

Press Review 05/2012 - Vietnam, Water and Environmental Technology,

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No	Title	Date	Source	Region	Catalogue	Description
1	Forest fires wreak havoc	3/5/2012	VN News	Danang	Environment	Forest fires blamed on the unseasonably hot weather have devastated swathes of forestry and agricultural land across the country.
2	HCM City's urban plan to embrace green development	3/5/2012	VN News	HCM	Environment	HCM City will continue to complete its urban infrastructure in the coming years to turn into a greener and larger urban zone, according to the city's Department of Planning and Architecture.
3	30% of domestic waste in Ha Noi goes untreated	3/5/2012	VN News	Hanoi	Waste	Only 70 per cent of Ha Noi's household waste is collected for treatment, leaving stagnation in most of the capital's rural areas.
4	Polluting factories, farms, firms moved	4/5/2012	VN Net bridge	Dong Nai	Pollution	The PC of southern Dong Nai Province decided to relocate 579 facilities this year, claiming they were hostile to the environment.
5	Satellite images capture changes on planet Earth	7/5/2012	VN News	Hanoi	Remote Sensing	A sleepless planet with the twinkling lights of populated areas can be seen in an image captured by satellite.
6	Central hydro-power projects to be inspected	7/5/2012	VN News	HCM	Others	MONRE this year will conduct inspections on hydro-power projects in 22 provinces and cities in the central region of the country.
7	Delta faces dire climate impacts	7/5/2012	VN News	Mekong	Climate Changes	The Mekong Delta needs to take prompt and drastic measures to deal with the steadily worsening problem of landslides and erosion, experts warn.



MOST-BMBF Office for
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Vietnamese – German Office for Water and Environmental Technology

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8	Dam projects destroy environment	9/5/2012	VN News	Quang Nam	Environment	It is a serious mistake to build so many hydro-power dams around the country since they ravage the environment.
9	Experts discuss Agent Orange clean-up at Da Nang Airport	9/5/2012	VN News	Danang	Environment	Vietnamese and US experts discussed in a seminar the use of In-Pile Thermal Desorption technology to clean up the Agent Orange/Dioxin contamination at Da Nang Airport.
10	Green theme for Environment Day	9/5/2012	VN News	Vietnam	Environment	Viet Nam will celebrate this year's World Environment Day on June 5 under the theme of "Green Economy: Does it include you?" in Quang Ninh Province's Ha Long City.
11	Polluting firm ends clean-up of canal	10/5/2012	VN News	Dong Nai	Pollution	The Sonadezi Long Thanh Co has completed cleaning up pollution along Ba Cheo Canal, according to Le Viet Hung, director of DONRE
12	Water rates may rise by 35%	10/5/2012	VN News	Hanoi	Water	Clean water prices in HN are projected to rise by 35 per cent if a proposal by the Ha Noi Water Company Ltd receives approval from the municipal PC
13	Fresh water for all this summer	11/5/2012	Vfej	Hanoi	Water	Residents in central Hanoi will have access to fresh water all summer long.
14	RoK-Vietnam Ministerial Meeting on Environment opens in Hanoi	11/5/2012	VN Net Bridge	Vietnam	Environment	Vietnam's environmental protection strategy aims to promote international cooperation to complete the legal system, improve environmental management skills, apply technology and create financial resources for environmental protection.



