

Vietnam, Water and Environmental Technology, Press Review, 03 + 04/2011

For more information please contact: Ms. Pham Thi Viet Ha (hapham2310@gmail.com)

No	Title	Date	Source	Region	Catalogue	Description
1	\$ 2.8 billion Investment Program Puts Clean Water on Tap	1/3/2011	ADB news	Vietnam	Water	The Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) Board of Directors has approved a \$1 billion financial support facility that will help improve clean water access for three million families in Viet Nam.
2	Environmental concerns important to producers	5/3/2011	Vietnam plus	Vietnam	Environment	The need to combine the State budget and producers' capital, as well as mobilize producers in preserving the environment.
3	City rivers too polluted for aquaculture: expert	10/3/2011	VN news	HCM	Pollution	The pollution in HCM City's rivers and canals is severely affecting people living on aquaculture, an expert has said.
4	Industrial parks fined for waste	14/3/2011	VN news	HCM	Waste	HCM City environmental authorities have fined several industrial parks after catching many factories inside them discharging untreated effluents directly into the environment.
5	Geologists focus on conservation	16/3/2011	VN news	Hanoi	Environment	A meeting in Ha Noi in July this year to discuss approaches to geopark development and co-operation in conservation of nature and heritage.
6	Environment ministry calls for water protection	19/3/2011	VN plus	Vietnam	Water	Raising the public awareness of protecting water resources is a top priority of the ministry at present and in the future.
7	Energy saving projects win 'Green' competition	21/3/2011	VN news	HCM	Environment	An energy saving project involving neon lights, an "intelligent" street light savings management system and making "half-organic" coal from waste won prizes.



MOST-BMBF Office for
Water+Environmental Technology

Vietnamese – German Office for Water and Environmental Technology
funded by MOST and BMBF

Address: Room 210, 2nd Floor, Vietnamese-German Center
Hanoi University of Technology - 1 Dai Co Viet, Ha Noi

Tel/Fax : + 84 4 36230251

Website: www.vn-ger-wateroffice.vn

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8	Air pollution alert	21/3/2011	VN net bridge	Vietnam	Pollution	Air pollution in Vietnam is getting serious in comparison with Southeast Asia and other Asian countries.
9	Polluting villages may stay put	22/3/2011	VN news	Hanoi	Pollution	The highly polluted Nhue and Day rivers in Hanoi's outer Hoai Duc District have prompted local authorities to consider relocating the area's craft villages.
10	Mekong water security dominates conference agenda	24/3/2011	VN news	Hanoi	Water	Water scarcity and declining quality would be a challenge to countries in the region, a study group on water resources security was told yesterday.
11	Overloaded landfill makes way for new trash facility	24/3/2011	VN news	Ha Giang	Waste	The landfill in northern Ha Giang City's Minh Khai Ward would be shut down this month to make way for construction of a new trash dump and waste water treatment facility.
12	Recycling project falls flat in HCM City	24/3/2011	VN news	HCM	Waste	A pilot project on recycling household rubbish in HCM City has failed due to poor implementation and a lack of funds.
13	HCM City faces groundwater crisis	28/3/2011	VN news	HCM	Water	Experts have sounded a red alert about the quality of groundwater in HCM City, saying it was critically degraded and sanitized.
14	Water plants idle due to poor management, lack of funds	28/3/2011	VN news	Hanoi	Water	As many as 16 clean water treatment plants in Hanoi's suburban districts have been left unused for four or five years due to a shortage of funds and poor management from local authorities.



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15	VN, Netherlands join hands on climate change	29/3/2011	VN plus	Vietnam	Climate change & Water	Vietnam and the Netherlands will cooperate in climate change adaptation and water management.
16	Country prepares to face climate change	1/4/2011	VN news	Hanoi	Climate change	Viet Nam must get ready to cope with climate change, which was forecast to bring erratic and extreme weather this year.
17	Flexibility key to tackling climate change	1/4/2011	VN news	HCM	Climate change	Long-term vision and short-term planning should be the twin planks on which the Mekong Delta should base its adaptation to climate change.
18	Ha Noi running short of waste disposal sites	5/4/2011	VN net bridge	Hanoi	Waste	Ha Noi will run out of room for rubbish by 2012, warns the Ha Noi Department of Natural Resources and Environment.
19	Sai Gon River redevelopment plan out soon	5/4/2011	VN news	HCM	Sea port	HCM City in June will approve a detailed plan to redevelop the seaport area.
20	HCM City needs stiffer penalties for polluters	14/4/2011	VN news	HCM	Pollution	Government ministries and agencies that own and manage companies in HCM City must take steps to penalize those who violate environmental regulations.
21	City areas likely to flood	17/4/2011	VN news	Hanoi	Environment	Ha Noi Construction Department has identified 23 flood hot spots in the city.
22	Announcement of on the merger of GTZ, Inwent, DED	29/4/2011	VN news	Vietnam	Other	Announcement on the merger of the three development organizations of the German Government.



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\$2.8 Billion Investment Program Puts Clean Water on Tap for Millions of Vietnamese Families

The Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) Board of Directors has approved a \$1 billion financial support facility that will help improve clean water access for three million families in Viet Nam, including half a million poor households who will receive their own piped water connection for the first time.

The assistance is part of a nearly \$2.8 billion investment program involving ADB, the Government of Viet Nam, development partners and water company financiers. The program will help water companies improve and expand clean water supply in some of Viet Nam's largest cities through the installation of new pipelines and the repair and extension of existing networks. In addition to infrastructure improvements, the program will enhance the operational management and commercial viability of water companies.

At present, four in every ten families living in Viet Nam's largest cities are not connected to a central water supply system, and only one in three towns have any form of piped water supply. Many piped water systems in urban areas urgently need upgrades, with as much as 30% to 40% of water lost before it reaches the end consumer, due foremost to leaky pipes. Water loss contributes to intermittent service from low pressure.

