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*Information and experience equal knowledge,
please share your knowledge with us!*

1- Opening International Summit on Managing for Development Results

Hanoi, 06/02/2007: More than 500 governmental officials and experts from 40 countries and territories around the world attended the third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, which opened in Ha Noi on Feb. 6.

The Vietnamese Government and donors in the country have recognized the importance of enhancing the effectiveness of aid in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Viet

Nam Development Goals (VDGs), said Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem. Viet Nam was an active participant in international and regional forum on aid effectiveness, and one of the first nations to localize the Paris Declaration in the Ha Noi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness.

Vietnam has applied good practices and experiences adopted by other countries to develop its Five-Year Social and Economic development Plan 2006-2010 that involves the whole society participation and donor community, Khiem emphasized. The indicators of the plan will be

monitored regularly and evaluated based on statistical data in order to manage well the implementation of the plan, increase quality of decisions.

XuLin- Director General from China's National Development and Reform Commission- main speaker at the morning session, shared many experiences of his country in encouraging the public's involvement in building and deploying the country's development plan.

The two orators also highlighted that designing major orientations and priority strategies through national development plans, aiming to reasonably earmark the national budget play a pivotal role in accelerating the fight against poverty in developing countries.

At the next sessions of the agenda, delegates will discuss measures to make, evaluate and supervise development plans with the aim of promoting the development management efficiency of each nation.

The third roundtable is hosted by the government of Viet Nam under the assistance of the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Its preoccupations is to find measures geared to effectively use the global international development aid, valued at 87 billion USD in 2005.

The first roundtable was held in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002 and the second, in Marrakech, Morocco in 2004.

The progress made by the government of Viet Nam in managing and using Official Development Assistance (ODA) sources in recent years has drawn more commitment by donors to the country. International donors committed, by late 2006, a record of nearly USD 4.45 billion worth of ODA to Viet Nam in 2007.

Source: VNA

2- Aid from foreign NGOs up 23 percent in 2006

Ha Noi, 08/02/2007: Viet Nam has received more than 216 million USD in aid from foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 2006, marking a year-on-year increase of 23 percent.

The information was released at an annual meeting held in Ha Noi on Feb. 8 between the Working Committee for Foreign NGOs and foreign NGOs operating in Viet Nam.

The year 2006 witnessed the start-up of nearly 60 foreign NGOs in Viet Nam. Humanitarian and development assistance programmes of foreign NGOs were deployed in every province and city across the country.

Their assistance focused on healthcare, education, economic development and addressing social problems. The largest amount of aid

disbursement went to the healthcare sector, accounting for 31.9 percent.

At the meeting, Vu Xuan Hong, President of the Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organisations briefed participants of a national programme geared to mobilise more aid from foreign NGOs during the 2006-2010 period, which was issued by the government of Viet Nam in December, 2006. Hong is also a member of the working committee for foreign NGOs.

The drive, he added, is aimed at enhancing foreign NGOs' aid efficiency in Viet Nam, thus contributing to the country's socio-economic development and poverty reduction.

Source: VNA

3- Annual Conference of Forest Sector Support Partnership (FSSP)

Hanoi, 30 January 2007: the FSSP Annual Conference was organized in Hanoi. Mr. Hua Duc Nhi, Vice-minister of MARD, FSSP Chairman, and Mr. Michel Evequoz, First Secretary of the Switzerland Embassy, FSSP Co-chairman chaired the meeting.

The meeting aimed to (i) provide FSSP partners with an update from MARD on forest sector developments in 2006; (ii) update partners on the FSSP re-orientation and change in 2006; (iii) exchange information on partners' own perspectives in supporting Viet Nam's forestry sector; and (iv) discuss how partners together could best prepare for the first Partnership Forum, which is tentatively scheduled for May 2007.

More than 70 participants represented line departments in Government at central and provincial levels, multi-lateral and bilateral international organizations, and international non-governmental organizations (INGO) attended the Conference. For the first time, representatives from private sector also participated in this FSSP meeting.

For further information on detailed presentations and meeting outcomes, please visit the FSSP website at http://www.vietnamforestry.org.vn/PSC_en.html.

