development. The rural economy has continuously grown well and strongly shifted toward industry and service. The agricultural sector is focusing on added value and sustainable development, increasing income for rural people and gradually narrowing the gap with the city. High-tech application to agricultural production has been adopted by many businesses, farms and farmers to achieve high economic efficiency. Many businesses have invested in building factories and establishments to preserve and process agricultural products in rural areas and support farmers.

Could you please tell us about the development orientations of the agricultural sector in 2021 and beyond?

To promote achievements in recent years, the agriculture and rural development sector is determined to continue its ongoing restructuring toward sustainable agricultural and rural development to enhance the value and competitiveness of agricultural products. Thus, this has helped raise the average income of rural people, develop modern, clean and organic agriculture, adapt to climate change and advance sustainable connectivity to global agricultural value chains. Particularly, focus will be placed on restructuring products, sectors and regions. To do this, it requires a high determination of the whole political system from central to local levels, from authorities to businesses and farmers who directly make products. At the same time, the agriculture and rural development sector is resolved to constantly improve leadership capacity, professional capacity and solidarity tradition to develop agriculture and rural areas in Vietnam.

Specifically, to successfully achieve the targets, the whole sector will continue to focus on implementing two major programs: Restructuring the agriculture sector and building a new countryside. In particular, it will concentrate on upgrading and modernizing agricultural and rural infrastructure to meet and serve the construction and development of modern, smart commercial agriculture, international integration and adaptation to climate change. Besides, it will invest in agricultural infrastructure development in the value chain (including infrastructure for agricultural production, processing, trade and services; connect agricultural infrastructure with technical and economic infrastructure to enhance regional interconnectivity). In addition, it will strongly develop high-tech agriculture and smart agriculture to create breakthroughs in productivity, quality and sectoral administration; and develop the agricultural technology market by ensuring intellectual property rights. At the same time, it will perfect regulations and standards for industry management; and harmonize regional and international standards to boost export market expansion. The sector will continue comprehensive and sustainable rural development in association with rural urbanization; promote vocational training development; link handicraft industry with tourism services; and preserve and develop traditional culture, and protect the environment.

The One Commune One Product (OCOP) Program has produced initial success in rural economic development. Could you tell us what policy measures should be taken in the coming time to scale up OCOP development in the domestic market and for export?

After nearly three years of implementing the One Commune One Product (OCOP) Program, by the end of 2020, as many as 48 centrally governed provinces and cities assessed and graded their products. 2,169 products qualified as at least 3-star

standards, of which 43 products from 12 provinces and cities were submitted to the Specialized Council for recognition as National OCOP Products in 2020. This will help create key local agricultural export products. OCOP products have generated a large number of jobs and have quality, food safety, and geographical indication.

The OCOP Program has helped create jobs and promote rural economic development, especially lifting up the role of women and disadvantaged people such as ethnic minorities. Developing OCOP products is not only a solution to increase income, but also an opportunity and for people to have time to take care of and fulfill their responsibility to their families and the local community. Many products have increased their product value and quality, and gradually formed OCOP product value chains, especially with the participation of cooperatives and enterprises.

In the coming time, it is necessary to have the participation of the entire political system, and add this content to resolutions of the Party congresses at all levels, action plans of local Party committees and government. It is important to inform and raise awareness of the political system, the people and the community about the OCOP Program, particularly proper and full understanding of locally distinctive agricultural products and traditional services, to raise internal strength and enhance added value. Localities need to research and promulgate policies on OCOP support for actors to utilize their strengths and local resources for enhancing production capacity. Support solutions need to focus on two main product groups: Certified and ranked OCOP products should be developed with trade promotion, market development support and distribution channels.

Potential products should be given priority to new product ideas, linked to local tradition, potential and advantages, facilitating stakeholders to improve their potential resources and develop OCOP products. Localities need to carry out synchronous OCOP programs and cycles, particularly the role of commune-level agencies in shaping and building local plans; and support actors and people to take part in the OCOP Program.

Thank you very much!



Farming processes and management have become increasingly automated



Vibrant Step forward in Rural Development



New rural development has changed the face of Vietnamese rural areas and become a driving force of modern and sustainable agricultural production.

MINH NGOC

Positive change

The “all people join hands for rural development” movement has become powerful and influential across the country. The entire political system and the whole society, especially the consensus and response of the people, are engaged in the program. The Vietnam Fatherland Front and social and political organizations have effectively performed the role of social supervision and criticism, promoted democracy and the people’s role in new countryside construction.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, after 10 years of implementing the National Target Program on New Rural Development, the face of rural areas and the lives of rural people have been greatly improved. Strong agricultural and rural infrastructure development has dramatically changed the rural face. Agricultural production is restructured toward modernity and sustainability, focused on high-tech application and newly-developed cooperative style linked to the value chain, environmental development and community culture. By the end of 2020, over 63% of communes were estimated to fulfill new rural development standards, higher than the rate of 17.5% in 2015 (an increase of 45.5 percentage points); 165 out of 664 district-level localities met/completed new rural development standards, compared to 15 units in 2015 (an increase of 150 units). As much as VND2,115.68 trillion (US\$92 billion) was raised for rural development in five years from 2016 to 2020, an increase of 2.5 times over the 5-year period from 2011 to 2015.

The One Commune One Product (OCOP) Program has produced many positive results. Local products and industries

have boosted employment and income for rural people. More localities have joined the OCOP program. By the end of 2020, all 63 provinces and cities ratified the Provincial OCOP Scheme and Plan. They categorized and recognized 2,400 OCOP products, fulfilling 100% of the plan. The poverty rate rapidly slid from 9.2% in 2016 to 5.46% in 2019 and 4.2% in 2020. The agricultural and rural infrastructure system has been upgraded and modernized to better serve business operations of enterprises and livelihoods of people, prevent and mitigate natural disasters, and adapt to climate change.

In five years from 2016 to 2020, irrigation facilities increased their capacity by over 97,000 ha (2015: 35,000 ha) and watered 70,000 ha more agricultural land (2015: 15,000 ha). Irrigated rice area reached 7.5 million ha or 98% of the cultivated area. Irrigation reservoirs already increased. In 2020, there were 6,750 reservoirs, an increase of 421 reservoirs (6.7%) over 2015. Reservoir capacity was 14,500 million cubic meters, an increase of 1,300 million cubic meters (9.8%) over 2015. Natural disaster prevention and control were focused, switched from passive response to active prevention. As a result, although natural disasters were more complicated and irregular in recent years, damage to people and materials decreased significantly as compared to the previous period.

Building a model and modern countryside

The overall goals of the target program in the 2020-2025 period included developing smart, internationally integrated agriculture, adaptive to climate change, increasing added agricultural value and developing sustainable agriculture in association with building prosperous and civilized countryside; realizing the goal of developing prosperous agriculture, wealthy farmers and a civilized and modern countryside. Particular focus will be placed on specific objectives as follows:

Objectives to 2025: The agricultural sector strives to achieve annual growth of 2-3%. At least 80% of communes will meet new rural development standards (with about 40% meeting advanced standards and 10% meeting model standards) and 50% of district-level localities will achieve rural development standards.

Each province or city has at least two district-level localities fulfilling new rural development standards; 80% of poor villages in border areas, mountainous areas, coastal areas and islands achieve new rural development standards. At least 15 provinces are recognized to complete the task of new countryside construction. Per capita income in rural areas will be 1.6 times higher than in 2020. About 25% of rural workers will work in agriculture.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, building prosperous agriculture and civilized countryside, building an inclusive and sustainable countryside together with urbanization, accelerating industrial and service development, economic and labor restructuring in rural areas, and developing rural professions; supporting the conservation and development of cottage industries; linking economic activities of cottage industry villages with tourism services, conserving and developing traditional culture and protecting the environment are the next targets of the program. ■

Increasing Income for Rural People



At the review conference on the 2-year pilot implementation of new model rural district construction, Mr. Nguyen Xuan Cuong, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, said the region-based pilot helped define locally distinctive advantages for production development to develop rural production and economy, build synchronous infrastructure, and ensure environment, security and income for farmers. Districts focused on tapping their advantages and strengths together with tourism development to scale up the program to other localities.

