

Vietnam, Water and Environmental Technology, Press Review, 02/2011

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1	ADB, NDF support action on Vietnam climate change	08/02/2011	Saigon Celebration	Vietnam	Climate Change	The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Nordic Development Fund are to help Vietnam draw up and implement detailed climate change action plans for key cities and government departments
2	Industrial parks fail to treat wastewater	08/02/2011	VN news	Binh Duong	Wastewater	Inspectors from the Viet Nam Environment Administration have found that many industrial parks in southern Binh Duong Province have been discharging untreated waste water into the environment
3	Vietnam to launch int'l initiative on green economy	09/02/2011	VN net bridge	Vietnam	Environment	Vietnam will launch an international initiative on a green economy for sustainable development in Hanoi in September, said a Vietnamese diplomat to the UN.
4	Help to tackle climate change	09/02/2011	VN news	Vietnam	Climate Change	The Nordic Development Fund and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will help Viet Nam draw up and implement detailed climate change action plans for key cities and government departments
5	Huge improvements made in environmental protection	10/02/2011	VN news	HCM	Environment	Environmental protection in HCM City showed a distinct improvement last year compared to 2009, with all industrial parks and export processing zones bringing their consolidated wastewater treatment systems into operation
6	Minister calls on farmers to cut greenhouse gas	14/02/2011	VN news	HCM	Environment	The farm sector has to take pro-active measures to ease the rate of climate change, Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Cao Duc Phat has said.



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7	Hoan Kiem to be cleansed of Exotic turtles in March	15/02/2011	VN Net Bridge	Hanoi	Environment	The Hanoi Department of Science and Technology will kill red-ear turtles in Hanoi's Hoan Kiem Lake in March to protect the legendary turtle
8	Comprehensive climate change strategy a 'matter of life and death	17/02/2011	VN News	Hanoi	Climate Change	Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung asked relevant agencies to rapidly complete and publish the latest climate change and rising sea level scenarios for likely affected localities
9	Experts raise concerns over health of legendary Hoan Kiem Lake turtle	18/02/2011	VN News	Hanoi	Environment	Hoan Kiem Lake's giant turtle should be removed for treatment for injuries believed to have been caused by fish hooks, pollution and attacks by other species of turtles
10	River pollution kills 36 tons of fishes	22/02/2011	Saigon Economy Times	Dong Nai	Pollution	Pollution in the Dong Nai river has killed 36 tons of fishes in Thong Nhat Ward of southern Bien Hoa city, the farmers association said in a report sent to authorities Monday
11	Bay diversity under threat	23/02/2011	VN News	Nha Trang	Environment	Bio-diversity in Nha Trang Bay is under serious threat, according to Truong Kinh, director of the Nha Trang Bay's Sea Protection Management Board
12	Brakish water spells bad news for Delta	23/02/2011	VN News	Mekong Delta	Water	Salt water intrusion in coastal provinces in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta has occurred earlier this year than previous years, affecting thousands of ha of rice
13	Polluting brick kilns continue to operate despite official ban	23/02/2011	VN News	Hanoi	Pollution	More than 900 traditional brick kilns, which are known for using low-quality coal and out-moded methods that cause massive air pollution and waste of agricultural land



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14	Rising sea, drought threaten drinking water	25/02/2011	Vietnam net bridge	HCM	Water	Rising sea water, drought and pollution of water sources are forecast to leave this thriving commercial hub short of drinking water later this years.
15	Region needs \$5b for water systems	25/02/2011	VN News	Hanoi	Water	The north-central region needs VND109 trillion (US\$5.1 billion) to upgrade its water resources system by 2050 in response to rising sea levels and other effects of climate change
16	Drought puts many provinces at extreme risk of forest fires	26/02/2011	Vietnam Plus	Vietnam	Environment	Thirteen provinces throughout the country are listed as being under dire threat of forest fires, according to the Department of Forest Management under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
17	Vets to treat injured Hoan Kiem lake turtle	26/02/2011	VN News	Hanoi	Environment	The Emergency Committee for the Saving of the Hoan Kiem Lake Turtle decided yesterday to treat the injured turtle at Thap Rua (Turtle Tower) in the middle of the lake
18	City focuses on beating pollution	28/02/2011	VN News	HCM	Pollution	Addressing environmental pollution is one of their major tasks in the next five years and they have already taken many measures to check pollution, HCM city authorities have said



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ADB, NDF support action on Vietnam climate change

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Nordic Development Fund are to help Vietnam draw up and implement detailed climate change action plans for key cities and government departments, the bank announced Feb. 1.

The announcement said a technical assistance grant of US\$2.5 million from the Nordic Development Fund, administered by ADB, will be used to help Ho Chi Minh City and Danang, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and Thanh Hoa Province plan and implement effective climate change response measures.

