

Mr Phan Van Khai

The degree of Doctor of Science in Economics (honoris causa) was conferred upon Vietnamese Prime Minister His Excellency Mr Phan Van Khai by the Chancellor Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer AC at a special conferring ceremony held on 1 April 1999 in Maclaurin Hall before an invited audience which included Senate Fellows, government officials, academics, students and the media.

Citation

Chancellor

I am pleased to present to you His Excellency, Mr Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science in Economics (honoris causa).

Prime Minister Khai has made many significant contributions to the democratisation of Vietnam's economic and political life. His own life mirrors the emergence of modern Vietnam and his actions have contributed to changes that are transforming the country.

Prime Minister Khai has an extensive background in public administration, particularly as an economic policy maker. As Prime Minister, he has been one of the major architects of Vietnam's integration in the region and internationally, and in 1998, in Kuala Lumpur, he was the first Vietnamese representative to participate in the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum.

Born in 1933 in a village adjacent to Ho Chi Minh City in the south of Vietnam, Prime Minister Khai later studied at the National Economics University in Moscow. He was Deputy Section Chief, then Section Chief of the State Planning Commission in the period of 1965 to 1972. In 1974 he was a member of the Government National Reunification Committee before becoming Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee of Ho Chi Minh City. In 1981 he was appointed Deputy Mayor of Ho Chi Minh City before becoming Mayor. In 1989 he became Chairman of the State Planning Committee and subsequently became Deputy Prime Minister and then in September 1997 he became Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Since taking up the office of Prime Minister in 1997 Prime Minister Khai has led the Vietnamese Government towards open economic reform. His reform agenda has focused on five major areas: removing constraints on production, particularly agriculture; continued privatisation of state-owned enterprises; strategic investment in key national projects; maintenance of fiscal discipline and simplification of administration. Embedded in the reform agenda is maintenance of the integrity of Vietnamese culture and identity.

Prime Minister Khai has paid particular attention to rural reform and has proposed major structural changes to the Vietnamese rural economy although these changes have been somewhat tempered by regional economic crises.

The Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, His Excellency, Mr Michael Mann, comments that Prime Minister Khai is widely credited with reforming Vietnam's investment laws as well as insuring high growth and low inflation for many years. Prime Minister Khai is recognised for having a solid grasp of market economics that has enabled him to play a key role in the economic reforms in Vietnam.

Chancellor, I have the honour to present to you His Excellency, Mr Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science in Economics (honoris causa), and invite you to confer the degree upon him.