Source: FSSP-CO

4- Support centres to help timber industry

Ha Noi, 10/02/2007: Three centres providing timber and forestry products for the Northern, Southern and coastal provinces are being established in order to cut costs and support the country's forestry enterprises.

At present there are more than 300 timber enterprises dealing with processing, and the importing and exporting of wooden products nationwide.

The dilemma facing processors in particular, is that the national timber processing industry is largely dependent and tied to the fluctuations of the

global timber export market. Enterprises should invest in large scale forestry planting to increase the supply of locally grown timber over the next 10-15 years, chairman of the Viet Nam Timber and Forest Product Association (ViForest), Nguyen Ton Quyen recommended.

Last year, the total export turnover in the sector was estimated at around 2 billion USD, of which expenditure for material timber imports and facilities for processing accounted for over 1 billion USD.

Locally grown timber accounts for only 20 percent of the total demand from processors and craftsmen.

Source: VNA

5- Viet Nam strives to improve ODA use

Ha Noi, 06/02/2007: Viet Nam is working hard to enhance the efficiency of Official Development Assistance (ODA) by employing measures to reinforce surveillance over the process of attracting and using this capital to ensure that it is carried out in a simultaneous and transparent manner.

Ho Quang Minh, Head of the Ministry of Planning and Investment's External Economy Department, affirmed that the Government's Decree 131 on the management and use of ODA demonstrated its most clear-cut commitment to donors on the issue.

The decree decentralised the management, use and allocation of ODA, requesting that owners of ODA-funded programmes and projects must be those who manage the use of the capital and benefit directly from these programmes and projects after they are completed.

Regarding the disbursement of ODA, the Government has instructed relevant agencies to take measures to streamline administrative procedures and reduce transaction costs in order to speed up the disbursement process and use of ODA more efficiently.

At present, Viet Nam's ODA disbursement rate is equal to 70-80 percent of the average disbursement rate in the region, Minh said.

He stressed that the Government will offer donor organisations access to data on development assistance in Viet Nam at www.dad.mpi.gov.vn so they can be updated with the signing and disbursement of ODA in the country.

Minh also added that from now till the end of June, the Ministry of Planning and Investment will issue circulars to guide the implementation of Decree 131, particularly the regulations concerning the ODA management board, project assessment, criterion for selecting projects and instructions on aid models.

Dr. Duong Duc Ung, a senior advisor to the Ministry of Planning and Investment, said Viet Nam

and donors will collaborate to implement an "one-stop" policy for ODA projects.

Viet Nam should change its management methods for ODA projects in particular and the State budget in general by basing their development on efficiency instead of relying on their projected deadline, Ung said.

Ung cited an example that after building highway 5 linking Ha Noi and the port city of Hai Phong, Japan identified several social problems concerning people's travel and traffic safety on the road. As a result, it then poured additional investment in the construction of linking roads and over-fly bridges on this highway.

"This is an example of efficiency-based management," Ung stressed.

There also remains another hurdle in the use of ODA, some experts said, pointing to separate pre-investment procedures required by both Viet Nam and the donor.

This increases costs and prolongs preparations, affecting the efficiency of investment and disbursement process, they stressed.

Source: VNA

6- World Bank to Provide Over US\$4 Billion in Credits to Vietnam Under New Partnership Strategy

Hanoi, February 6, 2007: The World Bank announced today that it expects to provide over US\$800 million a year in long-term interest-free credits to support Vietnam over the next five years as it builds on its development achievements of the past 15 years. This represents more than US\$4 billion in support for Vietnam from 2007 to 2011.

Launching the World Bank's Country Partnership Strategy for Vietnam, the new regional vice president for East Asia Pacific, Mr. Jim Adams, said Vietnam stood out as an example of a development model that has lifted millions of people out of poverty while ensuring the benefits of its vibrant market economy are fairly evenly distributed across society.

Mr Adams said that through its concessional lending arm, the International Development Association (IDA) - which provides credits to the world's poorest countries - the World Bank will focus resources on areas key to supporting Vietnam to implement its own five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP). The SEDP aims to further reduce levels of poverty while moving the country towards the goal of attaining middle income status by 2010.