The assistance will support the Vietnamese Government's National Target Program for building a more climate-resilient economy producing less greenhouse gas, the bank said. "This project will help increase the capacity of the target cities, ministries and province to respond effectively to the impacts of climate change," Ayumi Konishi, ADB Country Director for Vietnam, said in the statement.

A national study for Vietnam indicates that by the end of the 21st century the average temperature will have risen by about 2.3 degrees Celsius with sea levels expected to increase by 75 cm over the same period.

These changes in climate threaten the key rice growing areas of the Mekong and Red river deltas, as well as major urban areas, including Ho Chi Minh and Danang cities. The project will fund impact assessments to identify the risks to economic sectors and communities from climate change, with mitigation and adaptation options identified and integrated into comprehensive action plans.

The capacity of key agencies in the public and private sectors will be strengthened, and climate change community awareness campaigns will be carried out through the media.

The ADB said the assistance will also support the design of greenhouse gas emission reduction projects, along with estimates of emissions under different growth scenarios, and the creation of an emissions database which can be regularly updated.

According to the bank, the Vietnamese Government will provide counterpart finance of \$250,000 for a total investment cost of \$2.75 million. The Ministry of Industry and Trade is the executing agency for the project which is due to begin in May 2011, and be completed by May 2013.

The Nordic Development Fund is the joint multilateral development institution of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and provides grant finance for climate change interventions in developing countries.

Industrial parks fail to treat wastewater

Inspectors from the Viet Nam Environment Administration have found that many industrial parks in southern Binh Duong Province have been discharging untreated waste water into the environment.

As many as 14 of 21 inspected parks were found to be releasing waste water that exceeds the permitted standards, with 10 of them discharging 10 times the allowed level, according to deputy head of the inspection team Pham Hong Son.

The results of the inspection, which took place in October and November last year, were revealed at a recent meeting between the inspectors and provincial authorities.

Major violators include Binh Duong, Song Than 2, Dong An 1, Tan Dong Hiep A and B and Viet Huong industrial parks.

Dong An 1 in Thuan An District was discovered by the local police and the environment inspectors to be severely damaging the environment — the park has been discharging about 1,000cubic metres of untreated waste each day.

Deputy director of the provincial Department of Natural Resources and Environment Vo Thi Ngoc Hanh said the key reason for the damage was not because industrial parks did not have adequate waste treatment facilities but because many businesses failed to make use of these facilities.

The 21 industrial parks operating in the province discharge a total amount of 49,000cu.m of industrial waste water each day.

Under the current regulations, environmental violators will be fined a maximum of VND500 million (US\$25,500) or face criminal proceedings depending on the level of their infringement.

Vietnam to launch int'l initiative on green economy

Vietnam will launch an international initiative on a green economy for sustainable development in Hanoi in September, said a Vietnamese diplomat to the UN.

The initiative, which will be conducted in collaboration with the Netherlands Government, will focus on the role of the market and sustainable forest management.

At the 9th session of the ongoing UN Forum on Forest in New York, Ambassador Bui The Giang, Deputy Head of Vietnamese Delegation to the UN, said that 2011 was announced by the UN as the International Year of Forest, and that forestry and sustainable forest management made an important contribution to sustainable development, poverty reduction and reaching development goals in Vietnam.

He added that forests have become an important factor providing solutions for many global issues, especially climate change, biodiversity, food security and energy supply.

Ambassador Giang said the international initiative hosted by Vietnam will help boost dialogue and cooperation to accelerate sustainable forest management and land use, which will help improve life in rural areas and development of small and medium forest enterprises.

The initiative is expected to affirm the role of international trade in accelerating.

Help to tackle climate change

The Nordic Development Fund and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will help Viet Nam draw up and implement detailed climate change action plans for key cities and government departments.

A technical assistance grant of US\$2.5 million from the fund, administered by ADB, will be used to help HCM City and Da Nang, Thanh Hoa Province, the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, plan and implement effective climate change response measures, an ADB press release said.

The assistance will support the Vietnamese Government's National Target Programme for building a more climate-resilient economy producing less greenhouse gas.

"This project will help increase the capacity of the target cities, ministries and province to respond effectively to the impacts of climate change," said Ayumi Konishi, ADB Country Director for Viet Nam.

Viet Nam, with its low-lying deltas, is highly vulnerable to climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather. A national study indicates that by the end of the 21st century the average temperature will have risen by about 2.3 degrees Celsius and sea levels are expected to increase by 75 cm over the same period.

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The Nordic Development Fund – a multilateral development institution comprising Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – provides financing for climate change interventions in developing countries.



