

The Greater Seattle Vietnam Association

UPDATE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER SEATTLE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION
VOL. 3
ISSUE 5
MAY/JUNE 1997

VinaLines Upgrades Shipping Industry

Vietnam has streamlined its shipping industry and is buying large foreign ships for its fleet. Reports say VinaLines, created last year to modernize and consolidate operations, has bought nine good quality second hand ships and is expected to take delivery of a crude oil carrier soon. The company predicts Vietnam may order new ships soon. Vietnam National Shipping Lines, was established to provide a central management system to oversee containerized shipping and also control the activities of Haiphong Port and Saigon Port. In addition, it acts as the controlling company for 19 separate

shipping, servicing, trading, import-export and stevedoring companies. President and Managing Director of VinaLines, Vu Ngoc Son, was interviewed last month by the publication Lloyd's List Maritime Asia. He is former managing director of Germartrans, Vietnam's leading container line joint venture with French Carrier CGM. The executive explained the role of VinaLines is to carry out "the most complete fleet modernization in the country's history. We have the money to invest and it is our job to see the fleet is upgraded according to our government's wishes. We are a commercial body with a responsibility

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Invitation to World Trade Organization

Vietnam says the World Trade Organization (WTO) has invited it to talks about preparations for membership. Vietnam's Trade Minister Le Van Triet spoke at a conference in Ho Chi Minh City on "Vietnam in the course of accession to the WTO." He said WTO Director General Renato Ruggiero has sent Vietnam an invitation to meetings with members at the organization's Geneva headquarters. Vietnamese representatives have been chosen and expect the meeting to take place by July. As Mr. Triet reported, acceptance to WTO is a long process. Vietnam made an official application to WTO two years ago. Then Vietnam's memorandum on its political and social situation was sent to 127 WTO members, who replied with more than 2,000 questions. Among responders were Japan, Canada, the U.S. and South Korea. Mr. Triet acknowledged that his country will have to make many changes in trading practices to comply to the rules, but he expected Vietnam may be a WTO member by the year 2000. WTO was founded in 1995 to implement the sweeping provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is designed to make international trade profitable, fair and efficient. Its guidelines say members are expected to recognize the "need for positive efforts designed to

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Join GSVVA for a Summer Picnic and Festival!

The GSVVA board would like to invite all members and friends to join us at Angle Lake park on Sunday, June 29 for a picnic. The City of SeaTac is hosting an international festival in the park that weekend. This is a great chance to enjoy the festival and socialize. GSVVA will provide soft drinks. You are welcome to bring picnic food, or enjoy the food on



sale at the event. The park is located eight tenths of a mile south of SeaTac Airport on Highway 99. From I-5 take 188th to 99 and turn left. We'll meet starting at 11:00 a.m. on the upper portion of the site above the arts and crafts booth area.

Look for the GSVVA sign. If you have questions, call Gary Johnson at 684-4812(w) or 632-4957(h).

HISTORY SHELF

Aloof in the Cool Hills: Dalat Offers Footnotes to History

Dalat is one of several resorts nestled aloof in remote hills of the Asian tropics where the elite may escape urban congestion, dangers, heat and humidity and may enjoy cool nights, waterfalls, sweet garden vegetables and, if they wish, big game hunting. Colonial civil servants from Europe loved these places. Just as with the other hill resorts, the excitement of Dalat survives history best in the footnotes. Dalat was the summer home of Bao Dai, France's puppet emperor from 1926 to 1945. His 25-room palace was built in 1933. On returning after World War II to reclaim its most profitable colony, France tried unsuccessfully to block Ho Chi Minh by bringing Bao Dai to the presidency. Another footnote concerns the Dalat Conference of April 1946 to review a French plan for shared power with Vietnam. The period was disordered. Ho's new government in Hanoi was preoccupied with several crises: providing food for the millions in the north suffering from starvation; adjusting to the loss of US support; consolidating links with rural nationalists in the south, many of them more radical than Ho; reoccupying parts of the north being vacated by the Chinese who had secured the area waiting for the French to return; and preparing for the anticipated arrival at Haiphong of new French forces. On the other side of the table, the French too were distracted: subduing rural southerners who demanded independence; appeasing politicians back home who demanded an end to involvement in Vietnam; assur-

ing moneyed interests that their rubber and rice investments were safe; safeguarding support from the U.S. by creating an illusion of structure and order, with a plan – however distant – for self-rule. Ho had agreed in principal to a limited power sharing with France. Historians say his priority was to get the Chinese out. He could deal with the French later. The Dalat conference bogged down, but conferees agreed to meet again in July in Fontainebleau, France. But nothing substantial was accomplished. The issue of power-sharing was tabled forever after November the same year when French war ships entered the port of Haiphong and tried to settle a customs dispute by shelling the city, killing an estimated 6,000 Vietnamese people. The new war had begun. Everyone knows how it ended. One more footnote for the history books is Dalat's nuclear plant donated 30 years ago by the US Arms for Peace plan, but then abandoned in 1975. New reports reveal that in their haste retreating Americans left behind three ounces of weapons-grade plutonium. The plant, modernized by the Russians, reportedly has been used for nuclear medicine and for agriculture, environment and industrial development. An Associated Press reporter visited the place earlier this year and spoke with the director, Tran H. Anh. Asked if the U.S. were going to want the plutonium back, the director said that "would be very complicated." He added, "Many things have been left behind from the war that have not been settled."

