

PROJECT FOR IMPORTANT STRUCTURAL REFORM  
IN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED  
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President outlines major points of reform program

Saigon (VP) Feb. 7

In a news conference at Independence Palace yesterday, the President of the Republic announced important reforms in the government structure and outlined the major points of his program.

More than 100 Vietnamese and foreign newspapermen, representatives of various news agencies and press attaches of diplomatic missions attended the news conference.

After welcoming the newsmen, the President asked the Secretary of State for the Presidency, Mr. Nguyen Dinh Thuan, to present the major points of the reform program.

The Secretary of State said :

"Along the reform lines drawn up in the declaration delivered by the President of the Republic before the National Assembly on Oct. 3, 1960, several important projects have just been approved with a view to rendering the government agencies more adapted to the situation..

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"First and foremost, several key agencies will be reorganised in order to increase their co-ordination and their efficiency, and at the same time, to attribute in a more proper manner the departmental responsibilities. To this end, many services which have heretofore been directly attached to the Presidency, will be placed under the jurisdiction of appropriate Departments; those agencies having related activities will be centralised under the direction of one Secretary of State or one Coordinating Secretary of State. This innovation will be favourable to the harmonious development of various activities in each branch, particularly in the economic and cultural fields.

"Therefore the number of agencies attached to the President's Office is now reduced to six and these will be reorganised. The Directorate Generals of Information and Youth will be integrated with the Civic Action Commissariat under a department of Civic Action. The agencies which have been handling agrarian reform, agriculture, land development, agricultural credit and rural reconstruction will fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Rural Affairs. The Departments themselves will be grouped according to their respective branches of activity : security, economic development, social and cultural, and in addition to the Secretaries of State there will be Secretaries of State in charge of Coordination.

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"Furthermore there will be many agencies of regional or national nature, to be established with a view toward encouraging more active participation by the intellectual, working, productive classes in projects of common interest. The village councils each will have a new councillor to be elected by the Cong Hoa (Republican) Youth organizations who will be in charge of youth and information in the villages. The Provincial and City Councils will be organized on the basis of large decentralization. A National Economic Council and a Cultural and Social Council, to be made up of representatives from economic, and technical circles and of able and experienced people, will directly help in mapping out and approving the government-sponsored projects and programs. A Cultural Institute, to operate under a flexible statute, and to include members of the intelligentsia, will help promote the research activities and creative work in the scientific, technical and artistic fields.

"All together, with the establishment of the Constitutional Court and the High Council of the Judiciary the new agencies mentioned above will complete the government's structure, reorganized in such a way as to help Viet Nam speed up its progress, under the sign of efficiency, personalism and democracy."

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The President of the Republic emphasized that the reforms aim at several goals :

1. To perfect the democratic institutions of the country by establishing such important councils as the Constitutional Court, the High Council of the Judiciary and the National Economic Council.

2. To alleviate the burden devolving on the President's Office, only major agencies will be retained. The number of agencies attached to the President's Office will drop from 20 to six -- Civil Service, Planning, Social welfare and Social Action for the Highlands, Inspection and the Institute of National Administration.

3. To strengthen the responsibility of the Departments by transferring to them the responsibilities heretofore held by the President's Office.

4. To strengthen the coordination and control of the government's activities through the grouping of various departments under Security, Economic Development, Cultural and Social Affairs, each group of departments being headed by a Coordinating Secretary of State in addition to the Secretaries of State who are directly responsible for the departments' operations.

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Furthermore related activities formerly divided among several departments will be grouped under a unique department. For example, Information, Youth, and Civic Action, will come under the Department of Civic Action. Agriculture, Agrarian Reform, Land Development, Agricultural Credit, and Rural Reconstruction all will be grouped under the new Department of Rural Affairs.

5. To strengthen the village administrative machinery by the election to the village council of a member of the Cong Hoa Youth who will be in charge of Information and Youth Affairs.

6. To decentralise authority by establishing provincial and municipal councils.

7. To encourage the participation of people in all walks of life in the government-sponsored programs, with the establishment of the National Economic Council, Social and Cultural Council, Cultural Institute, Provincial and Municipal Councils.

Structural Reforms of Central Agencies

Replying to questions, the President pointed out that the appointment of Secretaries of State in charge of Coordination is aimed at activating and coordinating the work of the different Departments in the same field which must submit to these Secretaries their projects and action programmes. The Secretaries of State in charge of Coordination will not directly run the Departments under the jurisdiction of the concerned Secretaries of State.

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This reform, the President said, has been decided upon in answer to criticisms against red-tape, to make a more efficient use of the personnel, and to simplify work methods and coordinate work more closely in fields that require cooperative efforts of several Departments.

Asked about responsibilities of the Secretaries of State and the Secretaries of State in charge of Coordination, the President replied that they all are responsible to the President of the Republic.

Furthermore, the authority of the Secretaries will not be subject to any change since the decentralization of power advocated by the reform programme is centered on the regional level.

In regard to the selection of appointees to the newly created positions and the date of application of the reforms, the President said that he has been having consultations on these problems. The time required for the establishment of central agencies will be relatively short, he added.

On the contrary, he went on, the installation of village provincial and municipal councils will require longer time as does the establishment of important agencies such as the National Economic Council, the High Council of the Judiciary and the Constitutional Court.

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Draft bills concerning these agencies have been presented to the National Assembly which will shortly debate on them, so action by the executive can be taken only after the vote of the legislative.

Local Administration Reforms

The first step toward reshaping the village administrative apparatus is the participation of the Youth Commissioner in Village Council work. \*

This first reform has been in effect for one month and a half, and the experiment will be generalized, depending on the results obtained as well as the educational level and the competence factors of the people in the villages..

Asked whether the creation of municipal and provincial councils means a decrease of power for the chiefs of provinces, the President said that the decentralization at the local level is the purpose of the new move.

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After the conference, President Ngo talked informally with Vietnamese and foreign journalists and correspondents until 6:30 p.m.

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