"When four out of every ten liters of water is lost before it comes out of the tap, this is essentially pouring cash down the drain," said Ayumi Konishi, ADB's Country Director for Viet Nam. "Making an upfront investment to plug the leaks gives consumers a more dependable water supply, enhances public health, and provides water companies with significant cost savings."

One goal of the water investment program is to reduce water loss in urban areas to less than 20% by 2020, bringing Viet Nam's cities in line with affluent Asian cities such as Seoul.

ADB is providing \$138 million for the program's first project in Ho Chi Minh City, where many poor households are not yet connected to piped water systems, and are paying almost twice the official water tariff.

"Poor water coverage hits poor families the hardest, and this investment program will benefit these families most," said Mr. Konishi. "When poor families are provided with piped water connections it measurably boosts their income and improves their well-being."

The Ho Chi Minh City project, which will be implemented by the Saigon Water Corporation, will improve pressure and coverage for over half a million city residents, and provide almost 20,000 families with their first household water connections. The project is expected to increase water availability in Ho Chi Minh City to over 64 million cubic meters per annum over the next decade.

The nationwide water investment program is a cornerstone of Viet Nam's efforts to attain 90% piped water coverage by 2020, with universal coverage targeted by 2025.

Environmental concerns important to producers

Vice National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Duc Kien has emphasized the need to combine the State budget and producers' capital, as well as mobilize producers in preserving the environment.

At a working session with the Hanoi People's Committee on the implementation of environmental policies and law at craft villages in the city, Vice NA Chairman Kien expressed his support for Hanoi's selection of pilot models to draw experiences for expansion. However, he laid stress on publicizing and defining authorities' and people's responsibility in environmental protection as well as the clarity in the city's instruction documents in terms of time for implementation.

According to the committee's report, the city is now home to 1,350 craft villages, including 198 traditional craft villages. The villages have attracted more than 672,000 workers with 170,607 production families, 2,063 joint stock companies, more than 4,560 Ltd. Co., over 1,460 private businesses, 164 cooperatives and 50 associations.

In 2010, craft villages' total production value was estimated at more than 8.6 trillion VND, making up 8.3 percent of the industrial production value of the city. The waste volume discharged from craft villages has increased, together with the expansion and development of craft villages' business production.

In the meantime, shortcomings remain in environmental management at craft villages and due attention has not yet been paid to treatment of craft village waste. To ease the situation, Hanoi has carried out solutions to reduce environmental pollution at craft villages and built a pilot waste water treatment system at the cassava craft villages in Tan Hoa commune, Quoc Oai district.

The city has also zoned off 2,580 ha for accommodating establishments causing pollution in craft villages and 1,424 ha for developing clusters of craft villages. It has so far built 47 industrial clusters on 2,648 ha which attracted 2,360 investment projects.

City Rivers too polluted for aquaculture: expert

The pollution in HCM City's rivers and canals is severely affecting people living on aquaculture, an expert has said.

Nguyen Van Phuoc, head of the Viet Nam National University – HCM City's Institute of Environment and Resources, said clean water sources meant aquaculture farmers could reduce the use of chemicals for cleaning.

But HCM City's water sources are polluted by industrial waste.

A study by the Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development found almost all the City's rivers and canals were polluted.

Minor rivers in the districts of Nha Be, Binh Chanh, Hoc Mon, and Cu Chi were "seriously" polluted.

Just certain short stretches of the Sai Gon and Dong Nai rivers are "slightly" polluted with most of the rest as well as the Nha Be, Long Tau, Soai Rap and Can Gio rivers being "medium" polluted.

Only some stretches on any of the rivers are suitable for aquaculture. One of them is in the Dong Nai between its confluence with the Sai Gon and the upper reach of the Dau Tieng Lake.

Two others are in the Sai Gon: from Tay Ninh to Ben Dinh and Binh Phuoc Bridge to Sai Gon Bridge.

Besides, there are several sections along the Nha Be, Soai Rap, Long Tau, Nga Bay and Vam Sat rivers.

In the southern part of Binh Chanh District and Nha Be District, the Long Tau, Go Da and Thi Vai rivers are unusable for aquaculture as are all the canals in the City.

As a result of the lack of water, almost all shrimp farmers and many fish farmers in Nha Be, Can Gio and Cu Chi districts have quit.

They blamed the pollution in Dong Dien River on the Hiep Phuoc Industrial Park where many new factories are being built.

Those continuing with shrimp farming have to draw water from other rivers.

The Fisheries Quality Assurance and Aquatic Resources Protection Department and An Nghia quarantine station take water samples twice a month from the river to study and make recommendations to farmers.

A similar situation is also occurring in the districts of Cu Chi, Hoc Mon, Nha Be and Can Gio where an estimated 3,000 shrimp and fish farmers are extremely worried about the pollution.

Industrial parks fined for waste

HCM City environmental authorities have fined several industrial parks after catching many factories inside them discharging untreated effluents directly into the environment.

The IPs penalised were Cat Lai 2 in District 2, Hiep Phuoc in Nha Be District, Tan Tao in Binh Tan District, Tan Thoi Hiep in Hoc Mon District, Tay Bac in Cu Chi District, and Binh Chieu in Thu Duc District, whose wastes were found exceeding allowed limits by one to seven times.

They were together fined VND330 million (US\$16,000), according to the Sai Gon Giai Phong newspaper.

Hiep Phuoc, Cat Lai 2 and Binh Chieu were imposed the highest fines of VND75 million (\$3,600) each, while the rest had to pay VND35 million each.



HCM City's Ba Bo Canal is one of the city's hot spots for pollution. Officials have fined several industrial parks where factories were discharging untreated waste water into the environment. — VNA/VNS Photo Phuong Vy

They were also ordered to make sure their wastes meet required standards within 30 days.

According to inspectors, though the IPs are equipped with central water-treatment facilities, most of them discharge more than 1,000 cubic metres of inadequately treated wastewater daily.

But it was not possible to impose tougher penalties like shutting them down or revoking their licences given that the hundreds to thousands of factories operating in each would be affected, Nguyen Thi Du, chief inspector in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, said.