Embankments are enforced along the Lach Truong River in Hau Loc District in the central province of Thanh Hoa to better cope with climate change-induced flooding. Viet Nam will receive support from Nordic nations and the Asian Development Bank to counter climate change. — VNA/VNS Photo Huy Hung

Huge improvements made in environmental protection

Environmental protection in HCM City showed a distinct improvement last year compared to 2009, with all industrial parks and export processing zones bringing their consolidated wastewater treatment systems into operation, according to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

The city collected and treated properly 1.9 million tonnes of household waste and 43,000 tonnes of construction debris last year, the department said.

It also said that the city is now able to treat all the solid waste including those from toxic industries and the healthcare sector.



Garbage is treated in HCM City's Dong Thanh dump. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment has worked closely with agencies and neighbouring provinces to tackle pollution and improve waste treatment.— VNA/VNS Photo Thanh Vu

Of 37 enterprises previously identified as serious polluters, 35 have vastly improved their operations to reduce the environmental pollution caused by them, the Sai Gon Giai Phong (Liberated Sai Gon) quoted the department as saying on Monday.

The department and district administrations have also implemented effectively the task of collecting environmental fees from enterprises and households.

Nguyen Van Hong, deputy director of the department, said the city mobilised all human sources and economic sectors to participate in waste treatment.

Investors in waste treatment are applying advanced technologies to help the city meet its environmental protection targets for the 2009-2020 period, according to Hong.

The city has also closely cooperated with the neighbouring provinces of Binh Duong, Tay Ninh, Long An, Dong Nai and Ba Ria – Vung Tau to solve inter-provincial environmental pollution issues, including the upgrading of Ba Bo Canal, controlling untreated wastewater released into Sai Gon and Vam Co Dong rivers as well as the Thay Cai – An Ha Canal. The city has also worked with Long An Province to build a solid waste treatment area to serve both localities.

To enhance environmental protection in the coming time, the department is encouraging expedited work on waste treatment projects carried out by the Tam Sinh Nghia and Tasco companies to ensure they go into operation by the end of this year.

The department said it would also cooperate with relevant agencies to inspect environmental pollution at various projects and manufacturing establishments.

Furthermore, it would expand and increase international co-operation in environmental protection activities, the department said.

This year, the department plans to implement a programme to separate and classify rubbish into different types at the household level to facilitate the task of waste treatment.

Minister calls on farmers to cut greenhouse gas emissions

The farm sector has to take pro-active measures to ease the rate of climate change, Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Cao Duc Phat has said.

He said the sector should strive to cut greenhouse emissions by 30 per cent by protecting forests and afforesting, restructuring production, and developing production that can absorb carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases.

He said that rice crops account for 40 per cent of total emissions in the country.

"So the sector should research into cropping methods with low emissions."

The traditional method of rice planting emits large amounts of carbon dioxide because of the overuse of fertilisers and pesticides, improper irrigation, and burning of rice husk after harvest.

Last month an experimental rice-growing model that cuts emissions was unveiled in An Giang Province in the Mekong Delta following a workshop attended by local authorities and researchers.

Can Tho University, the Ha Noi Water Resources University, the US-based Environmental Defense Fund, and the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta Development Research Institute are piloting the model on 100ha in the province's Binh Hoa Commune.

By 2015, after the pilot project is completed, the system is expected to be adopted on 500ha. Phat also urged the animal husbandry sector to reduce emissions.

Viet Nam has made several bilateral commitments with the UN for forest protection and planting and for a 30 per cent reduction in emissions.

Norway will provide a grant of US\$100 million for the task, Phat said, while the World Bank and several countries would also provide assistance.

"In the context of climate change, it is obvious that the country will be badly affected, especially agriculture. So the Government and people should act promptly to deal with the situation," he said.

Hoan Kiem to be cleansed of Exotic turtles in March

The Hanoi Department of Science and Technology will kill red-ear turtles in Hanoi's Hoan Kiem Lake in March to protect the legendary turtle.



“The temperature will increase in March. At that time, red-year turtles will go to the shore to expose themselves to the sun. That will be a favorable time to eliminate this dangerous species,” said the department's director Le Xuan Rao.

An international workshop on turtles will be held in Hanoi this week, Rao said. Vietnamese and international experts will discuss measures to kill the exotic turtles and to protect the old turtle in the Hoan Kiem Lake.

Earlier, the Hanoi Department of Science and Technology proposed two methods to eliminate the red-ear turtles while making sure that the ancient turtle is left unharmed.

The first method is using plastic or steel cages to catch the turtles. The second way is to place floating rafts on the lake. Red-ear turtles will crawl onto the rafts to expose themselves to the sun, and then caught in the nets below.

Rao said that both methods will be first tested

Experts and the public are currently very worried about the health of the ancient turtle. On February 12, Professor Ha Dinh Duc, who has researched the ancient turtle for over 20 years, said that the legendary turtle had recently risen to the surface many times, with many new injuries that he had never seen before.