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15	Five city factories fined for pollution	12/5/2012	VN News	HCM	Pollution	The HCM City Environmental Crime Prevention and Fighting Police Department discovered five factories in District 12 discharging untreated wastewater and emissions into the environment.
16	Youth speak out on environment	14/5/2012	VN News	HCM	Environment	Young residents of big cities like HCM City and Ha Noi are expressing their concerns about pressing environmental problems by urging residents and authorities to actively take part in reducing pollution levels.
17	City to launch green energy programme	15/5/2012	VN News	HCM	Energy	The country's most populated city has adopted a programme to save power and promote the use of renewable and environmentally friendly energies.
18	Rising waters	16/5/2012	VN News	Vietnam	Water	Developing nations in the Asia-Pacific region must build up climate resiliency and shift towards lower-carbon pathways if they want to sustain hard-won human development gains attained over the past decades in the changing climate context.
19	The Journal of Vietnamese Environment	16/5/2012	TU Dresden	Vietnam	Environment	The Journal of Vietnamese Environment (J. Viet. Env.) is a scientific platform for researchers and stakeholders working on environmental issues in Vietnam and abroad.
20	\$2.1 mil for medical waste treatment in Dong Thap	17/5/2012	VN Net Bridge	Dong Thap	Waste	The Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta province of Dong Thap has received US\$2.1 million in aid for a local hospital waste treatment project.
21	Delta gets \$2.1m to treat medical waste	21/5/2012	VN News	Dong Thap	Waste	The Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta province of Dong Thap has received US\$2.1 million in aid for a local hospital waste treatment project.



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22	AKIZ Project satisfies requirement on wastewater concept for industrial zone	24/5/2012	AKIZ News	Can Tho	Waste water	On May 24th, 2012, The Vice minister of Ministry of Science and Technology – Mr Tran Viet Thanh did come to have a talk and visit the pilot plant for treating wastewater of AKIZ Project in Tra Noc Industrial Zone (Can Tho City).
23	New drainage system to be installed in HN	24/5/2012	VN News	Hanoi	Environment	Ha Noi will install new underground drainage systems in 44 streets in seven inner-city districts from now till the end of next year
24	Pollution levels raise public concern	24/5/2012	VN Net Bridge	Vietnam	Pollution	People in Viet Nam have rising concerns about the effects of the environment on their health and well being, a survey released recently by market research firm Cimigo has found.
25	Workshop on monitoring of wastewater system in urban regions	25/5/2012	AKIZ News	Can Tho	Wastewater	Over 100 participants who are IZs management boards, scientists of universities in Can Tho, HCM did come to the Workshop on “Monitoring of wastewater system in urban regions”
26	Ministry to curb illegal mineral exploitation	28/5/2012	VN News	Tay Ninh	Pollution	MONRE is planning to raise fines for illegal mineral exploitation in a bid to curb rampant violations and reduce pollution from activities such as ore and coal mining.
27	Vietnam faces big challenges in treating electronic waste	29/5/2012	VN Net Bridge	Vietnam	Waste	With a loosened legal framework, Vietnam still cannot tightly control the electronic waste imports. Therefore, scientists have warned that Vietnam is turning into a big electronic landfill.



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28	Toxic medical waste incinerator planned	29/5/2012	VN News	Nghe An	Waste	Central Nghe An Province will build a modern incinerator to treat toxic medical waste in Vinh City and adjacent districts during 2012-20.
29	Sanitation falls short in rural areas	29/5/2012	VN News	Hanoi	Water & Sanitation	It is estimated that 20 million people living in rural areas do not have access to proper toilets, a report by the Economics of Sanitation Initiative run by the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme revealed yesterday.
30	Delta province expects more riverbank erosion	30/5/2012	VN News	An Giang	Environment	Authorities in southern An Giang Province have warned of more possible landslides caused by erosion along a 400-metre stretch of the Hau River in Long Xuyen Town's Binh Khanh Ward.
31	Medical waste plan proposed	30/5/2012	VN News	HCM	Waste	MOH has devised a plan to collect all medical waste every day, with 70 per cent of solid waste to be treated by 2015, according to a source from the Health Environment Management Department.



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Forest fires wreak havoc

Forest fires blamed on the unseasonably hot weather have devastated swathes of forestry and agricultural land across the country.

An estimated 30ha of forest on Hai Van Mountain Pass in Lien Chieu District in Da Nang was destroyed by fire yesterday.

The blaze was first discovered by rangers at 2pm yesterday in section 4A of eucalyptus forest. It quickly spread to section 11 on the top of Hai Van Mountain pass, 30km north of Da Nang city centre.

About 500 soldiers, fire-fighters and local militia were mobilised to contain the fire, which was expected to continue into the next day.

