

# Vietnamese president's visit

## Strong ties bind Vietnam, Japan

Truong Tan Sang  
PRESIDENT OF VIETNAM

In September 1973, diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Japan were officially established, opening up a new era in the two countries' relations. But the relationship between our people traces back long before that. Despite geographical distance, cultural similarities and long-standing relations have been natural bonds that joined our two countries and our people together, creating the solid cultural, historical and social foundation for our relations today.

We note with satisfaction that over the last 40 years, especially since the establishment of strategic partnership for peace and prosperity in Asia between our two nations in 2009, the friendship and comprehensive cooperation between Vietnam and Japan have been growing by leaps and bounds in all areas.

We have been able to forge solid political trust and effective cooperation between our two countries through frequent visits and meetings at various levels, especially at the higher ranks. Many dialogue mechanisms were also established, including the Vietnam-Japan Cooperation Committee headed by the two foreign ministers, the Strategic Partnership Dialogue and other mechanisms that focus on specific areas of cooperation. The sound development of political relations has created a favorable environment for promoting comprehensive cooperation between our two countries.

In terms of economic cooperation, Japan is currently among Vietnam's leading development partners, with the largest amount of official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment. Over the last 20 years, Japanese ODA has played a significant role in Vietnam's efforts for socioeconomic development, human resources development and poverty reduction.



### Brief profile of President Sang

- Born on Jan. 21, 1949; married with two children
- Qualification: BA in Law
- 1966-1975: joined the revolution
- 1975-1983: Secretary of Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union of Ho Chi Minh City suburban farms and agricultural economic units
- 1983-1986: In charge of voluntary youth forces, rural economic recovery and forestry work of Ho Chi Minh City
- 1986-1991: Member of City Standing Committee of the Party, Secretary of Binh Chanh District Party Committee, Ho Chi Minh City; Director of Ho Chi Minh City Department of Agriculture
- 1991-1996: Member of the Central Party, Deputy Secretary of City Committee of the Party, Chairman of Ho Chi Minh City's People Committee
- 1996-2000: Member of the Politburo, Secretary of Ho Chi Minh City's Party Committee
- 2000-2006: Member of the Politburo, Head of the Central Board of Economic
- 2006-2011: Member of the Politburo, Standing member of the Central Party Committee's Secretariat
- July, 2011 to present: President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, elected by the 13th National Assembly

These funds have also served as positive support to business and investment activities of Japanese firms in Vietnam, thus raising the effectiveness of bilateral cooperation. Within 10 years, bilateral trade has increased

five-fold, reaching \$25.3 billion in 2013. According to studies conducted by the Japan External Trade Organization, 70 percent of Japanese firms currently investing in Vietnam want to expand their operations. Coop-

eration also blossoms in other areas. Each year, approximately 600,000 Japanese travel to Vietnam, whereas the number of Vietnamese students in Japan exceeded 15,000 in 2013, marking a three-fold increase in just three years. Additionally, Japanese is among the foreign languages tested on Vietnam's high school graduation exams.

A unique feature of our bilateral relations is the close interaction between our people along with our shared cultural values. Records show that over 1,000 years ago, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk named Buttsu traveled to Nara, Japan to attend the Eye-Opening Ceremony of the Buddha Statue at Todaiji Temple. In Hoi An, a city in central Vietnam, "Japanese inns" built by Japanese merchants still stand today. Today, Vietnamese people, especially the younger generation, are interested in Japanese cultural events such as sakura (cherry blossom) viewing, enjoying Japanese food and learning about the tea ceremony. On the other hand, Tokyo's Vietnam Festival, which takes place every autumn, has become a rendezvous for Japanese friends who love Vietnam.

Since the introduction of reforms 30 years ago, Vietnam is steadily progressing on its path toward building a nation of prosperity, equality, democracy and civilization and achieving a fundamental goal of becoming an industrialized country by 2020. Vietnam has been an active and responsible member of the international community, including ASEAN and various regional and global organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forums, and the Asia-Europe Meeting. It is now working with Japan and other partners towards the finalization of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.



Located near Hai Van Pass in central Vietnam, Lang Co Bay attracts tourists with its beautiful sand dunes and azure ocean waters, surrounded by emerald green mountains and tropical forests. HOANG QUANG

We take joy in the economic achievements by Japanese people in recent years. In the midst of global and regional economic turmoil, Japan recorded an impressive GDP growth of 1.7 percent in 2013. Being an economic giant of the region and the world, Japan's economic growth is a key driver of common prosperity for Asia. In that regard, we wish to congratulate and place our confidence in the future of Japan and its people.

Vietnam looks forward to

working with Japan in bringing our partnership to a higher level with profound political trust and comprehensive, effective cooperation. This is also a major issue to be discussed with Japanese leaders during my state visit to Japan. My message in the dialogue with Japanese businesses is that Vietnam always welcomes their investment and we are striving to be an attractive destination for Japanese investors. What we are aiming at is not just 70 percent, but 100 percent of

existing Japanese companies in Vietnam expanding their investment and business in Vietnam on a long-term basis. The state, government and people of Vietnam will give them the most favorable conditions.

Still, there remains vast potential for cooperation between Vietnam and Japan given our mutual trust and strengths, which can complement each other for joint development. Most importantly, we are working together to realize these po-

tentials and joining hands for mutual support, innovation and creativity to adapt to a changing world. Building on the momentum of our excellent relations, driven by the aspirations and determination of both governments and people, I am fully confident in the vigorous development of the Vietnam-Japan friendship delivering practical benefits to our people and actively contributing to peace, stability and prosperity of the region and the world.