In the past few days, the turtle tried to crawl to the bank and bite a rubber pipe. Duc said that this was a way the turtle showed his anger.

“The ancient turtle is struggling with the polluted environment and injuries on his back. If we don't take timely measures, his life will be in danger,” Duc said.

Duc had previously suggested bringing the ancient turtle to the shore to cure his injuries and kill red-ear turtles in the lake.

There are only four turtles of the same species as the ancient turtle in the Hoan Kiem Lake in the world, including two in Vietnam and two in a zoo in China.

Comprehensive climate change strategy a 'matter of life and death'

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung asked relevant agencies to rapidly complete and publish the latest climate change and rising sea level scenarios for likely affected localities.

The PM was speaking to members of the Steering Board of the National Target Programme (NTP) on Climate Change in the capital city yesterday.

That was the second time the National Steering Board had met to discuss orientations and plans for the implementation of the NTP for the 2011-15 period.

It is forecast that Viet Nam is one of several developing countries that will be seriously affected by climate change, particularly rising sea levels.

Climate change will seriously affect people's livelihoods, the environment and infrastructure as well as the gains Viet Nam has achieved in poverty reduction in recent years.

As a proactive response to climate change, Viet Nam ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol in 2008, with the country adopting its own NTP.

Viet Nam has successfully mobilized more than US\$1.2 billion from international donors for activities in response to climate change. So far funding of about \$1.3 billion has been committed or is in the process of negotiation with international donors for the NTP.

During their discussions, members of the steering board agreed to focus on drafting legal documents in response to climate change while reviewing the contents of the NTP. The meeting focused on immediate points of action.

They also agreed on the need to have international donors involved in the program's activities and management unit, with specific tasks assigned to each locality and agency.

"In the comprehensive strategy on climate change and rising sea levels we have to highlight the importance of the issue – a matter of life or death of the nation," said Dung adding "Having a good strategy will guide us developing action plans to ensure the NTP is successfully executed."

He asked all sectors and localities to make best use of their internal resources while mobilizing external support to invest in projects to respond to climate change and the sea level rises.

He ordered the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to co-ordinate with other ministries, sectors and localities to specify activities that must be urgently undertaken to cope with the negative impact of climate change, including the reduction of the greenhouse gases.



Drought and saline water encroachment choke cultivated land in Co Do District in the Mekong Delta city of Can Tho. — VNA/VNS Photo Thanh Vu

Experts raise concerns over health of legendary Hoan Kiem Lake turtle

Hoan Kiem Lake's giant turtle should be removed for treatment for injuries believed to have been caused by fish hooks, pollution and attacks by other species of turtles. The proposal was made on Tuesday in Ha Noi at an international conference of scientists and advisors concerned with the protection of the turtle, which has been given status in legend.



The meeting heard that the critically endangered Swinhoe soft-shell turtle had suffered serious injuries and needed treatment. Ha Noi aquatic expert Nguyen Ngoc Khoi said a smaller species of red-eared turtle in the lake were suspected of biting the turtle's wounds, while Phan Thi Van from the Centre for Environment and Aquatic Diseases Research said the injuries could have been caused by parasites and viruses.

A rare photo of the giant turtle in Ha Noi's Hoan Kiem Lake. Some experts have proposed removing the turtle from the lake for medical treatment. — VNA/VNS Photo Nhat Anh

Associate Professor Ha Dinh Duc said photos of the turtle showed it had sustained several wounds on its shell and neck. The fact that the turtle was floating more than normal could be a sign of bad health or injuries, Duc said, adding that the turtle's naturally lived on the bottom of a lake. He said the turtle floated 72 times in 2007 while last year it was estimated to have risen above the surface 134 times. "The seriously polluted environment of the lake, with its harmful micro-organisms, have contributed to the situation," Duc said. However, experts have raised concerns over the feasibility and methods of moving the turtle out of the lake for treatment.

Ecology Association vice chairman Mai Dinh Yen proposed a net be used to catch the turtle and put it on a stretcher for transport to a veterinary clinic. Nguyen Ngoc Khoi suggested using a helicopter to avoid injury. Nimal Fernando, a senior veterinarian from Ocean Park in Hong Kong, said treatment and surgery for the turtle could take six months. He said the best solution was to leave him in the lake and provide on-site treatment in combination with improving his environment. He said the turtle could be mated with those in China to preserve the species.

Timothy McCormack from the Asia Turtle Programme said the risks in moving the turtle out of the lake were multiplied by the nation's lack of technology and experience. Only three of about five turtles believed to be in existence were in captivity, he said. One was in Hoan Kiem Lake and two were in Chinese zoos. He said investigations were continuing in the north of Viet Nam to find out if there were others in existence. He added the programme had tried to get the turtles to multiply by transplant methods and others without success.