The Bank's Country Partnership Strategy provides support for strengthening the institutions necessary to facilitate and safeguard a more complex and diverse economy - with initiatives ranging from the regulation of infrastructure to social insurance to

the development of modern planning and budget systems.

The four proposed areas for engagement are: improving the business environment; strengthening social inclusion; better managing natural resources and the environment; and improving governance.

“Vietnam is well aware that major challenges remain and that its effort to move from a low-income country to one with middle income status will require strong leadership as well as support from the development community,” said Mr Adams. “The Government’s partnership approach is leading the way in ensuring that all of Vietnam’s partners are working towards the goal in a harmonized way.”

The Country Partnership Strategy, which covers the period from 2007 to 2011 was launched in Hanoi in the presence of the Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Vietnam H.E. Mr. Phung Khac Ke. It came during the Third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, a conference of more than 400 government officials and development experts from 40 countries and 33 aid and development agencies.

“The World Bank has been an important partner in Vietnam’s development over the past 13 years,” Mr Phung Khac Ke said. “Beyond the very substantial financial resources that the Bank has provided, it has also played a vital role in bringing the Government and a growing number of donors together around one roadmap for reforms as Vietnam moves towards the completion of its transition to a market economy. We look forward to continuing this very positive engagement under the Bank’s new Country Partnership Strategy.”

Vietnam’s poverty rate dropped from around 58 percent in 1993 to around 20 percent in 2004.

The CPS outlines some of Vietnam’s key development achievements, including:

- ✓ the rapid creation of private sector jobs and wage employment - increasing from 11 percent of the working age population in 1998 to 18 percent in 2004
- ✓ Strong progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals with targets for primary school attendance, universal education and improved education quality already achieved
- ✓ the difference between enrollment rates for girls and boys throughout the school system almost eliminated.

However, the strategy also highlights that poverty continues to be widespread and remains overwhelmingly rural (rural poverty stands at 25 percent compared to 4 percent in urban areas). Poverty also remains entrenched for the country’s ethnic minorities which represent just 13 percent of the population yet constitute 39 percent of the poor. And still, pockets of severe poverty remain within cities, especially for migrants.

Mr. Adams said the Bank’s approach would seek to focus on the next generation of reforms

needed to improve Vietnam’s competitiveness and integration into the world economy while also attending to growing needs for good governance, modernized social protection systems, better environmental management and improved infrastructure.

“Picking up the pace of Vietnam’s banking and anti-corruption reforms, which have lagged behind other reforms, will be especially important.”

Since 1993, when the World Bank re-engaged with Vietnam, the International Development Association has provided US\$6 billion in interest-free credits and grants to help the country sustain growth and fight poverty.

Among other things, these IDA funds have been used to build roads and other vital infrastructure, to connect millions of rural people to the electricity grid, to improve the quality of the education system; to expand farm production; and to provide access to basic services such as running water for close to 3 million poor people in urban areas.

Source: www.worldbank.org/vn

7- WB to provide Viet Nam with 4 billion USD credit for five years

Ha Noi, 06/02/2007: The World Bank (WB) has launched its new Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Viet Nam for the 2007-2012 period, under which the WB intends to provide Viet Nam with more than 800 million USD per year in long-term interest-free credits.

Speaking at the launching ceremony in Ha Noi on Feb. 6, Jim Adams, WB Vice President for East Asia and the Pacific, said that Viet Nam stood out as a development model that has lifted millions of people out of poverty while ensuring an even distribution of the benefits of its vibrant market economy.

The new strategy supports Viet Nam for strengthening the institutions responsible for facilitating and safeguarding a more complex and diverse economy - with initiatives ranging from the regulation of infrastructure, social insurance to the development of modern planning and budget systems.

The strategy proposes four areas for the WB’s engagement in Viet Nam, including improving the business environment; strengthening social inclusion; a better management of the environment and natural resources and improving good governance.

