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Hanoi and KL enjoy close ties

K.P. Waran

VIETNAM and Malaysia have very close relations deeply rooted in their peoples' warm sentiments for each other and the common aspiration for peace and stability, development and prosperity, Vietnamese ambassador to Malaysia Tran Trong Toan said.

He said the two countries established diplomatic relations as early as 1973 and there had been an active exchange of visits from both sides since and added that with Vietnam becoming a full member of Asean in 1995, the friendship and co-operation between Vietnam and Malaysia had deepened.

Vietnam celebrated its Independence Day yesterday..

Tran said Vietnam and Malaysia enjoyed good trade, investment and tourism links. Trade volume has been increasing at a pace of over 20 per cent to reach US\$638 million (RM2.4 billion) in 1999 compared to a mere US\$17.4 million in 1987.

Malaysian companies have invested significantly in Vietnam with over 70 projects in operation and around US\$1 billion of capital investment.

"With the fast recovery of the Malaysian economy, Malaysian investment in Vietnam will surely rise. Malaysian businessmen are committed and serious in doing business with Vietnam and their investments are highly effective. Vietnam is grateful to Malaysia for its invaluable support and fruitful co-operation," Tran said.

The Vietnamese greatly admire the success achieved by Malaysia in economic development in the 43 years since independence.

From a poor agricultural country with a legacy of colonial domination and exploitation, the people of Malaysia have built their country into one of the most advanced nations in the region and the world.

"Vietnam has a lot to learn from Malaysia's experiences, especially in economic and human resource development as well as environmental protection.

"We have witnessed how the people of Malaysia have strived to achieve the goals embodied in the seventh Five-Year Plan and in the long-term Wawasan 2020. We are confident that under the leadership of Dr Mahathir, Malaysians will record further success on the way to achieving Wawasan 2020. Malaysia boleh!," he said.

He said Vietnam's history was full of challenges and victories and over the past 55 years, it had recorded great achievements in nation-building.

He said the Doi Moi (comprehensive reforms) implemented over the last 14 years had brought about very important changes in the economic, political and social lives of the Vietnamese.

He said from a country that had no place on the world map and was devastated by colonial exploitation and an imperialist war, Vietnam had emerged as a sovereign and free country.

"A country that had to import nearly one million tonnes of grains to feed its people every year prior to 1989 has since begun to export rice. It has now become the world's second largest rice exporter, third largest coffee exporter and second largest exporter of cashew nut.

"With this, the quality of life in Vietnam has improved considerably," he said.

He attributed Vietnam's excellent economic and trade relations with the outside world to its proactive policy of diversification, friendship with all countries and quest for peace, independence and development

"The month of July 1995 marked a milestone in Vietnam's international

relations as it joined Asean, signed a co-operation agreement with the EU and normalised diplomatic relations with the US.

"Vietnam actively takes part in various important regional and world organisations and is now preparing for accession to the WTO. For the first time in its history, Vietnam is enjoying the most favourable environment for peaceful construction and development," he said.

He said the success of the Doi Moi in all fields had enabled Vietnam to embark on the rapid industrialisation of the country.

He added efforts would be continued to improve the living standards of the population, develop human resources and scientific, technological and economic infrastructure, to create the conditions to make Vietnam an industrialised nation by the year 2020.

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