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| **The golden age of Czech-Vietnamese relations**  *To mark the National Day of the Czech Republic on October 28, Vietnam News presents an article written by the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Vietnam*  The **picturesque** land of the Czech Republic has been home to the Czechs for more than 1,200 years. Located in the center of Europe, the country has been at the crossroads of various trade routes since **the Middle Ages**, and an inspiring place of encounter for people of different nationalities, beliefs and cultural backgrounds.  This is perhaps best embodied by the country’s capital, Prague. A city that is a **harmonious blend** of over a thousand years of the very fitnest in European arts, stunning architecture and scientific advances. Unknown to some, the Czech Republic is actually a modern union of three historical territories – Bahemia, Moravia and Silesia, each of which enriches the country’s culture in their own special way.  What is the Czech Republic today? It is a promised land of car manufacturing, **splendid** crystalware, lovely music, etc. It is also a modern democratic country with a high standard of living and fine quality of life. A home of free and confident people whose economic prosperity, social cohesion and national security is safeguarded by membership of the European Union.  The relationship between Czech and Vietnamese people has been extraordinary. Seven decades of diplomatic relations between both countries, defined by mutual understanding, respect and trust, as well as selfless support both in the good and bad times. A 70-year history of mutually supportive and advantageous co-operation between the Czech Republic and Vietnam had led me to **dub** this period a “Golden Age” for Czech-Vietnamese relations.  The best proof of this is the high frequency of high-profile political visits over the last couple of years. It is of the greatest importance for both countries and their needs to keep this frequency up. Thanks to very satisfactory co-operation in many fields including trade, defence, science, education and culture, Czech-Vietnamese relations have an outstanding past, an excellent present and without any doubt, a very promising future.  The ambitious EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), which came into effect in August, is going to have far-reaching impacts on our bilateral trade and investments thanks to tariff cuts and strong commitments articulated by both the EU and Vietnam. The most visible benefits are expected in significantly increased trade supported by substantial reductions or even total elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barrier as the EVFTA cuts an unprecedented 99 percent of customs duties on goods traded between the Czech Republic and Vietnam. In addition, Vietnam’s commitments to guarantee an open and transparent investment and business environment will effectively help boost high-end investment from the Czech Republic in Vietnam. The time has never been more suitable for doing business that it is now. That is why I myself see our common future of Czech-Vietnamese relations with more than justified optimism and have high expectations and unshakable trust in their quality, as proven over all this time.  This spring, shaken by the first wave of COVID-19, showed me another remarkable feature of the strength of Czech-Vietnamese relations, one that wasn’t visible until then. All the Czechs, including myself, were deeply **touched** by the spontaneous assistance of the Vietnamese Government and the selfless help of ordinary Vietnamese people living in both countries, who donated to us much-needed face masks and medical protective equipment. It was the Vietnamese community in Czechia that immediately started to sew vitally important masks and supported the frontline teams of doctors, nurses and policemen with free meals.  These developments also proved beyond any doubt that the Vietnamese coummunity is now fully integrated in Czech society and forms an irreplaceable and invaluable part of my country. Despite the pandemic, current developments show us something extremely important: how **cordial** and selfless nation-to-nation and people-to-people Czech-Vietnamese relations are. As and old Czech proverb says: “A friend in need is a friend indeed.”  To mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Czech Republic and Vietnam, we had prepared a number of cultural events – art exhibitions, classical music concerts, film festivals, literature presentations and theatre performances. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, most of the events had to be postponed, but I am also certain that they will be back on when the pandemic is over.  For those who want to visit the Czech Republic, I have some very good news, A direct flight between Hanoi and Prague is ready for take-off as soon as we overcome COVID-19 and restore health standards. I cordially invite you to come to the Czech Republic to experience its friendliness, creativity, culture, history, and its unique connection with Vietnam. My advice is this: Don’t hesitate and go and discover why the Czechs are so popular here in Vietnam and elsewhere. I wish you a pleasant and safe journey, hopefully very soon! | **Picturesque:** colorful character, nature.  **the Middle Ages:** thời trung cổ.  **harmonious:** hài hòa.  **Blend:** to mix.  **Splendid:** gorgeous, beauty.  **Dub:**  call.  **Touched:** affected with emotion, especially with sympathy or gratitude.  **Cordial:** friendly, warm, sincere, heartfelt. |