The WB Vice President said that Viet Nam has used International Development Association (IDA)’s development aid effectively, which can find manifestation in the reduction in Viet Nam’s poverty ratio from 58 percent in 2003 to around 20 percent in 2004, an increase in universal education levels and the access to electricity service by more than 90 percent of the Vietnamese population.

Talking about the scandal at the Ministry of Transport's Project Management Unit (PMU 18), he said that independent investigations proved no misuse of No. 18 the WB's financial assistance in the PMU 18-managed projects.

To ensure the effective use of its new development aid, the WB will assist the Vietnamese Government to improve its auction system and manage its loans effectively, the official added.

Since 1993, the IDA has provided 6 billion USD in interest-free credits and grants to Viet Nam to help the country sustain growth and fight poverty.

Among other things, these IDA funds have been used to build roads and other infrastructure, to connect millions of rural people to the electricity grid, to improve the quality of the education system; to expand farm production; and to provide access to basic services such as running water for nearly 3 million poor people in urban areas.

Source: VNA

8- WB, ADB officials: Viet Nam effectively uses ODA

Ha Noi, 08/02/2007: Viet Nam is among countries that have effectively use official development assistance (ODA), and the fruitful implementation of many projects funded by the international community has contributed to Viet Nam's sustainable growth and its poverty reduction efforts.

The remarks were made on Feb. 8 by Haruhiko Kuroda, President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and James Adams, Vice President of the World Bank for the Asian-Pacific Region, at a press conference closing the third Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in Ha Noi.

James Adams praised Viet Nam's socio-economic development plan for 2006-2010, saying it is as an important factor for the country to develop results-based management.

The ADB and WB leaders said enhancing the management capacity, speeding up the implementation of projects and maintaining administrative reform will help Viet Nam effectively use ODA in the future.

Kuroda also expressed his belief that with committed administrative reform in coming years, Viet Nam would make greater progresses.

After four-day working, Government officials and development experts from more than 40 developing countries, and from donor agencies, private companies and NGOs concluded the Third Roundtable on Managing for Development Results with a call for stronger action to improve the number and quality of development results achieved with countries' own public funds and with international aid.

They agreed on the need to invest more in systems and capacity for managing for results in developing countries, including in such areas as national statistical system, and sector-wide monitoring and evaluation.

In his closing speech, Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Cao Viet Sinh said that Viet Nam will accelerate the implementation of a national action plan for results-based management, combining the plan with the implementation of the Paris Declaration and the Ha Noi Commitment on Aid Effectiveness.

Source: VNA

9- World Bank launches Vietnam stories on web, spreading best practices

Hanoi Feb 12, 2007 - The World Bank has launched a special web package full of stories about Vietnam on its home page, www.worldbank.org, in seven different languages.

Under the theme "Vietnam - A country on the move", Vietnam's development examples are posted in Arabic, Chinese, English, Japanese, French, Russian and Spanish in an effort to spread best practices among developing countries. The package highlights what Vietnam has achieved as a result of the credits and grants it has received from the [International Development Association](http://www.ida.org) - the lending arm of the World Bank that provides interest-free credits to the world's poorest countries.

Among other things, the audio-visual package contains numerous stories about Vietnam's development, a slideshow featuring stunning images from around the country, an interview with Klaus Rohland, and a video story about results from a typical World Bank poverty reduction project in the northern mountains area.

The Vietnam World Bank website www.worldbank.org/vn has also been renewed with material from the web package, including case studies on key development sectors such as infrastructure, energy and education. It reviews Vietnam's economic transformation over the past 15 years while presenting results of projects presented in video and text.

The web package's launch was timed to coincide with last week's announcement of the World Bank's \$US4 billion Country Partnership Strategy for Vietnam. It also came during the Third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held in Hanoi last week, in which Vietnam was highlighted as a successful model.

At the launch of the Country Partnership Strategy last week, the new Vice President for the World Bank's East Asia Pacific region, Mr Jim Adams, said the new strategy was the product of an excellent collaboration with the Government.

“It emphasizes a partnership that underlines the changing relationship which is typically expected of a very successful development program,” he said.

