

OFFICIAL NAME: Socialist Republic of Vietnam

CAPITAL: Hanoi

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Unitary Single-Party Socialist Republic

AREA: 329,565 Sq Km (127,246 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 80,184,100



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Vietnam is located in South East Asia. It is bound by the South China Sea to the east, Laos and Cambodia to the west and China to the north.

The country can be divided into three regions, North Vietnam, Central Vietnam and South Vietnam. North Vietnam is mountainous especially in the north and northwestern sections while the lowlands consist of the Red River Delta and the coastal plains. Central Vietnam is divided into a narrow coastal strip, a broad plateau and the Annamite Mountain Chain which separates the plateau from the coastal lowlands. The lower one third of South Vietnam including the Mekong River System is a low and marshy flat land while further north and east, upland forests as well as rugged terrain dominate. The principal river systems are the Red in the north and the Mekong in the south and the country has three large lakes the Ba-Be, HoTay and Hoan-Kiem. Major Cities (pop. est.); Ho Chi Minh City 4,322,000, Hanoi 2,155,000 (1993). Land Use; forested 30%, pastures 1%, agricultural-cultivated 21%, other 48% (1993).

CLIMATE: Vietnam has a tropical climate in the south that ranges to subtropical in the north, while both are dominated by the monsoons. North Vietnam is characterized by a hot and humid wet season from mid May to mid September as well as a warm and humid dry season from mid October to mid March with two short transition periods. In the south the seasons come later and in Central Vietnam rainfall is heaviest between September and January when the coast is subject to tropical storms. Average annual precipitation in Hanoi is 1,830 mm (72 inches) with areas in the Annamite Mountains exceeding 4,060 mm (160 inches). Average temperature ranges in Hanoi are from 17 degrees Celsius (63 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 29 degrees Celsius (84 degrees Fahrenheit) in June.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Vietnamese also called Annamese or Annamites who account for around 87% of the population and are a mixture of Chinese and Thai ethnic stocks. The largest ethnic minority are the Chinese who account for 6.6% of the population followed by the Khmer while there are over 60 other ethnic minority groups located in the mountains.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 205 persons per sq km (531 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 20.1% urban, 79.9% rural (1989). Sex Distribution; 49.1% male, 50.9%

female (1991). Life Expectancy at Birth; 59.9 years male, 64.3 years female (1989). Age Breakdown; 39% under 15, 29% 15 to 29, 16% 30 to 44, 9% 45 to 59, 6% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1989). Birth Rate; 29.0 per 1,000 (1993). Death Rate; 8.0 per 1,000 (1993). Increase Rate; 21.0 per 1,000 (1993). Infant Mortality Rate; 48.0 per 1,000 live births (1991).

RELIGIONS: Around 55% of the population are Buddhists mainly Mahayana Buddhists in the north and central regions while Theravada Buddhists are mostly located in the south. Other religious minorities include Taoists, Confucianists and Christians.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Vietnamese or Quoc-Ngu, although French, Chinese, English, Khmer and various tribal languages are also spoken.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 16.6%, incomplete primary 46.6%, primary 23.5%, secondary 6.5%, higher 6.8% (1989). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 39,277,999 or 87.6% (1989).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In 1941 Ho Chi Minh founded the Viet Minh Council in China which consisted of an alliance of communist and nationalist associations. During World War II the Japanese occupied Vietnam and in Aug. 1945 after their surrender the Viet Minh gained control of Hanoi and Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) and declared the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Under the post World War II Postdam Agreement, Vietnam was temporarily divided into North and South Vietnam with the Chinese occupying the north and the British the south. The British rearmed the French who had regained control of Saigon. In Mar. 1946 the North Vietnamese government, which had been recognized by China, signed an agreement with the French for the DRV to become a free state within the French Community. During 1946 to 1947 clashes between French and Vietnamese troops broke out and the French took control of Hanoi after Ho Chi Minh's government fled in Nov. 1947. In June 1948 the French established the State of Vietnam with the Annamite emperor Bao Dai as Chief of State. In late 1950 the Viet Minh began an offensive and by May 1954 the Viet Minh had defeated the French. In July 1954 the Geneva Conference divided Vietnam into two nations, North and South with a planned unification for 1956. In 1956 all North Vietnamese proposals for elections were rejected by the US backed South Vietnamese government. During the late 1950's the South Vietnamese government's own repressive treatment of its community led to rural unrest and an increase in communist led guerrilla activities. In Dec. 1960 the southern-based guerrillas formed an alliance under the National Liberation Front or Viet Cong. During the early 1960's the US began to increase its military presence in South Vietnam and the escalation of Viet Cong activities as well as the infiltration of North Vietnamese troops in 1964 led to the beginning of the Vietnam War. In 1969 Ho Chi Minh died and was succeeded by Le Duan as party leader. On Jan. 27, 1973 US participation in the Vietnam War ended with the signing of a cease-fire, although fighting

