https://vietnamnews.vn//life-style/1173833/hcm-city-troupe-to-stage-new-version-of-french-musical.html

HCM City troupe to stage new version of French musical

   
  
  
  
  
 Young actress Yến Thanh plays the iconic Esmeralda in the Vietnamese version of the French musical Notre Dame de Paris. Photo courtesy of the theatre  
  
  
HCM CITY — Young artists with the HCM City-based Chợ Lớn Troupe will enact on a new version of the French musical Notre Dame de Paris starting next week.   
  
The new Vietnamese version will be produced and directed by Thanh Thuỷ, one of the city’s prominent theatre directors.   
  
Thuỷ’s play is based on the famous novel by Victor Hugo, set in 15th century Paris.   
  
Her work uses some elements from the musical Notre Dame de Paris composed by Richard Cocciante with lyrics by Luc Plamondon that debuted in France in 1998.   
  
Quách Bình will play Archdeacon Frollo, Khal Võ will take role of Quasimodo, while Yến Thanh play the iconic Esmeralda.  
  
Thuỷ said she was confident that  “my version of Notre Dame de Paris will dazzle theatre lovers with its costumes, choreography, music and lights.  
  
“Our young artists will offer the Vietnamese version of Notre Dame de Paris in the southern style. I believe they will make musicals popular among local audiences.”   
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 Young artists of the private Chợ Lớn Drama Troupe will present a new version the French musical Notre Dame de Paris . The show is produced and directed by Thanh Thuỷ. Photo courtesy of the theatre  
  
  
The Chợ Lớn Drama Troupe was founded in 2020 by People’s Artist Hồng Vân, who is also its art director. It has attracted 15 young actors who are graduates of leading art schools in the city, like the HCM City University of Theatre & Cinematography and HCM City University of Culture.   
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 The Chợ Lớn Drama Troupe has attracted 15 young talents who have graduated from leading art schools in the city. Photo courtesy of the theatre  
  
  
It has already presented three new plays, including Ngẫm Kiều (Song of Kiều), a musical based on the 18th-century Vietnamese epic poem Truyện Kiều (The Tale of Kiều),  recognised as one of the country’s top literary works.   
  
Ngẫm Kiều was first staged in late December, 2020 and several times last year.   
  
“We want to promote and develop love for the theatre among young people, who can learn new things about history, culture and traditional lifestyles through our shows,” said Vân, who has 30 years of experience in the industry.   
  
The Vietnamese version of Notre Dame de Paris will be staged every Sunday starting on April 17 at the Phú Nhuận Cultural House, 70-72 Nguyễn Văn Trỗi Street, Phú Nhuận District. — VNS

https://vietnamnews.vn//society/1173915/hcm-city-labour-federation-to-support-200000-workers-in-may.html

HCM City Labour Federation to support 200,000 workers in May

   
  
Trần Thị Diệu Thúy, chairwoman of the HCM City Labour Federation, gives gifts to workers during the 13th Workers Month last year. VNA/VNS Photo Thanh Vũ   
  
HCM CITY — The HCM City Labour Federation will spend around VNĐ100 billion (US$4.33 million) on a series of activities to deliver healthcare and financial support to 200,000 blue-collar workers during the 14th Workers Month in May.  
The annual programme will focus on protecting the legitimate rights and interests of labour union members and workers.  
It encourages competition movements to increase productivity and other initiatives for the development of their businesses and agencies and helps inspire solidarity and creativity among workers.  
Labour unions at all levels would identify union members who are in need of support due to severe illness, accidents at work or financial difficulties, said Nguyễn Thành Đô, head of the federation’s legal policy department.  
Around 200,000 workers would get meaningful support, he told a conference on April 14.  
The federation planned to co-ordinate with the Traditional Medicine Institute to provide health checks for 10,000 workers who contracted COVID, he said.  
Trần Đoàn Trung, deputy standing chairman of the city Labour Federation, said Workers Month would see a wide range of activities to ease the difficulties faced by workers due to the pandemic.  
It was expected to kick-start movements for the accomplishment of targets set for this year, he said.  
Dialogues and meetings between local authorities, businesses, trade unions, and workers, job fairs and skills contests will be held during the month.  
The Workers Month opening ceremony will take place at the Labour Culture Palace on April 29.  
The Action Month for Labour Safety and Hygiene will be held concurrently to raise awareness of labour safety and hygiene among workers and employers. —VNS  
   
 

https://vietnamnews.vn//sports/1173714/fencer-an-shooter-vinh-selected-sea-games-flag-bearer-cauldron-lighter.html

Fencer An, shooter Vinh selected SEA Games' flag bearer, cauldron lighter

SEA Games  
  
  
  
  
 Fencer Vũ Thành An carries Việt Nam national flag at the 2019 SEA Games. This year he is selected to take charge of the responsibility again. AFP/VNA Photo  
  
  
HÀ NỘI — Reigning fencing champion Vũ Thành An will fly the flag for Việt Nam at the SEA Games while Olympic gold medallist Hoàng Xuân Vinh will light the cauldron in Hà Nội on May 12.  
  
It will be An's fifth time taking the honourable duty for the nation. He previously took the responsibility at the Rio Olympics in 2016, SEA Games 2017 and 2019 and the Asian Games in 2018.  
  
An is considered a 'lucky' flag bearer as after his service, Việt Nam won their first ever Olympic and Asian Games golds.  
  
At this year's Games, An is one of Việt Nam's golden hopes in men's sabre fencing event. The 29-year-old won the title at the last three Games.  
  
Meanwhile marksman Vinh is the most successful sportsperson in Việt Nam's history. He won one gold and one silver at the Rio Games, Việt Nam's best result at the world's largest sport festival.  
  
Vinh, now national head coach of the shooting team, will join nine notable athletes to take the honour of anchoring the torch relay, before he lights up the Games flame at the Mỹ Đình Stadium.  
  