Source: WB

10- Conferences geared to lure more Japanese investment

Tokyo, 02/02/2007: Three investment promotion conferences were organised in Tokyo, Nagoya and Kanazawa cities of Japan between Jan. 30 - Feb. 2 as part of Viet Nam's efforts to draw more investment from Japanese small-and medium-enterprises.

A delegation from the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MoPI), headed by Deputy Minister Nguyen Bich Dat, attended these conferences to introduce Viet Nam's propitious investment environment to host businesses.

Addressing the workshops, Deputy Minister Dat extolled Japanese investors' strength in technology, finance, international retail systems and business management skills. He expressed his hope that more small-and medium-sized businesses of Japan will invest in Viet Nam, especially in high technology, information technology, electronics, microelectronics and biotechnology.

At the conference in Tokyo, the deputy minister briefed participants on an initiative to boost economic cooperation between Viet Nam and Singapore, which is geared to attract more investment from third countries, particularly from Japan. After one year implementing the initiative, a number of projects have been licensed, including a project of the Sumitomo Chemical Company, Dat noted.

Representatives from businesses successfully operating in Viet Nam shared their experiences with Japanese entrepreneurs who plan to invest in Viet Nam in the years to come.

They also touched upon difficulties that Japanese businesses should take into account while investing in Viet Nam, including a lack of middle-ranking executives and poor supply of water and electricity and accommodation for foreigners in suburban areas.

The conferences were co-hosted by the Vietnamese Embassy in Japan, the MoPI and the ASEAN-Japan Centre.

Source: VNA

11- Agricultural exports grow 8.3 percent

Ha Noi, 06/02/2007: Agricultural and forestry products exports earned 565 million USD in January, up 8.3 percent over the same period last year, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Coffee exports reached 130,000 tonnes, earning 182 million USD, an increase of 60 percent over last year.

With stable and high prices, rubber exports were also highly elastic, with an output of 65,000 tonnes and export value bouncing up by 18 percent to 104 million USD.

Other agricultural products with high export values included tea, with 7,000 tonnes of output worth 7 million USD, an increase of 30 percent over last year.

Rice, the country's leading agricultural staple, showed a decline in export value in January, however, posting the lowest figure over the past seven years, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

January rice exports reached only 40,000 tonnes, earning only 15 million USD, a decrease of 19 percent from last year, a state of affairs attributed to the State's recent restrictions on rice exports to guarantee national food security following last year's disease infestation of rice crop.

The Viet Nam Food Association said, however, that there was reason for optimism due to high demand of world market. Viet Nam was still expected to export about 4 million tonnes of rice by the end of this year.

Other leading products that showed declines in export value in January included pepper and cashews. With an output of about 4,000 tonnes, down 33 percent from the same period last year, pepper fetched only 7.6 million USD in export revenue, and cashews earned a modest 28 million USD, a decline of 16 percent.

Agricultural and forestry exports this year were expected to reach a turnover of 7.5 billion USD, an increase of 5.8 percent over 2006, according to the Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry.

Source: VNA

12- Ben Tre's cocoa rated as of first-class quality in Asia

Ha Noi, 23/02/2007: Cocoa beans cultivated in southern Ben Tre province are ranked top in Asia, according to the US's Cargill Corporation.

The Cargill Viet Nam, one of the biggest exporters of Viet Nam's cocoa, has sent samples of cocoa beans from Ben Tre province to the US for test, which showed the fat content of Viet Nam's cocoa reaching 55-56 percent.

Ben Tre province has about 10,000 ha defined as ideal for cacao growing. The province now has expanded its cacao acreage to 2,000 ha, including 600 ha in harvest period. Each hectare under intermingled cacao and coconut trees provides about 1.5 tonnes of cocoa beans per year.

Another major exporter, the British-invested ED&F MAN Viet Nam Company, has set up a station to purchase cocoa beans in Ben Tre province. The company has also exported a batch of 12 tonnes of fermented cocoa beans.

Viet Nam now has about 8,000 ha of cacao, mainly in southern provinces of Ben Tre, Tien Giang, Binh Phuoc, Ba Ria-Vung Tau and Dong Nai, and in central highlands provinces of Dak Lak and Dak Nong. The country plans to expand its cacao acreage to 20,000 ha by 2010.

