



The Entry of Time and the Decisions of the Political System and All People in Vietnam in the Prevention and Fight against COVID-19

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a dangerous epidemic with a rapid global spread and increasingly complicated and unpredictable developments. However, the Party, State, and Government of Vietnam have led drastic, quickly, and creatively directed epidemic prevention and control measures from an early stage, applying a higher level of response than the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO). All levels of branches, agencies, and units in the political system in the country have joined forces and unanimously promoted propaganda and the mobilisation of people to prevent and fight epidemics, and promote the tradition of 'mutual friendship, mutual love' in disease prevention and control. Consequentially, Vietnam has been controlling the epidemic situation. The initial positive results of a high proportion of people with COVID-19 being cured in the country have been recognised and appreciated by the WHO, and the international community.

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The Situation of COVID-19 Transmission in Vietnam

On 23 January 2020, Vietnam officially entered the war against COVID-19. Cho Ray Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City confirmed the country's first two COVID-19 patients; a father and son from Wuhan, China. On 12 February 2020, the Vinh Phuc Province decided to isolate the entire Son Loi commune. Subsequently, the unfolding of the COVID-19 epidemic in Vietnam can be divided into the following five phases:

Stage 1: The first 16 cases of COVID-19

- On 23 January 2020, Vietnam officially confirmed the country's first two COVID-19 patients, a father and son from Wuhan, China.
- On 12 February 2020, a case of COVID-19 was discovered in the Vinh Phuc Province.

Stage 2: Cases of Foreign Infiltration

- On 6 March 2020, the City of Hanoi announced its first case. This was the seventeenth COVID-19 patient in Vietnam.
- On 10 March 2020, a highly infectious patient in Binh Thuan was found, the 34th patient in Vietnam. This patient had returned from the United States (US) by entering the country at Tan Son Nhat Airport, later taking a private car back to Phan Thiet, whilst infecting 11 other people in the meantime.
- On 17 March 2020, Vietnam temporarily stopped issuing visas for foreigners entering the country. On 21 March 2020, Vietnam temporarily ceased entering foreign visitors.

Stage 3: The Risk of Spreading in the Community

- On 20 March 2020, the Ministry of Health announced that two nurses of the Tropical Disease Centre at Bach Mai Hospital, were infected with COVID-19. They were the 86th and 87th patients in Vietnam, respectively.
- On 28 March 2020, Vietnam officials ordered one of the nation's largest medical centers to be locked down and demanded thousands of employees and people who recently visited Hanoi's Bach Mai Hospital be tested for Covid-19 after nurses and food workers contracted the disease..
- On March 31, 2020, the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued Directive No. 16/CT-TTg, which sets out Vietnam's strongest measures yet for preventing and controlling the COVID-19 virus. Notably, Directive 16 mandates strict social distancing throughout the country for 15 days, from April 1 through April 15.

Stage 4: Combating a Long-Term Epidemic with Socio-Economic Development

- From 23 April 2020, the whole country essentially stopped social isolation, however, continued to ensure the rules of epidemic prevention and control were implemented.
- On 25 April 2020, the Prime Minister issued Directive 19 to continue measures to prevent and control the COVID-19 epidemic in the new situation.

Stage 5: Rediscovery of the Infection Spreading in the Community

On 25 July 2020, the Ministry of Health announces the 416th patient was discovered in Da Nang but it cannot trace the source of the infection; On 26 July 2020, the Ministry of Health announced the 418th patient was found. The Da Nang hospital to be locked down.

- On 27 July 2020, 11 more patients were confirmed in Da Nang. The City of Da Nang commenced a social gap from 0:00AM on 28 July 2020.
- From 31 July 2020, Vietnam started to record its first patient deaths from COVID-19.
- As of 10:00 AM on 3 September 2020, Vietnam has recorded 1,046 cases of infection, of which 263 cases are under treatment, 746 cases have been cured, and 34 patients have died.

The Policies and Solutions of the Party, State, and Government of Vietnam in the prevention of the COVID-19 epidemic

Policy and Orientation

As soon as the epidemic began in Vietnam, the leaders of the Party, State, and entire political system entered drastic action, along with the unanimity and solidarity of the people, and the army. Subsequently, the epidemic prevention and control work had reached a conclusion of obtaining good results with Vietnam repelling and controlling the epidemic. At the same time, there were timely policies to gradually support businesses and people to overcome the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. The activities of socio-economic life have been gradually restored, and the socio-economic situation has had positive changes. As a result of being highly appreciated by the international community, the people increasingly believe in the leadership of the Party, and State, and the direction and administration of the Government.

