



during the visit will open up new cooperation in traditional medicine, agricultural science and research, telecommunications, cybersecurity, space applications, the next phase of the restoration and conservation of heritage projects in Vietnam, the exchange of radio and TV programs between our broadcasters, and expanded defense cooperation. The jointly inaugurated Army Software Park at the Telecommunication University in Nha Trang [in south-central Khanh Hoa province] will facilitate cooperation combining information technology [IT], defense, education, and related capabilities. Vietnam's joining of India's global initiative, the "Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure", and its progress to become a member of the "International Solar Alliance" will provide a platform for the two countries to cooperate on regional and global matters.

During the visit, Prime Minister Chinh presented Vietnam's economic priorities and opportunities to Indian businesses through the Vietnam-India Business Forum in New Delhi, and also discussed prospects individually with leading Indian corporates that will promote business-level participation. He outlined Vietnam's vision and path forward for the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to Indian scholars, academics, and researchers at the historic Indian Council of World Affairs in New Delhi. I believe that both countries' developmental experience can be mutually-beneficial for our scholars to assess and policymakers to consider, such as digital transformation, renewable energy, and PPP [public-private partnership] models. The visit thus reinvigorated political, economic, business, scientific, academic, and people-level relations between the two countries.

■ What were the most significant economic agreements or partnerships established during this visit? How do you see these affecting the economic relationship between Vietnam and India in the time to come?

As two rapidly-growing economies, trade, investment, and economic progress through innovation and startups, emerging technologies, human resources / skills development, industrialization, and infrastructure are of common interest to both. On trade, the two countries agreed that the ongoing review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement, which is to be completed by 2025, should generate a more user-friendly, simple, and trade-facilitative regime with Vietnam and other ASEAN countries. The two sides also agreed on efforts to address technical issues in certain areas to facilitate and

Fortified cooperation

H.E. Sandeep Arya, Ambassador of India to Vietnam, tells VET's Linh Tong how Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's recent State visit to India revitalized the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries.

■ How would you evaluate the outcomes of Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's recent State visit to India?

The visit allowed leaders to comprehensively review progress in relations between the two countries, provide fresh impetus, and set the course for further strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Vietnam. It was particularly significant as the first high-level bilateral visit to India for four years, and as noted by Vietnam, the Prime Minister was among the first foreign leaders to visit after the formation of the government in June following our five-yearly general elections.

The two Prime Ministers held detailed discussions on various elements of our multifaceted bilateral cooperation, shared each other's priorities and endeavors, and agreed on strengthening cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, business collaboration, technology and innovation, defense and security, developmental exchanges, education, digital transformation, tourism, and preserving heritage and culture. They also exchanged per-

spectives on regional and global developments, where the two countries agreed on closer bilateral cooperation in light of current geopolitical realities.

The two witnessed the exchange of ten agreements in various fields of bilateral cooperation that will guide cooperative activities in agriculture, traditional medicine, defense, heritage conservation, radio and TV programs, customs exchanges, law, and more.

■ How does this visit strengthen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership? Were there any new areas of cooperation identified during discussions?

The follow-up of the ten agreements and other understandings reached between the two governments during the visit will be systematically pursued through a Plan of Action signed by the two Foreign Ministers, covering cooperation in political, economic, finance, scientific, technology, energy, agriculture, transport, connectivity, education, healthcare, defense, foreign policy, strategy, tourism, culture, and other areas. In particular, decisions reached

enhance trade between India and Vietnam from its present level of about \$15 billion.

The two governments will undertake sectoral discussions in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, digital applications, energy, defense, and banking, etc., which will also promote trade and economic ties. Connectivity (shipping), logistics, and transport were also identified as areas for further work between us. The two countries will develop a framework for cross-border real-time digital payments, which will benefit businesses, travelers, and residents in each other's country. The emphasis on more active exchanges and cooperation in digital technologies, energy transition, ICT [information and communications technology], shared applications, and emerging technologies will provide a boost to greater economic ties. A high level of interest among Indian businesses towards Vietnam is a very positive indicator for future economic and commercial relations between the two countries.