Based on the 2-year results plus survey in some more localities, in the coming time, the Steering Committee will have solutions to make it possible for more communes and districts to meet new countryside standards by tapping their strengths. This program is expected to help build a civilized rural area with rich national identity, develop modern agriculture with value chains, and utilize local advantages to improve people's livelihoods.

Mr. Nguyen Minh Tien, Director of the Central Coordination Office of New Rural Development, said localities are actively implementing new rural development projects with specific plans and roadmaps and developing locally adapted criteria for model districts. Depending on their own characteristics, four districts in four provinces piloted new models of model rural areas. Specifically, Nam Dan district has developed the new model countryside based on "culture and tourism development"; Hai Hau district with the "bright, green, clean and beautiful model for sustainable development"; Don Duong district with the "high-tech smart agriculture"; and

Developing production and raising people's income to be sustainable and climate-resilient, and tapping local advantages are the goals of the New Model Agricultural Development Program designed to speed up poverty reduction in Vietnam.

DUC BINH

Xuan Loc district with the "sustainable commercial agricultural production" model.

Despite difficulty in achieving rural development criteria, higher income among rural people and lower poverty rates are the most obvious results. Specifically, in 2019, per capita income reached VND46 million in Nam Dan district, VND58.3 million in Hai Hau district, VND66.7 million in Don Duong district, and VND61.6 million in Xuan Loc district, all significantly higher than the country's per capita GDP of VND40.5 million. Compared with that in 2016, three districts witnessed a nearly 1.3-fold increase (Nam Dan, Don Duong and Xuan Loc) and one district by 1.7 times (Hai Hau). Also in the past two years, the poverty rate decreased rapidly. In 2019, it slid to 1.46% in Nam Dan, 0.05% in Hai Hau, and 0.99% in Don Duong. In particular, Xuan Loc district had no poor households since 2018 and had only 434 socially protected poor households, accounting for 0.8%, Mr. Tien said.

Mr. Tien added that in the 2021-2025 period, districts should continue to effectively implement the approved and reviewed projects matching local criteria with following solutions:

Firstly, further informing and raising awareness of rural officials and residents, improving the quality of emulation movements for new rural construction, with focus placed on people's roles in new countryside construction, bringing clearer positive changes to each village and household and their livelihoods;

Secondly, directing localities to further review the goals set for the 2016-2020 period to complete and exceed the targets assigned by the Prime Minister in the 2016-2020 period;

Thirdly, further improving the legal framework, mechanisms and policies on new rural development support, and reviewing, updating and issuing national criteria for a new countryside development suitable for each stage;

Fourthly, enhancing effective solutions to engage in the Program, integrating and unifying investment and support mechanisms in the same area according to the investment and financial mechanism of the National Target Program on New Rural Development; mobilizing maximum local resources to implement the Program; and mobilizing enterprises to invest in effective projects;

Fifthly, enhancing international integration and cooperation, taking advantage of ODA capital and loans from international financial institutions and international development partners to increase resources for new rural development;

And finally, promoting and improving the quality of monitoring and assessing the program, with a focus placed on strict management and use of resources for the Program. ■

Changing Mindset on Rural Economy



OCOP products displayed at a trade fair

The Prime Minister's Decision 490/QĐ-TTg dated May 7, 2018 on One Commune One Product (OCOP) Program in 2018 - 2020 created a strong and widespread effect across provinces and cities, especially producers. Local specialties have been strongly developed to preserve culture on the one hand and improve people's livelihoods on the other.

DUY ANH

According to the Central Coordination Office on New Rural Development, all 63 provinces and cities have to date approved and launched the OCOP Program and their action plans. This is an important basis for them to review, classify and develop their potential OCOP products. Currently, 46 provinces and cities have assessed, graded and recognized 2,169 OCOP products, reaching over 90% of the plan of 2,400 products, including nearly 700 4-star products and 43 5-star products graded by the National OCOP Council.

OCOP is a rural economy development program designed to tap internal forces and added value, and a solution and task to implement the National Target Program on New Rural Development. Specifically, the program aims to promote local potential and advantages and 4,800 OCOP products of six categories, carry out 8-10 models of cultural and tourist villages, and consolidate 100% of enterprises and

cooperatives taking part in the OCOP Program.

OCOP Program generates jobs, fosters rural economic development, and especially empowers rural women and disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities. OCOP development is not only a solution to increase income and develop family businesses, but also an opportunity and condition for people to take care of and fulfill the responsibilities to their families and local communities.

Many products highlight their value and quality, and gradually form value chains engaged by cooperatives and enterprises. The role of OCOP products is aligned with cooperative development.

However, many OCOP products do not have good designs and brands, resulting in their quality being underestimated. Mr. Nguyen Minh Tien, Chief of the Central Coordination Office for New Rural Development, said localities have strongly focused on advertising and matching supply and demand of OCOP products since 2019. Localities organized OCOP trade fairs, encouraged and supported OCOP producers to take part in domestic and regional fairs to introduce their OCOP products. Many started developing OCOP showrooms and organizing annual exhibitions, fairs and conferences to connect suppliers and buyers of OCOP products like Hanoi, Quang Ninh, Ha Tinh, Soc Trang and Bac Kan. OCOP products have helped producers boost production, increase revenue and expand markets. The majority of OCOP products filed with the central government for assessment and grading reported revenue growth of 10-40%. Many products in poor localities managed to expand their markets, particularly overseas.

OCOP products have gradually entered the market as Vietnam's specialty products, becoming an identification mark of both policy aspect and product aspect for consumers, Mr. Tien said.

In the coming time, OCOP programs must prioritize value chain development to enhance quality, processing and engagement of communes, people, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Especially, the OCOP Program is expected to engage 500 new SMEs and cooperatives in the program. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, OCOP focuses on developing agricultural and non-agricultural products and services of local advantages in the value chain operated by private sectors, collectives and SMEs.

In the OCOP Program, the government plays a constructive role, develops a legal and policy framework for program implementation that will help economic restructuring, in turn improving people's income and achieving economic and production criteria based on the National New Rural Development Standards.

OCOP Program will help speed up agricultural and rural industrialization and modernization, rationalize rural labor structure, protect the environment and preserve good traditional values of the Vietnamese countryside. ■



Ha Tinh Strives to Boost Rural Development

According to the draft plan for the pilot new rural development project in 2021 - 2025, Ha Tinh province will have 100% of communes meeting new rural development standards from 2023. Prioritized resources will be provided to 10 communes that have not yet achieved the standards (eight in Huong Khe district and two in Ky Anh district).

Ha Tinh will strive to have at least 91 communes meeting advanced new rural development standards by 2024, focusing on difficult-to-achieve targets like high-tech application to production, production mechanization, food safety, 3-star or above OCOP products, and 20% growth of per capita income.

Before 2025, at least 20 communes will achieve new model countryside standards, with a focus placed on demanding contents and criteria: Each commune will have at least two well-performing new-style cooperatives; have 4-star or above OCOP products, increase per capita income by at least 1.5 times; and have no poor households. Recognized communes will continue to consolidate and complete unsustainable criteria like environment, residence, garden and income; develop solutions for infrastructure upgrade and water quality upgrade.

All district-level units will reach this standard by 2024. In the short term, the district will apply for the recognition of Vu Quang district to the central government. Loc Ha, Cam Xuyen and Huong Son districts will achieve this target in 2021, Ky Anh district in 2023 and Huong Khe district in 2024. Thach Ha, Duc Tho and Can Loc districts will endeavor to reach advanced new rural development standards, concentrating on difficult criteria like the number of certified communes, traffic system, urbanization, and waste treatment.