  
  
  
 Legend marksman Hoàng Xuân Vinh will light the 31st SEA Games cauldron at the opening ceremony on May 12. — AFP/VNA Photo  
  
  
The nine athletes are Trần Hiếu Ngân (Olympic taekwondo silver medallist ), Hoàng Anh Tuấn (Olympic weightlifting silver medallist), Trần Lê Quốc Toàn (Olympic weightlifting bronze medallist), Nguyễn Thúy Hiền (multi-time wushu world champion), Nguyễn Thị Ánh Viên (multi-time SEA Games swimming winner), Bùi Thị Thu Thảo (Asian Games winner), Lê Tú Chinh (four-time SEA Games athletic champion), Quách Thị Lan (Asian championship 400m winner), and Lê Thanh Tùng (World Cup gymnastic champion).  
  
Vietnamese swimmer Nguyễn Huy Hoàng will represent all athletes to take the Games' oath while volleyball referee Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Hoa will make a promise to officiate matches based on fairness.  
  
The opening ceremony will feature a cultural and artistic performance featuring 3,000 people over two hours under director Trần Ly Ly, head of the Performing Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.  
  
The SEA Games' flag raising ceremony will be held on May 11, one day before the opening ceremony.  
  
It is an official event to welcome all teams and encourage athletes ahead of their tournament. It is also expected show Việt Nam's hospitality and friendship to international friends.  
  
Almost 400 representatives of all teams, guests and media will take part in the ceremony.  
  
The 31st SEA Games will be held from May 12-23 in 12 cities and province. Football will be the first sport organised from May 6.  
  
The regional biennial event will see the participation of almost 10,000 athletes, coaches and officials of 40 sports. — VNS

https://vietnamnews.vn//sports/1173629/pencak-silat-fighters-to-seek-sea-games-top-place-this-may.html

Pencak silat fighters to seek SEA Games' top place this May

Pencak Silat  
  
  
  
  
 Vietnamese pencak silat martial artists training at Hà Nội's National Sports Training No 1. They will compete for the top spot at the SEA Games this May. — Photo zing.vn  
  
  
  
 HÀ NỘI — As one of Việt Nam's strong points in all regional competitions, the pencak silat team is expected to win seven gold medals at the upcoming SEA Games, although it will be a tough task.   
  
  
 Việt Nam is home to many world champions and is considered one of the strongest pencak silat centres internationally.  
  
  
 In the recent Games, organisers cut a number of categories including Việt Nam's key classes, leading to a drop in results.  
  
  
 Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in competition rules, Vietnamese athletes are up against it to make a statement.  
  
  
 "New rule switches since 2020 make many changes in the way of counting points in the tanding (combat) discipline. Our coaching board have to learn and discuss a lot before spreading information to athletes, as well as applying it in our training," said head coach Nguyễn Văn Hùng.  
  
  
 "Over the past two years, we have rarely taken part in international events, so it is hard to know how the new rules are conducted in reality. We were lucky to compete at February's Southeast Asian championship and my fighters did a good job with nine gold medals," said Hùng.  
  
  
  
  
 Asian Games champion Trần Đình Nam (left) training with a teammate. Nam will compete in the men's U75kg category. — Photo laodong.vn  
  
  
  
 His athletes also grabbed two silvers and three bronzes to be the tournament's No 1 team.  
  
  
 In the coming Games, there will be 16 categories for both men and women. Coach Hùng has his best athletes and expects seven golds, mostly from combat categories.  
  
  
 Hopes are on Asian Games winner Trần Đình Nam (men's U75kg), world champion Nguyễn Duy Tuyến (men's U85kg), Asian Games champion Nguyễn Văn Trí (men's U95kg), Quàng Thị Thu Nghĩa (women's U75kg) and Nguyễn Thị Cẩm Nhi (women's U70kg) among other title favourites.  
  
  
 "It is the first time I am to compete on home turf. Definitely, it is a little nervous but also exciting. But I am confident that I know how to decrease pressure for best performance," said four-time world champion Nguyễn Duy Tuyến.  
  
  
 "At the recent Southeast Asian championship, I was introduced to the new rules by officials of the Southeast Asian federation before competing. I believe that we have been quickly learning it by heart. I ask myself to win a gold," said Tuyến who won at the 2017 SEA Games, though that category from 2019 has been dropped.  
  
  
  
  
 Four-time champion Nguyễn Duy Tuyến cannot wait to compete at the SEA Games. — Photo zing.vn  
  
  
  
 His teammate Nghĩa, the world and Asian champion, will make her SEA Games debut this year, and is feeling confident.  
  
  
 "To me, they are all powerful athletes. Thailand is physically strong; Indonesia is home to this martial art. I, however, have not had regular tournaments for years. But I still want gold in my first SEA Games".  
  
  
 Indonesia and Thailand will be Việt Nam's biggest rivals, vying for the top overall ranking.  
  
  
 Indonesia is the motherland of pencak silat. The team was also No 1 at the previous Games in the Philippines.  
  
  
 Meanwhile, according to Hùng, Thai fighters will be very competitive because the new rules make pencak silat more similar to Muay Thai, the traditional martial art of Thailand. Many Muay Thai athletes have switched to pencak silat.  
  
  
 "They have trained in Muay Thai since they were young, so they have built strong physique which is an advantage compared to us. However, they are disadvantaged in terms of technique, which is worse than athletes from Indonesia, Malaysia and Việt Nam," said Hùng.  
  
  
 "We are currently focused on improving our fitness to make ourselves in balance with the Thais.  
  
  
 "Singapore are also a threatening team as they were one of the countries who proposed to change the rules and took part in the process. They have been training with the new rules for a long time and should be much more fluent than us," Hùng said.  
  
  
  
  
 Seni (performance) artists are also part of Việt Nam's plan to win seven golds at the SEA Games. — Photo zing.vn  
  
  
  
 Apart from technique, the coaching board are also working on athletes' spirit and morale under high pressure.  
  