Normally, wastewater has to go through two treatments cycles, one at the factory and then at the park level, before they are released into the environment.

For example, manufacturers at Hiep Phuoc are supposed to treat their wastewater to Level C before send it to the central facility for further treatment, paying \$0.1 to \$0.3 for every cubic metre of treated water. Factories are fined by the parks if their treatment does not meet required standards.

All 15 of the city's processing zones and IPs had central wastewater treatment facilities, Nguyen Van Phuoc, the department's deputy director, said.

The department would crank up inspection to detect violations and install automatic monitoring equipment, he added.

Geologists focus on conservation

Asia-Pacific geologists will gather in Ha Noi in July this year to discuss approaches to geopark and geotourism development and co-operation in conservation of nature and heritage.

The second Asia-Pacific Geopark Network Symposium on Geopark and Geotourism will also provide a venue for participants to discuss measures to foster increased co-operation between member geoparks and stimulate contributions from different economic and scientific sectors.

The event would affirm Viet Nam's support for UNESCO's initiative on global geopark development as a means for comprehensive conservation and improved utilisation of natural heritage, said Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Linh Ngoc at a briefing yesterday.

"It is also an opportunity for Vietnamese geologists to learn from other countries in geopark development and management and is expected to help increase co-operation and mutual understanding between countries in the region in relation to geoparks, heritage and tourism," he said.

The conference and related activities are scheduled to take place between July 16-24 in Ha Noi and other localities.

The Asia-Pacific Geopark Network was founded in 2007 and currently has 31 members.

Environment ministry calls for water protection

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Thai Lai affirmed that raising the public awareness of protecting water resources is a top priority of the ministry at present and in the future.

In an interview granted to the Tai Nguyen va Moi Truong (Natural Resources and Environment) newspaper, the deputy minister said the demand for water keeps rising in Vietnam due to rapid urbanisation and population growth.

This is even more challenging for Vietnam in the context of increasingly complex and uncertain climate change and water resources in urban areas decreasing, he said

At present, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) is working on a national strategy on water resources until 2020, along with promulgating regulations on drilling, exploring and using water as well as discharging waste water, and on managing the river basin, in an effort to create a legal State management corridor in this field.

The ministry has also instructed relevant agencies to complete projects on protecting underground water in urban areas and coordinate with localities to set up basin water resources plans for the basin of Ma, Ca, Lo, Gam, Dong Nai, Ba, Cau, and Huong rivers, the northern, central and southern key economic zones, Ca Mau peninsula, and Phu Quoc island.

MNRE will launch a national meeting and activities in response to the 2011 World Water Day (March 23) themed, “Water for urban development”, in the central province of Ninh Thuan on March 21-22.

Since the beginning of March, exhibitions, seminars and screenings of documentaries on water resources have been held as part of the programme.

Energy saving projects win 'Green' competition

An energy saving project involving neon lights, an "intelligent" street light savings management system and making "half-organic" coal from waste won prizes in the final round of the "Green Ideas 2010" contest organised on Saturday in HCM City.

A group of students in Ha Noi won the top prize money of VND30 million (US\$1,400) for a project that will develop a machine to save 30 per cent of energy used for neon lighting systems in schools, offices and workshops.

The "Intelligent saving management system" project submitted by Nguyen Thanh Phuong from HCM City won the VND20 million second prize. It aims to control street lighting systems after 10pm by using light, movement and sound sensors to turn them on and off.

The third prize of VND15 million was taken by a group of students from Ha Noi who came up with a project to make "half-organic coal" from waste produced by a guild village. The students plan to mix coal and waste from cattle to create a new kind of fuel.

This year's "Green Ideas" contest focused on how to sustainably use energy by looking for new, practical and effective solutions to use recycled and renewable energy. It aimed to increase community awareness of the need to save energy and come up with coping strategies for climate change.

Apart from the prize money, the winners will get financial support of up to VND250 million (\$12,000) per project from Toyota Motors Viet Nam to implement it and bring into daily life.

Air pollution alert

“Air pollution in Vietnam is getting serious in comparison with Southeast Asia and other Asian countries,” said Dang Van Loi, Deputy Director of the Agency for Pollution Control, under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

According to the national report on environment 2007, air pollution in cities was mainly caused by vehicles (70 percent). Scientists state that traffic contributes to 85 percent of the total volume of CO and 95 percent of VOCs.

Nguyen Hoang Duc, from the Agency for Pollution Control, said that “according to Japan’s research, the increase of motorbikes and cars in Vietnam has made air pollution in cities more seriously.”

“Public education about water pollution and pollution at industrial zones has been emphasized in recent years but air pollution has been neglected. Dust pollution in big cities in Vietnam has exceeded standards from 5-7 times,” says Duc .

Le Anh Tu from the Vietnam Registration of Vehicles, under the Ministry of Transport, said that “most of motorbikes in Vietnam are not maintained because the people don’t understand the harms of exhaust and the benefit of maintenance – reducing exhaust and saving energy.”

Dr. Pham Ngoc Ho from the University for Natural Science, has pointed out another source of air pollution: exhaust from coal, wood and straw – popular fuels in the countryside.

“We need to have a specific roadmap to reduce the use of polluting fuels so Vietnamese will only use clean fuels by 2020,” Dr. Ho said.

“We should ban the use of coal in daily use,” Ho suggested.

Motorbikes are now the most popular vehicles in Vietnam, accounting for 95 percent of the total vehicles in the country and 95 percent in big cities. Vietnam has around 3 million new motorbikes and 150,000 cars registered annually. Notably, motorbikes are not controlled for exhaust fume.

By the end of 2010, there were 33 million motorbikes and cars in Vietnam, including 1.4 million cars.

Polluting villages may stay put

The highly polluted Nhue and Day rivers in Ha Noi's outer Hoai Duc District have prompted local authorities to consider relocating the area's craft villages, but funding shortages may hinder any action.

