

Vietnam national day

Strategic partnership with Japan strengthened to a higher level

Nguyen Phu Binh
AMBASSADOR OF VIETNAM

Every year, the Vietnamese people in the country and overseas celebrate the National Day of Vietnam on Sept. 2 with a spirit of patriotism and great enthusiasm.

On this day 66 years ago, the foundation of an independent country wherein the people of Vietnam could live in freedom, perform their aspirations and shape their lives according to their values was proclaimed by President Ho Chi Minh as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which is the predecessor to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam today.

In this year, this solemn anniversary will be commemorated with a greater jubilation as 2011 is the watershed marked with the success of the 11th

Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam that has set forth a comprehensive strategy for the country to enter into a new decade of development, the building of an industrialized economy by 2020.

Over the past 20 years with the popular "doi moi" (renovation) process, the economy has escaped from a poor state and expanded more than twice over the last decade at a continuous and high growth rate of 7.26 percent annually, resulting in a drastic threefold increase in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. These important economic achievements have upgraded the country to the median ranking from a low-income status and placed a firm foundation for implementing the strategic targets for 2020.

On this historic occasion, I would like, on behalf of the Vietnamese government and people, my compatriots in Japan and myself, to express our

respectful and sincere greetings to Their Imperial Majesties the Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako, the Imperial Family, as well as to the government and Diet members of Japan and all the friendly Japanese people, for their valuable cooperation and assistance for our cause of national construction and development.

Since the diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and Japan was established, our two countries and peoples have enjoyed very cordial and friendly relations, which have steadily advanced to new highs after every stage through nearly 40 years of development. Frequent exchanges of visits by top leaders and high-level dialogues on political and economic affairs, and people-to-people exchange between the two countries have strongly augmented bilateral ties. The Japan-Vietnam Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia concluded in 2009 between the two countries reflects the significance of Japan for Vietnam as a major development partner, and Vietnam has become a strategic destination for investment from Japan and a reliable factor to support peace and stability in Asia. A series of agreements reached between the two governments on investment promotion and protection, double taxation avoidance, science and technology cooperation, etc., and especially the Vietnam-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (VJEPA), the first bilateral free trade accord

of Vietnam effective in 2009, have formed a comprehensive framework to facilitate a considerable increase in the bilateral economic transactions. In 2010, Vietnam-Japan trade value mounted to a record of \$16.74 billion and the corresponding \$11 billion for the first eight months of 2011 predicts another peak in bilateral trade for the current year, making Japan the third largest trade partner and the second biggest export market of Vietnam.

By 2011, Japanese official development assistance (ODA) for Vietnam has risen to over \$19 billion, taking up more than 30 percent of the total development aid from the country's 51 donors and becoming one of the most important financial supports for major infrastructure projects in Vietnam. Fast expansion in road and transportation networks, urbanization, electricity and water supply, and health care services in Vietnam has, on one hand, brought enormous improvement to the people's living and laid an important basis for the country's future development goals. On the other hand, it has created tremendous facilitation for Japanese investment.

Vietnam also offers a wide range of opportunities for Japanese companies in various sectors, including mining, banking, energy development, power generation and food processing. The modality of public-private partnerships (PPP) recently launched by the Vietnamese government has attracted and would well serve as the pipeline for a greater contribution of the Japanese private sector to large



Solidarity: H.E. President Truong Tan Sang, at the time a top party leader, consoles people affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake in the city of Asahi, Chiba Prefecture, on June 3. EMBASSY OF VIETNAM

infrastructure development projects in Vietnam. At present, Japan possesses over 1,500 foreign direct investment (FDI) projects, with a total capital of \$21.6 billion, ranking in the top five among 92 countries and territories having investment in Vietnam. The presence of leading names, such as Toyota, Honda, Canon, Hitachi, Sumitomo and Mitsubishi, in big projects for industrial production and manufacturing in the country is reflective of Vietnam's market potential.

The acceleration of the strategic partnership was continued with the official visit by Prime Minister Naoto Kan to Vietnam in 2010. In this visit, the determination by both sides on maintaining annual summit-level visits as well as strengthening dialogue channels at all levels and in all areas was reaffirmed.

On the economic relationship, the two governments' leaders agreed to a closer bilateral collaboration and Japan's assistance for Vietnam's priority infrastructure projects, and other significant cooperation, including nuclear energy development and rare earths exploitation.

The year 2011 is the most challenging for Japan. The Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11 that heavily damaged the Tohoku region and caused a huge human loss in Japan was a hard challenge for the Japanese people. Through these difficult days, we have witnessed with great admiration the resilience and strong resolve of the Japanese people to overcome all the hardships and we are confident Japan will emerge more prosperous from such a hard challenge.