  
 "It is only four weeks to go. This period is very important to prepare the final touches for the team. We encourage athletes to feel comfortable ahead of fights. We give them no pressure of medals but ask them to perform like they are training. This would bring better results," said Hùng.  
  
  
 "I strongly believe that they will overcome these challenges and complete our mission."  
  
  
 Pencak silat will be held on May 10-16 at Hà Nội's Bắc Từ Liêm Gymnasium and doors will be open for supporters. — VNS

https://vietnamnews.vn//sports/1173365/huge-task-for-vietnamese-volleyball-teams-at-sea-games.html

Huge task for Vietnamese volleyball teams at SEA Games

Volleyball  
  
  
  
  
 The national men's volleyball team train in Hà Nội. Photos daidoanket.vn  
  
  
Thanh Hà  
  
HÀ NỘI — Việt Nam's male volleyball team are going for gold at the SEA Games while the women hope to better the silver medal they won at the last meet.  
  
But this is no easy feat, as they face tough competition in the group stages.  
  
There are five teams in the women's group with the two best teams advancing to the final.  
  
Việt Nam have been in the gold-medal match nine times but have never won. And Thailand will be the biggest challenge for the hosts.  
  
They have won the title 13 times in a row and defeated Việt Nam in eight finals.  
  
  
  
  
 The men will have a training camp in Khánh Hòa later this week, the women (far side) will train in Ninh Bình ahead of the SEA Games.   
  
  
"Thailand are in higher level compared to ASEAN teams," national head coach Thái Thanh Tùng of the women's team told Việt Nam News.   
  
"They are world-class and are definitely the title favourites. Thailand will play with several young players but despite their age they are still powerful.  
  
"Because of the tournament's round-robin formula, we have to win at least three matches to be in the final. On the way to get there, Thailand will take one, then Indonesia are clearly the team who will fight us for the other spot."  
  
Indonesia, who nearly missed this Games because of financial shortage, threatened Việt Nam's second place since the 2019 Games but failed. This year they set a higher target to win a gold.  
  
"Our strong rivals are just one of the many difficulties that we have faced during our preparation," said Tùng.   
  
"Almost all of my players were positive with COVID-19 and were isolated. They have only been training since March.  
  
"The pandemic also prevented us from taking part in training camps abroad. Instead we will just have a couple of weeks in Ninh Bình starting in the next few days. We have only one month left to lift the team. In the SEA Games, every match is a final."  
  
  
  
  
 The return of veteran Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Hoa, one of the best Vietnamese players, will also help her young teammates gain confidence.   
  
  
This year, Tùng will have talented player Nguyễn Thị Bích Tuyền, best spiker of the 2021 national championship, in his team after she refused in the past to take part due to personal reasons.  
  
The coach also welcomed back his skipper Trần Thị Thanh Thúy who just finished her spell in Japan's V.League.  
  
The return of veteran Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Hoa, one of the best Vietnamese players, will also help her young teammates gain confidence.   
  
One the men's side, Việt Nam are in Group A with defending champions Indonesia, Myanmar and Malaysia after the draw took place on Friday. Group B has silver medallists Philippines and third-placed Thailand.  
  
Việt Nam have only twice advanced to the final match in the 2007 and 2015 SEA Games. Three years ago, the team were eliminated from the group round after three losses.  
  
"A gold medal mission is really putting high pressure on us," said assistant coach Trần Đình Tiền.   
  
"COVID-19 was a big challenge for us with no international competitions and training camps and we also couldn't assess the other teams' capacity."  
  
  
  
  
 Players are in a good mood to be competing in the 31st SEA Games at home.    
  
  
  
 "But head coach Li Huan Ning is very confident after working with us for nearly a year. We have had good preparation for seven months and players are fluent with tactics and good in technique."  
  
After taking charge of the team last May, Li, from China, held talks with the local coaching board and the Việt Nam Volleyball Federation. He confirmed his mission was to lead Việt Nam to the top podium.  
  
"I want to take SEA Games gold medal. This task will put heavy pressure on players but also push them as well. In fact, other teams are strong but my assistants and I mapped out plans to help Việt Nam improve."   
  
  
 Coach Tiền added: "We are getting better, but so are our rivals. Our first step is to advance to the semis. In Group A, our direct rival is Myanmar. Beating them means we are closer to the last four rounds.  
  
"We will do everything to complete our mission."  
  
  
  
  
 The team also welcomed back skipper Trần Thị Thanh Thúy who just finished her spell in Japan's V.League.  
  
  
The men's team will take part in a 10-day training course in Nha Trang from April 15. They will have several friendly matches against local Sanest Khánh Hòa Club before moving to train at the Quảng Ninh Province's Đại Yên Gymnasium which hosts volleyball events from May 13-22.  
  
The video challenger system will be applied at the 31st SEA Games to help referees officiate their matches well. — VNS

https://vietnamnews.vn//society/1173602/american-ex-teacher-convicted-of-child-sexual-abuse-against-vietnamese-boys-in-hcmc.html

American ex-teacher convicted of child sexual abuse against Vietnamese boys in HCMC

   
  