According to the National Assembly Standing Committee's study conducted earlier this month, the pollution levels in the two rivers are three or four times the regulated levels.

The study found that four of the district's 51 craft villages, including Duong Lieu, Minh Khai, Cat Que and La Phu, directly discharge waste water to the rivers.

Deputy chairman of the district People's Committee Nguyen Quang Duc said the four villages mainly produced cassava, vermicelli, malt, confectionery, green peas and wooden products. And he said 4.8 million cubic metres of waste water were discharged each year.

The untreated waste water is discharged into the T2, T5, T3A and T3B canals that then flow into the Nhue and Day rivers, which are currently black and giving off a potent smell.

To reduce the pollution caused by craft villages, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment approved a project aimed at protecting the district's environment by 2015 with a vision to 2020, said Duc.

Under the project, two waste water treatment systems have been under construction in the Cat Que and Duong Lieu communes since the end of last year, each with an area of 1.5ha. They are scheduled to be completed this year.

The systems are funded by VND28.8 billion (US\$1.4 million) from the municipal budget. The expected capacity of the systems is about 12,000-13,000cu.m per day. A total of 50 rubbish collecting points, which have areas of 28.8ha, will be set up in different communes, he said.

"So far three points have been set up in the Dong La and Kim Chung communes," said Duc.

Enterprises in the craft villages were asked to separate their rubbish to make it easier to collect and treat. But Nguyen Van Hoa, owner of a vermicelli business in Cat Que, said that his enterprise had neither the time nor the manpower to separate rubbish.

"I think local authorities should set up waste treatment systems and have teams that specialise in separating rubbish since we just do not have time to do it," he said.

In May, the district authorities plan to build a treatment station in Cau Xa Village in the Van Canh Commune with a capacity of 10,000-12,000cu.m per day.

Duc said a long-term and ideal measure should remove craft villages from residential areas.

"But we're facing a lack of funds," he said. He added that last year the ministry asked the National Assembly to increase the budget for environmental protection activities in the locality. If the proposal is approved, the district may eventually have enough funds to relocate the craft villages.

"Every year Ha Noi is supplied with VND800 billion (\$40 million) for environmental protection and it is never enough," Duc said.

The Nhue and Day rivers have total areas of 7,665sq.m and run through five northern provinces, including Hoa Binh, Ha Noi, Ha Nam, Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh.

Mekong water security dominates conference agenda

Water scarcity and declining quality would be a challenge to countries in the region, a study group on water resources security was told yesterday.

The two day meeting of the Council for Security Co-operation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), beginning Tuesday, attracted experts in water resources security in the region.

Swedish scholar Maria Larsson said the Asia Pacific region would run short of water within a decade, especially in the lower reaches of the Mekong River, due to the present utilization and management of water resources.

Other scholars warned that surface and underground water was being polluted by rapid urbanization and industrialization, the increasing use of chemical fertilizers and the discharge of untreated water to rivers.

They said the building of dams on the main stream of the Mekong River would seriously divert water flow, stopping over 50 per cent of alluvial soil running to its lower reaches, exterminating ecological diversification in the river valley and causing immeasurable corollaries at the river mouth.

Tarek Ketelsen from the International Centre for Environment Management said the building of hydro-electricity dams along the river would meet a small part of demand for energy in their countries.

However, these projects would cause a loss of between 3,000 tones and 4,000 tones of fish every year and adversely impact on 600 million of people living along the river and another 300 million of rice consumers, he said.

Ketelsen said the dams would also eternally change the economy, culture and society of the lower reaches of the Mekong River and cause serious conflict of interest issue among regional countries.

Scholar Mark Brindon from Australia said water reserves to feed dams in the upper reaches of the Mekong would increase the risk of having one dam after another broken in the case of an earthquake.

The resulting catastrophe would be many times greater than the havoc wreaked by the tsunami in Japan, he said

All scholars said institutions and co-operation between regional countries were not enough to ensure water resources security in the region.

They stressed the need to have a transparent exchange of information about the use of water resources.

"Sharing data on river flow should be urgently done by countries along the river," they said.



Cai Be floating market in the Mekong Delta province of Tien Giang. Countries in the Mekong River basin could face water scarcities and declining quality due to poor management. — VNA/VNS Photo Pham Do

A Chinese scholar said China had co-operated better with countries in the river's lower reaches after the Chinese Government permitted the sharing of its data on flow.

China would continue to look for measures to strengthen co-operation with these countries, the scholar said.

Scholar George Radosevich cited international rules on the use of water resources, including the guarantee of equality between nations sharing the river, the guarantee of open traffic along the river, equal sharing of natural resources in the river and not detrimental to countries in the river's lower reaches.

Vietnamese and Thai scholars suggested strengthening the role of ASEAN in seeking measures for water resources protection and bringing the Mekong River protection issue onto ASEAN's agenda.

Other measures to enhance co-operation in waste water treatment, ecological environment protection, coping with climate change and the rise in sea water level were also discussed at the meeting.

The second session of the study group will take place in Cambodia in 2011 and was expected to focus on discussing concrete measures to strengthen international and regional co-operation with a view to better protecting water resources in the region.

Overloaded landfill makes way for new trash facility

The landfill in northern Ha Giang City's Minh Khai Ward would be shut down this month to make way for construction of a new trash dump and waste water treatment facility, said director of Ha Giang's Environment and Natural Resources Department Hoang Van Nhu.

Plans for the VND20 billion (US\$910,000) project called for a new 3.6-ha facility, said Nhu. It would consist of three main areas, including a zone to treat previously-collected waste, a new landfill and a zone to treat waste water as it leaks from the garbage.

A layer of clay and high-density polyethylene (HDPE) will be placed beneath the new facility to avoid leakage into the ground and prevent environmental pollution.

Duong Van Hai, director of the project developer, Construction and Environment Technology Transfer Company, said the project would help reduce the pollution caused by the current landfill and offer more space for refuse disposal.

The new landfill would be able to properly treat the city's rubbish for a minimum of three years after its completion next year.