Envoy Appointed to Washington

Le Van Bang, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vietnam, has been appointed Ambassador to the United States. He is the first Vietnamese Ambassador sent to Washington, D.C. since the reunification of Vietnam in 1975. The career of the new ambassador has focused on the U.S. for the last 11 years. Following his appointment in 1986 as Assistant Director of the Americas Department of Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bang held a succession of rising positions. They included: Deputy Director of the Americas Department, Visiting Fellow at the International Center for Development Policy in Washington, D.C., Director of the Americas Department, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Chief of Vietnam's Liaison Office to the United States and then Charge d'Affaires of Viet-

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Fleet Improvement

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ity to make a profit." He said his company was distinct from VinaMarine, which he described as a government agency whose main task is to supervise and regulate. Vietnam, like other Asia countries, has a reserved cargo system requiring that domestic carriers be used for a designated share of shipping at its ports. About 20 percent of crude oil exports are reserved for local tankers. Vu Ngoc Son said Vietnamese ships carried less than one million tons of the total eight tons of crude exported from its oil fields. Nu Ngoc Son said, however, that quotas will be required when the ships are available.

City of Eternal Spring: Honeymoons, Waterfalls and Lakes

To the Vietnamese, Dalat City is probably one of Vietnam's most well known vacation destinations. Since the turn of the century, it has been the chosen vacation spot for wealthy Vietnamese and foreigners. It is a honeymoon mecca. Dalat is 305 kilometers from Ho Chi Minh City. It is 1500 meters above sea level, in the Lam Nguyem (Langbian) Highlands, part of the Central High Lands of Vietnam. The name Dalat originated from the local hill tribe and means "Stream of the Lat People." Dalat enjoys favorable weather all year around. The average temperature for winter is around 10 degrees C. During the summer it averages around 18 degrees. Many of the homes in Dalat are built from wood. It also has many grand villas build by French officials during the early part of the century and later by local wealthy Vietnamese in the '60's and '70's. The city is famous for its many waterfalls and lakes. Among these is the man-made Ho Xuan Huong (Xuan Huong Lake.) In 1919, a dam was built on a branch of Cam Ly River, creating a small lake. Another dam was built farther down stream, thus creating another lake. In 1923, both dams were destroyed during a storm. The two dams were converged between 1934 and 1935 and became known as Ho Long (Large Lake). The lake

was later renamed as Ho Xuan Huong, after a famous female poet of the 17th Century. Another attraction of Dalat is Lake of Sorrow (Ho Than Tho), about 5 km northeast of the city. The lake was named during the war between Vietnam and China. The origin of the name is a sad story of a young couple who often met by the lake. About the time they spoke of marriage, a call went out for able-bodied men to take arms against invaders from the north. The patriotic young suitor, Hoang Tung, decided to join the army of King Quang Trung-Nguyen Hue to help defend his country. The couple planned a meeting by the lake before he left. But his betrothed, Mai Nuong, was equally patriotic and decided not to burden his mind--lest he not perform his duties to his country. She committed suicide by drowning in the lake. Other "must-see" spots at Dalat include Thung Lung Tinh Yeu (Valley of Love), Gougah Fall, Prenn Fall and the open market -- all within 40 km of the city Center. Prenn Fall is particularly picturesque. The falling water creates a sheet of silver pouring into a pool of water. Under and behind the sheet is a wooden and bamboo bamboo bridge where visitors can cross to the other side of the pond. It's an experience they won't soon forget. -Tyler DuLam

Vietnamese Ambassador

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nam to the U.S. Mr. Bang's appointment as Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi came in February of this year. Earlier in his career, from 1982 to 1985, the Ambassador was Deputy Chief of Mission at Vietnam's Embassy in the United Kingdom. He holds degrees from the University of Havana, Cuba, and Australian National University. He holds a post graduate

degree from the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, and he has completed two professional development courses in the United States -- the Georgetown and Stanford Leadership Seminars. Mr. Bang is married to Mrs. Bui Thi An and has two sons. He was born in 1947 in Ninh Binh Province.

WTO

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ensure that developing countries, and especially the least-developed among them, secure a share international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development." The organization is particularly committed to offer protection against unfair competition such as dumping and subsidies and to protect the interests of the developing countries of the world.

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UPDATE



POSTAGE
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Greater Seattle Vietnam Association
A grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to helping the
people of Seattle create and maintain cultural and business links
with the people of Vietnam.

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