



Mekong Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MEKONG INSTITUTE

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Southeast Asia: the flood crisis

The floods that have swept many countries across Southeast Asia these past months are yet far from over. Millions have been affected, an estimated 900 were killed, and Billions of Dollars worth of damages have been made. The question everyone's asking is: **what will this lead to?**

The United Nations reported in mid-October that the countries affected by floods, namely Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and the Philippines, were to face "serious food shortages" due to agricultural damages and difficulty in delivering food assistance.

Official estimates say that 12.5% of the total rice farm land has been damaged in Thailand alone, with Cambodia following at 12%. Laos on the other hand, damaged 7.5% and Vietnam 0.4%.

UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned that rice, which is the main staple food in Asia, was affected the most. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, the rice price will surely rise drastically as the top three rice exporters in the world namely Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia have been severely struck.

Neighboring import-dependent countries like Singapore have already expressed concern. However, Sin Serey, the Cambodia Ambassador to Singapore reassured that some farmers in Cambodia have already switched to flood-resistant rice grains which could grow even if paddy fields were flooded.

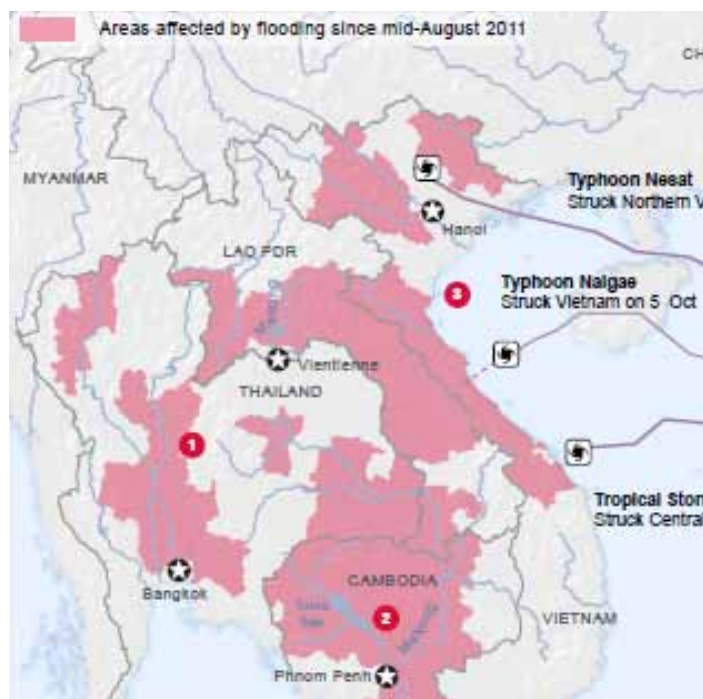
The region has also seen scores of livestock killed from the disaster. In Thailand, 9.9 Million heads of livestock are at risk, said the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, yet this number may still grow as the floods continue to worsen.

Flood-waters carry in them a mixing bowl of components, ranging from rotten food, dead animals, sewage and waste water, oils and harmful chemicals from factories, etc. Numerous people have already been killed by poisoning during the floods.

In this regard, the Mekong Institute (MI) would be the go-to organization due to its nature in training ... See page 3



AP— An areal view of the Chao Praya River on Oct 12, 2011, in Ayuttaya Province, Thailand.



UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs showed, in a recent report, a graphic on flood affected areas as of August.

GMS experts meet for AEC 2015

The Mekong Forum, with the theme: "From the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015: Prospects for Human Resource Development and Capacity Building in Regional Cooperation and Integration," was held in Khon Kaen, Thailand on July 12-13, 2011.

The Forum provided a unique opportunity to bring together senior government officials, academics and researchers, civil societies, private sector practitioners and other capacity building professionals from throughout the Sub-region and beyond. Seventy one delegates participated in the Forum, which was organized by the Mekong Institute and sponsored by the New Zealand Aid Programme.

Recognizing that the demand on the GMS countries for integration into ASEAN is occurring at an accelerated pace, the Forum focused on how regional networks and partnerships can help prepare the GMS countries for integration and assist in narrowing development gaps



in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV).