In the context that the COVID-19 pandemic may be prolonged, the world economy continues to possess many uncertainties and unpredictable factors. Thus, it is necessary to make the most of the domestic market, and at the same time, it is necessary to prevent and respond to instability from the outside, maintaining macroeconomic stability, controlling inflation, ensuring social security, livelihoods, jobs, and living standards for workers, the poor, and the underprivileged. Moreover, to strive to achieve the highest level of the targets of the socio-economic development plan in 2020, as well as actively administer and adjust targets on the state budget, including state budget revenues, budget deficit, State books, and public debt to suit the practical situation, contributing to socio-economic recovery and development.

Vietnam must clearly define opportunities and challenges to take advantage of solutions, and transform opportunities and challenges into new growth engines, speeding up the process of innovation and restructuring the economy. Thus, overcoming and solving difficulties in production and business, preparing resources, developing special policies, taking advantage of opportunities, improving internal capacity and competitiveness, resilience, and autonomy of the economy.

However, the world's COVID-19 epidemic is still complicated and unpredictable. The negative impacts of the epidemic upon all aspects of socio-economic life continues to persist and cannot be fully assessed. This situation requires the priority of epidemic prevention and control, and at the same time, the need to have immediate and long-term policies and solutions to minimise the impact of the epidemic, overcome difficulties and challenges, and take advantage of the opportunities for early recovery and boosting production, business, and socio-economic development.

Urgent Tasks and Solutions

Firstly, continue to implement appropriate mechanisms and policies synchronously and effectively, especially upon finance, currency, and social security, to support people, businesses, and employees. Small and medium enterprises overcame the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic by quickly recovering and developing socio-economically. Seek to implement the policy of exemption and the reduction of a number of tax obligations for a several fields and subjects that suffered heavy losses due to the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020.

Secondly, focus on strongly developing the domestic market, effectively implementing measures to stimulate domestic consumption, and step up the movement of the 'Vietnamese people give priority to using Vietnamese goods'. Launch a thrift movement in the entire political and social system to put resources into economic recovery and development. In the immediate future, the base salary rate for cadres, civil servants, public employees, and armed forces is yet to be adjusted, and the pension commenced from 1 July 2020.

Thirdly, extend the period of the state budget stabilisation from 2017–2020 to 2020–2021. In 2021, issue the allocation norms of state budget expenditure estimates for the period of 2022–2025.

Fourthly, accelerate disbursement, improve efficiency of the use of public investment, resolve problems in administrative procedures, speed up procedures for approval, and adjust new policies. In addition, immediately commencing and implementing large-scale, important projects by having a spillover effect on to the socio-economic development of localities, regions, sectors, and fields. Strengthen discipline, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state management, and uphold the responsibility of the head, while attaching the responsibilities of the concerned collectives and individuals in ensuring the progress of implementing and disbursing the plans for public investment capital.

Fifthly, proactively adjust plans for public investment in 2020 among ministries, central agencies, and localities within the scope of development investment expenditure estimates. Adjust several expressway component projects on the North-South East route during the period of 2017–2020 from the public-private partnership investment mode to investment from the State budget. Furthermore, ensure publicity, transparency, science, efficiency, and feasibility in accordance with the actual situation of the ability to mobilise credit capital for the implementation of each public-private partnership project and have a management mechanism closely checked and supervised.

Sixthly, properly change the mechanism of inspection and supervision from pre-check to post-check, associated with the transparency of sanctions with sufficient deterrence levels; reduce the number and avoid overlapping in inspection and audit. Moreover, to resolutely, strictly, and promptly handle violations.

Long-Term Tasks and Solutions

Firstly, renovate and perfect institutions to open up, free up resources for development, and improve national governance capacity. Strongly innovate, and improve efficiency in law construction and enforcement. To step up the reform and simplification of administrative procedures, improve the investment and business environment, and focus on solving bottlenecks and shortcomings, creating open conditions for investors and enterprises alike. Accelerate the development of a legal and policy framework, and complete the legal framework for new business models and digital transformation applications.

Secondly, accelerate the process of economic restructuring. Support the development of industries and fields with potentials and advantages, participating deeply in value chains through preferential policies on finance, including the State budget, credit, and other support policies. To restore and stabilise agricultural production, ensuring national food security and export suitability, efficiency, and adaptation to the new situation, as well as strengthen and improve the capacity of disease prevention and control. Focus on restoring and developing new supply chains and value chains. Diversify to avoid depending upon a market for both export and import by increasing exports.

Thirdly, improve capacity and competitiveness to anticipate new opportunities, advantages, and opportunities. Effectively support domestic enterprises, including State-owned enterprises, private enterprises, and Foreign Direct Investment enterprises, which are not to be taken advantage of or acquired by foreign investors. To step up the arrangement, renewal, and divestment associated with improving the operational efficiency of State enterprises, as well as promoting the leading role of corporations and large enterprises in forming value chains and promoting the participation of small and medium enterprises. Create favourable conditions for enterprises of all economic sectors to promote creativity and adaptability, take advantage of opportunities, improve competitiveness, and create jobs for employees. Proactively adopt mechanisms and policies, improve infrastructure, provide support services to attract and select foreign investment cooperation, and ensure quality, efficiency, and environmental protection.