Source: VNA

13- State budget allocates nearly 133 million USD to agriculture

Ha Noi, 05/02/2007: The agricultural sector is allocated over 2.12 trillion VND (132.8 million USD) from the State budget in 2007, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

More than half of the sum, over 1.23 trillion VND, will be spent on construction of irrigation plants, while 298 billion VND and 210 billion VND will go to agriculture and forestry development, respectively.

The MARD will give priority to irrigation projects using ODA capital, and projects to reinforce dykes and reservoirs.

Concerning agriculture, focus will be on projects involving tea and fruit trees growing, the fight against bird flu and repairing damages caused by natural disasters in 2005.

Regarding forestry, projects on forest protection, southern wetland development, afforestation in central and central highlands regions are on the priority list.

Furthermore, the MARD will continue to invest in the salt-making industry.

Source: VNA

14- More than VND 124 billion will be invested in agriculture extension activities

Hanoi, 07/02/2007: VND 124.4 billion would be invested in agriculture extension by the State, released by National Center for Agriculture Extension under MARD.

The State spent nearly VND 110 billion for this field in 2006. As a result, 2,288 dissemination models of new and quality varieties, 1,100 dissemination models of livestock and 214 models of new-variety afforestation were established, attracting thousands of farmer households.

The established agriculture extension models were assessed to be more effective and productive than wide-mass production, meeting the local demand of agro-forestry and rural industry development.

Source: MPI

15- Japanese newspaper praises investment potential in Mekong River basin

Ha Noi, 12/02/2007: Japanese newspaper, Mainichi, said on Feb. 12 that the greatest head-turn for foreign investors in Viet Nam, is development projects in the Mekong River region.

The paper said that in the future, foreign investment will increase in the Mekong River section in Viet Nam due to its young, abundant and cheap workforce in addition to its improved infrastructure.

The Mekong River basin is the largest producing region of farm and aquatic products in Viet Nam, with 90 percent of rice production output, 70 percent of fruit yield and 60 percent of aquatic produce output nationwide, the paper said.

It also praised Viet Nam's economic achievements, saying that the country has become an attractive destination for foreign businesses, including those from Japan.

Viet Nam will maintain strong economic development momentum, particularly after officially becoming the 150th member of the World Trade Organisation, the paper said.

Source: VNA

16- Japanese investors seek investment opportunities in Viet Nam

Tokyo, 10/02/2007: Viet Nam is one of the most attractive places for foreign investors, including Japanese businesspeople, acknowledged participants at a conference held in Tokyo on Feb. 10.

The conference on Viet Nam's socio-economic development and new regulations in the country's Investment Law was jointly organised by the Vietnamese Embassy in Tokyo and the Viet Nam Economic Research Institute in Japan.

It drew participation of more than 100 Japanese enterprises that are interested in investment opportunities in Viet Nam.

The embassy's Trade Counsellor Ha Kim Ngoc informed the delegates of the great progress in relations between the two countries over the last year as well as his forecast on the developmental trend of bilateral ties in order to help Japanese investors have a better view regarding prospects and investment opportunities in Viet Nam.

Many Japanese at the conference expressed their admiration for Viet Nam's outstanding achievements over the past years in all aspects, saying they believed the country would continue to increase its economic growth in the coming years.

Japanese entrepreneurs were especially interested in new regulations relating to Viet Nam's Investment Law. They also said they hope to be investing in Viet Nam soon.

Source: VNA

17- Economic potentials of Northern provinces are highly recognized internationally.

Hanoi, 05/02/07: International Communicant Newspaper (French) and South China Morning Post Newspaper (Hong Kong) launched same statement on their latest issue that Northern provinces of Vietnam would become an outpost of Southeast Asia economic integration process.

Northern provinces of Vietnam are luring more and more attentions of foreign investors and considered as the best stepping-stone on the path to penetrating into Chinese market, stated by International Communicant Newspaper. In this context, trading activities along the Vietnam-China border will be animated with increased trading transactions between two countries.