Mr. Phuong Dinh Anh, Deputy Director of the Ha Tinh Coordination Office of New Rural Development, said economic development and increased income for rural people will still be the core of the new rural development program of the province. In the near future, Ha Tinh will restructure the agricultural sector, and promote key local products by boosting production connectivity in the value chain where enterprises and cooperatives are the nucleus. By developing handicraft industries and locally distinctive products aligned with the OCOP program, encouraging and facilitating new handicrafts, the province will give priority to inspiring people, building up their will and confidence in the program in all districts and communes.

Ngoc Dan

Lao Cai Strives to Have 15 Communes Meeting New Rural Development Standards in 2021

The Steering Committee of the National Target Program for New Rural Development and Sustainable Poverty Reduction in Lao Cai province recently launched Plan 66/KH-BCD dated February 9, 2021 on implementation the National Target Program for New Rural Development, aiming to add more communes that fulfill new rural development standards in 2021.

In 2021, the province will have 15 more communes fulfilling "new rural development standards": Tan Thuong, Minh Luong, Chieng Ken and Nam Dang communes in Van Ban district; Xuan Thuong, Bao Ha and Vinh Yen communes in Bao Yen district; Nam Mon, Coc Lau and Ban Lien communes in Bac Ha district; Thong Nhat commune in Lao Cai City; Nam Chay commune in Muong Khuong district; Trinh Tuong commune in Bat Xat district; Muong Hoa commune in Sa Pa Town; and San Chai commune in Si Ma Cai district.

The Steering Committee of the National Target Program for New Rural Construction and Sustainable Poverty Reduction in Lao Cai province set the goal that these communes will achieve per capita income of over VND40 million a year and a poverty rate below 12%. The total funding for these communes will reach VND223.38 billion in 2021.

Lao Cai province now has 57 out of 127 communes meeting new rural development standards. The province targets to have a total of 72 communes of this standard by the end of 2021.

Dinh Bao



CAO BANG

Creating New Motivation for Better Business Investment Environment



In the 2021-2025 period, Cao Bang province will carry out many programs and solutions to enhance its competitiveness and business climate to attract and efficiently use investment resources to create new motivations for rapid and sustainable economic growth, said Mr. **Hoang Xuan Anh**, Chairman of Cao Bang Provincial People's Committee, in an exclusive interview granted to Vietnam Business Forum. **Ngo Khuyen** reports.

Cao Bang province wrapped up the 2015-2020 term with great successes in promoting economic growth and attracting investment flows. Could you please introduce the achievements in the past time and how the province will promote these in the 2020 - 2025 period?

In the 2015-2020 term, Cao Bang province completed and exceeded all 17 main targets. Specifically, the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) expanded over 7% a year; the economic structure shifted positively toward the desired pattern with an increasing share of industry and construction and a smaller share of agriculture; budget revenue grew by 11% a year; GRDP per capita reached VND37.2 million in 2020; infrastructure was strongly upgraded; and the face of urban and rural areas was lifted.

In the past term, Cao Bang attracted VND46,376 billion of investment capital from many large domestic and foreign enterprises such as TH Group, TNG Holdings Vietnam, Deo Ca Group and Korea Hitech Farm Company. The province had 300 operational projects with a total capital of over VND38 trillion (US\$1.65 billion) by the end of 2020. Many large-scale projects produced strong impacts on

local socio-economic development, including Dong Dang (Lang Son) - Tra Linh (Cao Bang) Expressway, high-tech dairy farming and processing project, and Cao Bang digital urban development project.

Promoting the achievements in the past term, pursuing overall targets set for the 2021-2025 phase, Cao Bang province will strongly promote internal strength, innovation and willpower to create new breakthroughs in all fields; gradually build and develop the digital economy; accelerate administrative reform, upgrade the business investment environment, attract all investment resources for development, enhance economic competitiveness, and ensure social security. The province has set out specific targets for the next phase. The GRDP will grow by over 8% a year. By the end of 2025, its economy will be made up of 16.4% agriculture, forestry and fishery; 32.4% industry and construction; and 48.2% service. GRDP per capita will reach VND60 million in 2025. The agricultural yield will reach VND50 million per hectare of arable land. The import and export value will rise by 10% a year; the budget revenue will expand by 12% a year; the total social investment capital will grow by over 11% a year. In 2024, the Dong Dang (Lang Son) - Tra Linh (Cao Bang) Expressway - Phase I will be completed. In 2025, 85% of the length of district and commune roads will be asphalted/concreted, and 100% of communes will have asphalted/concreted roads leading to administrative centers.

To successfully implement the above objectives, Cao Bang has defined three breakthrough solutions, including (1) Developing sustainable tourism - service, gradually turning tourism and service into a key economic sector, building Cao Bang into a tourist center of northern midland and mountainous provinces; (2) developing smart agriculture and commercial agriculture, enhancing the competitiveness of agricultural products, and exporting local products to domestic and foreign markets; (3) developing the border economy to tap advantages generated by a 333-km borderline where there are a lot of border gates with China to build Cao Bang into a cargo transshipment center from Lach Huyen Port (Hai Phong) to Chongqing - Urumqi (China) - Khorgos (Kazakhstan) to European countries and vice versa.

At the same time, Cao Bang will focus on implementing three following programs:

(1) Infrastructure development program (transport, tourism, border gate, urban, digital infrastructure and airport), aimed to early overcome congestion and build synchronous and modern infrastructure.

(2) Personnel development program for all levels, aimed to improve the quality of human resources, especially in rural areas, to clear bottlenecks and hindrances to enhance human resource quality; build the public employee force at all levels, especially at strategic levels, with sufficient qualities, capabilities and reputation to perform their missions.

(3) Policy construction and reform program, aimed to ensure open, attractive, innovative, distinctive approaches to enhance the business investment environment and attract strategic investors into the province.



Cao Bang province boasts many advantages for tourism development

Currently, the Provincial People's Committee is directing all levels and branches of government, localities and agencies to work out concrete socioeconomic development programs and plans for the whole phase and for every year, and to implement effective solutions to achieve 2021-2025 goals.

The Dong Dang (Lang Son) - Tra Linh (Cao Bang) Expressway has created a driving force for stronger socio-economic development of Cao Bang province. Would you tell us more about this project?

The Dong Dang (Lang Son) - Tra Linh (Cao Bang) Expressway project was approved by the Prime Minister in Decision 1212/QĐ-TTg dated August 10, 2020. It will be built in the form of public-private partnership (PPP), in which 20% will come from the central budget, 20% from the local budget and 60% from investors and credit loans.

The expressway is 115 km long, including 52 km in Lang Son province and 63 km in Cao Bang province, running through Thach An, Quang Hoa, Trung Khanh, Hoa An and Cao Bang City. The 15.5-km road is built to link to Cao Bang City, passing through Quang Hoa (previously Quang Uyen district), Hoa An district and Cao Bang City. The starting point of the expressway is at Tan Thanh Border Gate, Van Lang district is linked to Huu Nghi - Chi Lang Expressway in Tan Thanh Border Gate and Coc Nam Border Gate in Lang Son province. The endpoint is at Tra Linh Border Gate Economic Zone and National Highway 34 in Cao Bang province.

The 4-lane highway is designed for motorized vehicles to move at a speed of 80 kmph. Phase 1, implemented from 2020 to 2024, will build 93 km of road from Tan Thanh Border Gate to Phuc Sen commune, Quang Hoa district. Phase 2, started after 2025, will build 22 km from Quang Hoa district to Tra Linh Border Gate.

To date, the Provincial People's Committee has planned to carry

out topographical and geophysical surveys; project feasibility studies, set up ground clearance landmarks for localities to manage the planning, extract and measure the land. At the same time, the committee has also invited partners to study, survey and deploy the project design; coordinate the implementation of landscape architecture to minimize impacts on the UNESCO-recognized Cao Bang Non Nuoc Global Geopark.

Upon completion, the expressway will facilitate commodity trading from Lach Huyen International Port (Hai Phong City) to Chongqing - Urumqi (China) - Khorgos (Kazakhstan) to European countries, facilitate investment flows into economic regions, develop border economy in Cao Bang and Lang Son provinces, and raise agricultural export value of Vietnam.