Kim Van Van from the Ha Noi Agriculture University warned against causing the turtle stress, by moving it or by changing its living environment, such as exposing it to humidity or visitors. Van suggested using a tank near the lake for treatment, which could take one to two months.

Viet Nam Zoology Association chairman Dang Huy Huynh said the turtle should be listed in Viet Nam's Red Book as one of the important problems to solve.

River pollution kills 36 tons of fishes

Pollution in the Dong Nai river has killed 36 tons of fishes in Thong Nhat Ward of southern Bien Hoa city, the farmers association said in a report sent to authorities Monday.



The association said 33 families practicing fish cage culture had claimed to have lost hundreds of millions of dongs due to the death of their mature freshwater fish, including carp and hemibagrus.

Hoang Van Thong, head of the province's Environmental Protection Department, said the fishes were killed by the increasing pollution in the Dong Nai River.

Thong added that a large amount of untreated wastewater from households and enterprises in the city was discharged into the river.

In addition, the number of fish cages in the region has increased up to 800, much higher than the maximum permissible number of 200. The rapid increase has resulted in a reduction of oxygen concentration in the water.

The local authorities have tried to reduce the number of fish cages by way of voluntary relocation. The deadline for the relocation is end of May.

A similar event involving the death of a massive number of fishes happened in June 2010. The cause was also attributed to water pollution.

Bay diversity under threat

Bio-diversity in Nha Trang Bay is under serious threat, according to Truong Kinh, director of the Nha Trang Bay's Sea Protection Management Board.

Kinh said local scientists had raised the alarm over pollution in the bay after samples of sea water analysed last year showed level of iron and hydrocarbon that exceeded regulated limits.

The water samples are also polluted by micro-organisms, with samples from the mouth of the Cai River showing the highest levels of pollution.

Water from the Cai River brings salt, iron and micro-organisms to Nha Trang Bay, with the increasingly polluted water leading to higher levels of bacteria and algae that harm the coral reef and threaten to unbalance the bay's eco-system.

Kinh said authorities should spend more time sampling water in the bay. "There were only two checks last year, and before that the last check was conducted in 2007, while the previous one was in 2005," he said.

He also urged related agencies to enhance awareness on the importance of protecting the environment among the public and enterprises while raising fines for environmental violations, especially for enterprises caught discharging untreated sewage into the bay.

Brakish water spells bad news for Delta

Salt water intrusion in coastal provinces in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta has occurred earlier this year than previous years, affecting thousands of ha of rice.

Salt water intrusion had already penetrated 30km inland in Ben Tre Province by late last month, Nguyen Van Hanh, director of Ben Tre Province's Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting Centre, said.

"Salt water intrusion this year has occurred earlier and has a higher saline content compared to the same period last year, meaning the effects could be worse," Hanh said.

Tra Vinh Province's Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting Centre forecast that with the current low water levels at river mouths, sea water would penetrate 60km inland in Tra Vinh Province this year, directly affecting Duyen Hai, Cau Ngang and Tra Cu districts.

More than 1,700ha of rice fields in Tra Cu and Cau Ngang districts have been damaged because the fields are affected by salt water, which has a saline content of 4.9 gramme per litre, according to the Tra Vinh Province's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Rice fields along the Quan Lo – Phung Hiep Canal, which runs through Soc Trang and Bac Lieu provinces, are also drying up, as the canal is increasingly saline.

Nearly 9,000ha of winter-spring rice crop in My Quoi, My Binh and Vinh Bien communes in Soc Trang Province's Nga Nam District could be totally ruined because of the impact of the salt water.

In Soc Trang, Ngo Thi Duc Hanh of the provincial Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting Centre, said the salt water intrusion this year was two weeks earlier than last year.

The saline content at the mouth of Dai Ngai River, a tributary of the Hau River, has reached 6.3 gramme per litre compared to 3 gramme per litre in the same period of last year, Hanh said.

In Tien Giang Province, salt water has affected the entire Tan Phu Dong Island District over the last month.

Le Van Tot, a resident in Ca Thu Hamlet in Tan Phu Dong's Phu Thanh Commune, also said the salt water came early this year so every one's hands were tied coping with it.

"Families that live among rice fields are isolated. They have to filter the water from nearby canals and ponds for their daily use," Tot said.

Doan Van Tho, chairman of the Tan Phu Dong District People's Committee, said to mitigate the impact of salt water intrusion, his district has dug a 6-ha dam in Tan Thoi Commune to store fresh water for 40,000 people in the district.

At least 200,000 people in the eastern part of Tien Giang Province will be without enough fresh water during this year's dry season, according to the provincial People's Committee.

The People's Committee has instructed local authorities to install fresh water pipes to communities that haven't got them.