continued between the internal factions until Apr. 30, 1975 when South Vietnam surrendered to the communists. On July 2, 1976 the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was declared. In 1977 border disputes with Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime led to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 and the establishment of a pro-Hanoi communist government in Cambodia. In Feb. 1979 Chinese troops invaded northern Vietnam but withdrew 16 days later after encountering strong resistance. In 1986 Le Duan died and was succeeded by Nguyen Van Linh who implemented austerity measures and attempted to improve the efficiency of the government's central control, in an effort to reconstruct the country's war torn economy. Since the end of Vietnam's internal and regional conflicts, economic hardships have forced hundreds of thousands of refugees, commonly referred to as "Boat People", to flee the country only to be repatriated, as they are classified as economic refugees by most governments. In Mar. 1991 Vietnam held a conference on foreign investment that was attended by 600 delegates from 31 countries. In April 1991 the USA unveiled a four stage "road map" for normalization of relations between the two countries, that included help in finding 1,700 US MIA soldiers and the release of some 200 former South Vietnamese officials from prison. In June 1991 Politburo General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh was succeeded by Do Muoi. In Aug. 1991 Vo Van Kiet a proponent of Western-style economic reform was elected Premier. In Oct. 1991 Britain agreed to repatriate all designated Hong Kong Vietnamese non-refugees within three years. In Nov. 1991 Vo Van Kiet and Do Muoi visited China in an attempt to normalize relations with Beijing. Also in 1991 rice harvests suffered as a result of bad weather and caused increases in local rice prices. In Jan. 1992 the government approved the opening of local branches for six foreign banks and announced five concessions for oil exploration. In April 1992 a new constitution was adopted by the National Assembly that confirmed the government's free-market reforms and the Communists Party's guidance role in the development of the country. The constitution also guaranteed foreign investor's assets against nationalization and abolished the Council of State and Ministers. In July 1992 elections for the National Assembly were held and the government also signed an agreement of cooperation and friendly relations with ASEAN. Also in July a conference regarding the disputed Spratly Islands was held in Indonesia with all parties agreeing to settle the matter through negotiation. In Sept. the Assembly elected Le Duc Anh as President and re-elected Vo Van Kiet as Premier. Also in Sept. 1992 the government banned the importation of some 17 commodities, including textiles, due to cheap goods that were being smuggled from China and undermining their local markets. In Oct. 1992 the government agreed to make available all the information to the US on the MIA soldier matter and released personal effects of US servicemen as well as some 5,000 military archive photos. In Nov. 1992 Japan lifted its aid embargo and announced a low interest loan of USD \$370 million. In Dec. 1992 Vietnam established diplomatic relations with South Korea. In Feb. 1993 French Pres. Mitterand visited Vietnam and announced an aid package of USD \$65 million. In March 1993 relations with Laos improved following the visit of Loation Prime Minister Siphandon. Also in March, Premier Vo Van Kiet visited South Korea and was informed that the Korean government would provide some USD \$50 million in low interest loans. In July 1993 officials from Cambodia visited Hanoi to hold talks on strengthening ties and the establishment of commissions on border disputes and immigration. In Nov. 1993 Pres. Le Duc Anh visited China to discuss economic and other disputed issues, the first Vietnamese head of state to

do so since 1955. Also in 1993 disputes with China escalated following China's detention of a number of Vietnamese ships off Hong Kong early in the year and the construction of an oil exploration rig in the Gulf of Tonkin. Additionally, Australia, Germany, France and Britain also promised aid packages throughout the year.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Dong (D) divided into 100 Xu and 10 Hao.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$11,997,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$24,700,000,000 (1994). Imports; USD \$4,500,000,000 (1994). Exports; USD \$3,600,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$350,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; USD -\$900,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 30,521,019 or 47.4% of total population (1989). Unemployed; 5.8% (1989).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the former USSR, former communist East European countries and Japan.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Anthracite, Bananas, Cassava, Cattle, Chrome, Coal, Coffee, Fish, Gold, Iron, Lignite, Limestone, Maize, Manganese, Pigs, Pineapples, Phosphates, Rice, Rubber, Salt, Sweet Potatoes, Tea, Timber, Titanium, Tobacco.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Cement, Cotton and Silk, Food Processing, Forestry, Mining, Paper, Textiles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Clothing, Coal, Coffee, Rubber, Tea.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 3,218 km (2,000 mi) (1988), passenger-km 3,506,000,000 (2,179,000,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 1,015,000,000 (695,000,000 short ton-mi) (1988). Roads; length 85,700 km (53,251 mi) (1988). Vehicles; cars 100,000 (1976), trucks and buses 200,000 (1976). Merchant Marine; vessels 190 (1990), deadweight tonnage 711,575 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 10,240,000,000 (6,363,000,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 6,000,000 (4,109,000 short ton-mi) (1985).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 5 (1994) with a total circulation of 2,250,000 (1987). Radio; receivers 7,000,000 (1994). Television; receivers 2,500,000 (1994). Telephones; lines 260,000 (1993).

MILITARY: 572,000 (1995) total active duty personnel with 87.4% army, 7.3% navy and 5.3% air force while military expenditure accounts for 5.7% (1994) of the Gross National Product (GNP).