A corner of HCM City's District 1. — VNA/VNS Photo  
  
HÀ NỘI — US citizen and substitute teacher Paul Bodner was sentenced in the US District Court on March 31 in the northern district of California to 11 years in federal prison on three counts of Travel with Intent to Engage in Illicit Sexual Conduct and one count of Engaging in Illicit Sexual Conduct in Foreign Places, for sexual abuse committed against Vietnamese boys in HCM City.  
The Homeland Security Investigations office at the US Consulate General in HCM City successfully worked on the investigation jointly with Homeland Security Investigations San Francisco International Airport and the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security.  
Between approximately 2010 and 2019, Bodner made yearly trips to Việt Nam to meet underage boys.  
During a border search interview upon returning from Việt Nam in late 2016, Bodner acknowledged being attracted to underage boys but denied having sexual contact with them.  
The Homeland Security Investigations in HCM City identified, located, and interviewed multiple minor males who Bodner had victimised.  
Many shared similar stories in which Bodner, who used the fake name 'Kevin', befriended them at a local sports complex and invited them, some as young as 10 years old, back to his hotel room to hang out, where he would photograph and abuse them.  
He bought the loyalty and silence of his victims, who were predominantly poor, with money and gifts to avoid detection and prosecution.  
In January 2020, Bodner was indicted by a federal grand jury and later arrested in conjunction with executing a search warrant at his San Francisco Bay area residence the following month.  
During criminal proceedings, it was discovered through analysis of texts and social media communications with his victims that Bodner attempted to tamper with evidence and encouraged witnesses to lie about their ages. He ultimately pleaded guilty to the four charges in June 2021.     
"This case is an unfortunate reminder child sexual predators continue to target vulnerable populations in Việt Nam and countries across the region, thinking their resources and distance from the US criminal justice system will help them evade prosecution," said Acting Consul General Robert Greenan.  
"Luckily, law enforcement officers now have a global reach, and through diligence and cooperation with international partners, Homeland Security Investigations was able to provide justice for these young victims." — VNS

https://vietnamnews.vn//society/1173706/hcm-city-seriously-short-of-english-and-art-teachers.html

HCM City seriously short of English and art teachers

   
  
  
  
  
 Many English teachers prefer working in foreign language centres than in schools because of higher income. Photo: thanhnien.vn  
  
  
HCM CITY — The top education official in HCM City says it is facing a serious shortage of teachers in several subjects, especially English and art.  
  
Nguyễn Văn Hiếu, director of the HCM City Department of Education and Training, said at a recent meeting held at the Sài Gòn University that the number of teachers for several subjects does not meet minimum requirements.  
  
Even though Sài Gòn University has trained teachers for the new general education programme since 2018, high schools in the city need art teachers to teach two classes per week, he said.  
  
Hiếu stressed the importance of forming a new human resource base for subjects that many students wish to learn.  
  
“It is necessary to recruit more teachers so that students can choose subjects based on real needs. Students currently have no choice but ‘eating’ what is available on the ‘menu’,” Hiếu said, adding that for a big city such as HCM City, students should be able to access comprehensive development.  
  
Lương Thị Hồng Điệp, head of the Preschool Education Unit under the municipal education department, said many foreign teachers lack essential skills to manage young students though they have certificates in teaching English.  
  
Providing these English teachers with short-term pedagogy courses is crucial for them to acquire the skills needed to handle preschool classes efficiently, she said.  
  
In addition to English teachers, professional team leaders in private classes and support staff also need further training, Điệp said, adding that the importance of courses that teach management skills to teachers who wish to become managers should be emphasised.  
  
Hồng Lãm Thuý, head of the department’s Primary Education Unit, said that there was a serious shortage of teachers in English, art and music.  
  
Thuý suggested that Sài Gòn University increases the development target of these faculties to meet the demand for teachers in middle and high schools.  
  
Inter-school teachers  
  
Phạm Hoàng Quân, principal of Sài Gòn University, spoke about difficulties in enrollment and employment of students in some pedagogical disciplines.   
  
“Though Sài Gòn University is the only university in HCM City that offers fine arts pedagogy training, it continues failing to meet enrollment quotas. Meanwhile, students taking part in music programmes do not choose to teach. Instead they look to pursue a singing career after graduation,” Quân said.  
  
He said many English teachers prefer working in foreign language centres because of higher income.  
  
Quân suggested hiring art teachers who can teach in many schools at the same time.  
  
“Recruiting inter-school teachers may be the immediate solution.” he said.  
  
Recruiting teachers to work in an area instead of an individual school is also a solution, agreed Hiếu. However, it would be challenging to select the school that would be in charge of paying and conducting necessary paperwork for teachers, he noted.   
  
In response to the education department’s request, Sài Gòn University aims to recruit new students for computer science pedagogy in the near future.   
  
At the meeting, the department and the university signed a comprehensive cooperation programme agreement for the 2022-2027 five-year period. VNS

https://vietnamnews.vn//economy/1173683/hcm-city-leaders-work-with-leading-asian-corporations-calls-for-investment-to-rebuild-economy-post-covid-19.html

HCM City leaders work with leading Asian corporations, calls for investment to rebuild economy post COVID-19

   
  
  
  
  
 Chairman of the city People's Committee, Phan Văn Mãi (fourth from right) meets with leaders of some leading Asian corporations in HCM CIty on April 13. — VNS Photo  
  
  
  
 HCM CITY — HCM City leaders and officials have held a meeting with some leading Asian corporations to discuss investment programmes that seek to promote the city’s economic and social reconstruction after COVID-19.  
  
  
 The attendees included ORIX Corporation of Japan, one of the world's largest renewable energy companies with 3GW solar cell and module factories worldwide, interests in finance, insurance, infrastructure, and real estate, and business in 31 countries and territories.  
  
  
 Another, CK Asset Holdings Limited, is one of the largest corporations in Hong Kong with real estate and infrastructure investments in many countries.  
  
  
 The two are partners of Vạn Thịnh Phát, a private company with more than 30 years of consistent operations in the real estate sector and a number of noteworthy projects.  
  
  
 Speaking at the meeting attended by heads of various government departments, Chairman of the city People's Committee, Phan Văn Mãi, expressed happiness that the pandemic has basically been controlled, the socio-economic recovery process has begun and large investors are returning to the city.  
  
  
 He said the city’s development goals focus on economic, technical, social, and digital infrastructure like roads, railways, waterways, logistics, housing, and education and healthcare facilities besides digital governance and economy.  
  
  
 These are the areas the city seeks long-term co-operation in for its own development and that of the whole country and businesses, he said.  
  
  
 Justin Chiu, executive director of CK Asset Holding Ltd, said: “CK Asset Holdings Limited has been investing in many countries. In each country, our investment decisions start with two essential conditions: government support and a trustworthy local partner with comprehensive insight and ability to connect to the world market. ﻿  
  
  
 “In HCM City, we are attracted to the strategy to develop the city into a world-leading destination for real estate, finance and advanced technologies.  
  