Experts from within, and outside the region, shared their views on the implications for regional cooperation and integration. Distinguished speakers included: Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman of the Board, MFC Asset Management Plc. Thailand; Ambassador Pradap Pibulsonggram, Thai Representative High Level Task Force on ASEAN Connectivity, Dr. Lothar Mahnke, Managing Director, Regionomica Asia Pte. Ltd and Dr. Suchat Katima, Director, Mekong Institute.

Key themes :

1. Human Resource Development and Capacity Building are critical factors in strengthening GMS

countries' ability to integrate into ASEAN

2. GMS countries need to leverage on the rise of China as well as their commitment to ASEAN to improve their economies
3. Successful capacity building is demand-driven, long-term, uses a variety of methods and must pay attention to the role of partner institutions
4. Tangible inter-regional cooperation is already taking place (connectivity of infrastructure, institutions and peoples)
5. Achieving AEC 2015 depends on closing "The Prosperity Gap" between CLMV and other ASEAN countries.

Delegates discussed and shared experiences to identify the major Human Resource Development and Capacity Building barriers and constraints centered on the issues of Free Trade Agreements, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, and Good Agricultural Practices. Delegates identified the need to address constraints in three major areas... See page 2.

Transport Sector: 'Backbone of EWEC'



"The transport sector is the backbone for trade in the EWEC. Therefore there is a need to support it," said Mr. Sumit Pokhrel, the Energy and Climate Change Coordinator from GMS-EOC, ADB, at a workshop held at the Mekong Institute (MI), Khon Kaen, Thailand, last Friday, October 7, 2011.

The East West Economic Corridor (EWEC), is the most established corridor out of the four that are operational in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). The GMS Economic Program, under the Asian Development Bank (ADB), set up these economic corridors to enhance the cooperation and integration of the region. The EWEC runs from East to West, namely through Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and ends in Vietnam. Across this corridor, trade is open, yet there are still many areas that need upliftment, in order to maximize this project.

The transport sector is one of these areas. Since most of the trade across this region runs in-land, issues regarding freight and logistics are affecting its business potential. To address this, the ADB and MI have conducted a survey along the EWEC in Thailand, Laos and Viet Nam, to know about the business situation and fuel costs of road freight businesses.

To validate the searches, they also organized a 1-day consultative workshop on "EWEC Freight and Logistics Energy Efficiency", wherein Government Agencies, Logistic Companies and Associations from Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as Clean Air Initiative-Asia, Manila, were in attendance.

The survey showed that more than 70% of companies change their vehicles every 6-10 years. Also, 40-60% of the operating costs of the companies were on fuel ... see page 2.

More Inside:

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Rising Up to the Challenges Ahead

“There was never a night or a problem that could defeat sunrise or hope.” – Ben Williams

This year’s floods have been dreadful for all of us across the Greater Mekong Subregion. It has tested us, educated us, and toughened us. Yet there is nothing we haven’t overcome in the past, and I have faith that our people will rise above this calamity as well.

Aside from natural disasters, we have other pressing things coming our way. One of these things is the coming of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. As envisioned, this entails a single market and production base, a highly competitive economic region, a region of equitable economic development and a region fully integrated into the global economy.

The Mekong Forum, a forum we organized earlier this year, discussed how to prepare for this massive integration, and what it means for us. The free flow of goods and services will push us to set our bar higher, preparing our own to be as competitive as our neighbors. It gives our own businesses opportunities to set out to the global market. It gives us challenges yet with them, such great windows for exposure and development.

On November 11, 2011, we will strengthen our integration further as the opening of the 3rd Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge in Nakhon Phanom will take place. The Mekong Institute will be holding an executive meeting there the day before on “Business Opportunities and Development Potentials along the East-West Economic Corridor”.

As everything is coming together in such a fast pace, a new era is soon to begin. One that has no ‘mine’, no ‘yours’ but only ‘ours’ -- in an inter-dependent regional economy.

Dr. Suchat Katima
 Director



Continued...

From Page 1 — GMS Experts ... (1) Institutional – by building the capacity of government agencies and private sector institutions (e.g. Chambers of Commerce and Industry) in developing and disseminating ASEAN related information; (2) Implementation – by strengthening the capacity of government agencies to implement different ASEAN frameworks; (3) Innovation - by enhancing the ability of all stakeholders to cope with changes and fast developments.