Polluting brick kilns continue to operate despite official ban

More than 900 traditional brick kilns, which are known for using low-quality coal and out-moded methods that cause massive air pollution and waste of agricultural land, are still operating despite a ban issued by city authorities two months ago, the municipal Department of Construction has said.



Brick kilns near the Hong (Red) River cause serious pollution in Van Phuc Commune in Ha Noi's Thanh Tri District. — VNA/VNS Photo Xuan Quyet

Reports from the department's recent inspection on the implementation of the city ban of traditional brick kilns showed that only about 400 of 1,278 kilns which had been banned by the city had stopped operations. The rest, mostly located near river banks or hills to take advantage of access to clay, had continued business illegally. Specifically, Soc Son District had the highest number with 293, Phuc Tho District 147, Chuong My District 163, My Duc District 144 and Thach That District 119. The remainder are scattered through Dan Phuong, Phu Xuyen, Ba Vi, Ung Hoa and Son Tay districts.

About 20 per cent of the kilns lack chimneys. This creates potential workplace safety concerns, including carbon dioxide suffocation and potential collapse.

Poor management by local authorities and ignorant kiln owners who were only interested in profits were to blame for the situation.

Nguyen Thi Dinh, representative from Lien Trung Commune in Dan Phuong District said that the commune had forced 40 traditional brick kilns to close down twice but they all resumed operation after a short period.

"It's hard to control the situation as nearly half of the kilns only work during certain months," Dinh said.

Most of the kilns were located on the alluvial ground between adjoining communes which raised monitoring difficulties among local authorities, she said.

Dinh said the commune is planning to dismantle all of the kilns to avoid them from resuming operation in the coming time, but the 17ha of cultivated land, where the kilns are located, would not be able to be used for agriculture due to coal residues.

Can Van Thieu, an old-style brick kiln owner in Kim Quan Commune in Thach That District, said that brick production was a traditional industry that created jobs for thousands of local residents for years.

"What are we supposed to do if all of these kilns are eliminated?" he said.

To deal with the situation, the department has required local authorities not to extend contracts for traditional brick kilns, enforce a ban on kiln owners from using agricultural land for brick production and rapidly dismantle the low-quality kilns.

Local authorities will have to propose measures to encourage kiln owners to replace old traditional brick kilns with modern and friendly-environmental models. The new hi-tech model costs at least VND10 billion (US\$480,000) to build with a 10 million brick capacity per year, which can save 42 per cent of coal use and lead to a six-fold reduction in carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide emissions compared to traditional models.

The department has completed a plan to develop materials for environmentally-friendly brick kilns by 2020 with a vision to 2030, as part of a programme to eliminate polluting traditional models.

Rising sea, drought threaten drinking water

Rising sea water, drought and pollution of water sources are forecast to leave this thriving commercial hub short of drinking water later this year.



Salt water intrusion has seriously affected the lives and production of residents in HCM City's Can Gio District. The situation could get worse and cause a drinking water shortage, experts have warned. (Photo: VNS)

And the United Nations Development Programme's policy adviser on climate change, Koos Neefjes, has warned that the situation could get worse. Sai Gon and Dong Nai rivers, the two major water sources for HCM City, have been experiencing serious salt water intrusion since early this month, the Sai Gon Giai Phong (Liberated Sai Gon) newspaper reported. The Binh An Water Plant, which supplies the city with 100,000cu.m of potable water a day, has begun closing its sluice gates for at least 10 hours a day to prevent saline water inflow from Dong Nai River because of the high salinity levels. The Thu Duc Water Plant, which usually supplies 300.000cu.m of potable water a day to the city, has been increasing its capacity to pick up slack water from the Binh An plant. While both plants source water from the Dong Nai River, the Thu Duc plant is located further upstream and, up until now, has been less effected by salt water intrusion. However, saline intrusion is now said to be approaching critical levels at the Thu Duc plant as well, according to Ho Thi Khanh, head of its water testing and analysis division. "The level (of salinity) has been around 20-25mg per litre during the last few years, but has risen to 150mg per litre in the last couple of weeks," said Khanh. "The intrusion has never been as bad as this year," said plant manager Truong Khac Hoanh, adding that the maximum salinity level allowed in Viet Nam was 250mg per litre. "It is still safe, but the rapid increase in intrusion should be taken seriously," he said. According to experts, average rainfall in the city decreased 35 per cent last year and was responsible for this year's early salt-water intrusion, which normally starts in March. They predicted the worst effects would happen in March and April. UNDP expert Koos Neefjes said low river flows allowed more saline water to enter river mouths from the sea. "If there's little fresh water coming, salty water will penetrate," he said. Meteorologists said Sai Gon and Dong Nai rivers' drought was causing the shortage of water. The Dau Tieng Reservoir, located on the Sai Gon River about 70km from HCM City, had a shortfall of 450 million cubic metres last year. Neefjes said the situation would get worse with climate change. "Climate change is making things worse. Salty water intrusion for countries with river basins, like Viet Nam and China, will become worse with more droughts," he said. The UN expert said water suppliers would need to keep moving water intake pipes further upstream. He also said large lakes in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta would have to be created to prevent fresh water from running into the sea. "It's a huge investment to build a dam. Such projects cannot be financed immediately, but Viet Nam need to start designing them," he said. In the short term, Dau Tieng reservoir, which supplies 100 million cubic metres of water every year to homes as well as industries, and regulates water flow to downstream areas where HCM City is based, will be used to tackle the salinity problem. In preparation for increased salinity this year, the reservoir, which is the largest irrigation reservoir in the country with a capacity of 1.6 billion cubic metres, has collected more than 60 million cubic metres of water during the past two months. The HCM City Irrigation Services Management Company has been repairing and upgrading the city's irrigation network to minimise water losses, said Nguyen Van Dam, head of the company.

