

VIETNAM REPORT

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General Vo Nguyen Giap *100 not out*

I am sure the General, his friends and his many supporters will not object to the use of the cricketing term on reaching his centenary, an achievement that all who know of his outstanding military feats will applaud.

Described as one of the worlds top ten military commanders General Giap certainly qualified for that title in his use of military strategy that helped defeat two of the worlds major military countries France and the USA.

President

Nguyen Minh Triet, who was on a state visit to Laos, in his message of congratulations for 25th August said; Gen Giap is an excellent disciple of President Ho Chi Minh and an eminent commander-in-chief.



On August 24, National Assembly, Government and Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee leaders visited the general and congratulated the former military commander on his birthday.

On behalf of the government, Prime Minister Dung said the government remembers and speaks highly of the general's significant contributions to the cause of national liberation and reunification as well as the country's national construction and defence.

He stressed that the government, the Party and people will continue to unite to make the country more prosperous as late President Ho Chi Minh wished.

In response, Gen Giap thanked the leaders for their attention and expressed his belief that under the leadership of the Party and the State, the country would continue to reap greater socioeconomic achievements.

VIETNAM AND UK SIGN MAJOR DECLARATION

The signing ceremony was held on September 8 in London on the first day of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem's official visit

to the UK, at the invitation of his counterpart, Foreign Secretary William Hague.

This strategic partnership, which is established in recognition of the rapid intensification of the two countries' ties since March 2008 when Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visited Britain, will provide a framework to develop the bilateral relationship in a comprehensive way in particular for strengthening and deepening cooperation in key areas. These include the political-diplomatic cooperation; global and regional issues; trade and investment; sustainable socio-economic development; education and training; security and defence and people to people links.

The joint declaration says the two sides will promote regular meetings and dialogue between leaders of both countries, enhance parliamentary cooperation and establish biennial strategic dialogue.

They also welcome stronger links between the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and British political parties, as well as between the CPV agencies and the UK government agencies.

On global and regional issues, the declaration commits Vietnam and the UK to closer coordination including the United Nations, ASEM, ASEAN-EU and the WTO. This will include exchanges of views in the areas of climate change and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In trade and investment area, both sides recognise that free trade and open markets play an important part in ensuring continued global de-

velopment and further intensification of the UK-Vietnam relationship.

The UK welcomes Vietnam's intention to expand its investment and to increase its exports in the UK market, in particular the footwear, garments and textiles, wooden, agricultural and aquatic products. Vietnam likewise encourages more UK exports to Vietnam. The UK will look to consolidate its position as Vietnam's number one overseas investor in financial services, and increase UK trade and investment in other key sectors.

Both sides commit to the develop-



ment of a state university in Da Nang which meets international standards in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed earlier in 2010.

They also welcome the contribution of the Vietnamese community in the UK and agree to a regular dialogue with the representatives of the community to foster cooperation and greater understanding.

The Foreign Secretary William Hague accepted an invitation from the Deputy PM to make an official visit to Vietnam.

In the photograph below the plaque to Ho Chi Minh, on the wall of New Zealand House, Len Aldis is shown with the Deputy Prime Minister, A guest, Ambassador Tran Quang Hoan and Mrs Belinda Brown. Deputy High Commissioner for New Zealand.

STONE STATUES ERECTED TO HEROIC FEMALES

The statues of ten young female volunteers - martyrs were inaugurated at the Dong Loc T-junction relic site in Can Loc district, Ha Tinh province.

The statues are located opposite the Dong Loc bell tower and Dong Loc Temple on a precinct of 1,156 hectares. VND 14 billion (US\$719,000) for the statues was raised from benefactors at home and abroad. The statues were sculptured by artisans from Ninh Binh province.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Deputy PM Nguyen Thien Nhan highlighted the great contributions of the ten young volunteers as well as all of the voluntary youth force in the Resistance War for national salvation. The construction of the statues expressed the gratitude of the Vietnamese peoples towards the ten heroic volunteers who laid down their lives at Dong Loc T-junction to ensure transport could get through the junction during the war.