Since the first days of the disaster, the government and people of Vietnam have shown their strong solidarity with the friendly people of Japan in a nationwide movement mobilized among all walks of life in Vietnam to raise funds for the affected people in Japan and tons of relief goods were sent by the government of Vietnam to the disaster areas. The president of Vietnam, H.E. Truong Tan Sang, then a top party leader, visited the affected people in the city of Asahi, Chiba Prefecture, and offered his condolences for those who lost their lives. This was a humble effort to sincerely express our gratitude to the Japanese people for their valuable assistance during our natural calamities and economic development. We are now happier to have seen the factories in the affected areas as the business in the streets revitalized faster

than expected. In 2013, Vietnam and Japan will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations. This time will be a great, joyful occasion for our two peoples as the cooperation between the two nations, after every stage of evolution over the past years, has expanded to a great extent and developed to the depth of strategic substance. With the formation of a new government in Vietnam in early August, the official visit to Japan by the current prime minister of Vietnam, H.E. Nguyen Tan Dung, which is expected to happen in the last months of 2011, would be of utmost importance to enforce more powerful momentum to further consolidate and strengthen the close and friendly relationship between our two countries.



Natural beauty: Located in northeastern Vietnam, Ha Long Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a popular tourist destination. EMBASSY OF VIETNAM

New cooperative frameworks help to drive growth in Vietnam

Susumu Kato and Kyohei Takahashi
CHAIRMAN AND COCHAIRMAN,
JAPAN-VIETNAM ECONOMIC
COMMITTEE, KEIDANREN

On behalf of Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), we offer our heartfelt congratulations to the people of Vietnam on the occasion of their 66th National Day. This year, a new government has taken office in Vietnam. We would like to take this opportunity to offer our congratulations and to express our sincere hope that the relationship between our two countries will continue to go from strength to strength under Vietnam's new leadership.

We are profoundly grateful for all the donations, emergency supplies, and other assistance given by so many people from the public and private sectors in Vietnam following the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11. Many Vietnamese government leaders visited Japan after the disaster to offer their support for reconstruction efforts, including then Permanent Secretariat Member Truong Tan Sang, Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai and then Planning and Investment Minister Vo Hong Phuc. These



Kato Takahashi

visits were a source of great encouragement at a time of national crisis.

Besides doing everything we can to help with reconstruction in the disaster areas, Keidanren is keenly aware of the importance of working to maintain and strengthen our relationships with other countries in order to allow Japan to fulfill its role in the world economy. Building an even stronger relationship with Vietnam is an important part of these efforts. In concrete terms, we will focus on cooperation in three areas that we believe are vital for sustainable growth in Vietnam.

The first is infrastructure development. At present, projects are moving forward to develop hard infrastructure, such as highways, high-speed rail, power stations, port facilities, and airports, as well as the development of the customs system and

training of human resources in infrastructure-related fields. The Japanese business community hopes to make a contribution to balancing Vietnam's environmental and economic policies by providing Japan's cutting-edge technology in such fields as disaster resistance and energy efficiency.

The second area involves the development of supporting industries. Early action on this issue is crucial in order to maintain Vietnam's competitiveness as a manufacturing base. On Sept. 5, Keidanren will cohost a forum in Tokyo with the Vietnamese Ministry of Planning and Investment on industrial investment for supporting industries, during which discussions will be held on potential areas for cooperation in the future. We hope that the Vietnamese government will take innovative measures to induce foreign investment, including a system of preferential taxation.

The third area to be addressed is human resources development, where policies are needed to resolve the current shortage of highly skilled workers. Keidanren will make a contribution in this area by sponsoring scholarships for univer-

sity students in Vietnam and providing support for establishing courses on Japanese law in Vietnamese universities. This is an issue that requires positive action on a government level.

This year, two cooperative frameworks were launched to drive progress on these issues. One of these was the ministerial-level policy dialogue that started in May. This involves public and private sector participation from Japan and Vietnam and is designed to encourage cooperative projects between the two countries. Then, in July, the fourth phase of the Japan-Vietnam Joint Initiative began. Under this initiative, representatives from the public and private sectors in both countries will work together to resolve issues affecting the business environment in Vietnam and to evaluate the results. Utilizing these frameworks to encourage cooperation in the three fields described above, Keidanren will work to make a continuing contribution to Vietnam's industrialization and modernization targets by the year 2020.

In closing, allow us to express once again our warmest congratulations to the people of Vietnam on this anniversary of their national independence.



Symbol: The Hanoi Flag Tower, part of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel complex, was completed in 1812 and is one of the most widely recognized landmarks in Hanoi. EMBASSY OF VIETNAM

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to the People of

the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

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Their National Day

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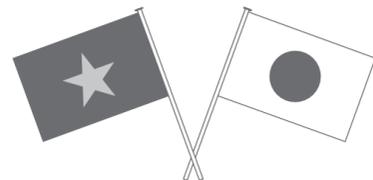
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