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Vietnam's First Honorary Consul General in India

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Why in News

Vietnam has **appointed Honorary Consul General of Vietnam in Bangalore** to promote trade, economics, investment, tourism, educational and cultural cooperation between Vietnam and the State of Karnataka.

- Industrialist **N.S. Srinivasa Murthy** based in Bengaluru has been appointed as Honorary Consul General of Vietnam for Karnataka.
- He is the **first honorary consul general of Vietnam from India**. The appointment is for a **period of three years**.



Key Points

- **India-Vietnam Relations:**

- **History of Cultural Ties:** **Cultural** and economic links between India and Vietnam date back to the 2nd century.

Both the countries have agreed to have various commemorative activities in the **year 2022, to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations** between the two countries.

- **Anti-Imperialist Struggle:**

- Even before official diplomatic ties were established in 1972, India **supported Vietnam's anti-colonial struggle** during its independence movement.
- During the **Cold War** period, India supported Hanoi's "Four Points" for resolving the **Vietnam conflict** (American war in Vietnam).
- India also supported Vietnam during the **Kampuchea crisis (Cambodian-Vietnamese War)** in the late 1970s.

- **Look East Policy:** The relationship was further strengthened when India, in the early 1990s, initiated its "**Look East Policy**" with the specific objective of **economic integration and political cooperation** with Southeast Asia and East Asia.

In 2014, the 'Look East Policy' was **graduated into an 'Act East Policy'**.

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP):** The strategic partnership was elevated to comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016, given the new security challenges of the 21st century.

- **Defence Cooperation:**

- **Sale of military equipment to Vietnam:** Negotiations for four large patrol vessels and **BrahMos short-range cruise missiles** are going on.
- **Training Vietnam's armed forces in military equipment:** Kilo-class submarines & Sukhoi aircraft.
- **Military exercises:** VINBAX, IN-VPN BILAT.

- **Geostrategic Convergence:** India and Vietnam have their **shared apprehension of an aggressive China.**

- China's virtually claiming the whole **South China Sea** as its territory and its assertiveness in the Indian Ocean.
- China **complained about Indian cooperation for the exploration for oil in Vietnamese waters, especially in light of the disputed political status of the Spratly Islands.**
- India and Vietnam have agreed to strengthen their strategic partnership "in line with India's **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)** and the **ASEAN's Outlook on Indo-Pacific** to achieve shared security, prosperity and growth for all in the region."

- **Regional Cooperation:**
 - India and Vietnam closely cooperate in various regional forums such as **ASEAN, East Asia Summit, Mekong Ganga Cooperation**, besides UN and WTO.
 - Vietnam has supported India's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council and join the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).
- **Economic Cooperation:**
 - Trade and economic relations for mutual benefit, which have significantly improved over the years particularly after the **ASEAN- India Free Trade Agreement** was signed.
 - India is now among the top ten trading partners of Vietnam.
 - India is **investing in development and capacity assistance** for Vietnam through quick impact projects (QIP), proposals in the area of water resource management in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and digital connectivity.
- **Science and Technology Cooperation:**
 - India and Vietnam have signed the **Framework Agreement** on cooperation in:
 - Exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes, IT cooperation, **Cyber Security**.
 - Uses of Atomic Energy for Peaceful Purposes.
 - Vietnam has been a large recipient of training programs under **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** programs.
 - A proposal to set up a **Centre for Satellite Tracking and Data Reception** and an **Imaging facility in Vietnam under ASEAN-India Cooperation mechanism** is under consideration.

Way Forward

- **Coordination:**
 - **Global Level:** Keeping in mind the strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, primarily those posed by China, India and Vietnam should work in close coordination at multilateral institutions such as the UN Security Council, where both India and Vietnam are elected to be **non-permanent members** in 2021.
 - **Regional Level:** Vietnam's role in ASEAN may make it easier for India and ASEAN to cooperate more on regional security issues.
 - Some of the big powers within ASEAN like Indonesia are also likely to take stronger positions against China given its aggressive posture in the South China sea.
 - **Economic Front:** Both Countries need to leverage the economic opportunities available because of anti-China sentiments and several manufacturing firms deciding to shift from China.
 - India should figure out a strategy, so that India's stance of not joining **RCEP** should not become a barrier in the growth of trade between the two countries.

- **Expedite Defence Deals:** Both Countries should expedite the process of negotiations for finalisation of defence deals.

This assumes more importance for India after the **Galwan valley Clash** & China's disrespecting international law including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Source: TH