PEOPLE WALK FOR VIETNAM'S AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS

Over 300 Vietnamese and German people joined a charity walk for Vietnamese Agent Orange /dioxin victims in Bochum, Germany on September 9.

First Secretary of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union's Central Committee Vo Van Thuong, Vietnamese Consul General in Frankfurt Nguyen Huu Trang, and First Secretary of the Vietnamese Embassy in Germany Pham Van Toan along with Bochum's city authorities attended the event.

The participants, including 50 Vietnamese students, walked 2.5 km around Kemnade lake. Each participant, who walked one kilometer, would raise one Euro from donors for a fund for Vietnamese AO victims.

The event has been held each year since 2006 by the Vietnamese Intercultural Women's Initiative in Germany (VIFI). Established in 1996, VIFI aims to support Vietnamese women living in Germany to achieve equality in their family and society while protecting the Vietnamese culture.

The association has also launched numerous activities to assist children and women in the homeland.

RACE FOR PEACE IN HANOI

The final round of the Race for Peace will be held around the Hoan Kiem Lake in the capital city of Hanoi on

October 3, said organisers at the launching ceremony held at Hanoi's Quan Ngua Sports Palace. More than 5,000 people attended the ceremony for the annual race for amateur athletes.

The organisers say, the 37th Hanoi Moi Run for Peace this year is one of many activities to welcome the 1,000th anniversary of Thang Long-Hanoi. It is expected that this year's race will attract the participation of about 15,000 people.

AMNESTY FOR 17,520

As with each National Day, September 2nd, prisoners are granted an amnesty, this year on August 30 a total of 17,520 inmates received the amnesty as announced at a press briefing on August 28. The press conference gathered reporters from local and foreign news agencies as well as representatives from foreign diplomatic corps in Vietnam.

Those released had paid legal costs, compensations and other fees totaling VND130 billion. Amnesties are granted three times each year, on the Reunification Day [April 30], the National Day [Sept 2] and the Lunar (Tet) New Year.

VIETNAM'S NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATED

On 2nd September, before an invited audience H.E. Mr Tran Quang Hoan, Ambassador to the UK and Northern Ireland held a reception to celebrate Vietnam's National Day.

Representatives of Buckingham Palace, Ambassadors, Government ministries, UK organisations, the Britain-Vietnam Friendship Society, the Overseas Vietnamese Association, the Business Society, Vietnamese representative agencies and Vietnamese expatriates in London and Members of UK Parliament applauded the ambassador when he recalled the speech of Ho Chi Minh in Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi sixty-five years ago declaring the independence and freedom of S.R.Vietnam and the major advances made since 1975.

Other speakers brought their greetings that ended with glasses raised in toasts to celebrate the occasion, later Vietnamese food were brought around to the guests along with drinks. The occasion was an opportunity to meet up with old and new friends to celebrate, and to renew and reflect on the day sixty-five years ago and the many sacrifices made.

500kg BOMB MADE SAFE

Ha Tinh Province's Military Headquarters de-activated a 500kg bomb in Thach Tri Commune believed to have been dropped in 1972 when the US Air force attacked northern Viet Nam.

This was one of many de-activated by the military in the province, so far this year 12 such bombs ranging from 300 to 500kg have been made safe plus many thousands of shrapnel bombs.

ORBIS FLYING EYE HOSPITAL

The world's only airborne ophthalmic surgical and training facility – concluded its surgical techniques transfer and training programme for Vietnam's central coastal city of Da Nang in late August.

During the two-week programme, 13 leading ophthalmic experts gave lectures to ophthalmologists, nurses and technicians at Da Nang Eye Hospital. Under the programme, 109 Vietnamese and 10 Lao and Cambodian ophthalmologists received online lectures from the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital's surgery ward as well as hands-on instruction.