Viet Nam has been listed among the five countries in the world likely to be most affected by climate change.

Region needs \$5b for water systems

The north-central region needs VND109 trillion (US\$5.1 billion) to upgrade its water resources system by 2050 in response to rising sea levels and other effects of climate change.

Speaking at a regional irrigation planning conference in Ha Noi on Tuesday, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Dao Xuan Hoc said the region, one of the nation's key economic zones, had suffered from flood, droughts and salt intrusion.

He said that new plans were needed to take these effects into account, including the upgrading of reservoirs.

Hoc added that the region has seen abnormal weather changes that were blamed on the El Nino and La Nina phenomena.

In addition, more than 32,200ha of the region, including areas north of Ma River, the lower Buoi River, and southern stretches of Chu River had been submerged.

Hoc said that VND81.1 trillion (\$3.8 billion) would be used to prepare a new regional approach to the problem from 2011-20, including VND3.7 trillion (\$176 billion) for providing fresh water, VND21.4 trillion (\$1.02 billion) for irrigation works, VND4.1 trillion (\$195 million) for drainage systems and VND19.7 trillion (\$940 million) for flood prevention.

Bui Nam Sach, head of MARD's Institute for Water Resources Planning, said water resources planning in every province was now based on research on the effects of climate changes.

He said that along Ma River, four reservoirs, the Cua Dat, Hua Na, Trung Son and Pa Ma, should be built to stop salt encroachment and floods as well as supplying water to more than 90,000ha of farm land, industry and a 1,120MW hydro-power plant.

On Ca River, the upgrade would improve 981 irrigation works to service 331,000ha of paddy fields and aquatic farms.

On Gianh River, up to 83 irrigation works would also be built while another 44 on Nhat Le River would be upgraded.

Some sections of the region's 142-km dyke system would be repaired and strengthened. The \$5.1 billion upgrade would also be used to build 23km of dykes from Xuan Dan to Dong Ken in central Ha Tinh Province's Nghi Xuan District.

The North Central region has 1,854 homes vulnerable to floods. They should be moved to high ground with total investment of VND37 billion (\$1.7 million).

About VND572 billion (\$27.2 million) is also needed to households that have been regularly submerged to build houses and public works for flood prevention.

It is forecast that climate change will lift the sea level by 30 centimetres by 2050.



Residents of Hung Chinh Commune in the north-central province of Nghe An's Hung Nguyen District upgrade irrigation works. The region needs to upgrade its irrigation and flood control works to cope with emerging climate change impacts. — VNA/VNS Photo Lan Xuan

Drought puts many provinces at extreme risk of forest fires

Thirteen provinces throughout the country are listed as being under dire threat of forest fires, according to the Department of Forest Management under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.



Prolonged dry weather has been attributed as the main cause for the concern.

People's Committees at all levels have been asked to deploy immediate measures to prevent forest fires.

Nguyen Huu Dung, deputy head of the department, said they were organising fire watch teams and emergency response teams to monitor forests throughout the country. The northern province of Bac Giang's Department of Forest Management said that they were co-operating with the provincial People's Committee to provide personnel and firefighting resources.

Local authorities have been asked to organize continuous patrols, guide local people in the safe use of slash-and-burn agriculture and monitor potential fire hotspots. The provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is to keep locals updated on potential forest fire threats.

Strict punishment would be imposed on people found illegally starting fires in wooded land. Besides Bac Giang, Ha Nam, Ninh Binh, Dong Nai, Gia Lai and Kien Giang were also on the at risk list.

Statistics from Department of Forest Management show that there were 897 forest fire cases last year, 262 percent higher than 2009, destroying an approximate 5,668 hectares of woodland nationwide.

Vets to treat injured Hoan Kiem lake turtle

HA NOI — The Emergency Committee for the Saving of the Hoan Kiem Lake Turtle decided yesterday to treat the injured turtle at Thap Rua (Turtle Tower) in the middle of the lake.