  
 “This is undoubtedly the right strategy showing the vision of the leaders of the city and the country.”  
  
  
 Li Hao, deputy head of the east Asia business headquarters and president of Orix Asia Capital Ltd., said: “We look forward to hearing the Government's views on developing financial infrastructure and institutions that have a strong connection to international markets - the key to attracting investment and developing valuable assets.  
  
  
 “This is also why we believe in the vision of Vạn Thịnh Phát Group, as their investment network is exceptional.  
  
  
 “Vạn Thịnh Phát's reputation and experience in the international financial market is the primary reason that has brought us here.  
  
  
 “Prior to today's meeting, the two sides spent a lot of time researching and evaluating each other's capabilities and discussing investment projects that bring value and mutual benefit to the parties in line with the economic development strategy of HCM City.  
  
  
 “With Vạn Thịnh Phát's solid and reputable projects and business bases in HCM City, we are confident that ORIX's investment strategy in Việt Nam will soon be implemented and reap results in the near future.”  
  
  
 Trương Huệ Vân, CEO of Vạn Thịnh Phát Group JSC, said, “Vạn Thịnh Phát Group is a corporation deeply associated with the development of HCM City for more than 30 years.  
  
  
 “We always aspire to connect resources and open investment capital channels so that the country can develop new opportunities to reach its full potential by overcoming development bottlenecks.”  
  
  
 Mãi appreciated and supported the investment plans of Vạn Thịnh Phát and its partners. ﻿  
  
  
 The city also promised investors it would promptly resolve all the problems they might face and offer them favourable conditions. — VNS  
  
  
  

https://vietnamnews.vn//politics-laws/955095/voters-in-hcm-city-excited-to-cast-ballots.html

Voters in HCM City excited to cast ballots

Election Council reports voter turnout of more than 95 per centPM urges people to vote as he casts his ballot in Cần ThơMany constituencies report early high turnout rates in largest-ever electionVoters nationwide cast ballots as election day startsElderly man dedicated to spreading election information   
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 President Nguyễn Xuân Phúc and his wife on May 23 participated in the launching ceremony for casting ballots for the election of deputies to the 15th NA and People’s Councils at  voting site No. 41 in HCM City’s Củ Chi District. VNA/VNS Photo Thống Nhất  
  
  
HCM CITY— President Nguyễn Xuân Phúc and his wife today participated in the launching ceremony of the election of deputies to the 15th NA and People’s Councils at all levels for the 2021-2026 tenure at voting site No.41 under election unit No.9 in HCM City’s Củ Chi District.  
  
They also offered incense at the Martyrs Memorial Temple in the district.  
  
The President and his wife were the first to cast ballots at the voting site. HCM City Party Committee Secretary Nguyễn Văn Nên was the next to cast a ballot.  
  
At 6 am, many voters throughout the city came to voting sites to cast ballots. They filled online health declaration forms, had body temperature checked, and washed hand with sanitisers before entering the voting sites. They also wore masks and kept a safe distance as required by the Ministry of Health’s regulations in COVID-19 prevention and control.  
  
Fishermen in Cần Giờ District’s Thạnh An Commune anchored their boats near shore to go to the commune’s voting site.  
  
Chợ Rẫy Hospital in District 5 collaborated with election team No.58 in Ward 12 to bring three ballot boxes to rooms of 1,274 patients and their relatives so they could vote.     
  
  
  
  
 Chợ Rẫy Hospital in District 5 worked with election team No.58 in Ward 12 to bring three ballot boxes to the rooms of 1,274 patients and their relatives. VNA/VNS.Photo Đinh Hằng  
  
  
District election teams were also bringing ballot boxes to houses of many seniors with health problems who could not go to voting sites.  
  
According to the city Election Commission, more than 5.6 million voters in the city are expected to cast ballots. They will elect 30 of 50 candidates to become deputies to the 15th NA and 95 of 158 candidates to become deputies to the People’s Councils at all levels in the 2021-2026 term.  
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 Voters in District 10's Ward 15 check ballot boxes before the election starts. VNS Photo Gia Lộc  
  
  
As of 11 am, more than 2.6 million voters had cast ballots in HCM City, accounting for 46.8 per cent.   
  
The city has 3,618 people staying in quarantine areas and 1,042 at home.  
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 A voter casts a ballot at voting site No. 94 in District 10’s Ward 15. VNS Photo Gia Lộc  
  
  
After casting ballots, President Nguyễn Xuân Phúc told the media that great national unity is the large issue that has received the most attention, directed by the Party and Uncle Hồ. The spirit of great national unity can be seen amid the natural disasters and floods that the country has faced, as well as amid wars and the country’s development process.  
  
The President called on more than 69 million voters throughout the country to promote this spirit and select talented and ethical deputies.  
  
Chinese-Vietnamese voter La Tiên, 92, who was the oldest voter at the voting site No.6 in Hóc Môn District, came to the site early to take part in the election’s opening ceremony. “I read the candidates’ biographies and action programmes carefully and voted for the best deputies.”  
  
Nguyễn Quốc Hưng, 80, who came to the voting site No.94 in District 10’s Ward 15, said: “Many candidates are young and talented. They will contribute to develop the country and carry out tasks well.”  
  
Bùi Thị Liêm, 69, of Thủ Đức City, whose husband was being treated at Chợ Rẫy Hospital, said: “It is convenient that the hospital’s staff and election team brought the ballot box to us. I am happy.”  
  