Clearing traffic infrastructure bottlenecks will help the province to achieve comprehensive, rapid and sustainable development. Therefore, the expressway will open a breakthrough development to meet expectations of the Party, authorities and people of the province.

Over the past years, Cao Bang province has carried out many solutions and activities to raise PCI rankings. In the coming time, how will the province continue to improve the PCI standing and the investment and business environment?

In the past five years, Cao Bang province has carried out projects and action plans to facilitate administrative reform, improve the business investment climate and attract investment funds into the locality. After five years, the business investment environment has been significantly improved. The Provincial Competitiveness Index (PCI) has climbed year after year. Specifically, its PCI scored 58.89 points in 2017 (5.9 points higher, climbing up five places over 2016), ranking No. 58 out of 63 provinces and cities - moving from the relatively low group to the average group; 60.67 points in 2018, ranked No. 57; and 63.69 points in 2019, ranking No. 54.

To further strongly improve the business investment environment and competitiveness, the province will focus on implementing the following solutions:

First, upholding the roles and responsibilities of agency leaders to enhance the business investment environment and competitiveness. This is considered a key task.

Second, mobilizing and efficiently using investment resources; completing the socio-economic infrastructure system, especially urban infrastructure of Cao Bang City, transportation system leading to residential areas, tourist attractions, border gate economic zones and other places.

Third, accelerating information technology application, e-government construction; strengthening administrative procedure reform, improving the performance of the Provincial Public Administration Service Center, the Single-window mechanism at all levels, reducing time and costs regarding this issue for businesses.

Fourth, building mechanisms and policies for innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting and attracting businesses to invest in strong fields; implementing support solutions to remove difficulties for enterprises, the collective economy and cooperatives to access credit capital and premises.

Fifth, developing schemes and plans to carry out the human quality improvement program; focusing on human resource training, attracting high-quality personnel working in science and technology.

Thank you very much!



Creating Momentum for Breakthroughs



Cao Bang province will have great development opportunities as its great potential will be tapped by the infrastructure system, especially the transport infrastructure in the coming years. Ahead of these new opportunities, the provincial government is making efforts to prepare momentum for new breakthroughs in the future.

DUC BINH



Agriculture and forestry

Cao Bang province has a natural land area of 6,724.6 square kilometers. The terrain is mainly limestone plateau and soil mountains, with an average elevation of over 200m (the border area is at 600-1,300m high), forming three distinct regions: rocky mountains in the east, soil mountains and rocky

mountains in the west, and mountainous land and dense forests in the southwest. The province has 94,724 ha of agricultural land. With climate and soil advantages, especially the diversity of geological heritages and ecosystems, Cao Bang has many endemic products such as Phja Den vermicelli (Nguyen Binh), pear and black jelly (Thach An), chestnut, white jelly and Pi Pat sticky rice (Trung Khanh), tangerine (Tra Linh), Na Giang sli cake (Ha Quang), rice rolls, sour pho, coong phu cake, sweet shortcake, sautéed duck, roasted duck, Jiaogulan tea and Tuber fleeceflower tea. These are favorable conditions for the province to focus on agricultural and forestry development to grow special crops and animals of high economic value, establish concentrated commercial farming areas, processing and tourism. Over the past time, Cao Bang has applied high and smart technology to special crops and animals to improve productivity and increase income.



Thang Hen lake is one of the most beautiful eco-tourist spots in Cao Bang province

Travel

This northern tip of the country is endowed with cultural identity and revolutionary tradition with many beautiful landscapes to create very unique charming features.

Beautiful natural landscape: Many famous places and landscapes such as Ban Gioc Waterfall - the most beautiful of its kind in Southeast Asia; Nguom Ngao Cave and Ngom Puc Cave with mysterious beauty; Phja Oac - Phja Den National Park with primeval forests at an altitude of nearly 2,000 m; Thang Hen Lake Tourist Area with 36 large and small lakes beautify Cao Bang Non Nuoc Global Geopark stretching across nearly 3,000 square kilometers in nine districts, recognized by UNESCO as a global geopark in 2018. These potentials give Cao Bang many advantages to develop different types of tourism such as revolutionary historical and cultural tourism, ecotourism, community tourism, spiritual tourism, border tourism, experience travel, discovery and adventure tourism and tourist routes connected with other provinces.



Historical sites

Cao Bang has a long revolutionary tradition as the origin of the Vietnam revolution. Typically, the Pac Bo revolutionary historical relic is located in Truong Ha commune, Ha Quang district, where President Ho Chi Minh lived, worked and led the Vietnamese revolution to gain national independence from 1941 to 1945.

Kim Dong Tomb Site includes the tomb of Kim Dong, the spacious monument at the foot of a rocky mountain range, the statue of Kim Dong with the pigeon in his hands. This place has a large yard where children in Cao Bang province and in the country come to camp, play and sing every year.

Tran Hung Dao Forest Historical Relic in Nguyen Binh district is where the Vietnam Propaganda Liberation Army or Viet Minh - the forerunner of the People's Army of Vietnam - was established. Near here lies Victory Monuments in commemoration of Viet Minh's victory against French invaders at Phai Khat and Na Ngan posts.

Dong Khe Relic in Thach An district is evidence of Vietnam's early historical victory in the war against the French rule to liberate the country. This monument features Dong Khe Fort and Ho Chi Minh Memorial.

Up to 95% of Cao Bang's population are ethnic minorities who have many distinctive cultural identities.

Border trade

Cao Bang also advantageously has over 333 km of the border with China, where there are Ta Lung International Border Gate, three official border gates (Tra Linh, Soc Giang and Ly Van) and many secondary border gates for trade with China. The province is also the gateway for commodities from Guangxi and western and southwestern Chinese provinces to the East Sea and to ASEAN countries. These favorable conditions enable the province to develop the border economy, trade and services, especially the border economy. Especially, Cao Bang Border Gate Economic Zone, established in 2014 by the Government, is one of nine key border gate economic zones which offer many investment incentive



policies for development cooperation, especially in import and export to the Chinese market through Cao Bang province.



The groundbreaking ceremony of the 115-km expressway, which is expected to promote Cao Bang's economic growth, create a new trade route between ASEAN countries and China, and enable new socio-economic breakthroughs in the region

New optimistic investment flows

Over the past time, the province has focused on promoting investment activity. To date, Cao Bang has 293 projects with a total registered capital of over VND40 trillion, including 12 foreign direct investment (FDI) projects with over VND1 trillion. Operational projects are working very effectively. Some investors expressed their interests in investment projects in Cao Bang province and registered to invest VND33 trillion in the province, including Sun Group, FLC Group, TH True Milk, TNG Holdings Vietnam, and Deo Ca Group. Currently, the province is actively inviting investors and mobilizing investment resources for key projects and sectors like Dong Dang (Lang Son) - Tra Linh (Cao Bang) Expressway, border economic zones, tourist sites and agricultural projects to create socioeconomic development breakthroughs. ■



THANH HOA

Investment Flows Increasingly Productive



Carrying out Resolution 58 NQ/TW of the Politburo dated August 5, 2020 on Thanh Hoa development to 2030, with a vision to 2045, and implementing planning and management tasks and solutions; and developing socio-economic infrastructure, Thanh Hoa province has endeavored to make breakthroughs in administrative reform, improve the business investment environment; and build investment attraction mechanisms and policies to make Thanh Hoa a model province and a new growth pole in the rectangle development together with Hanoi, Hai Phong and Quang Ninh, Mr. **Le Minh Nghia**, Director of the Department of Planning and Investment of Thanh Hoa province, said in an interview granted to Vietnam Business Forum. **Duy Anh** reports.

What do you think about investment results in Thanh Hoa province in 2016 - 2020?