"It's so hard for us to approach the fire because the forest is more than 1,000m above sea level. This has prevented fire-fighters and rescuers from gaining access to the area," deputy head of Lien Chieu district's forest ranger section Phan Van Rong said.

"The fire is particularly serious because the forest is near an airfield and an ammunition depot left over from the American War," he said, after hearing an explosion.

According to local rangers, the fire could get out of control if it reached a nearby pine tree forest and Lien Chieu oil storage depot.

Dang Thanh Quan, a militiaman who joined in the rescue, said he was unable to get near the fire because of the inhospitable terrain.

"It took us two hours to approach the fire. The best we can do at the moment is just to prevent the blaze from spreading," Quan said.

Fire-fighters are currently digging a 2km trench to isolate the fire.

Meanwhile, the city's administration has warned neighbouring Thua Thien-Hue Province to ready itself in case the fire crosses the provincial border.

A ranger from Lien Chieu District blamed the fire on the recent heat wave.

Meanwhile, another fire has broken out in northern Bac Giang Province's Yen Lu Commune. It has so far destroyed 6 ha.

The local authorities said 10-year-old trees that included pines, eucalyptus and acacia had been destroyed. By yesterday evening, fire-fighters had yet to put out the blaze.

In the northern mountainous province of Ha Giang's Bac Quang District, 12ha of forest has been destroyed by fire, which was extinguished yesterday morning.

The fire, which started on Tuesday evening, was allegedly caused by an ethnic family who were attempting to clear land for cultivation.

A fire also occurred in the central province of Quang Ngai's Son Tinh District yesterday, damaging 2ha of sandalwood forest.

According to Quang Ngai Fire Prevention and Fighting Department, the recent hot weather had helped the fire to spread.

The National Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting has recorded the historical peak hot temperature in the northern mountain province of Lao Cai yesterday.

The average temperature in the province was reported at 40 to 41 degree Celsius.

The high mountain Sa Pa Town's temperature was hit by the recorded 29 degree Celsius. In lower areas, the outside temperature was 43 to 45 degree Celsius while the humidity decreased to 25 to 30 per cent. This was marked as the highest level in the last 55 years.

The hot weather has put the region in the high risk of fire. Many hectares of corn and bean fields have suffered withered-leaf.

HCM City's urban plan to embrace green development

HCM City will continue to complete its urban infrastructure in the coming years to turn into a greener and larger urban zone, according to the city's Department of Planning and Architecture.

The south Saigon area, Thu Thiem, District 9, Thu Duc District and Tay Bac urban areas will continue to be upgraded to change the face of the city, according to Nguyen Hoai Nam, the department's deputy director.

High-end residential areas, shopping centres and high-rise buildings will be developed alongside Ha Noi Highway and the eastern side of the city by 2020.

In the inner city, all families living in slums along Tau Hu and Kenh Te canals will be relocated.

The face of HCM City in the next 10 years would change significantly, he said, adding that more rental housing units would be built.

According to the city's master plan until 2025, the population will remain at 4-4.5 million people in the older inner city area.

The city will remove slums dwellings along canals and streets, and move production establishments, ports and industrial parks that cause environmental pollution out of the inner city.

Ecological areas including the Can Gio mangrove forest, the Cu Chi special used forest and protective forests, will be strictly conserved.

The city would also conserve and renovate existing parks and tree systems in older inner city districts, as well as develop more parks and plant more green trees on land acquired from relocated factories, ports and industrial parks.

After 37 years of implementing industrialisation and modernisation, despite the remaining issues of traffic congestion, urban flooding and pollution, the city "realised that it had faithfully followed the route that developed countries have often experienced," according to Nguyen Minh Hoa, head of the HCM City National University's urban department.

The city has achieved spectacular changes in technical infrastructure and urban development, Hoa said.

It has initially completed the renovation of inner-city districts, with more than 100 high-rise buildings built in the city's downtown area.

30% of domestic waste in Ha Noi goes untreated

Only 70 per cent of Ha Noi's household waste is collected for treatment, leaving stagnation in most of the capital's rural areas.