In addition, experts from the two hospitals performed surgery and provided laser treatment to 56 retina and glaucoma patients. They also provided medical check-ups and treatment to 163 disadvantaged patients, mostly children.

The Orbis hospital staff joined their colleagues from the Hue Eye Hospital in offering eye examinations to more than 200 children and elderly people at the Medical Centre in Phu Loc district in the central province of Thua Thien-Hue.

Another 30 cataract patients are due to have operations and treatment from Da Nang Eye Hospital doctors in September under the sponsorship of Orbis.

Founded in 1982, the Flying Eye Hospital has conducted 269 programmes in 87 nations. It landed in Vietnam for the first time at Da Nang Airport in October 2006; this is the fourth time it has returned to the Southeast Asian nation and the third time it has visited Da Nang city.

GREETINGS TO THE PEOPLE OF HANOI ON THE OCCASION OF THE 1,000 ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF YOUR CITY.

Happy Birthday.

BRITISH TRADE UNIONS RENEW LINKS WITH VIETNAM

Readers will recall the launch on May 26th of "Trades Union Friends of Vietnam", at Bolivar Hall in London. Work carried out since by Doug Nicholls, its secretary and a small committee, led to a motion being tabled by the Bakers, Food and Allied Worker's Union, at the Trades Union Congress held in Manchester 13 -16 September.

Four members of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) came over from Hanoi to be present at the Congress and to have a series of meetings with a number of leading trades union leaders.

On Tuesday The motion 71 (see full text below) moved and spoken to by leading trades unionists was passed unanimously. The following day, our friends, along with Doug Nicholls spoke at a well attended Fringe Meeting and answered a number of questions from the audience.

Returning to London further high level meetings were held and the evening before departure for Hanoi a farewell dinner was held for them.

MOTION 71

Congress appreciates the incredible achievements of the Vietnamese people in rebuilding their country since Vietnam's liberation 35 years ago from one of the most brutal wars in history, which destroyed the infrastructure of the country.

Congress recalls with respect the three million Vietnamese killed and four million injured in the fighting and bombing.

Congress notes that over eighty million litres of defoliants, including the dioxin Agent Orange, were sprayed on forests, farms and villages and that the legacy of this terrible poison still lives in on with over three million people affected and many birth deformities and health problems still today.

Congress further notes that no reparations have been paid for this appalling damage. Despite the devastation of the country, Vietnam has rebuilt at an incredible rate and greatly improved the living standards of its population. Congress congratulates the Vietnamese trade union movement in the role that its members played in the liberation of the country and subsequent reconstruction.

Congress further congratulates Trade Union Friends of Vietnam and the Britain Vietnam Friendship Society and affiliated unions for the work they have done to maintain contacts with

Vietnamese workers and their families, and urges affiliates to consider their work. Congress calls on the General Council to establish closer links with the Vietnamese General Confederation of Labour.

Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union Sept TUC 2010

The photograph is the farewell dinner to our friends from Vietnam's Trades Union.



MONSANTO'S MAN IN CHARGE OF FOOD SAFETY!

Former Monsanto vice president Michael Taylor has recently been appointed by Obama to be the U.S. food safety czar. It looks like we have yet another case of the fox guarding the hen house.

The safety of GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) in the public food supply has been hotly debated in Europe. As a result, labeling laws have been enacted there to allow consumers choice in the matter. Yet in the U.S. the powerful agriculture lobby, which is dominated by Monsanto has managed to keep the GMO debate out of the media spotlight and thus out of public awareness.

Taylor was Monsanto's attorney before becoming policy chief at the FDA in 1991. Not long after leaving the FDA in 1994, he became a Monsanto vice president and its chief lobbyist. Now, he is back again as the FDA's new food czar. Like so many other similar positions, it's been a revolving door between big business and government.

The FDA's made no mention of Taylor's work with Monsanto. He is

introduced there as "a nationally recognized food safety expert and research professor at George Washington University's School of Public Health and Health Services."

