

ASIAMONEY

AWARDS

Asia's best-managed companies

A strong corporate vision, canny use of capital and an eye for detail - all these qualities separated the region's best companies from the rest in 2007. ASIAMONEY talks to fund managers and analysts to determine which are the best-managed small, medium- and large-cap corporations across the region.

THAILAND

MEDIUM-CAP CORPORATE OF THE YEAR

Thoresen Thai Agencies

Dry bulk shipping company Thoresen Thai Agencies (TTA) has had a stellar year thanks in large part to soaring demand for freight from regional giants India and China as well as the high level of regional trade in commodities. In the past 12 months, TTA's shares have doubled from Bt26 to Bt52.

For their part, analysts believe that the 32-year-old company offers plenty more upside. "Thoresen Thai is an extremely well managed company which should be priced like any other regional shipping counter," says the head of one major securities house in Bangkok.

Poramet Tongbua, head of research at Tisco Research, agrees. With high time charter rates set to continue, Tisco expects TTA to achieve record earnings in 2008 of Bt6.5 billion, a rise of 28%. Furthermore Tisco projects earnings growth of 22% per annum between 2008 and 2011.

The company's successful diversification into the high-margin offshore oil and gas market is also reaping dividends. In October, TTA listed its majority-owned subsidiary Mermaid Maritime on the Singapore Stock Exchange, raising S\$218 million (US\$151.6 million).

The funds will be used to expand Mermaid Maritime's fast growing drilling and engineering services. Poramet expects this business to reduce TTA's reliance on the more cyclical shipping revenues.

TTA notched up another milestone in September when it successfully raised US\$169 million from the sale of convertible bonds. The company will use the proceeds to fund its fleet renewal and expansion plans.