It is estimated that around 2,500 tonnes of household waste are discharged daily in rural areas.

Statistics from the city's Natural Resources and Environment Department show that only five out of 18 suburban districts, including Soc Son, Dong Anh, Gia Lam, Me Linh and Thanh Tri, finished transporting all their waste to common waste-treatment plants.

According to the department, stagnant waste along local roads, schools and markets has been blamed for environmental pollution in the suburban districts of Thach That, Quoc Oai and Chuong My.

The department found some communes in suburban districts using ponds or lakes to bury waste, resulting in local water pollution.

Pham Van Khanh, the department's deputy director, said that collecting and transporting waste met difficulties due to tardiness in building landfill sites.

Poor co-operation between managerial agencies and environmental sanitation companies was believed to be adding to the situation, he said.

District-based authorities blamed shortages of land and money on their slowness to build waste treatment sites, he added.

Nguyen Van Doanh, vice chairman of the Chuong My District People's Committee, said that the district had been building temporary landfill sites in the communes of Dong Son, Tan Tien and Tran Phu with the city's support of VND100 million (US\$4,800) for each site.

"But that is just a short-term solution. In the long run, we'll face difficulties due to having no money to build waste treatment plants," Doanh said.

According to Khanh, to solve the problem, the city committee should order its units to speed up the progress of building common waste treatment plants in the districts of Son Tay and Soc Son.

As planned, the city targets to build more waste treatment plants with hygienic burying technology by 2015.

The city has called for investment to build these sites; however, no investors were ready to pour money into such projects due to slow payback.

Besides, the cost for treating waste is also a problem, costing \$15 per tonne, which the city could not afford.

In the meantime, it was not easy to raise waste collection fees higher than VND1,500 per person when rural people remained poor, Khanh said.

Polluting factories, farms, firms moved

The People's Committee of southern Dong Nai Province on Wednesday decided to relocate 579 facilities this year, claiming they were hostile to the environment. They include many pottery factories, slaughter houses and livestock farms that are thought to be polluting their surroundings.

* 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to be targeted

Viet Nam will attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent in the agriculture and forestry sectors by 2020, according to a plan being developed by the Ministry of National Resources and Environment.

Experts at a conference yesterday in Ha Noi discussed the plan, which is expected to cost VND208 billion (US\$9.9 million) and has adopted 2005 as the base year for comparisons.

"The draft plan will be completed by the end of this month and then submitted to the Government for approval," said Tran Hong Ha, Deputy Minister of National Resources and Environment.

According to the Department of Meteorology, Hydrology and Climate Change, several sectors continue to emit large amounts of green house gases in Viet Nam, including energy, agriculture and forestry.

The measures proposed to reduce these harmful effects included developing biogas technology, changing the diet of livestock, collecting and recycling agricultural by-products and using water-saving rice cultivation methods.

Many of the potential solutions involve the application of modern technologies to promote efficiency and the increased use of renewable energy and fossil fuels.

The plan would also address the management of carbon credit, which is a generic term for any tradable certificate or permit representing the right to emit one tonne of carbon dioxide or one tonne of another greenhouse gas with a carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e), according to the Department of Meteorology, Hydrology and Climate Change.

In other words, a carbon credit is a certificate showing that a government or company has paid to have a certain amount of carbon dioxide removed from the environment.

The plan would aim to increase control over carbon credit trading activities, to develop the carbon market within the country and to promote Viet Nam's participation in the international carbon market.

The department also said that as of April this year, there were 112 projects in Viet Nam recognised by the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) Executive Board as CDM projects. They will help reduce the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 51 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents.

According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Clean Development Mechanism allows a country with an emission-reduction or emission-limitation commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to implement an emission-reduction project in developing countries. In this way, the developed country would be given credits for meeting its emission reduction targets, while the developing country would receive the capital investment and clean technology or beneficial change in land use.

Viet Nam ranked fifth among countries with the largest number of CDM projects.

Satellite images capture changes on planet Earth

A sleepless planet with the twinkling lights of populated areas can be seen in an image captured by satellite.