Many had hoped that the more progressive Obama administration would not be as swayed by the deep pockets of mega-corporations as was

the previous Bush administration. Sadly, it's turning out to be the same old story. Obama is repeatedly being more influenced by big money than by what's best for the public

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PRIME MINISTER MEETS US DELEGATION

In his meeting with the delegation, led by Senator Thomas Harkin, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labour and Pensions. The Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung suggested the US government increase their assistance to Vietnam to help redress the serious effects caused by the toxic chemical, especially in cleaning dioxin-contaminated land areas and seeking over 300,000 Vietnamese people missing in the war.

He welcomed Senator Thomas Harkin's contributions to boosting the normalisation of Vietnam-US ties as well as his support for the US government's activities to help Vietnam overcome the aftermaths of agent orange/dioxin.

He also expressed his wish that Senator Thomas Harkin, continues fostering the bilateral ties in health, education, labour and climate change.

2,000 STUDENTS SENT ABROAD

Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) has sent 2,000 students abroad for advanced training under the state budget and agreements with foreign nations this year.

The overseas training will focus on such fields as science and technology, social sciences, economics and management, arts and sports, healthcare and pharmacy, agriculture, forestry and fishery.

The major destinations for these students will be France, Australia, the U.S. the U.K. China, Thailand and Japan. In the past ten-years over 7,000 Vietnamese officials and students were sent overseas for training under the programme.

Vietnam will spend VND104.775 trillion (\$5.37 billion) from the state budget on education and training this year compared with VND94.635 trillion in 2009.

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WORK BEGINS ON VIETNAM'S FIRST THERMAL POWER PLANT

Construction of Southern Vietnam's first thermal power plant, Vinh Tan 2, began in August in Binh Thuan province's Tuy Phong district. The project is worth 23 trillion VND (US\$1.2 billion) and the plant has a designed capacity of 1,244MW.

The Vinh Tan 2 Thermal Power Plant would be one of three plants that make up the Vinh Tan Power Centre, General Director of Electricity of Viet Nam (EVN) Pham Le Thanh said. The plant would house two 622-MW turbines and consume about three million tonnes of coal per year. When fully operational in June 2014, the plant is expected to produce 7.2 billion kWh annually.

Eighty-five percent of the project's total investment was provided by a preferential loan from the China Import-Export Bank and the Chinese Government's official development

assistance capital. Speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony, Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai said the plant will help ensure the country's energy security, which will enhance development of the south in particular and country as a whole.

Thanh said the project will be an important supplementary provision of electricity that would satisfy the southern key economic region's increasing demand, help ease pressure on the North-South transmission line, and improve the efficiency of the national grid system.

Hai asked the National Coal and Mineral Industries Group to cooperate with the Ministry of Transport to manage the delivery of coal to the Vinh Tan centre.

Binh Thuan province People's Committee and local authorities were also asked to finish clearing the site before September and to take care of the people whose land was expropriated.

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INCREASE IN STRIKES

Vietnam reported more than 200 labor strikes in the first seven months of this year, equal to 92.59% of 2009's total figure, said the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA).

In the first quarter, the country recorded 82 labor strikes, 40 fewer than the same period last year. The strikes were mainly in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, the southern provinces of Binh Duong and Dong Nai despite efforts of the local governments to ease the cases.

Most of the cases reportedly occurred at foreign-invested firms and were involved in salary, bonuses and working conditions.

The country has more than 45 million people of working age with total laborers in the state-owned sector accounting for 9.6%.

ROUNDUP LINKED TO BIRTH DEFECTS

New study's shows Roundup link to birth defects International scientists confirmed dangers of Roundup at GMO-Free Regions Conference in Brussels

Glyphosate, the active ingredient in the world's best-selling weedkiller **Roundup**, causes malformations in frog and chicken embryos at doses far lower than those used in agricultural spraying and well below maximum residue levels in products presently approved by EC.



Published by a group around Professor Andrés Carrasco, director of the Laboratory of Molecular Embryology at the University of Buenos Aires Medical School, his research has focused on the frog embryo model but has also employed other models.