The city is inching closer to its total collection capacity of 70,000 tonnes each day with 65.7 tonnes currently being collected daily, according to 2009 statistics. The current 2-ha landfill has been in use since 2001.

The overloaded landfill combined with improperly treated waste water has caused environment pollution in the city, especially in its water resources.

Recycling project falls flat in HCM City

A pilot project on recycling household rubbish in HCM City has failed due to poor implementation and a lack of funds.

The project, which aimed to encourage residents to separate their household rubbish for recycling, was launched in 2004 in districts 1, 4, 5, 6, 10 and Cu Chi District.

Plans to provide residents with two rubbish bins, one for organic waste that can be used as compost and one for rubbish made from materials that can be recycled such as paper and plastic, were only implemented in District 6.

Residents in all the other districts set to benefit from the pilot project never received the rubbish bins, with authorities claiming that they didn't have enough funds to carry out the project.

Tran Van Danh, director of the Public Utility Co Ltd which implemented the project in District 6, said the district began to separate household rubbish in 2006 in nine of the district's 14 wards with funds of more than VND6 billion (US\$285,000) from the municipal budget.

Most of the district's residents responded positively to the project, but some of them did not separate their rubbish, said Danh.

"I think to make the project successful, we need four factors: equipment, regulations, dissemination and a rubbish treatment facility," he said.

Municipal authorities have not issued regulations on separating rubbish and residents who did not recycle rubbish were not fined.

"The most factor in this project is separating rubbish for recycling, however, the enterprises responsible for collecting rubbish did not recycle residents' rubbish," said Danh.

Initial funds for the project were set at about VND50 billion (\$2.5 million) to cover rubbish collection and work on raising public awareness on the project.

Municipal authorities tried to get the project back on track last year by requiring each district to take more control over rubbish recycling in their own localities. Districts were also asked to find funds for the project.

"However, district budgets are modest and I think they don't have enough money to carry out the project," said Danh. "Municipal authorities should supply more funds for districts to encourage them to recycle rubbish."

Huynh Kim Phat, deputy chairman of the HCM City People's Committee, said the city also lacked additional funds for the project.

"Districts can call for help from enterprises or organisations," he said.

Everyday the city produces more than 6,000 tonnes of rubbish, according to statistics from the city's Department of Natural Resources and Environment.



An overflowing garbage dump on Bui Van Ba Street in HCM City's District 7. A pilot project to promote recycling of household rubbish in HCM City has failed due to poor planning and a lack of funds. — VNA/VNS Photo Van Khanh

Most of the rubbish is buried at rubbish dumps. However, two rubbish dumps are causing severe pollution in HCM City's Tan Binh District.

A large rubbish dump at the corner of Truong Chinh and Pham Van Bach streets and a smaller facility on the corner of Quang Trung and Truong Chinh streets are seriously affecting the health of more than 1,000 poor families.

Resident Huynh Van Phuoc said the rubbish has resulted in a bad stench, and residents also have to put up with noisy rubbish trucks rumbling throughout the night.

"Because of the loud noise at 2am every day, we can hardly sleep," said Phuoc.

The rubbish, often piled up to as high as 10 metres, also pollutes ground water.

Diseases are widespread, with many residents suffering from skin and digestive diseases, while many older residents suffer from bronchitis.

HCM City faces groundwater crisis

Experts have sounded a red alert about the quality of groundwater in HCM City, saying it was critically degraded and sanitized.

Dr Nguyen Van Nga of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment said the groundwater was also close to exhaustion.

"My studies show that it began to dwindle in 1996, falling by 2m to 3m every year in several areas," Assoc Prof Dr Le Van Trung, director of the National University in HCM City's Geology-Information Technology Centre, said.



A local resident pours tap water into a jar to use later because of the lack of water in HCM City. — VNA/VNS Photo Hoang Tuan

Nga told Sai Gon Tiep Thi (Sai Gon Marketing) newspaper that in many places the water was contaminated by nitrate and iron though he did not specify their source.

In some places, the water has four times the permissible NO₃ content and 100 times the iron content.

Trung said the exploitation of groundwater had increased by several times, causing its level to recede from level 2 to level 3 or even 4, resulting in salinisation in many places.

Water has turned brackish in many places in Districts 8, 5, and Binh Thanh and parts of Districts 2 and Binh Chanh, while in the southeastern districts of Nha Be and Can Gio, it is become much saltier.

Though the volume of water exploited in a day is controlled, the exploitation is concentrated in a few places where it is now virtually exhausted.

Nga blamed the situation on poor water management and the lack of a clear plan for exploitation.

The City People's Committee previously had earlier banned the drawing of groundwater in 30 wards in 13 districts, but, with water supply failing to keep pace with the urbanisation and industrial growth, the ban was rarely observed.

"Urgent solutions are necessary to deal with the situation," Nga said.

"The water supply should be stepped up to meet the needs of city residents so that exploitation of groundwater stops."

From 2020 onwards, groundwater should only be drawn in suburban districts like 9, 12, Thu Duc, Hoc Mon, and Cu Chi, he added.

Water plants idle due to poor management, lack of funds

As many as 16 clean water treatment plants in Ha Noi's suburban districts have been left unused for four or five years due to a shortage of funds and poor management from local authorities.

The treatment plants, which were supported by funds totalling almost VND100 billion (US\$4.7 million), are in Ung Hoa, Thanh Oai, Hoai Duc, Chuong My, Quoc Oai and Dan Phuong districts.

Nearly 200,000 local residents who are struggling with limited water supplies from other facilities stand to benefit if the 16 stations begin operations.

Under an initial agreement, the city budget would pay for 60 per cent of the total funds to build the stations, and the remaining costs would be covered by each district.

"However, many districts cannot find sources of funds for the work," said Vu Binh Nguyen, director of the Ha Noi Clean Water and Rural Environment Sanitation Centre.

Thanks to funds from the city budget, about 80 per cent of construction work was completed, he said.

Another reason for the delay was that local authorities did not pay adequate attention to managing and maintaining the treatment plants.