Nguyễn Trương Gia Khánh, 21, of District 12, said that this was the first time he had cast a ballot. He read candidates’ biographies and action programmes many times to select the best deputies in the election. “I am very excited to cast a ballot. I hope they try their best to develop the country and pay more attention to health and education development.” VNS  
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 Voters keep a safe distance at a voting site in Tân Bình District. VNS Photo  
  
  
  
    
  
  
    
  
  
    
  
  
    
  
  
  

https://vietnamnews.vn//politics-laws/872492/asean-proves-its-centrality-in-a-volatile-2020-diplomat.html

ASEAN proves its centrality in a volatile 2020: Diplomat

PM: Việt Nam becomes strong, trustworthy mainstay in ASEANVN’s steady leadership has reinforced ASEAN’s pivotal role in the regionASEAN-UN partnership grows stronger than ever: UN ChiefWorld’s largest trade pact signed by ASEAN countries and five partnersVN highlights importance of maintaining environment of peace and stability   
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 Nguyễn Quốc Dũng, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Việt Nam. — VNA/VNS Photo  
  
  
HÀ NỘI — Nguyễn Quốc Dũng, Deputy Foreign Minister of Việt Nam and  Head of Việt Nam’s ASEAN Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM), has penned an article reviewing the ASEAN centrality in the year 2020, when Việt Nam successfully fulfilled the chairmanship role.  
  
Below is the full text of his article.  
  
“2020 drew to a close with complex and multidimensional upheavals that have not been witnessed in the regional and global politics and economy in a long time. As Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc put it, the “ASEAN 2020 ship” has navigated through “rough sea and tumultuous storms of the COVID-19 pandemic, but rocked by economic recessions, disrupted trading activities, and growing strategic competition between major powers in the world that is playing out right within the region.  
  
Undaunted, the “ASEAN 2020 ship”, under the steering of Việt Nam and the cooperation from member countries and partners and friends, have strongly overcome the adversity, reaffirmed its central position in the region, and elevated its reputation and profile in the international arena.”  
  
ASEAN Centrality: the fruit of long, patient building process  
  
The notion of “ASEAN centrality” started to gain traction among the group’s member countries since around 2005-06 when ASEAN perceived a growing pressure and sway from outside partners.  
  
In that context, centrality is understood as that ASEAN always coordinates perspectives and actions in its cooperation relationship with partners so as to maintain the group’s ‘main driver’ role, as well as uphold the group’s central role in shaping regional cooperation structures based on ASEAN-led forums and frameworks.  
  
With the birth of the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN centrality has been codified – the notion becoming both the goal and guiding light for ASEAN activities.  
  
From the five founding members, ASEAN had gradually opened up to the current 10 countries of Southeast Asia, transforming the region from a state of conflict, division, and full of doubts in the Cold War era to a region of peace, solidarity, cooperation and development – making ASEAN one of the world’s models of regional cooperation. In addition, ASEAN has set up dialogue partnership with nine countries and one international organisation (the United Nations) and one important regional player (the European Union).  
  
Other than bilateral frameworks, ASEAN also established many important forums and mechanisms – including ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN+3, and East Asia Summit (EAS) – which help bind partners more strongly into regional dialogue and cooperation processes.  
  
ASEAN centrality also comes from initiatives, ideas, and agenda for the sake of mutual benefits that the Association proposes and leads the implementation, based on common principles and code of conduct that the Association has built as well as on the interests of the dialogues and cooperation brought about by the many mechanisms and forums that the Association has set up.  
  
From ASEAN’s proposals, a series of regional cooperation and linkage programmes have been implemented such as: free trade agreements, connectivity plans, etc. Dozens of external partners have voluntarily participated and committed to complying with the principles and provisions set out in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), which is considered ASEAN’s “set of rules” in governing the conduct of countries in the region.  
  
In joining ASEAN's cooperation mechanisms and frameworks, major countries not only reap benefits from various cooperation plans and programmes with ASEAN, but also have opportunities to meet, converse and work together. ASEAN's major forums and events – with a friendly atmosphere of dialogue and cooperation – have served as a good environment for leaders and ministers of major nations to have bilateral meetings to build trust and overcome differences.  
  
From the achievements and experiences, in 2015, ASEAN concretised the “ASEAN centrality” notion into five key aspects – the central role within an independent and resilient ASEAN, a central role in the face of hot-button issues in the region, a central role in relations with major countries and other dialogue partners, a central role in the regional structure, and finally, a central role in participating in and resolving issues and challenges of global concerns.  
  
2020: ASEAN centrality reaffirmed in the face of unprecedented challenges  
  
“Adversity tests strength as fire test gold,” in 2020, against unprecedented challenges, the ASEAN centrality has been fully asserted in every way.  
  
First, the theme of ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020 – “Cohesive and Responsive” – showcases all aspects of the “ASEAN centrality”.  
  
If solidarity, cohesion, and strong cooperation serves as a solid foundation, then timely responsiveness and adaptation is the way for ASEAN to continue to reaffirm its leading role in the region.  
  
Overcoming the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN continues to firmly maintain the momentum of building the ASEAN Community, promoting the effective implementation of plans and programmes to realise the goals stated in the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.  
  
Facing the risk of cancellation of ASEAN summits and meetings due to interrupted aviation activities, under the chair of Việt Nam last year, ASEAN has flexibly and promptly moved hundreds of conferences and meetings to virtual format. In 2020, more than 550 conferences and meetings have been held in this manner. This not only helped carry on the momentum of dialogue and cooperation in the region, but also helped shape a new way of operation, helping to enhance ASEAN’s resilience and flexibility.  
  
Along with that, ASEAN continued to assert an important role and voice on essential issues related to regional peace and security. Faced with the adverse ramifications of increased competition and friction among major powers, on August 8, 2020, ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a Statement on the Importance of Maintaining Peace and Stability in Southeast Asia.   
  
In this Declaration, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers affirmed their strong, shared commitment to the maintenance of peace, security, neutrality and stability, the rule of law, contributions to strengthening mutual trust and confidence, and working towards building an open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based regional architecture, thereby reinforcing ASEAN's central role.  
  
With complex issues such as the South China Sea (known in Việt Nam as the East Sea), ASEAN always works closely, maintains consensus and a common voice. In particular, in 2020, the role of international law was emphasised by many countries, especially the role of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the legal framework governing all activities in the seas and oceans.  
  
