Vietnam's Communist Party names To Lam top leader

AFP – Vietnamese President To Lam was formally named the country's top leader Saturday, pledging to "speed up" a sweeping graft campaign that has snared thousands in recent years.
The Communist Party elected Lam as general secretary in the morning, the party said at a press conference, making him the most powerful figure in Vietnam's leadership structure,

It was not immediately clear if Lam would simultaneously continue to serve as president, a largely ceremonial position.

In his first remarks as general secretary, Lam pledged to "speed up" a sweeping anti-corruption campaign that has seen thousands – including top officials and senior business leaders – caught up in the crackdown.

"(I will) continue to speed up anti-corruption … regardless of who the person is," Lam told a press conference.

"We have gained the trust of the people, and international friends, in our fight".

Lam's appointment comes two weeks after the death of General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, Vietnam's most powerful leader in decades.

Trong died in the capital Hanoi "due to old age and serious illness" and Lam was informally handed the reins of power.

Lam's succession to the top job follows a long career within the secretive public security ministry, which deals with the monitoring of dissent and surveillance of activists in Vietnam, a one-party state.

Lam, 67, led the ministry from 2016 until earlier this year,

when he was voted in as president.

That came in the wake of the resignation of his predecessor, as part of the sweeping anti-graft purge.

The so-called “blazing furnace” campaign has proved popular with the public, but analysts have warned the turmoil is threatening the country’s reputation for stability.

The communist party has undergone a series of upheavals in recent months, with ministers, business leaders and two presidents all falling from grace as part of the vast campaign.

And with many fearful of being caught in its crosshairs, everyday transactions within business and the state apparatus have slowed.

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