Professor Carrasco's applied research has employed the embryological expertise of his laboratory to assess the impacts of pesticides, primarily glyphosate-based pesticides, uncovering disruptive effects that can be linked to birth defects in human exposed to these pesticides.

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EMBASSY HOSTS 80TH BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR BVFS SECRETARY

Sunday October 3rd saw a celebration attended by some members of Len's family and friends including many Vietnamese, and Vietnamese students and three members of Vietnam-UK Friendship Association who had arrived in the afternoon from Hanoi for a week of meetings.

After welcoming the guests the Ambassador Mr Tran Quang Hoan congratulated Len on his 80th and his work for Vietnam, in particular that of helping the Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange, he hoped he would live for another 30 years to carry on his work, this drew laughter of agreement from those present and a smile from Len.

The ambassador then began to read out greetings received for Len. In his letter Mr Pham Gia Khiem, Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Secretary wrote: "The Government and people of Vietnam always respect and appreciate your warm heart and valuable contribution that you and the Britain-Vietnam Friendship Society have accorded to the country and people of Vietnam in our past struggle for reunification and our current course of na-

Foundation, would like to extend the warmest and sincerest congratulations to you, a great friend of Vietnam.

We always hold deep in our minds good feelings of a friend who has been devoting his lifetime to the



friendship between Vietnam and the United Kingdom. As we all may know, you have been actively organising activities of the UK-VN Friendship Association, helping Vietnam in the cause of poverty alleviation, education and training, especially working relentlessly with many initiatives in the support of Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange.

We wish you health and hope that you will continue your contribution to the promotion of the friendship be-



tional construction and development. I am confident that with your enthusiasm and prestige, you will continue to make contributions to the strengthening of Vietnam - UK friendship and cooperation."

The former Vice-President of Vietnam Mme Nguyen Thi Binh wrote:

"On the occasion of your 80th birthday, I, myself and on behalf of the Vietnam Peace and Development

tween the peoples of Vietnam and the United Kingdom."

Many others were read including greetings from Vietnam Red Cross, Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO). People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM). Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA), Vietnam-UK Friendship Association, Highland Education Development

Organisation (HEDO), Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), and many individual friends from Vietnam, USA, Sweden, France, Australia, Brunei and the UK.

In his reply, Len thanked the ambassador and embassy staff for arranging the wonderful evening. He thanked all friends especially the young students and wished them well in their studies and thanked Mrs Thanh Binh for the buffet of Vietnamese food.

No one, said Len, having been to Vietnam will forget the friendly people and beautiful country, nor, he added, if they saw victims of Agent Orange come home and not do something to help them. He promised to continue with his work in particular seeking justice for the victims of Agent Orange.

TURTLE JOINS IN THE 1,000 YEAR CELEBRATION

The turtle that inhabits Hanoi's central lake made a rare appearance as the city kicked off the 10-day festival to celebrate its 1,000th anniversary.

The celebrations of cultural performances, exhibitions and fireworks, ended on October 10.

Temporary stages around Hoan Kiem Lake blasted music at deafening volumes throughout the day. People expressed concern that the music may affect the health of the giant turtle, an endangered species. The apparently healthy turtle surfaced at 9 am, shortly after Hanoi Communist Party Secretary Pham Quang Nghi opened the festival with a speech from a podium by the lake. "He stayed up for about 10 minutes," said a security guard who saw the turtle from the city's central post office. "He often comes up when the weather changes."

Biologist Ha Hinh Duc, the leading expert on the Hoan Kiem turtle, said fears for its health were groundless. "Saying it's coming up because of the noise is nonsense," The turtle is one of several beasts of mythical significance in tales of Hanoi's history.

In the top photo, the Ambassador is shown handing Len the gift from Mme Nguyen Thi Binh (Pottery of Boy on a Buffalo).

Mrs Tao Thanh Huong, Minister Counsellor is handing Len a beautiful bouquet of flowers, one of several he received during the course of the evening.