In 2016 - 2020, Thanh Hoa attracted 1,131 direct investment projects, more than twice that of 2011-2015, including 1,054 domestic direct investment (DDI) projects with a total registered capital of VND118.06 trillion and foreign direct investment (FDI) with US\$3.74 billion (22.6% more of the registered fund over 2011 - 2015). Notably, in 2016-2020, the province drew important FDI projects that created a driving force on local economic development and social security. The good investment results also reaffirmed the appealing business investment environment to domestic and foreign investors. To date, Thanh Hoa has 133 valid projects with a combined registered capital of US\$14.25 billion, ranking 8th by value in the country.

At its investment promotion conferences in 2017 and 2020, Thanh Hoa province attracted many large investment projects. How are these projects operating now?

Thanh Hoa successfully hosted the Investment Promotion Conference 2017, where 31 projects were licensed with a total pledged fund of VND141 trillion (US\$ 6.35 billion). To date, six projects are operational, 16 projects are under construction, and three are being prepared for detailed planning. These projects accounted for 93.6% of the total pledged capital at the conference. Operational projects are helping improve the quality of economic, urban and rural infrastructure and creating a new force for the province.

For Investment Promotion Conference 2020, Thanh Hoa was the first locality to open an investment promotion conference immediately after the Government ended social distancing and announced the dual goal of “strongly promoting socio-economic development and effectively preventing the pandemic”. At the conference, 34 projects were licensed with a total registered fund of US\$15 billion. This event had the largest-ever projects and investment value in the province. To date, three projects started construction: (i) Long Son cement grinding station in Nghi Son Economic Zone and terminals No. 7, 8, 9 and 10 in Nghi Son Economic Zone, invested by Long Son Industrial Company Limited; (ii) Dai Duong Cement Plant 2 in Nghi Son Economic Zone, invested by Dai Duong Cement Joint Stock Company; and (iii) Sam Son marine square, luxury ecotourism, resort, entertainment and residence complex in Sam Son City, invested by Sun Group. 16 projects completed necessary documents and procedures for investment and construction. 15 projects are preparing documents and procedures for investor selection or investment license.

Thanh Hoa has been highly appreciated for its productive partnership with enterprises and investors. Would you tell us about this?

Thanh Hoa province pledges to offer the best support to investors carrying out their projects, facilitating investors to



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc (sixth from left) at the groundbreaking ceremony of the dairy farm project developed by TH True Milk in Thanh Hoa province



MoU signed by Thanh Hoa People's Committee and AVG Capital Partners from Russia to develop a US\$1.4 billion pork processing complex in Nghi Son Economic Zone in the province

achieve the best business performance in the province.

When investors come to study investment opportunities, the province always supports them to conduct surveys and select locations and helps them settle administrative procedures, including those under the authority of central governmental agencies. When they decide to invest in the

locality, Thanh Hoa actively fulfills “three commitments”: Site clearance progress at the request of the investor; investment in traffic infrastructure, electricity supply, water supply and communication to the project boundary; prompt solution of difficulties and problems during the project implementation and commercial operation.





Administrative reform, which focuses on administrative procedure reforms, has made a breakthrough. Administrative documents and procedures from provincial to communal levels are processed electronically. Many administrative procedures need much shorter time for settlement like investment licensing procedures (down 30%), planning licensing (51%), construction permission (50%), land allocation and land lease (40%).

The planning system has been reviewed for consistency. Investment incentive and attraction policy have helpfully promulgated. The province directed construction, review, addition and revision of planning. Nghi Son Economic Zone was approved for adjustment and expansion by the Prime Minister's Decision 1699/QĐ-TTg dated December 7, 2018, laying the groundwork for investment attraction. The province has regularly reviewed and completed development plans for industrial zones, district-level land use and urban areas, making Thanh Hoa one of the top planners of synchronous modern provincial planning for the 2021 - 2030 period, with a vision to 2045, to facilitate investors to search for investment opportunities. Besides, many attractive investment policies have been issued to woo investors, for example, handicraft development investment incentive policy; support policy for shipping lines to open international container shipping routes through Nghi Son Port; support policy for airlines to open new routes; and credit support and interest subsidy for agricultural and rural investment projects.

Business support has been strengthened. Existing difficulties against local enterprises are promptly removed. Business startup and entrepreneurship training are implemented annually according to the plan adopted by the Provincial People's Committee. The Standing Board of the Thanh Hoa Provincial Party Committee issued regulations, held direct dialogues with people and handled complaints and petitions filed by people to the Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee. Every month, the Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee holds public dialogues at the Citizen Reception Office; the Chairperson of the Provincial People's Committee together with relevant agencies host business meetings on the 20th of every month. Leaders of districts, towns and cities meet businesses at least once a month.

The modern infrastructure system has been gradually built, especially transport infrastructure and infrastructure in economic zones and industrial zones. Tho Xuan Airport was upgraded, with many new domestic and international routes in operation. The seaport system in Nghi Son Economic Zone was completed with synchronous technical infrastructure with international container routes. Many traffic routes were upgraded and expanded, such as roads from Nghi Son Economic Zone to Tho Xuan Airport, roads from Thanh Hoa City to Nghi Son Sao Vang, and coastal roads linking the province with domestic and international localities, to facilitate mobility and transportation of goods and services.

Implementing Resolution 58-NQ/TW dated August 5, 2020 of the Politburo on Thanh Hoa development to 2030, with a vision to 2045, what will Thanh Hoa province focus on to attract investment capital in the 2020-2025 period?

First, the province will focus on attracting investment in four dynamic economic centers, five growth pillars, and six economic corridors to create new room for socio-economic development. Specifically, four dynamic economic centers are the dynamic hub of Thanh Hoa City - Sam Son City; southern

dynamic center (Nghi Son Economic Zone); northern dynamic center (Thach Thanh - Bim Son); and western dynamic center (Lam Son - Sao Vang).

Five growth pillars include processing and manufacturing; agriculture; tourism; health; and infrastructure development.

Six economic corridors include coastal economic corridor; North-South economic corridor; Ho Chi Minh Road economic corridor; Northeast economic corridor; Central economic corridor; and International economic corridor.

Second, Thanh Hoa will focus on attracting investment capital for agriculture, forestry and aquaculture development to increase the output, added value and product reputation; developing vegetable and fruit processing factories for farming areas in Hoang Hoa, Nga Son and Hau Loc districts; pineapple and fruit processing factories for farming areas in Ha Trung, Thach Thanh districts and Bim Son Town; and building Lam Son - Sao Vang high-tech agricultural zone and other areas to grow high-quality agricultural products for domestic and export markets.

The province will entice investors to new large-scale industrial projects to create new driving forces for local economic growth, including Nghi Son refining and petrochemical plant - phase 2 and petroleum depot; gas power plant and LPG depot; paper and energy complex; Duc Giang Nghi Son chemical complex in Nghi Son Economic Zone; Intco Medical Vietnam's factory, Nitrile Intco Vietnam's glove factory in Bim Son Industrial Park.

Thanh Hoa will attract investment for synchronous infrastructure construction in economic zones and industrial zones. The locality will gradually form industrial chains such as petrochemical, chemicals (polypropylene, synthetic fibers, plastics and synthetic fertilizers) in Nghi Son Economic Zone, agricultural and forest product processing, electronics, telecommunications and information industries in Lam Son - Sao Vang Industrial Park.

Thanh Hoa will attract investment for synchronous infrastructure construction in economic zones and industrial zones. The locality will gradually form industrial chains such as petrochemical, chemicals (polypropylene, synthetic fibers, plastics and synthetic fertilizers) in Nghi Son Economic Zone, agricultural and forest product processing, electronics, telecommunications and information industries in Lam Son - Sao Vang Industrial Park.

The province will encourage investment in tourism infrastructure construction, support investors to accelerate large-scale tourism projects like maritime square and festivals in Sam Son City; Ben En resort and entertainment complex, Dao Ngoc ecological resort and hotel complex, Flamingo Linh Truong B, and Sao Mai Thanh Hoa Resort.

It will attract resources for synchronous modern infrastructure development, especially for investment and business activities of enterprises and people.