Fourthly, promote the development of digital government, digital economy, digital society, and the innovation and application of science and technology. Focus resources to develop a number of shared technology platforms, and core national database systems, while ensuring safety technical infrastructure and information security. Building and developing a system of national, regional, and local innovation centres, as well as supporting and developing a startup ecosystem that innovates.

Fifthly, ensure social security, create jobs, and train human resources in line with new trends. Effectively implement policies to support social security, create jobs, and create conditions for employees to return to the market soon, while ensuring there is a sufficient workforce when entering the stage of increasing production. Focus on supporting employers to train and retrain employees to meet the new requirements, as well as stepping up the connection of domestic labour supply and demand, and linking to the international labour market.

Sixthly, to bring into play the strengths of key economic regions and big urban centres as the locomotives for socio-economic development. Formulate and implement policies and solutions for the sustainable, synchronous, and systematic development of the region, while also creating spillover effects. Promote intra-regional, inter-regional, and international links, creating a basis for developing new models of territorial organisation, and organisation of production and business. In addition, forming industry clusters, and interconnected production and supply value chains, as well as to create a new development space, suitable to the socialist-oriented market economy institutions.

Positive Results in the Prevention of the COVID-19 epidemic in Vietnam

Countries also highly appreciate the policies and plans of the Government of Vietnam in epidemic control. During a talk with the Vietnamese Embassy in the US about the COVID-19 epidemic, Mr. Mitchell Wolfe, the Chief Medical Specialist at the Office of the Director of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, highly appreciated the capacity in Vietnamese healthcare in general, and especially in COVID-19 epidemic control in particular.

The above decisions and achievements can be affirmed to be very correct and timely, expressing the consistent views of the Government of Vietnam, and at the same time, affirming the consensus in the relationship between the Government and the people.

Certainly, when implementing the above policies, some interests of the people will be affected, especially regarding difficulties in production and business, travel, and personal activities. In parallel with the goal, 'the health and lives of the people are first', the people have consensus, and voluntarily abide by and join hands with the Government to effectively control and prevent epidemics.

That consensus is expressed very clearly in all aspects and fields of social life, from the observance of control activities to medical examination and treatment, voluntary reporting, and beyond. Another is the contribution of energy and material resources to anti-epidemic work. Recently promoting the spirit of solidarity, sharing, and responsibility in the prevention and fight against the COVID-19 epidemic, many units, organisations, and individuals across the country have enthusiastically participated in material and money contributions towards the prevention of translation activities.

The majority of social media users in Vietnam have highly appreciated the effectiveness of the solutions proposed by the Government to prevent COVID-19. This is clearly demonstrated in the fact that currently, the above solutions are good, so the rate of people infected with COVID-19 in Vietnam is



very small compared to other countries around the world, and the speed of spread in the community is slow. Moreover, the number of deaths locally caused by COVID-19 is small, with a majority of the deaths in Vietnam comprised of the elderly, and on the basis of serious illnesses, such as: end stage chronic kidney failure, end stage blood cancer chemical response, coronary syndrome, acute respiratory failure, polyarthritis, hypertension, chronic adrenal insufficiency, type two diabetes mellitus, sepsis, pneumonia, exhaustion, and multiorgan failure.

At the same time, the survey also found that social media users are highly supportive of the implementation of 'slogans' to propagate to the people regarding epidemic prevention. Up to 88.1 per cent of people surveyed support or highly support this action. This shows that in addition to propagating with posters or promotional videos, these 'slogans' are also effective because they are close, easy to understand, and easy for all to remember.

On the other hand, in addition to studying the behaviour of users of social networks related to the Government's timely decisions on disease control and prevention, the authors also researched upon how to deal with diseases. The authorities of the State have issued documents that are not in compliance with regulations or cause confusion in the public opinion concerning COVID-19. When being surveyed on this issue, 35.9 per cent of surveyed people believed that the person who signed the documents in contravention of regulations or caused confusion in public opinion should publicly apologise and accept responsibility for their work. However, in addition, 27.2 per cent of others said that it is necessary to remove them from office, so that competent people can be more responsible for their jobs. Furthermore, 15 per cent think that just warning against the above behaviour is enough. The above survey opinion also reflects the 'social consensus' very clearly in the direction of the Government and the people's opinion, which is to resolutely handle agencies that issue incorrect documents that affect the epidemic prevention process of the country.

In short, social consensus is one of the decisive factors for the survival and development of a society. In perilous historical periods, social consensus has shown its vital role. Currently, the world and Vietnam are entering decisive historical moments, requiring correct decisions and the participation of the entire political system and the entire population towards the highest consensus. Thus, contributing to repel and quell the epidemic COVID-19, contributing to the process of stability and sustainable development of the nation, and the world.



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