

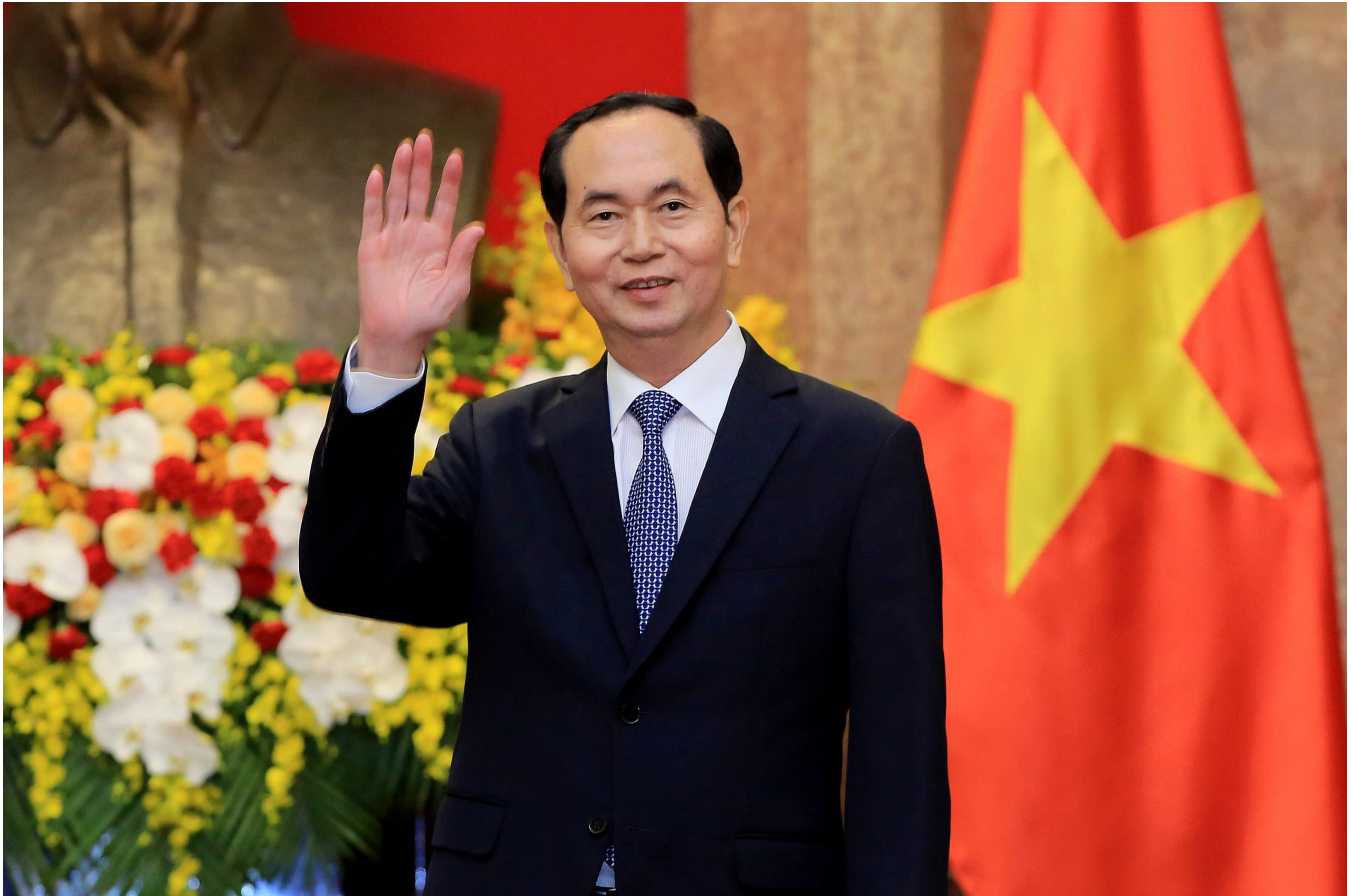
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Speculation swirls over fate of Vietnamese president

Retirement or dismissal seen as reasons for Quang's absence from key events

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Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang. © Reuters

HANOI -- Political insiders in Vietnam are abuzz over the fate of President Tran Dai Quang, with some speculating that he may have resigned or been ousted.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam kicked off a six-day general assembly on Monday, reportedly to discuss personnel affairs. Quang's **absence from important events** has fueled rumors that the party's second-highest leader may no longer be in office. His current status will be a key issue during the assembly.

During **Myanmar** State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi's inaugural visit to **Vietnam** on April 19, the president, as Vietnam's top diplomat, was scheduled to meet the leader following a signing ceremony that day. However, the meeting was suddenly cancelled.

The president has recently been absent from other key events, including a commemoration marking the end of the Vietnam War on April 30 and a dialogue with voters during a ceremony on May 5.

Quang, 61, previously served as Minister of Public Security, and was elected president during the Communist Party Congress in 2016.

General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, 74, had been expected to hand over his position to Quang in 2018 after having served only half his term. Trong's advanced age would have likely made completing his tenure through 2020 impossible.

Ill health could be behind Quang's non-appearances, increasing the possibility that he may be on the way out.

In a related event on Wednesday, the party's Central Committee named a successor to Tran Quoc Vuong, the party's Central Inspection Commission chief. This may signal that Vuong will be moving to replace Quang as president, as has been rumored.

If Vuong, 65, becomes president, he will retain his post as executive secretary of the Central Committee's Secretariat.