Third, Thanh Hoa province will actively and selectively attract and cooperate with foreign investors, take quality, performance, technology, and environmental protection as criteria for investment promotion; prioritize large-scale projects with high added value, modern environment-friendly technology and ripple effects connected to global production and supply chains. The province will focus on convincing well-reputed domestic investors to place large projects in the locality.

Thank you very much!

Clearing Hurdles in Market Entry for Businesses



Thanh Hoa province has made great efforts to improve the market entry index, which are highly appreciated by the business community. However, market entry remains quite difficult as it still takes a long time for enterprises to complete necessary documents other than business registration certification and official operation.

MINH XUAN

The Market Entry, a sub-index of the Provincial Competitiveness Index (PCI), is gauged by business satisfaction with administrative procedures such as achieving business registration, completing startup procedures, feeling the openness and transparency of business registration procedures, professional knowledge and attitude, and information technology application of business registration agencies.

In 2019, Thanh Hoa's Market Entry Index ranked No. 21 out of 63 provinces and cities, climbing 29 places with the addition of 0.76 points over 2018. Illustratively, the province had about 3,200 new companies, as many as in 2018, ranked 7th in the country. 38% of companies registered online for establishment, doubling the growth in 2018 (rising 18%), significantly reducing time and traveling costs for businesses. Business registration indicators improved. Registered capital was estimated at VND23,500 billion (US\$1 billion). A new company had average registered capital of VND7.83 billion, 26.2% more than in 2018. They employed 50,000 workers, 38.9% more than a year earlier.

Following the firm direction of the Provincial People's Committee, administrative procedures for businesses have been simplified and streamlined to reduce the service time (by 30-50%) and the waiting time for business registration. In addition, business registration procedures are publicly listed at the Provincial Public Administration Service Center and are instructed clearly and fully by specialized public officers who are very effective and friendly at work. The province's efforts and solutions for a better market entry index bore fruits and gained recognition of the business community. However, market entry remains quite difficult because it still takes a long time for enterprises to complete other necessary documents in addition to business registration certification and official operation.

To further improve the Market Entry Index in the coming time, the Department of Planning and Investment will continue to review and improve service quality, support local enterprises with business registration, and standardize employees in charge of receiving applications and delivering results. Besides, the department will enhance the relationship between State agencies and enterprises; strictly prevent harassment and bureaucracy in the service of enterprises. It will also review and reduce the time of issuing permits and certificates for their quick official operations, including fire prevention, security, passport and temporary residence permits for foreign workers, environmental impact assessment, practice certificate, compliance certificate for petroleum business, and certificate of eligibility for transport business. The department will work with other relevant agencies to review investment activities initiated by enterprises and investors; review delayed, prolonged investment projects; promptly report to the Provincial People's Committee for consideration, settlement and creation of land funds for other businesses and investors with better capabilities.

In addition, the department will coordinate with business associations and local businesses to foster business and investment support and cooperation; propose enterprise development mechanisms and policies consistent with the locality; open training classes for business executives and enhance the market entry. ■



Building Thanh Hoa into Modern, Smart City

In the 2015-2020 term, the Party and government of Thanh Hoa City strived to fulfill the resolutions of Central and Provincial Party Committees and the resolution of the 20th City Party Congress, which concentrated on four key programs and two breakthrough stages to make inclusive development progress in all aspects. As a result, the city's economy grew in both capacity and scale. Remarkably, the economy expanded 16.5% in the period, 1.5% higher than the previous term. Per capita income was estimated at VND73.4 million, nearly twice that of 2015. State budget revenue was forecast at VND22.5 trillion (nearly US\$1 billion), accounting for 18.4% of the province's total budget revenue.

The value of industrial production and construction grew as high as 16.8%. The service and trade sector developed dramatically in scale, diversity and quality, with the service value rising by 17.8%. The export value was estimated at US\$1.75 billion in 2020, up to 2.32 times higher than the beginning of the term. The economic sectors developed diversely. The investment fund for development was estimated at VND143.01 trillion, 2.13 times higher than the previous period

“The 21st Party Congress of Thanh Hoa City (2020-2025 term) defined tasks to build Thanh Hoa into a first-class provincial city in Vietnam by 2025, a modern and smart city by 2030. This approach is cross-cutting guidance and a strong determination of the Party Committee and the government, as well as the desire of the people of Thanh Hoa City.”

MINH XUAN

”

and equal to 23.3% of the total fund raised in the province.

Agricultural production was gradually expanded. Rural construction was accelerated. By the end of 2019, all 17 communes met new countryside standards and the city was recognized by the Prime Minister for fulfilling new countryside standards.

Entering a new stage of development, Thanh Hoa City has many opportunities for rapid growth of all aspects, but it is also facing numerous difficulties and challenges, requiring the Party and the people to work harder, keep ongoing innovations, uphold historical, cultural and revolutionary traditions, and uplift its status and position as the capital of robustly-growing Thanh Hoa province.

Deeply grasping the Party's developmental views, with the motto "Solidarity - Discipline - Leadership - Innovation - Development", the 21st Thanh Hoa City Party Congress defined the development direction for the city in the next five years: "Building Thanh Hoa into a first-class provincial city in Vietnam by 2025, a modern, smart and civilized city by 2030. This approach is the cross-cutting guidance and strong determination of the Party Committee and the government, as well as the desire of the people of Thanh Hoa City."

To achieve its objectives, the Thanh Hoa City Party Committee outlined 27 major targets, three focused programs and two breakthrough stages during this term, with many specific groups of tasks and solutions for all fields. The city will aim for rapid and sustainable economic development, improve economic competitiveness; enhance the quality of planning and management, align the city's development with the province's overall development strategy to play a leading role connecting and driving the province's development. The city will also pay more attention to social and cultural development, improve the people's material and spiritual life, build Thanh Hoa City into a true "cultural center" of the province; regularly maintain political security, and ensure social order and safety. It will also step up administrative reform, promptly and effectively solve security and order issues, facilitate socioeconomic development of the city and the province; and attach much importance to building the Party and the political system to strengthen Party leadership. ■





NGOC LAC DISTRICT

Economic Prosperity

Ngoc Lac district has made dramatic progress in all fields. The economy has been restructured to improve product quality and link production and consumption. The economic structure has been shifted toward a positive pattern and the economic size has expanded strongly.

DUC BINH

The economy has expanded stably toward the desired pattern. The total production value reached VND8,720 billion in 2020, 1.95 times that of 2015, and per capita income was estimated at VND39.1 million, exceeding the target of VND35 million set by the District Party Congress, 1.8 times that of 2015. Among 29 major targets, 20 exceeded the targets set by the Congress, four met the plans and five underperformed versus the plans. The success of the 23rd Party Congress (2015 - 2020 term) was an important milestone in the district development progress. Among five key programs, urban development was an important program aimed to boost inclusive development of Ngoc Lac district. In 2017, Ngoc Lac Town with its planned expansion area was recognized as a Grade 4 urban area. In 2019, the administrative boundary of Ngoc Lac Town was expanded from 173 ha to 3,514 ha, with more than 22,000 residents. Synchronous economic, social, cultural and public infrastructure was developed.

The production value expanded 14.3% in the 2016 - 2020 period, higher than the target of 14% set by the Party Congress. The economic structure was shifted toward an expected pattern where the share of agriculture, forestry and fishery decreased from 35.4% in 2015 to 25.2% in 2020, the share of industry and construction increased from 23.1% to 32.2%; and the share of services climbed from 41.4% to 42.6%.

Trade and service developed in both size, type and quality. This sector expanded by 17.3% annually on average. Commercial infrastructure was invested and developed to diversify distribution

channels. Trade centers, supermarkets and retail systems were invested and put into operation. The business investment environment was improved and investment promotion was strengthened to attract investment resources for development. In the 2016 - 2020 period (till the end of June 2020), 56 projects were granted investment licenses with a total registered capital of VND3 trillion. Some projects were completed and put into operation, including Viet Pan Pacific Garment Plant, Cam Hoang Garment Plant, Phuc Thinh Organic Fertilizer Plant, Ngoc Lac Supermarket and Commercial Concrete Mixing Plant. The district attracted some large-scale livestock projects like high-tech export chicken farm clusters in Minh Tien and Lam Son communes that helped increase local employment and economic restructuring.