Committee Deputy Director Le Xuan Rao said methods of capturing the turtle were decided yesterday and a council comprised of veterinarians, biologists and other experts would soon be set up to help cure the turtle.

This will be the first attempt to approach the soft-shelled turtle, which has been lacerated by fish hooks and forced to survive in highly polluted water while suffering attacks from aggressive red-ear turtles that have been released by local people who grew tired of keeping the animals as pets.

Rao said scientists would have to wait until the turtle crawls onto the tower to capture and treat it. If that does not work, the committee plans to capture the turtle by placing a net in the areas it typically swims.

An underwater tank containing a turtle-friendly environment will also be built to house the turtle.

Turtle Tower used to be a preferred resting spot of the turtle until the construction of a solid embankment blocked the turtle from reaching the tower.

According to turtle expert Ha Dinh Duc, there are two sand banks underneath the foot of the tower, each 6-square metre wide and about 40-cm deep. Rao said the committee plans to immediately make the tower accessible again.

Earlier, Duc said the injuries found on the turtle were probably the most severe injuries the turtle had suffered in the last two decades.

"They are getting worse and the turtle's health is at an alarming level," he told Viet Nam News.

Originally, Nguyen Ngoc Khoi, who has been studying the Hoan Kiem lake turtle for over 20 years, proposed using a motorboat or a helicopter to bring the turtle ashore. Duc rejected the proposal as well as those calling for automatic traps to catch red-ear turtles.

A series of proposals had also been put forth at meetings before the final decision was made by the Emergency Committee for the Saving of Hoan Kiem Lake turtle yesterday. By the time the committee finished its meeting at around 10.00am,

Hanoians had seen the turtle floating for about one or two minutes opposite the King Ly Thai To statue on the other side of Dinh Tien Hoang Street. Hanoians believe that spotting the turtle is an omen.

The turtle belongs to an extremely rare species. Only four of its kind are left in the world. One resides in a lake outside Ha Noi and the other two are in a zoo in China.

Turtles are a cultural symbol in Viet Nam, especially the one in Hoan Kiem Lake, which is believed to be hundreds of years old.



A photo of the elusive soft-shelled turtle in Hoan Kiem Lake. Vets are to treat the turtle, whose shell has been scarred from fish hooks. The lake is also severely polluted. — VNA/VNS Photo The Duyet

City focuses on beating pollution

Addressing environmental pollution is one of their major tasks in the next five years and they have already taken many measures to check pollution, HCM City authorities have said.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) said the city has almost completed the task of setting up facilities for handling solid waste and is gradually using advanced technologies to convert garbage into compost and electricity.

The City has also worked with neighbouring provinces like Binh Duong, Tay Ninh, Long An, and Ba Ria-Vung Tau to tackle pollution, controlling pollutants discharged into the Sai Gon and Vam Co Dong Rivers and cleaning up the Ba Bo Canal it shares with Binh Duong. "The goal for end-2015 is to be able to collect, store, and treat all solid waste as well as medical and toxic waste," a DNRE official said. By then, the City also hopes to have wastewater treatment systems in all industrial parks, export processing zones, and small industrial and handicrafts clusters. People's Committee standing vice chairman Nguyen Thanh Tai said in tackling environmental degradation and pollution, the City faced several challenges in terms of management and facilities. The city would need to build more treatment facilities for industrial and other hazardous wastes.

Pollution is worsening at the Le Minh Xuan Industrial Park in the outlying Binh Chanh District where polluters have relocated from the City centre. District authorities have said that 30 canals are severely contaminated, affecting the lives and production activities of local residents.

Other hotspots that discharge massive volumes of untreated wastewater are Tan Phu Trung IP in Tan Binh District and Linh Trung III EPZ in Thu Duc District. An example of serious pollution in HCM City is along the Ba Bo Canal located between Thu Duc District and Binh Duong Province's Thuan An District. People living along the canal, where a VND744 billion (\$37.2 billion) wastewater treatment facility is under construction, are contracting respiratory and skin diseases, and even cancer.

The facility should have been completed last September, but work has been delayed and the new completion date is not known.

Nguyen Thi Lan, a resident of Binh Chieu Ward in Thu Duc District, said factories near industrial parks secretly dump untreated wastewater at night.

"Previously, the foam in the canal used to be small but now 10m masses can be seen every morning from the foot of the bridge on inter-provincial No 43."

Huynh Thanh Nha, deputy head of the HCM City Division of Environmental Protection, said tests in the Canal last January found that the situation had yet to improve.

"The canal is again being heavily re-polluted," he said.

Surface pollution has also been occurring at an alarming level in the Sai Gon, Dong Nai, and Thi Vai Rivers, threatening the operation of the Thu Duc and Tan Hiep water treatment plants.