"Because they have been left idle for such a long time, most of the machinery and equipment at the plants are out of order or have even disappeared," said Nguyen.

"Reservoirs at the plants are leaking and the network of pipes are rusty."

The water treatment plant in Chuong My District's Tan Tien Commune was built in 2006 with funds totalling VND2.5 billion (US\$125,000) from the city's and commune's budgets.

However, local authorities were irresponsible in managing and protecting the station, and some equipment was lost or damaged.

During an inspection of the plant in July last year, officers found that only two-thirds of the station's pumps were working, and some water pipes had vanished, said Nguyen.

"It will take a long time to repair the plants because there are so many different problems in different districts," he said.

Director of the city Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Pham Ngoc Thach said the department would work with the municipal People's Committee to call for investment from enterprises and organisations to finish construction work at uncompleted plants.

According to statistics from the Ha Noi Clean Water and Rural Environment Sanitation Centre, by the end of last year, Ha Noi's suburban districts had 101 clean water treatment stations, of which 85 were working effectively and supplying water to about 600,000 residents.

VN, Netherlands join hands on climate change

Vietnam and the Netherlands will cooperate in climate change adaptation and water management.

At the first meeting of the Vietnam-Netherlands intergovernmental committee held in Hanoi on March 29, participants discussed detailed solutions to deal with climate change and improve water management, ensuring stable social development in such areas as the Mekong Delta, Ho Chi Minh City, Red River Delta and coastal areas.

Presiding over the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai highlighted the bilateral strategic partnership agreement on climate change adaptation and water management signed in October, 2010 as a landmark in the two countries' cooperative ties. He said the attendance of Dutch Prince Willem-Alexander at the meeting embodied the cooperative commitments of the two governments in the field.

The Deputy PM took the opportunity to thank the Dutch Government for its past support and committed to doing his best to bring bilateral cooperative relations to a greater level of success.

Deputy PM Hoang Trung Hai was also appointed as Chairman of the Vietnam subcommittee under the Vietnam-Netherlands intergovernmental committee on climate change adaptation and water management./.

Country prepares to face climate change

Viet Nam must get ready to cope with climate change, which was forecast to bring erratic and extreme weather this year, Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai said at a meeting to review storm and flood prevention and control in Ha Noi yesterday.

Hai said more storms and floods were expected this year which required all ministries, agencies and localities to consolidate their respective storm and flood prevention and control committees to quickly implement the national strategy for natural disaster prevention and mitigation by 2020.

He urged ministries and agencies to conduct quality examinations of rescue equipment and make replacements if needed, and promote communication in all localities.

Relevant authorities were asked to examine their preparations for natural disaster prevention at all levels and co-operate with the National Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting to facilitate timely warnings.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Industry and Trade would be in charge of evaluating and repairing dykes and reservoirs to minimise flooding.

Hai also requested the Military Telecom Corporation to complete documentation on earthquakes and tsunamis for submission to the Government in June. The Ministry of Construction has been urged to inspect earthquake-proof designs of construction projects.

Director of the National Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting Pham Minh Tang said six or more storms and low tropical pressures were forecasted to strike during the rainy season and peak water levels were expected to be higher between July and October than they were during the same period last year.

Locality representatives suggested that the forecasting of strong storms and floods should be quicker and more accurate, upgrades should be ordered for dyke and storm shelter constructions, and rescue efforts should be improved.

Figures from the Central Steering Committee for Flood and Storm Prevention and Control showed that unexpected weather had caused serious losses last year. Natural disasters killed 273 people; 96 are still listed as missing and 491 were injured. More than 6,000 houses collapsed and more than 300,000ha of crops were inundated. Total losses were estimated to reach more than VND16 trillion (US\$768 million).

Flexibility key to tackling climate change

Long-term vision and short-term planning should be the twin planks on which the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta should base its adaptation to climate change, Dutch experts said at a workshop yesterday.

It would be unwise to make big investments in impact mitigating projects like dykes when the actual phenomena could not be predicted with high accuracy, they said.

The two-day workshop, titled "Towards a Mekong Delta Plan", brought together policy-makers and hundreds of experts from the two countries in the presence of Dutch Crown Prince Williem-Alexander, who has been on an official visit to the country.



Heavy rain causes flooding in HCM City's District 7. Rapid growth and uncontrolled urban development has been blamed for the situation. — VNA/VNS Photo Hoang Hai

Workshop participants discussed different options to optimise plans for the Delta relating to many areas including the predicted rise in sea levels, salinity intrusion, drought, insufficient supply of fresh water, agricultural and aquaculture production as well as urban development.

Various scenarios and solutions were discussed based on a "design table" application developed by the Dutch. The design table presented three-dimensional images of the Delta that changed in response to different input data.

The design table session was an interactive spatial planning exercise that sought to help key Vietnamese decision makers "map out scenarios for the future of the Mekong Delta in relation to climate change adaptation," organisers said.

The Dutch side gave a design table to their Vietnamese counterparts at the workshop as a present.

"In the long term, many things will remain unclear," said Prof L. O. Fresco of the University of Amsterdam.

"We do not know by how much the sea levels will rise and water discharge will increase," she told Viet Nam News.

So planners for the Delta should take a step-by-step approach, she recommended.

"It would be wasteful to spend a lot of money to build expensive dykes if sea levels do not rise as much as predicted," she said.

"Sometimes we cannot change things back," she added.

Speaking to Viet Nam News on the sidelines of the workshop, deputy minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Dao Xuan Hoc said the step-by-step approach was a good idea.

It would allow authorities to have updated statistics on hand to develop the most accurate and appropriate plans, he added.

"We should have a vision for the next 50 years, then we get back to where we are now to develop strategies for every five years," he said.

Hoc also remarked that the Dutch approach to climate change was "strong" compared to the Vietnamese, which he felt was "more moderate."

He explained, "For generations, people in the Delta have adapted to rather than avoided floods."