It was also affirmed by the later newspaper that these provinces are locating at the center of ASEAN-China Free Trade region, which is under establishment. Foreign investment is starting to pour in this region with factories and appearance of such big corporations as Canon, Fujitsu, and LG. In addition to investing in real estate, they are rearing an ambitious of developing this region into an industrial base to make a way into Chinese market.

Japanese Foreign Trade Center also affirmed that locating at the strategic position between ASEAN and China is a relatively advantage of Vietnam, especially in the context that these two markets are strengthening increasingly trading and investment relations.

Source: VNA

18- Indian cashew processors to seek cooperation opportunities in Viet Nam

Binh Phuoc, 11/02/2007: Walter D'Souza, President of the Indian Cashew Association, and a delegation of cashew nut processors and exporters have visited southern Binh Duong province to seek opportunities for cooperation with the province, said Nguyen Van Thoa, Vice Chairman of the Binh Phuoc People's Committee.

Binh Phuoc now has 195,000 ha of cashew, of which 170,000 ha have annually yielded more than 200,000 tonnes of nuts, representing 50 percent of the country's total output. However, the province's output of processed cashew nuts stands at 23,800 tonnes, accounting for only 8.25 percent of the provincial GDP.

Only nine of Binh Phuoc's 127 cashew nut processing businesses meet the required conditions for production and export. The remainder can only provide semi-processed cashew nuts for other processors.

Source: VNA

19- Nation promotes export of dragon fruit

Ha Noi, 07/02/2007: The Trade Ministry is carrying out a programme to promote the export of dragon fruits to the Europe, a large market for this sweet and nutritious fruit.

The southern province of Binh Thuan has the largest acreage under dragon fruit in Viet Nam, with 7,000 ha.

In 2006, the province's dragon fruit-growing Ham Minh Cooperative was awarded the certification of European Retail Produce Good Agricultural Practices (EurepGap) by EurepGap Switzerland after implementing a project funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Dragon fruit is also grown in large areas in the southwestern region, especially Long An and Tien Giang provinces.

Vietnamese dragon fruit growers are working to implement EurepGap's standard in their fields.

The country plans to plant dragon fruit trees on 14,300 ha and yield 236,500 tonnes of fruits by 2010.

Source: VNA

20- PM adopts plan on sugarcane growing

Ha Noi, 21/02/2007: The Prime Minister has approved a plan to develop the growing of sugarcane until 2010 with a vision through 2020 in order to ensure the industry's socio-economic efficiency and environmental protection.

Accordingly, the State will provide part of the investment for infrastructure and irrigation projects in sugarcane growing areas, and help with the research and transfer of technological advances to raise sugarcane yield.

The State will create favourable conditions for sugar mills and companies to build their own trademarks and organise trade promotional activities.

Sugar factories will also be required to work out plans to expand sugarcane acreages, assist sugarcane growers in applying advanced farming techniques, and put in place quality management systems to ensure food hygiene.

Source: VNA

21- PM signs decree on implementing Trade Law

Ha Noi, 13/02/2007: On Feb. 12, the Prime Minister signed a decree on the implementation of Trade Law, which involves goods trading activities and directly relating to foreign-invested enterprises in Viet Nam.

The decree applies to foreign-invested enterprises, organisations, and individuals relating to the management of goods trading activities.

The decree also sets out conditions for foreign-invested enterprises, organisations, and individuals to apply for licences to run goods trading activities as well as actions relating to the trading of goods in Viet Nam.

The legal document will take effect 15 days after being published in the Official Gazette.

Source: VNA

22- Safe vegetable production to be developed in Red river delta

Hai Duong, 06/02/2007: The management of safe vegetable production in the Red river provinces was high on the agenda of a recent conference held in Hai Duong province.

At the conference jointly held by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the participants put forward a plan to unite these provinces in developing the production of safe vegetables.

They were briefed of Japan's experiences in managing, monitoring and certifying farm products in general and vegetables in particular.