Delegates then identified potential collaborative partnerships and arrangements to overcome these



(from Left to Right) Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Ambassador Pradap Pibulsonggram, Dr. Lothar Mahnke and Dr. Suchat Katima speaking on the AEC and what it will take to achieve it. Approximately 100 people from the GMS and from around the world were in attendance.



EDITORIAL

Mekong Institute News:

Human Migration Experts Gathered



The Mekong Institute (MI) organized an expert’s meeting for its upcoming Human Migration Management and Care Program. It hosted 13 experts from various government organizations, non-government organizations, and academic institutions with involvement in migration in the GMS countries. The meeting was set to validate the need of implementing MI’s Human Migration Management and Care Program as well as to set-up a cooperative action plan for the next three years. It was held at the Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen, Thailand on the 11th of July, 2011.

MI Attends Asia Pacific Trade Fair



The Mekong Institute (MI) participated in the Asia Pacific Trade and Investment Fair 2011 which was organized together with the 8th Asia Pacific Business Forum by UNESCAP from 25th -26th of July 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand. MI was one of the collaborative partners of the event. The theme of the Fair was “Capturing Post-Crisis Trade and Investment Opportunities in Asia and the Pacific”. The Trade and Investment Facilitation Division of Mekong Institute displayed its activities and products which generated great amount of interest among the visitors of the fair.

Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment

To ensure that events run smoothly without difficulty in language barrier, simultaneous interpretation equipment is now available at MI to facilitate the communication from one language into multiple languages without interrupting the speakers or the delegates. This real-time and completely wireless interpretation system enables MI to provide the interpretation services in large venues, both indoor and outdoor, as well as in small settings.



SLV on B2B Development and Trade

A Structured Learning Visit for Business to Business (B2B) along the East West Economic Corridor has been organized to share learning experiences and to seek business collaboration with regional and transnational companies to access regional and global markets.

MI meetings to be held in Siem Reap

This year, the MI Steering Committee Meeting and the MI Council Meeting will be held in Sofitel Angkor Phokeethra Golf & Spa Resort, Siem Reap, Cambodia on December 6-7, 2011. It will be hosted by MI’s Council Chairman, H.E. Mr. Ngo Hongly.

Executive Seminar in Nakhon Phanom

The Mekong Institute is organizing a one day Executive Seminar on Business Opportunities and Development Potentials of the East-West Economic Corridor in Mukdahan province on 10th November 2011, with a structured visit to witness the Grand Opening Ceremony of the Third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge in Nakhon Phanom Province on 11th November 2011.

From Page 1 — Transport Sector... alone. Fleet and vehicle upgrade is a major barrier to fuel efficiency, and the causes of this, as identified in the workshop, are the access to loans and credit, high interest rates thereof, lack of information on investment, driver quality and behavior, and technological barriers, to name a few. Other factors to fuel inefficiency are empty running, trade imbalances, and inefficient border procedures causing delays and double-handling.