## Meaningful cooperation at strategic levels

Doan Xuan Hung  
AMBASSADOR OF VIETNAM

At the invitation of Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, H.E. President



Truong Tan Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and his wife Madam Mai Thi Hanh is paying a state visit to Japan through March 19. They are the first national

guests of Japan in 2014. The visit of President Sang occurs amid strong growth in Vietnam-Japan relations, with great strides being made in many areas, especially following the official establishment of a strategic partnership in 2009. Bilateral relations have made remarkable, concrete and profound progress not only in economics, diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges, but also in science and technology, security and defense and other areas.

The fact that President Sang was invited to visit Japan as a national guest illustrates Japan's appreciation of Vietnam and the depth of Vietnam-Japan friendship and cooperation. This visit is even more significant against the backdrop of august events held in the 2013, the Vietnam-Japan Friendship Year, to commemorate 40 years of diplomatic ties. In particular, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe chose Vietnam as the destination for his first visit abroad in 2013 after his inauguration and later that same year received Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and his wife on an official visit to Japan. This is undoubtedly a new highlight in Vietnam-Japan dip-

lomatic relations.

Ever since Vietnam started the international integration process in the early 1990s, Japan has always been an active, trusted and effective partner of Vietnam's national construction and development drive. Japan is Vietnam's largest ODA provider, with aid steadily increasing over the years. So far, Japan's total committed ODA is approximately \$22 billion and Japanese experts consider Vietnam a model for effective use of ODA. In fact, Japan has been playing an instrumental role in Vietnam's infrastructure development as well as in its efforts to reduce poverty and improve the livelihood of people in both urban and rural areas.

Japan is also the largest foreign direct investor in Vietnam with 2127 valid projects and total registered capital of \$34.5 billion as of the end of 2013. The majority of these investments are in manufacturing, accounting for 82 percent of capital invested in this sector. Most investment projects in Vietnam have yielded decent returns to Japanese investors and significantly contributed to the development of domestic industries and the overall economic growth of Vietnam. Additionally, Japan is also one of Vietnam's leading trade partners. Bilateral trade increased at an average annual pace of 17 percent from 2005 to 2012, reaching \$25.3 billion in 2013, against \$1.9 billion, \$8.5 billion and \$16.8 billion recorded in 1993, 2005 and 2010 respectively. The product mix is more and more diverse, meeting the needs and potential of each country. In terms of tourism, Japan is among the countries with the largest number of visitors to Vietnam. That number is constantly growing, reaching

600,000 in 2013, for a 4.8 percent year-on-year increase. In addition, traveling to and studying in Japan has recently been a growing trend for Vietnamese. According to Japanese statistics, the number of Vietnamese entering Japan surged 53 percent in 2013.

The depth of the Vietnam-Japan strategic partnership is clearly shown in strengthened security and defense cooperation. Both the chief and deputy chief of the general staff of the Vietnam People's Army visited Japan in 2013. Japan's minister of defense, special advisor and the chief of staff of the Joint Staff of the Japan Self Defense Forces have all visited Vietnam. Security dialogues have occurred frequently at various levels, including at the vice minister of defense level. Training and development cooperation have been expanded to the army, navy and coast guard. In particular, Vietnam and Japan have had meaningful consultations on sending forces to join United Nations peacekeeping operations. Vietnamese Vice Minister of Defense Nguyen Chi Vinh has visited the Japanese PKO combat engineer unit in South Sudan. With a straightforward and open approach to meetings, defense officials from both sides have achieved common understanding regarding active participation and consultation in multilateral forums such as ADMM+, ARF and others. The countries have also settled maritime territorial disputes through peaceful negotiation in compliance with international laws, especially the 1982 UNCLOS.

Vietnam and Japan understand very well that stable, long-term and substantive growth of bilateral relations is important

not only to each country but also to peace, stability, cooperation and prosperity in the region. To ASEAN, Vietnam is a proactive and responsible member, while Japan is an important partner. Vietnam and Japan are actively cooperating in the process of building the ASEAN community, thus increasing connectivity in ASEAN and East Asia. Vietnam stands ready to strengthen cooperation with Japan in different forums, including ASEAN mechanisms, Mekong sub-region cooperation, EAS, APEC and recently TPP negotiations. At the international level, Vietnam and Japan have been maintaining effective cooperation and mutual support in U.N. forums.

A positive feature of Vietnam-Japan relations are frequent and strongly promoted high-level exchanges. This not only helps forge close and trusted relationships between leaders of both countries but also creates the momentum for bold, far-reaching decisions in promoting bilateral relations. During this visit, besides official protocol, President Sang will hold talks with Prime Minister Abe, address the Diet and meet with leaders of political parties, development institutions, large businesses and Vietnam-Japan friendship organizations. The president will also spend a day visiting agricultural production sites in Ibaraki Prefecture. Joining the president will be leaders of ministries, agencies, local governments and large Vietnamese firms. I am certain that, with such an intensive and substantive agenda, this visit will be a great success, giving new momentum to moving the Vietnam-Japan strategic partnership to a higher, more comprehensive and meaningful level.

**Our Heartiest Welcome**  
to His Excellency Truong Tan Sang,  
President of  
the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,  
on the Occasion of  
His State Visit to Japan



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