ASEAN has been continuing to expand and deepen existing partnerships, including agreeing to upgrade ASEAN-EU relations to a strategic partnership level, while at the same time, proactively deploying many measures to strengthen relations with other partners.  
  
In 2020, ASEAN agreed to grant the status of development partners to Italy and France, opening opportunities to further promote cooperation with these countries in the coming time. As many partners have been seeking to draw ASEAN into their own regional initiatives and strategies, ASEAN has persistently upheld the goals, principles and priorities outlined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, and at the same time, mobilised these very partners to support and back ASEAN in implementing the directions and priorities stated in the Outlook report for the mutual benefit of peace, stability, and development.  
  
At the global level, ASEAN has made great efforts to participate and contribute to the resolution of common challenges and problems. Many proposals on promoting sustainable development, combating climate change, ensuring gender equality and women’s empowerment have been approved and put into practice.  
  
ASEAN cooperation with the UN and relevant authorities continues to be strengthened. In addition, the conclusion of the negotiations and inking of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) not only will bring practical benefits to the participating countries but also this is an important contribution of ASEAN in the efforts to strengthen trust and create more impetus for multilateralism and the multilateral trading system.  
  
“ASEAN centrality” is both the goal and the guiding principle of ASEAN activities. The central role is not an "privilege" that is automatically available to the Association, the bloc can only create and nurture its “centrality” through its prestige, sincerity and the stance of “neutrality, peace, dialogue and cooperation” that has been constructed from the relentless efforts of ASEAN during its long journey of formation and development. Through unprecedented hardships and challenges, “ASEAN centrality” has been consolidated and strengthened in 2020.  
  
In its capacity as ASEAN Chair in 2020, Việt Nam has accompanied the group to overcome never-before-seen hardship, and reaffirmed its position as one of the “core”, “leading” members who actively build and shape the rules in ASEAN and the region.  
  
As Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc said at the review meeting of the ASEAN National Committee 2020, on December 11 last year, Việt Nam has truly proved a “solid and reliable source of support, especially in the moments when ASEAN grappled with arrays of difficulties and challenges.”  
  
These results will create an important foundation for Việt Nam and ASEAN countries to continue to steer the "ASEAN ship" to conquer all challenges, become more connected and boast higher adaptive capacity, and achieve new victories in the coming time.” — VNS

https://vietnamnews.vn//politics-laws/826460/pm-viet-nam-becomes-strong-trustworthy-mainstay-in-asean.html

PM: Việt Nam becomes strong, trustworthy mainstay in ASEAN

ASEAN proves its centrality in a volatile 2020: DiplomatVN’s steady leadership has reinforced ASEAN’s pivotal role in the regionASEAN-UN partnership grows stronger than ever: UN ChiefWorld’s largest trade pact signed by ASEAN countries and five partnersVN highlights importance of maintaining environment of peace and stability   
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc spoke at a meeting to review Việt Nam's 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship in Hà Nội on Friday. — VNA/VNS Photo Thống Nhất  
  
  
  
 HÀ NỘI — The success of the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020 showed Việt Nam is not only an active ASEAN member but also a strong, trustworthy and special mainstay, especially at a challenging time like the COVID-19 crisis, said Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc.  
  
  
 Addressing a conference of the ASEAN National Committee 2020 in Hà Nội on Friday to review the Việt Nam's chairmanship of the bloc, PM Phúc said on the back of strong will, determination and actions of the ASEAN Community, effective co-operation with partners and helmed by Việt Nam, the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020 had been a complete success with a record number of adopted documents and Việt Nam’s initiatives and priorities becoming a common asset of the bloc.  
  
  
 He highlighted success in ensuring security and safety as well as popularising the images of a peaceful and stable ASEAN Community and Viet Nam to international friends.  
  
  
 The PM also expressed his pride in the success of the 41st General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA-41) and the eighth meeting of the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ).  
  
  
 He said the adopted regional strategies were a hallmark of the success of the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020, adding that the theme 'Cohesive and Responsive' suits the circumstances, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic.  
  
  
 He reviewed progress in the building of the ASEAN Community in the spirit of maintaining its central role. Under the direction of Việt Nam, ASEAN flexibly adapted to uncertainties. For the first time, the ASEAN Summit was held three times this year instead of twice.  
  
  
 According to him, ASEAN’s success has brought invaluable lessons in terms of pooling collective power not only on regional but also global scale in response to the common challenges of humankind.  
  
  
 With achievements throughout 2020, Việt Nam’s will, brainpower and stature had been clearly demonstrated, he said.  
  
  
 Throughout 25 years of entry to ASEAN, Việt Nam has made important contributions to the grouping and become a crucial member building rules in ASEAN and the region.  
  
  
 Looking back on ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020, PM Phúc mentioned several invaluable lessons, with the first and foremost being unified directions of the Party and State leaders and their close watch on national external activities this year, as well as tapping the collective power of the entire political system, social organisations and people to contribute to the success of the year.  
  
  
 The second one is the effective collaboration between the Government and National Assembly organs in organising AIPA-41 and ASEAN 2020.  
  
  
 The third lesson is upholding Việt Nam’s diplomatic identity by consistently pursuing goals while flexibly adopting strategies to turn risks into opportunities, together with sincerity and integrity for common benefits and responsibilities.  
  
  
 The fourth is active and thorough preparations in terms of agenda, reception, security and communications for the country’s major external activities.  
  
  
 The fifth is the importance of multilateral diplomacy and the role of ASEAN in Việt Nam’s external guideline of smoothly combining bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, tapping the effectiveness of multilateral events to deepen bilateral ties, and pooling international resources for national development.   
  
  
 The sixth lesson is the harmonious combination of internal and external relations. The success of the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020 was greatly attributed to by Viet Nam's achievements in performing the dual tasks of controlling the pandemic and recovering socio-economic development, supporting businesses and taking care of people's lives.  
  