■ **Can you highlight any specific trade deals or initiatives that were signed or discussed during the visit?**

The revision of the existing ASEAN-India trade agreement of 2009 is part of an ongoing process, which saw the last round of discussions between our trade and commerce officials in late July, with the next round planned for November. We hope that this review will generate a better regime by 2025 for trade between India and Vietnam together with other ASEAN countries.

The identification of specific technical areas during the visit will guide bilateral engagement to address trade issues of concern on both sides. The mutual recognition of each other's standards in various areas could also be helpful. The growing areas of tourism and civil aviation will be another ongoing area encouraged for further work by the two leaders.

■ **What sectors do you believe will benefit the most from the enhanced trade relations between our two countries?**

The present bilateral trade of about \$15 billion annually has further prospects for growth in terms of Indian exports in areas such as pharmaceuticals and chemicals; engineering goods, particularly automobile components, power generation, and transmission equipment; agricultural goods, including animal and marine products; textiles; ICT and other services; refined petroleum products; jewelry; and electronic items. Vietnamese trade experts will know more, but data suggests that Vietnam's growing exports to India are competitive and could grow in areas such

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Ambassador of India to Vietnam

as mobile phones and accessories, electronic items and spare parts, machinery and equipment, and other industrial goods.

Apart from government-level efforts in terms of trade regime and technical issues, we believe that greater business-to-business contacts, participation in trade expos, cooperation in projects in each other's countries, further supply chain links, and promotional initiatives for the businesses and potential products of the two countries will contribute to higher trade.

■ **Were there any significant investment commitments made by Indian businesses towards Vietnam or vice-versa?**

We are pleased that Prime Minister Chinh held numerous meetings in New Delhi with Indian corporations and specialized companies in several promising areas. Such outreach and presentation of opportunities and priorities of the Government of Vietnam will encourage investments from India, which are often discussed directly between these businesses and Vietnamese authorities. What we see is active and growing interest among Indian companies towards Vietnam and vice-versa.

Vietnam has particularly welcomed investments from India in infrastructure, high technology, source technology, clean technology, IT, manufacturing and supporting industries, textiles, automobiles, the materials industry, green agriculture, smart agriculture, innovation and startups, semiconductors, renewable energy, and energy conservation projects, electricity generation, biogas, and polyester fabrics, among others, in Vietnam.

India encourages investments from Vietnam in agriculture, agro-processing, aquaculture, wood processing, urban devel-

opment and infrastructure, the production of bamboo and forestry products, hospitality and tourism, digital technology, e-vehicles, healthcare, and services in India.

■ **What measures are being taken to facilitate and encourage more investment flows between Vietnam and India?**

Investment flow is a process ranging from informing businesses about opportunities, understanding the legal and business environment, discussions between businesses and host governments, business-to-business partnership arrangements, and, after identifying mutual interests, the implementation of investment decisions. Efforts at all these levels are in progress involving numerous businesses in both India and Vietnam, which were energized by the recent visit.

I hope that some encouraging investment discussions between the two countries now underway will reach conclusions in the near future, in addition to the expansion of existing Indian investments in the field of food processing, automobile component manufacturing, IT, consumer care products, mineral processing, and more.

■ **What are the next steps for the two countries following this visit to ensure the implementation of the agreements made?**

A Plan of Action covering cooperation in different domains of the India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership was signed during the visit, which will enable a systematic review of progress in various areas. We also intend to hold sectoral discussions in relevant areas such as ICT, healthcare, agriculture, science, and technology to move forward with cooperation in all agreed areas. Apart from discussions between the two governments, we intend to expand our efforts with business chambers, associations, and enterprises to promote progress in potential areas that will be of mutual interest.

■ **How do you envision the future trajectory of Vietnam-India relations in light of this recent visit?**

The India-Vietnam partnership is both strategic in terms of its depth and comprehensive in terms of its breadth. I believe that the high-level impetus from the recent visit will generate mutually-beneficial results in deepening and widening our cooperation. We expect that and will work dynamically so that joint efforts at the level of governments, institutions, businesses, and academic and research entities, and the healthy participation and support of the people in both countries, will elevate the trajectory of India-Vietnam relations in various domains. ■