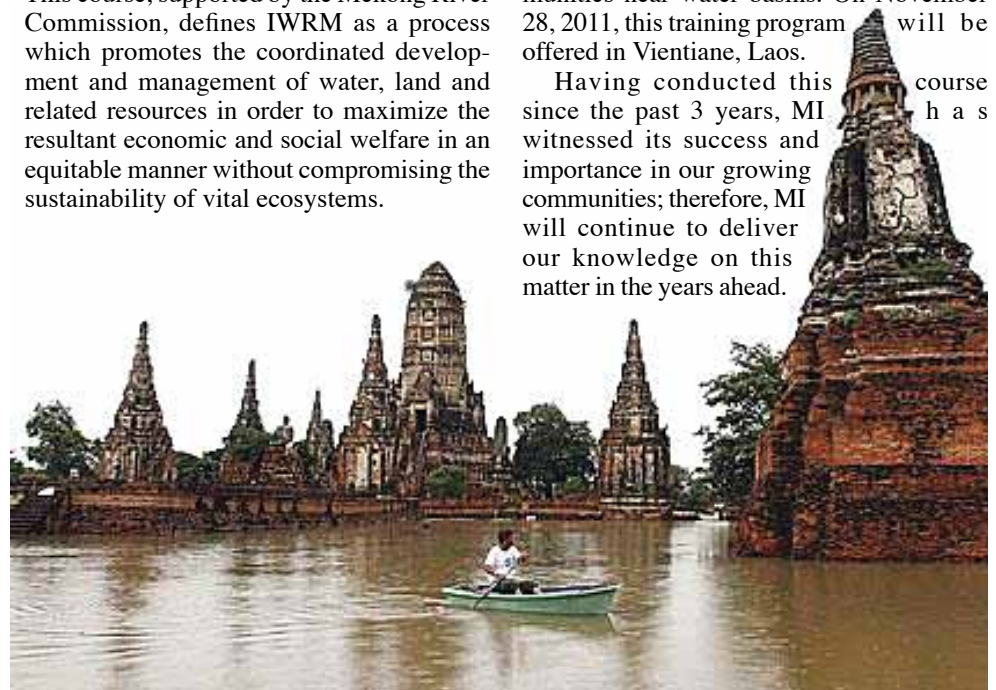


The recommendations were for the government and associations to expand the policies on trucks, provide market information, build better infrastructure, and minimize empty running through networks. Also, they should make available decent credit opportunities, provide technical training to drivers, and rationalize tariffs, etc. Companies, at their end, should seek partnerships, available credit options, and technological advancements to upgrade their fleets. While discussing the international companies’ view on this issue, Mr. John Quarmby (discussing in the photo) from the GMS Business Forum pointed out that multi-national companies don’t worry about fuel cost too much, all they need is the borders to run smoothly. Border crossing delays and border opening times are major issues to them, therefore there is a need for standardization in the EWEC as a whole.

From Page 1 — Southeast Asia ... offering many workshops and policy dialogues on significant issues in the Greater Mekong Subregion. MI offers a range of timely courses, such as Integrated Water Resource Management in the Mekong Basin (IWRM). This course, supported by the Mekong River Commission, defines IWRM as a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

The training aims to help current and coming generations of water professionals to learn how to properly design water management. Flood mitigation discussion is addressed as well, as this is an important factor when managing water resources in communities near water basins. On November 28, 2011, this training program will be offered in Vientiane, Laos.

Having conducted this course since the past 3 years, MI witnessed its success and importance in our growing communities; therefore, MI will continue to deliver our knowledge on this matter in the years ahead.

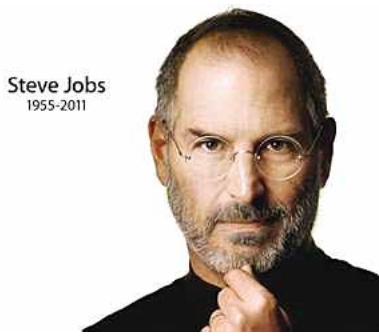


AP — A man rows his boat past the Chai Watthanaram temple, Ayuttaya Province, Thailand on Oct. 4, 2011



Steve Jobs – Quoted:

(Source Bangkok Post-Business Oct 28, 2011)



Steve Jobs, the innovator of the Mac computer, Toy Story from Pixar, the iPod, iPhone and the revolutionary iPad, died at 56 last Oct. 5, 2011. He was renowned not only for his innovation, but also for his thought-provoking words that reflected how he lived his life. Here are some of his inspiring quotations:

“You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.”

“The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it.”

“You know, I’ve got a plan that could rescue Apple. I can’t say any more than that it’s the perfect product and the perfect strategy for Apple.

But nobody there will listen to me.”

“It comes from saying no to 1,000 things to make sure we don’t get on the wrong track or try to do too much.”

“We don’t get a chance to do that many things, so everyone should be really excellent. This is your life.”

“If I were running Apple, I would milk the Macintosh for all it’s worth and get busy on the next great thing. The PC wars are over. Done. Microsoft won a long time ago.”

“I didn’t see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.”

SAFETY TIPS: DURING FLOODS

Before a Flood

1. Avoid building in a floodplain.
2. Construct barriers (levees, beams, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering your home.
3. Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.
4. If a flood is likely in your area, listen to the radio or television for information.
5. Know the difference between a flood watch and a flood warning. A watch means flooding is possible. A warning means flooding is occurring or will occur soon.

When a Flood is Imminent

1. Be prepared! Pack a bag with important items in case you need to evacuate. Don’t forget to include needed medications.
2. If advised to evacuate your home, do so immediately.
3. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground.
4. If possible, bring in outdoor furniture and move essential items to an upper floor.
5. Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances.



During a Flood

1. Do not walk through moving water. As little as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of moving water can make you fall.
2. If you have to walk in water, wherever possible, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check

the firmness of the ground in front of you.

3. Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely.
4. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

After a Flood

1. Listen for news reports to learn whether the community’s water supply is safe to drink.
2. Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
3. Avoid moving water.
4. Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
5. Stay away from downed power lines, and report them to the power company.
6. Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
7. Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
8. Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.
9. Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.

(source: National Geographic)

AMAZING NUMBERS

Unforgiving Waters

At the height of recent climate change skepticism, the planet makes it obvious again that big changes are happening.

400
Million Dollars is the estimated cost to Cambodia from the recent floods

56
Thousand homes were inundated in Vietnam

147
Is the estimated number of people who lost their lives in Myanmar

974
Is the amount in Dollars that the Thai Government said it would give to each affected household

37
Thousand people have been affected and displaced in Laos

8.2
Billion Dollars is the estimated loss of Thailand because of the floods

Special Guests:



Members of the Yunnan Delegation

On August 10, 2011, 37 members of Yunnan-Thailand (Northern Region) Cooperation Working Group paid a visit to the Mekong Institute. Middle to senior officials from Yunnan Province, led by Mr. Huang Jun, Director General of the Department of Culture of Yunnan Province, P. R. China, were welcomed by MI Director, Dr Suchat Katima, and MI staff. The delegates were given presentations on MI’s background and our activities in the Greater Mekong Subregion.



Mr. Craig Steffensen, Country Director, ADB Thailand

“I’ll do what I can do to support MI more. Consider me a supporter,” expressed Mr. Craig Steffensen (Country Director of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Thailand) during his productive visit on Friday, October 21, 2011. Mr. Steffensen, accompanied by Dr. Rattanatay Luanglatbandith, (Regional Cooperation Economist, ADB) visited MI for a courtesy call and after that paid a visit to MI’s Council Member and President of Khon Kaen University, Dr. Kittichai Triratanasirichai.



Department of Agricultural Extension - Thailand

A group of 35 government officials from the Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture of Thailand, visited last September 23, 2011. These officials were taking part in a 2-day training program entitled: “Producing and Developing Tutor in Extension Work”. They came to MI to be informed about the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) Economic Cooperation Program and what MI does to uplift the thrusts of this region, especially when it came to agriculture.

Upcoming Activities in 2011

| Activity: | Development Partner: | Venue: | Date: |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Trade and Investment Facilitation | | | |
| Executive Seminar on “Business Opportunities and Development Potentials of the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC): With the Opening of the Third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge” | Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) | Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand | 10 Nov |
| Consultative Meetings with National and Provincial Chambers of Commerce and Industries on a Standard Computerized EWEC Database System | Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) | 11 Provinces along EWEC | Nov-Dec |
| Mid - term Evaluation of the EWEC Project | Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) | Mekong Institute | 30 Dec |
| Rural Development for Sustainable Livelihoods | | | |
| Training Course on Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mekong Region | Mekong River Commission (MRC) | Vientiane, Laos | 28 Nov – 11 Dec |
| Training Course on Agriculture Sector Value Chain Analysis & Promotion | Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore | Mekong Institute | 28 Nov – 9 Dec |

Special Announcements:

(more information available at www.mekonginstitute.org)



MINZAS Scholarships

The Mekong Institute (MI) announces the availability of Mekong Institute—New Zealand Ambassador’s Scholarship (MINZAS) Program for 12 students from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand (CLMT) pursuing a Master’s degree course. MINZAS 2012 are provided in the form of a thesis grant and technical support available from March 2012 -February 2013. Three scholarships are allotted for each country and students will be selected primarily on the basis of scholastic achievement, relevance of the thesis proposal, and demonstrated potential to play an influential role in GMS cooperation and integration. The scholarships are funded by the New Zealand Embassy of Bangkok.

LOGO Competition

The Mekong Institute has arranged a contest for its 15th Anniversary logo which will be used all throughout 2012, with the theme: “15 years of Developing Partnerships with the People of the Mekong”. The logo contest design winner will receive a prize of 10,000 Baht. Up to two entries may be submitted per contestant, following the criteria of 50% Creativity and 50% Clarity. Deadline for all entries will be on November 30, 2011. The competition is limited to citizens of the GMS Countries which comprise of: Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and the Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces of PR China.

Recent Memories: *MI Staff Retreat*



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