Nguyen Ngoc Anh, dean of the Southern Institute of Water Resources Planning, said that it was not a sustainable option to drain all the floodwaters from the Delta's rivers to protect rice crops.

"Intensive farming leads to high accumulation of fertilisers and pesticides that need to be flushed out by the annual floods," he explained.

On the other hand, rice crops have now been shortened from 90 to just 70 days, allowing farmers ample time to wash their fields with fresh water before sowing a new crop.

"Farmers should be more flexible in timing their crops based on weather forecasts," Anh said.

'Living with the floods'

According to the institute's flood-management plan, the delta is divided into zones of deep, middle and shallow flooding that sustain one, two and three rice crops within a year.

However, in order to safeguard the delta's big cities, "living with the floods" is not a good choice, given that they can cause huge damage to industrial zones, Hoc said.

"So here, flood control, not regulation, is preferable," he added.

Anh of the Water Resources Planning Institute noted that food security for both the country and the world should be taken into account in formulating and implementing urban development plans.

"The Government requires around 1.8 million hectares for rice crops in the region," he said.

Regarding sea-level rise and salinity intrusion, he felt that sluices should be built at just three, rather than all eight estuaries of Mekong River.

"The Ham Luong, Co Chien and Cung Hau Estuaries together account for 38 per cent of water flow of all Mekong tributaries," he said, "Retention of fresh water in these tributaries will be enough to irrigate a large part of the Delta."

However, the biggest difficulty in climate change planning for the Mekong Delta was to address different, and sometimes conflicting priorities at the same time, said Dr Fresco.

The different functions of water needed to be taken into account, including agriculture, fisheries and ecosystem, she said.

"It's also the same in the Netherlands," she added, noting that Viet Nam could learn from Dutch experience in this regard.

"Ministries have to work together and cannot take one-dimensional solutions," she said.

Ha Noi running short of waste disposal sites

Ha Noi will run out of room for rubbish by 2012, warns the Ha Noi Department of Natural Resources and Environment.



Rubbish is evened out before dumping at Ha Noi's Nam Son Dump. Authorities plan to expand the 83ha dump by 100ha in order to cope with the city's increasing waste problem. (Photo: VNS)

The total amount of solid household waste discharged each day in the city is currently estimated at 5,000 tonnes, and the quantity of waste is growing at a pace of 15 per cent per year, the department has estimated.

Most of the rubbish is dumped or recycled at three rubbish dumps in Soc Son and Chuong My districts and of Son Tay Town, or at waste treatment plants in the town and Tu Liem District, said the department's deputy director, Pham Van Khanh, at a recent workshop on environmental education and information.

"Land resources are limited, so dumps are just a temporary measure, and most of the dumps are going to be full soon," Khanh said.

Local people still had a habit of using plastic bags for discarding rubbish, which are difficult to treat and recycle, he said, estimating that households threw away about 200 tonnes of nylon bags each day.

Meanwhile, up to 85-90 per cent of dumps in use had failed to meet sanitation standards, posing high health and environmental risks.

To solve the problem, the city had invested in upgrading and expanding dumps and waste treatment plants, seeking to improve their capacity and use more modern technology to protect the environment, he added. The Nam Son dump, for example, would be expanded by 100ha, and a new waste treatment project would be built in Chuong My District this year.

A modern new US\$140 million waste treatment facility began construction in September last year in Soc Son District and is expected to commence operations later this year with a capacity to process 2,000 tonnes of rubbish daily.

Sai Gon River redevelopment plan out soon

HCM City in June will approve a detailed plan to redevelop the seaport area along the western bank of Sai Gon River, according to a source from the municipal People's Committee.

The land, which is currently occupied by Tan Cang and Sai Gon Port seaports and Ba Son Shipyard, will be redeveloped once the ports have been shifted out of the city centre to provide housing for more than 20,000 people and other facilities.

Japan's Nikken Sekkel Civil Engineering Ltd has almost completed the final version of a 1:2000 scale plan for the development of the Sai Gon River's west bank.

Under the new plan, the land now used by Tan Cang Port would be used for trade, services, housing and socio-cultural activities including entertainment, health care and education.

The facilities with maximum and minimum heights of 270 and 15 meters respectively will combine with public spaces.

Ba Son Shipyard will be converted into an area for trade, entertainment, education and cultural activities, and residences.

New buildings are planned for the southwest area of the Ba Son Shipyard while heritage buildings will be preserved. Heights will be limited to 220 meters with a minimum of 30 meters.

Similarly Sai Gon Port will be converted for services, trade, entertainment, education, healthcare and housing. Riverside gardens and open areas will be a feature. A pedestrian bridge is planned to link Thu Ngu Flagpole with the Nha Rong Wharf in District 4. Building height limits are 140m.

HCM City needs stiffer penalties for polluters

Government ministries and agencies that own and manage companies in HCM City must take steps to penalise those who violate environmental regulations, industry insiders have said.

Of the 37 polluting companies in HCM City, 31 have corrected their problems while the remaining six are still behind in minimising pollution, according to Sai Gon Giai Phong newspaper.

The group includes two joint-ventures, 20 ministry- and agency-governed companies, 14 city-owned businesses, and one privately owned company.

The city Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) said the six companies include the Ba Son Shipyard, the Sai Gon Alcohol, Beer and Beverage Corporation (Sabeco), Sai Gon Tobacco Company, Ha Tien Cement Company, Posvina Tole Joint Venture Co Ltd, and Viet Thang Jean Co Ltd.

The department said these six businesses were expected to stop polluting the environment by the second quarter of this year at the earliest and 2015 at the latest.

Sabeco said construction of its wastewater treatment system would end by this year's second-quarter, while Sai Gon Tobacco Company has set June 30 as the deadline to move its equipment and machinery from Tran Phu Street in District 5.

A representative of Posvina Joint Venture Co Ltd said the company had received approval from the Dong Nai Province People's Committee to relocate to Nhon Trach II Industrial Park in Nhon Phu Commune.

