

Background

Geography

The territory of Vietnam comprises a land area of 330,000 km², a vast coastal area and a string of archipelagos stretching from the Gulf of Tonkin to the Gulf of Thailand.

On the map, Vietnam takes an elongated "S" shape. The national territory is approximately 1,750 km long, ranging from its Northernmost point to its Southernmost point, and its width varies from 50 km to 600 km. The total inland border line is 4,230 km in length, including 1,650 km of common border with the People's Republic of China in the North, 1,650 km with the Laos People's Democratic Republic in the West, and 930 km with the Kingdom of Cambodia in the West and Southwest.

The sea area in Vietnam is to the east, the South and the Southwest borders on the territorial water of Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippine and Thailand. Vietnam possesses a large coastal area, offshore islands and archipelagos. The main islands and archipelagos are Phu Quoc Island (70 km off the Ha Tien coast), Hoang Sa (Paracel) archipelago (300 km off the Da Nang coast), Truong Sa (Spratly) archipelago (500 km off Cam Ranh coast) and Tho Chu archipelago (200 km off the Rach Gia coast).

Vietnam has a rather diversified topography of plains, midlands, and mountains. Mountains and forests with more than 7,000 vegetable breeds make up three fourths of the area of Vietnam and can be divided into four main zones: the North-eastern Mountain area, or Viet Bac; the North-western region; the North Truong Son region; and the Central Highlands. The largest and potentially most fertile plains are the Me Kong River Delta in the South and the Red River Delta in North.

The capital of Vietnam is Hanoi, which lies in the North of the country. Principal cities include Ho Chi Minh City

("HCMC") in the South, Hai Phong on the north-east coast, and Da Nang, Hue and Nha Trang, all on the east coast.

Climate

Vietnam lies in the tropical monsoon zones. The typical features of this zone include warmth, humidity and abundant seasonal rainfall.

In the North, we experience four seasons: spring (from January to April), with its typical drizzle and constant humidity; summer (from May to July), which is a hot and rainy season, autumn (from August to October) and winter (from October to early January) with the lowest temperatures of the year.

In the Central and the Southern parts (from Da Nang southwards), it is hot all the year round and there are only two seasons: a rainy season (from May to October), and a dry season (from October to April).

Population and Demography

The total population of Vietnam is now about 99,644,064 as of 27 December 2024, expected to increase to 107 million by 2044 (not including about 6 million Vietnamese living and working in more 130 countries and territories, of which 80% are in developed countries and about 10% are highly qualified people) with average age of 33.2 years, accounting for 1.23% of the world's population; Vietnam is ranked at 15th in the world, 8th in Asia and 3rd in Southeast Asia in term of the population. It is also the country with the highest population density in the region with 321 people/km² with 38.1% of the population living in urban areas. Total life expectancy (for both genders) in Vietnam is 73.7 years old, in which 71.1 years old for men and 76.5 years old for women. The population is composed of 54 ethnic groups, of which the Viet (Kinh) accounts for around 85.4% and lives in the deltas and coastal areas.

Distribution of population is uneven, with rural population accounting for around 62%. Also, the population is not evenly distributed within the regions, Red River and Mekong River Deltas, for instance, only 16.62% of the total land area are home to over 32.6% of the total population whereas the Central highlands and Northern mountainous areas which account for over 48% of the total land area but have only about 20.14% of the total population. As for urban areas, Hanoi and HCMC, for instance, are the two largest population-density cities, with above 8.5 million and 9,389,700, respectively (however, the actual number of people living there may be more due to the number of people coming to work from other localities but not yet registered for temporary or permanent residence in the area; for example, the actual population of Ho Chi Minh City may be nearly 14 million).

The average population growth rate now is about 0.84% per year which, despite following a decreasing trend, is still among the highest in the region. Population growth rates are also different and vary sharply from region to region. Normally, the mountainous and rural areas have a much higher growth rate as compared with that in the urban areas, particularly in Hanoi and other principal cities.

In addition, the fact is that the rate of migration to urban areas has been growing significantly in recent years and expected to continue in the future, from rural to urban areas and/or big cities. The main reason is that agricultural sector becomes more mechanized while high labour demand has been rising in urban areas and in industrial zones.

Language

As earlier said, although Vietnam comprises a number of ethnic groups, each with its own culture and language, Vietnamese (the language of the Viet) is used as the national language for communications among all ethnic groups in Vietnam. Although the writing is the same throughout the country, there

are in fact some differences in speaking by Vietnamese between the two parts, the North and the South.

Amongst foreign languages in Vietnam, English becomes now the most common for communications in Vietnam after only a very short of time. And French and Chinese are still widely spoken in Vietnam by the older generations largely due to the historical reasons. Thanks to close co-operations between Vietnam and other former socialist countries, including the U.S.S.R., DDR, etc., in the past, some Vietnamese can now speak Russian and German. Because of its common usage, English and French are also used apart from Vietnamese, in some legal documents relating to foreign trade and foreign direct investment.