Notably, in agricultural production, the District Party Committee introduced high-yield and high-quality crop varieties to help farmers increase income. Agricultural production, including forestry and fishery, developed with higher productivity, quality and efficiency. The value of agricultural production was estimated at VND1,983 billion in 2020, up to 33% higher than that in 2015. The total annual food output was estimated at 60,500 tons, higher than the target 55,500 tons). In 2020, the value of agricultural production was forecast at VND1,679 billion, 1.26 times higher than that in 2015; converted 215.8 ha of low-yield rice land and 217 ha of low-yield sugarcane land for higher-yield crops; and devoted 108.2 ha of land for high-tech livestock value chains. Some high-tech farming models are quite effective, including a 2-ha watermelon farm in a membrane house in Lam Son, Minh Son and Kien Tho communes; a 4-ha organic vegetable farm in Thuy Son and Ngoc Son communes; and seedless litchi, Israeli avocado and dragon fruit farming invested by Ho Guom - Song Am Hi-Tech Agriculture Co., Ltd. Many households adopted new fruit trees with a high economic value like Thai sugar apple, Thai jackfruit and Taiwanese guava. Livestock was dramatically changed, strongly shifted from small-scale farming to large-scale commercial farming to better control disease outbreaks. At present, the district has 196 family-run farms and 53 company-run livestock farms of medium and large scale.

Local people have seen clear changes in Ngoc Lac over the years. The most impressive is the look of the modern rural traffic system and livelihood infrastructure. In addition to strong economic development, the district also achieved good results in society, culture, sports and healthcare, meeting new development requirements. The quality of cultural, information and sporting activities was enhanced. Political, social and economic tasks, important events and major public holidays were informed to local people. The conservation, restoration and promotion of historical monuments and intangible cultural heritages was focused. The "All people unite to build a cultural life" movement produced good results. The healthcare for the people was enhanced, with better quality of medical examination and treatment. Ngoc Lac Hospital was invested with better facilities and equipment.

With Party leadership and public unity, Ngoc Lac district is confident to realize the goal of being a Grade 4 urban area in the west of Thanh Hoa province. With a new position and force, the Party and people of Ngoc Lac will successfully achieve all assigned tasks although there are many new challenging paths. The strength of public unity and political determination will be driving forces for Ngoc Lac to make new dramatic changes, promote achievements and seize opportunities, overcoming all difficulties and challenges on the way to achieve its goals. ■

Leading Pharmaceutical Brand in Vietnam



Mr. To Hong Thai, Chairman of Merap Group

Merap Group is one of the leading pharmaceutical groups in Vietnam, the owner of many leading brands such as OSLA Eye Drops, XISAT Deep Sea Water, MECEFIX BE Antibiotic and EFODYL. Merap Group's products have gained trust in the quality, effectiveness of treatment and the trust of doctors and pharmacists, as well as consumers. Maintaining core values, developing a sustainable differentiated value chain, focusing on technology and human development have helped Merap Group become successful with an average sales growth of 25% over many years.

DUY BINH

Doing business with responsibility and promoting discipline at work

Over 21 years of development, from a small office in Hanoi, Merap has now had a modern factory in Hung Yen and a team of nearly 700 employees who are dynamic, young and enthusiastic, working across the nation. From the business philosophy of increasing company value based on suitable people value, Merap has created a favorable working environment for their staff to develop their full capacity and created conditions for them to have promotion opportunities.

During 21 years of operation, Merap Group has also experienced many ups and downs, but in spite of circumstances, Merap has still determined to move forward, overcome all difficulties, create confidence for employees so that they can feel secure to stay and work. Merap is always proud of having a team including qualified associates and employees who are always dedicated to the development of the company.

Mr. To Hong Thai, Chairman of the Board of Merap Group, shared: "Living by principles, living responsibly, living with value are the cultural values to create Merap's strength and they are Merap's business development strategy and goals". This strategy is always pursued and does not change in the development direction of the company. As a business directly related to human health, the company's products must ensure high applicability and best quality, minimizing the side effects to users. For the people of Merap, the company always creates the best working environment, where employees can maximize their abilities. They are arranged according to their own positions of competency; each employee must understand their responsibilities and duties, because a weak link will lead to a weak chain and affect the entire





Merap Group organizes many programs to team up its members, encouraging them to change for the better

company's development. Therefore, discipline is also one of the top factors always paid attention to by the company.

In addition, the company has paid to the application of information technology to management and administration. Merap has established a digital transformation committee to specialize in solving problems of digital technology application in production and business activities. It has researched and applied digital technology to management software. It has step by step digitized data in market research and analysis, planning, implementation of plans, predictive analysis and risk prevention in production and business, thereby helping to improve quality and productivity of products, reducing waste, damage, and reducing errors of subjective factors.

All of these factors have made Merap one of the leading companies in the Vietnamese pharmaceutical industry. Merap is now the owner of many leading brands such as OSLA Eye Drops, XISAT Deep Sea Water, MECEFIF BE Antibiotic, EFODYL, Benita Nasal Sprays, Meseca. Merap Group's products have received trust in their quality, treatment effectiveness and the trust of doctors and pharmacists, as well as consumers.

Focusing on building the Merap culture

Corporate culture is the soul and an intangible asset, so Merap

has paid special attention to corporate culture development. It can be seen that in Merap Group, corporate culture is also an important factor that unites members of Merap. In a diverse group of people with different professional and cultural qualifications, cognitive levels, culture is the glue that binds the collective, creating solidarity, unanimity and determination to implement the goals that Merap Group is pursuing.

"With good corporate culture, Merap will have many advantages in attracting high-quality human resources with good expertise, preventing "brain drain" which is common nowadays. On the other hand, with the trend of globalization and international economic integration, enterprises must always be creative and innovative in order to survive and develop. Through building corporate culture, we will promote creative human resources, create more product value and profit for the business. We determine that corporate culture cannot be implemented in a single day, but is a long term process requiring a contribution from each individual. First of all, it is the will, the determination to build the culture of the business leaders, then sharing, propagating and educating the personnel with the determination, consensus and cooperation of the various units in the business. When corporate culture is built and implemented regularly, daily, it will enhance the working spirit of human resources and the reputation of each individual's work, such as reputable superiors with subordinates, subordinates having prestige with superiors. The work efficiency will also increase and surely products will be more competitive, so Merap Group is built like a great family, where each individual must understand his responsibilities and roles," added Mr. To Hong Thai.

As an enterprise that has invested in Hung Yen for many years, evaluating the investment environment of the province, Mr. Thai also said Hung Yen province had the advantage of geographical location, convenient traffic and abundant labor force. Over the past years, the province has issued many policies to attract investments and many mechanisms and policies to support investors. However, in order to attract more investments, Hung Yen needs to invest in transport infrastructure to connect industrial parks with major national highways. At the same time, there should be many policies to attract workers, promote vocational training for local workers in accordance with the needs of businesses investing in the province, build condominiums suitable for workers, and connect schools, hospitals, markets, supermarkets, entertainment areas with industrial parks. ■



AN DINH TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT COMPANY

Successful Breakthrough in Rice Export



Mr. Nguyen Thanh Nhi, Director of An Dinh Technology Development and Investment Co., Ltd

Established in 2005, An Dinh Technology Development and Investment Co., Ltd has continuously strived to obtain many achievements. In particular, An Dinh has contributed to enhancing the value of Vietnam's rice products in difficult markets such as Europe, America and Japan, and surpassed major competitors such as Thailand and India in the international rice markets.