Source: VNA

23- Seminar on Viet Nam's WTO accession held in Thailand

Bangkok, 24/02/2007: A seminar entitled "Viet Nam's WTO accession: Opportunities and challenges for Thai companies" was held in Bangkok on Feb. 23, drawing representatives from the Ministry of Commerce, economic groups and companies which are currently doing business in Viet Nam.

Vinichai, Vice Director of the Ministry of Commerce's Department of Trade Negotiations, said that Viet Nam's tax reduction and exemption in line with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules has made the country become a more attractive destination for foreign investors than Thailand.

He warned that private companies in Thailand should intensify their economic activities or Viet Nam will surpass Thailand to become the top global exporter in farm produce, industrial products, services and foreign direct investment in the next 5 years.

Participants said that in the near future, Viet Nam's service sector will become stronger than that of Thailand. The transfer of state-of-the-art technologies of foreign investors will help Viet Nam become one of the top service exporters in the world.

Meanwhile, Chakkrit, head of Amata Group's business development office, said that Thailand should cooperate with Viet Nam rather than compete with the country.

"Thai companies should outline cooperation strategies with their partners in Viet Nam. Viet Nam is an ideal gateway to enter the markets in China, Russia and Eastern European countries."

Source: VNA

24- Viet Nam to grow rubber trees in Cambodia and Laos

Ha Noi, 20/02/2007: The Government has recently given the green light for the Viet Nam Rubber Corporation (VRC) to invest an estimated 4 million USD in planting 4,000 ha of rubber trees in Cambodia this year.

Under a bilateral cooperation plan, VRC will provide funding, seedlings and necessary equipment for the planting. The investment was part of a project to cultivate 100,000 ha of rubber trees in Cambodia which was previously approved by the Government.

Recently, a company of Viet Nam signed with a representative of the Lao Government an agreement on planting rubber trees and building a rubber latex processing mill in the southern region of Laos.

The project will be carried out in 8,000 ha of land in Sekong province of Laos.

An official of the province said this was the second company of Viet Nam to have been licensed to implement rubber tree planting project in the locality and the project was part of the province's re-forestation plan.

Source: VNA

25- Legal documents issued in Feb. 2007

By the Government

1. Decree 23/2007/ND-CP dated 12th Feb. 2007 regulating in detail Trade Law on goods trading activities and directly relating to goods trading of foreign invested enterprises in Vietnam.
2. Decree 24/2007/ND-CP dated 14th Feb. 2007 regulating in detail to enforce Enterprise Income Tax Law

By the Prime Minister

1. Directive 03/2007/CT-TTg dated 15th Feb. 2007 on measures to improve quality and efficiency of releasing legal documents on Official Gazettes of Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
2. Decision 18/2007/QĐ-TTg dated 5th Feb. 2007 approving Forestry Development Strategy of Vietnam period 2006-2020.
3. Decision 27/2007/QĐ-TTg dated 15th Feb. 2007 approving the Proposal of Local Trading Development by 2010 and orientation by 2020.

By Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

1. Decision 10/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 6th Feb. 2007 issuing a supplemental list of fertilizers subjected to allowable production, trading, and utilization in Vietnam.
2. Decision 11/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 6th Feb. 2007 promulgating a list of vaccine, bio-products, microorganism, and chemical substance used in veterinary allowable in Vietnam.

3. Decision 12/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 6th Feb. 2007 promulgating lists of veterinary medicine allowed, limited, and prohibited in Vietnam.
4. Decision 13/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 9th Feb. 2007 regulating management and utilization of breed he-buffalo.
5. Decision 14/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 9th Feb. 2007 abrogating some articles in the working regulation of MARD issued attached to Decision 54/2004/QĐ-BNN dated 28/10/2004 by MARD Minister.
6. Directive 15/2007/CT-BNN dated 13 Feb. 2007 strengthening management of farming in mountainous fields.
7. Directive 16/2007/TT-BNN dated 14 Feb. 2007 guiding management, using Certificate of exporting commemorative specimen subjected to the annex of Convention on international trading of emergency animals and plants.
8. Decision 17/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 27 Feb. 2007 regulating conditions of egg incubating and water-bird raising ./.

Source: ISG