

**INTERVIEW OF HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA BY
VIETNAMESE NEWS AGENCY PRIOR TO HIS STATE VISIT
TO VIETNAM FROM SEPTEMBER 14 TO 17, 2014**

Question 1: Your Excellency, the warm friendship between Vietnam and India founded by Vietnam's President Ho Chi Minh and India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has been fostered by successive generations of leaders and people of both countries. How do you assess the relations between two countries today?

A. Bilateral relations between India and Vietnam are excellent. They have never been better than what they are today. Our Strategic Partnership, which was established in 2007, is now entering its eighth year of implementation. In recent years, our relations have witnessed a continuous broadening and deepening in all aspects. Our relations are marked by strong mutual trust, understanding, support and a convergence of views on various regional and international issues. The foundation of friendship between India and Vietnam laid by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh has flourished over the years and has brought us to a high point today. In India, we have great admiration for the Vietnamese people, their fortitude, courage and for their determination to succeed against odds. I am confident that our mutual goodwill can be translated into further mutually beneficial cooperation, as there is immense potential for future cooperation.

Moreover, our partnership is also beneficial to ASEAN and the region beyond.

During my visit to Vietnam in the coming days, I look forward to strengthening this partnership through discussions with my counterpart, His Excellency President Truong Tan Sang and other leaders of Vietnam.

Question 2: Could you please assess the progress in cooperation under the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership between Vietnam and India, 2007?

A. In 2007, we decided to elevate our bilateral relations to a strategic partnership through closer cooperation, in (1) political, defence and security cooperation; (2) economic cooperation; (3) science and technology cooperation; (4) cultural and technical cooperation; and (5) multilateral and regional cooperation. We have made tremendous progress in all these areas of engagement since 2007.

Political, defence and security cooperation is one of the major pillars of our cooperation. We are of the view that there is much more potential that can be realized in this area and both sides are working towards it, along with our regional partners.

In economic cooperation too, we have made a lot of progress. Our trade volume has increased almost three and a half times since 2007. We are well on track to meet our trade targets. The prospects for investment cooperation are also bright. More and more Indian companies are now looking at Vietnam for doing business. There is a great interest among businessmen for future cooperation and I am confident that with efforts on both sides, we will be able to increase our trade and investment levels several fold, in the years to come.

In science and technology cooperation, there has been good progress, we believe a lot more can still be done. We have active cooperation in agriculture, health, pharmaceuticals and other sectors. We are cooperating in advanced areas like civil nuclear cooperation and space cooperation. I am confident that these will be strengthened in the coming years.

In cultural and technical cooperation, I am happy to note that Vietnam is one of the largest recipients of India's Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC). We are expanding our education links through the Connect to India programme. Our historical and civilisational linkages are a strong bond and Buddhism closely connects our two countries and peoples.

There is, however, a gap in information about each other among the younger generations. I understand that both sides are working on increased youth and cultural exchanges including exchange of cultural content, films and television programmes which can address this gap. I am also happy to note that direct flight services between our two countries will start shortly. This will give a major boost to increased business, tourism and people-to-people contacts.

India and Vietnam have a convergence of views and strong cooperation at all regional and international fora. There is strong mutual support and understanding between us.

Question 3: How do you appreciate the role of Vietnam in ASEAN and in “Look East” Policy of India.

A. We consider Vietnam as an important pillar in our Look East Policy. Vietnam has been a strategic partner for India both within ASEAN and in the wider region. We deeply appreciate Vietnam’s support for India at all regional and international fora and look forward to further deepening this aspect of our cooperation. With ASEAN integration acquiring momentum, we have deepened our regional interaction, stepped up initiatives to promote connectivity and expanded people-to-people links to enhance our role in the new era. I see India and

Vietnam as partners, contributing to peace, prosperity and stability in the wider region.