  
 Emphasising the success of the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020, the Prime Minister said this was a comprehensive success in all aspects, from content and reception work to security and healthcare. Information, communications, culture, and promotion were implemented methodically and effectively. In the 36th and 37th ASEAN Summits, there were no major incidents or errors on any front.  
  
  
 On behalf of the Government, PM Phúc praised all leaders, officers, soldiers, employees of ministries, departments, agencies from central to local levels, as well as businesses, sponsors, media agencies and people nationwide for their efforts to contribute to the success of the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020.  
  
  
 Amid complicated and unpredictable developments in the world and the region, and tough foreign relation tasks, the Government leader agreed with the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue promoting the success of the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020 to raise Vietnam's global position and boost its international economic integration.  
  
  
 Việt Nam should implement the priority tasks of ASEAN, especially initiatives put forth by the country during the chairmanship year, he said, adding it would work with other ASEAN countries to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and promote overall and sustainable economic recovery while taking advantage of opportunities brought by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).  
  
  
 The PM said the success of the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020 was a new victory of the Party's multilateral foreign policy.  
  
  
 “This provides new vitality for us to confidently and proactively make greater victories in the process of deep and effective international integration,” he concluded. — VNS  
  
  
  
  
  

https://vietnamnews.vn//politics-laws/808975/vns-steady-leadership-has-reinforced-aseans-pivotal-role-in-the-region.html

VN’s steady leadership has reinforced ASEAN’s pivotal role in the region

ASEAN proves its centrality in a volatile 2020: DiplomatPM: Việt Nam becomes strong, trustworthy mainstay in ASEANASEAN-UN partnership grows stronger than ever: UN ChiefWorld’s largest trade pact signed by ASEAN countries and five partnersVN highlights importance of maintaining environment of peace and stability   
  
  
    
  
  
  
  
 Australian Ambassador Robyn Mudie  
  
  
Robyn Mudie\*  
  
Việt Nam’s year as ASEAN Chair has taken place during an unprecedented time in modern history. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented us collectively with new threats, both to our health security and our economies. Việt Nam has managed the many challenges posed by this situation, including in its capacity as ASEAN Chair, skilfully and dutifully.  
  
Australia has been pleased to support Việt Nam throughout this year, both as a Strategic Partner to Việt Nam and to ASEAN.  
  
At the ASEAN-Australia Summit, East Asia Summit and RCEP Summit over the weekend, Prime Minister Scott Morrison made Australia’s commitment to recovery, resilience and security very clear: Australia is investing in partnerships in Southeast Asia; and the region’s priorities are our priorities.  
  
The first step to addressing the impacts of COVID-19 is to bolster our regional health response.  
  
We want all countries to have access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines. That is why the Australian Government has announced a A$500 million package to support access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.  
  
This includes a A$21 million contribution to the new ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, which will help combat COVID-19 and prepare the region for future pandemics.   
  
Recognising the importance of a broader approach to health security, we will provide A$24 million to combat other infectious diseases in the Indo-Pacific through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.  
  
Australia is also focused on supporting economic recovery after COVID-19.  
  
Last year, Australia’s two-way trade with ASEAN nations was more than A$122 billion and two-way investment stocks rose to over A$250 billion.   
  
Our trade and investment relationship with Việt Nam is already very strong, and the prospects for future growth are bright.  
  
Extensive work has taken place this year on the joint Australia-Việt Nam Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy with a number of initial recommendations now being finalised, including a set of initiatives to foster close business links with Việt Nam. This will contribute to the Strategy’s aim for both countries to become top ten trade partners and double investment.  
  
Our businesses and our people will benefit from the historic signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, which will open up new markets and new economic opportunities.  To ensure RCEP is a success, Australia is supporting ASEAN countries to implement its trade commitments with A$46 million as part of a Regional Trade for Development Initiative.   
  
We also recognise the importance for Việt Nam, as well as other coastal ASEAN states, of its vast maritime resources. Through an investment of A$65 million across the region, we will support the ongoing development of marine resources and ensuring maritime domains are secure and prosperous.   
  
In order to grow our economies, we also need to develop high-quality, sustainable infrastructure that meet the needs of the communities it serves.    
  
Australia’s commitment of A$70 million to support quality infrastructure investment in the region represents a partnership with Southeast Asian countries. Australia has demonstrated expertise in developing infrastructure that we are keen to share, including on the transition to renewable energy technologies and climate-resilient infrastructure.  
  
Our funding will support policy and regulatory reforms to deliver economic and social benefits for all. And we will make sure ASEAN partners have access to the technical and policy advice they need.  
  
Together, we can build smart, sustainable and resilient cities across the region.  
  
To support our Mekong partners to recover from COVID-19, and to narrow the development gap, we’ve announced a new A$232 million Mekong-Australia Program, with an investment in one of the region’s most important assets – human capital.  
  
Australia’s funding will provide new scholarships for future leaders. It will boost economic capability by providing technical assistance. It will build environmental resilience and strengthen cyber and critical technology capabilities.  
  
Việt Nam will receive special attention, through support to implement the Vietnam-Australia Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy once realised.  
  
Việt Nam’s year as ASEAN chair came against the backdrop of significant geostrategic shifts which are presenting new challenges to stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and around the world. The health and prosperity of our countries rely on our region’s security and stability.  
  
Australia strongly supports ASEAN’s Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.  Our support is grounded in a firm belief that a peaceful, inclusive, sovereign and resilient Indo-Pacific is in all our interests.  
  
To bolster our region’s security needs, Prime Minister Morrison announced a further A$104 million to support closer Defence ties with the region and greater security capability.  
  
The comprehensive initiatives announced by Australia are an investment in resilience, recovery and security in our region.  They are also an investment in the future of our partnership with Southeast Asia and ASEAN.   
  
Việt Nam’s steady leadership over the past year has reinforced ASEAN’s pivotal role in the region. As we recover and rebuild from COVID-19, Australia will be with Việt Nam, and all nations of Southeast Asia, every step of the way. VNS  
  
\* Robyn Mudie is Australian Ambassador to Việt Nam