HA THANH

Born and raised in Thai Binh, engineer Nguyen Thanh Nhi felt the hardships of the rice farmers. The land was crowded and the fields were mixed with old production methods; farmers had no motivation to cultivate rice due to unstable income. Therefore, from the very first days after graduating from Hanoi University of Agriculture 1 and working at the Institute of Agricultural Genetics, engineer Nguyen Thanh Nhi was passionate about how to help rural farmers. From his perspective, if the farmers could find ways to reduce the labor-intensive work, they could produce better rice seeds and yield more profit.

That is the reason engineer Nguyen Thanh Nhi founded An Dinh Technology Development and Investment Co., Ltd, with a mission of enhancing the value and creating a solid position for Vietnam's rice products in the market. To make this happen, the company strictly follows the process of safe rice production and ensures nutrition and health for people: All the process of planting (seeding, soil making), fertilizing, planting protection drugs to harvest and post-harvest preservation has integrated the most advanced technology.

Identifying Japan as a country where people take rice as main food and the country with the most modern rice production and processing level in the world, Mr. Nhi contacted leading experts in Japan to learn about the most famous Japanese Japonica rice varieties to come up with a Japonica rice production process suitable for weather and soil conditions in Vietnam.

The pilot production was carried out on a number of "sample fields" at home in An Dinh commune, Hung Ha district, Thai Binh province. Success came from the first rice crop of 2005. The rice varieties all grew quite well, which helped An Dinh have the first products sold to the market. However, they faced new challenges of lack of production land, machines, technology, markets and crops.

Mr. Nhi went directly to each field and spent a lot of time training farmers to do their jobs. The outcome surprised everyone and helped An Dinh continue to replicate the models to other areas of Thai Binh and other provinces such as Hung Yen, Nam Dinh, Hai Duong, Hai Phong, Bac Giang and some of Mekong Delta provinces. Along with completing the production process, Mr. Nhi and his Japanese partners researched, designed as well as gradually purchased some modern machinery and equipment to improve the quality of rice. As a result, An Dinh quickly exported higher quality rice products to more markets.

In 2010, An Dinh continued to invest in a Japanese rice factory with drying systems, warehouses, silos, equipment



An Dinh deploys the production of the best rice in the world - ST25 fragrant rice, developed by Labour Hero Ho Quang Cua (M)



lines, and advanced technology for post-harvesting rice. The general equipment standardized in Japan, Thailand and Vietnam has been installed in each stage. The factory can dry 500 tons of fresh rice and about 100 tons of high-grade rice products per day, with a total investment of tens of millions of USD on an area of 2.4 hectares in Ngoc Lam Industrial Park in Hung Yen province. It is considered a base for processing the high-quality Japanese rice products in line with the ISO 22000: 2005 standards; HACCP and Halal standards.

Nhat An Dinh rice brand has gained more and more trust from customers. With more than 70% of market share



nationwide, it's easy to find Nhat An Dinh rice in supermarket chains such as Aeon, BigC, Family Mart, Intimex, and Kmart. An Dinh rice is still available in many Korean and Japanese restaurants nationwide. To choose suitable products, you can access the official website of An Dinh: <http://andinh.com.vn>.

Technology has helped An Dinh produce rice successfully. 100% of the seeds of the company are imported directly from Japan. The Japanese rice products, such as Koshi Hikari, Akita Komachi, and Koshi Hikari, are produced under a clean agricultural process. Therefore, these products still retain the delicious taste, characteristic flexibility and high nutritional content of the land of the rising sun, but are suitable for the physical needs of Vietnamese people, especially children, the elderly and pregnant women. Japanese rice produced by An Dinh has gained the trust of tens of thousands of Japanese and Korean customers living and working in Vietnam for many years.

Currently, due to the increasing demand of Vietnamese rice products of high quality and safety, An Dinh has deployed the production of specialty rice ST24, ST25 in Soc Trang and Bac Lieu provinces. These are particularly delicious rice varieties selected by Labor Hero Ho Quang Cua. An Dinh has developed the brand of fragrant rice "TOMRICE", which limits the use of fertilizers and does not use preservatives toxic to plant protection. This helps the company's products meet export standards to the EU and bring a great taste to the Vietnamese people.

An Dinh has joined hands with other domestic enterprises to bring the Vietnamese brand to many markets like Australia, New Zealand, Russia, the U.S, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong (China), Italy and Poland. In particular, An Dinh's rice has actually met the most stringent quality criteria in the world.

From 2017 to 2020, An Dinh was selected to participate in the competition in the AVERP Project, a project on sustainable rice production, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In the spring crop of 2019 and the spring crop of 2020, An Dinh won the first and second prizes awarded by the Governments of the UK, Australia, Canada, the U.S and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with bonuses of up to US\$300,000. Its rice grains have surpassed more than 600 indicators of chemical residues and pesticides, and are eligible to enter Japan, the most demanding market in the world. The Itochu Group as the contractor of the Government of Japan has become the importer of the company since May 2020.

With efforts to build a reputation from quality, An Dinh has enhanced the value of Vietnamese rice products, bringing confidence to farmers and truly becoming a trustworthy brand and the best global rice brand. ■



Preparing for Post-Pandemic Tourism

According to Mr. Pham Tien Dung, Vice Chairman of the Hanoi UNESCO Travel Club, after tourism business activities have been suspended for a long time due to the Covid-19 pandemic, instead of giving up, travel businesses have started to make route surveys, study the services and add new tours so that they can be put into operation as soon as the new status is activated.

With the desire to meet the needs of developing new products and markets in 2021, S-Travel Lao Cai Company will organize program "Spring Festival Travel in borders and Lucky Festival 2021" on March 6-8 with the route Hanoi - Bac Quang - Hoang Su Phi - Xin Man - Bac Ha - Bao Ha - Hanoi to facilitate travel agencies to survey and update the conditions of infrastructure, accommodation and featured tourism products in some destinations of Ha Giang and Lao Cai, thereby building specific products. The tour is expected to deliver a different feeling in the highlands and remote areas. S-Travel builds tour itineraries for travel companies to explore the beauty of Hoang Su Phi, Xin Man and Bac Ha at spring time.

The VGREEN Sustainable Tourism Club will also cooperate with the Hanoi Travel Association to organize a Northwest Caravan Tour during Bauhinia variegata blooming season on March 12-16 to promote post-Covid-19 pandemic tourism.

"Sustainable tourism is our driving force to implement a program of responsible tourism recovery; starting with coming to the Northwest mountainous area in the middle of Bauhinia variegata blooming season; experiencing by driving car, at first

The recent Covid-19 pandemic wave has dealt a strong blow to Vietnamese travel companies as tourism had a new opportunity during spring festival travel at the beginning of the year. Facing the new situation, travel businesses have to constantly transform themselves to maintain operations to suit the new situation and to prepare operational plans to be ready for post-pandemic tours.

GIANG TU

to relieve the fears of going together; complying with the social distancing; still convenient enough to experience and have the best feeling about the charming land and many other interesting things," said Mr. Phung Quang Thang, Director of Hanoitourist.

From April 1-6, 2021, VietPromotion Group will cooperate with Nha Trang Hotel and Travel Union to organize the program "the blue sea and the forest" with many special destinations such as Sheep Field and Fairy Stream (Phan Rang), Rai Cave, Kinh Beach (Binh Hung); Draynur Waterfall - the most majestic waterfall, KOTAM tourist area, YALY hydropower, KoTum wooden church; KonKlor suspension bridge - the most beautiful and biggest industrial suspension bridge in the Central Highlands. According to the organizers, the program is designed to provide opportunities for Northern, Central and Southern travel agencies to survey destinations in the South Central Regions and the Central Highlands, thereby updating their latest services and land tours as a basis for building tourism products per unit.

The tours are designed with a new nuance and established by travel businesses during the temporary suspension of tourism activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic with the desire that when the pandemic is completely controlled, it will be used to welcome tourists. April is also considered a festive season, the peak tourism season for travel businesses. Therefore, this is also seen as a new vital opportunity for businesses. Currently, the Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam has been basically controlled, and tourism activities need to be restarted to welcome the new season of tourists. ■



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