He said it would not be until late 2012 that Posvina would suspend operations in District 9 and move to a new site.

Removal of the Ba Son Shipyard to Vung Tau is scheduled for 2015.

Ha Tien Cement Company and Viet Thang Jean Co Ltd have pledged to deal with pollution on-site but inspectors have still found the two companies violating environmental protection rules.

DNRE director Dao Anh Kiet said with the six companies being centrally governed, the lack of support from the ministry and agencies involved had retarded businesses' progress in addressing the problem.

Bui Cach Tuyen, deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, said the slow removal of the remaining polluters in HCM City stemmed from the global economic downturn, which led to a drop in business investment in environmental protection.

He also said current outdated technology used to tackle pollution in the country had made it hard for several businesses to access a suitable model to handle pollution.

In addition, support policies, particularly in land assistance, had been implemented slowly.



*A worker of Ba Son Shipyard Co in HCM City cleans a ship's hull after repairs. The company is one of six in the city which were ordered to stop polluting the environment by the second quarter of this year. — VNA/VNS
Photo Kim Phuong*

Tuyen said that capital sources for pollution treatment had become more diverse, but businesses still found it difficult to access these sources of funding.

Temporary measures

DNRE director Dao Anh Kiet said while the six companies have yet to take radical steps to address the problem, the department has regularly made inspections and forced the polluters to take multiple temporary measures.

For example, to reduce the impact on the environment, Ba Son Shipyard is conducting production in an enclosed workshop, and part of the shipyard's operation has been relocated to Nha Be and Can Gio districts.

The shipyard in District 1 is only engaged in building, not repairing, ships.

The city People's Committee has advanced VND200 billion to remove the shipyard to Cai Mep Port in southern Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province.

Ha Tien Cement Company has invested in upgrading production technology and installed an electrostatic dust filtration system to minimise dust.

The company stopped operating one grinding machine, bought in 1964, out of its three grinders since the machine discharged most of the dust.

The Sabeco brewery on Nguyen Chi Thanh Street in District 5 has moved part of the operation to the Northwestern Industrial Park in Cu Chi District, and lowered production capacity to 160 million litres a year from 240 million litres a year.

The brewery also invested in a wastewater treatment system with a designed capacity of 1,200cu.m a day.

However, the overload has led to substandard quality of treated wastewater and the company said it would handle the problem by the second quarter.

Posvina Joint Venture Co Ltd has built a waste gas treatment system for the zinc-plating furnace, expected to be completed this November.

While reducing production capacity, Viet Thang Jean Co Ltd has committed to regularly operating a wastewater treatment facility.

The company said it would halt operation in case the treated wastewater was not up to required standards.

City areas likely to flood

Ha Noi Construction Department has identified 23 flood hot spots in the city.

When rainfall exceeds 100mm, major intersections in the centre of the city such as Tran Hung Dao and Phan Chu Trinh, Ly Thuong Kiet and Phan Boi Chau, and Ba Trieu and Nguyen Du, among others, are expected to flood.

Le Duc Duc, deputy director of the department, said the city's waterways and sewerage system had become choked with rubbish and silt, which exacerbates the risk of flooding in the rainy season.

Nine ongoing construction projects in particular have been reported to have a negative impact on the city's drainage system by clogging the nearby rivers and canals. Hao Nam, Thuy Khue, Ngoc Ha and Thuy Phuong canals and Kim Nguu and Set rivers have been notably impacted by construction debris.

Luu Trong Quynh, a resident of Kim Ma Ward where the water flow has been blocked by ongoing construction of a new road, said local residents were annoyed as dirty water from the canal flooded the road on rainy days.

Duc said the department had instructed investors to speed up progress of their construction projects while ensuring clear flows in nearby canals and rivers.

The department, together with drainage companies and local authorities, has been asked to promptly inspect drainage systems, especially the parts passing through these ongoing construction works.

Four projects would face initial inspections this month, including the Cat Linh-La Thanh-Lang road construction project; the Yen Son pumping project; the Khuat Duy Tien-Nguyen Trai road project; and the western West Lake project.

"Those who encroach or discharge building rubbish into the canals and rivers will have their project suspended," Duc said.

According to department officials, the city now has 56 lakes that help relieve flooding. The city also has access to pumps, the largest of which can drain 90cu. m of water per second.

Drainage systems are being repaired and key parts of the systems were being upgraded to cope with flooding before the end of this month.

When the city's sewerage projects, valued at VND6.3 trillion (US\$302 million), were completed in time for onset of the monsoon season, the drainage system will be able to cope with 310mm of rainfall over a two-day period.



Truong Chinh Street in Ha Noi is submerged after a heavy downpour last July. Some 23 other localities in the city are at risk of flooding in this year's rainy season. — VNA/VNS Photo Thanh Tung

GIZ Office Hanoi

6th Floor, Hanoi Towers, 49 Hai Ba Trung Street, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Tel. + 84 4 39 34 49 51, Fax + 84 4 39 34 49 50

Email giz-vietnam@giz.de, Website: www.giz.de

ANNOUNCEMENT

ON THE MERGER OF THE THREE DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT

On 1 January 2011, the Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (DED) gGmbH (German development service), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH (German technical cooperation) and the Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung (InWEnt) gGmbH (Capacity Building International, Germany) were merged into the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The merger aims to make German development work even more efficient and effective. The new organisation brings all technical cooperation instruments together and further develops them in line with needs and demands.

In Viet Nam, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) officially began operation on 28 March 2011 with the new name stated in the Diplomatic Notes exchanged between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany (No. 501/2010 dated 8 December 2010) and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, which was represented by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (No.1840/BKHĐT-KTĐN dated 28 March 2011).

GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in international cooperation for sustainable development. GIZ is also active in international education work. It helps people and societies all over the world to improve their life prospects and living conditions by themselves. GIZ operates worldwide in many fields, including economic development and employment; governance and democracy; security, reconstruction, peace building and civil conflict transformation; food security, health and basic education; and environmental protection, resource conservation and climate change mitigation.