It is one among impressive images of typical landscapes and human settlements of Southeast Asia and Europe, captured by German Aerospace Centre (DLR) satellite, on display in Ha Noi until May 20.

As contribution to the ASEAN-EU Year of Science, Technology and Innovation 2012, the picture exhibition Eye of the Sky illustrates natural changes on Earth via satellite.



Global art: A view of Ha Noi and Ha Long Bay in Viet Nam from space. — German Aerospace Centre Photo

Ten panels depict the earth by night, and Europe and Southeast Asia by day. Lights at night and the shapes of continents provide a first glance look at the prosperity and challenges of life on both continents.

"The large-sized images of both continents help visualise the challenges we face as a result of the changes occurring in the natural environment," said Annette Schavan, federal minister of Education and Research, the exhibition's co-organiser.

"Science addresses these challenges by developing sustainable land use systems, efficient water technologies, risk and disaster management concepts, exploring renewable energy sources and planning the city of tomorrow, to mention some contributions to a better future," she said.

"By selecting topical areas that are of particular interest to Southeast Asia and Europe and of global relevance, the first bi-regional Year of Science highlights the impact and existence of co-operation between ASEAN and the EU," she said.

Eye of the Sky is conceived for the wider public to enjoy the beauty of nature and getting informed about the advancement of scientific collaboration between Southeast Asia and Europe.

Visitors will see an Ocean of Plastic in Spain, the world's largest greenhouse for vegetable and fruit production, land clearance for acacia plantations in Malaysia, degraded forestland in Laos, primary forest in Indonesia and the view of Ha Noi and Ha Long Bay between rivers. The images reflect the development of the areas and ecological problems these areas are facing.

The exhibition will run until May 20 at two venues in Ha Noi including the National Agency for Science and Technology Information (NASATI), 24 Ly Thuong Kiet Street, and the Vietnamese-German Centre at the Ha Noi University of Science and Technology, 1 Dai Co Viet Street.

The exhibit is also set to visit Singapore, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia and Thailand.

Central hydro-power projects to be inspected

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment this year will conduct inspections on hydro-power projects in 22 provinces and cities in the central region of the country.

The inspection aims to improve State management of land, natural resources and hydrometeorology activities in relation to hydro-power projects.

Inspectors have been asked to hand out strict penalties to violators of regulations, under to a decision signed by deputy minister Chu Pham Ngoc Hien on Friday.

Hydro-projects in the provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Dak Nong, Dak Lak and Lam Dong will undergo ministry's inspections on land, environment, water resources and hydrometeorology issues between June and October.

Meanwhile, the provincial departments of Natural Resources and Environment will conduct inspections on hydro-projects in Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien – Hue, Da Nang, Binh Phuoc, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, Binh Thuan, Ninh Thuan and Khanh Hoa.

Reports on these inspections will be sent to the ministry after they are completed.

Agencies will propose measures based on inspection results, including amending regulations on environmental protection and using natural resources in hydro-power development.

The inspections were done after the public raised concerns about the serious social and environmental impact caused by the hydro-power projects.

Last year the Department of Industry and Trade of Quang Nam Province asked the provincial authority of Quang Nam and the Ministry of Industry and Trade to scrap six long-delayed, environmentally harmful hydropower projects.

The northern province of Lao Cai and the central province of Khanh Hoa also requested the ministry to consider doing away with 17 hydro-power projects for the social and environmental problems it could cause to the localities.

According to figures from the trade and industry ministry's Energy Department, a hydro-power project needs around 9 ha of land for each megawatt of power, including 2.4 ha of forest land.

As of July 2011, Viet Nam had some 890 small- and medium-sized hydropower projects approved under the country's master plan for hydropower development with a total generation capacity of 5,900 MW.

However, the number of operational projects and those under construction now is around 100, with a total capacity of 600 MW.

At the moment, power generated by hydropower plants is sold to Electricity of Viet Nam Corporation (EVN) at around four US cents per kWh.

Delta faces dire climate impacts

The Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta needs to take prompt and drastic measures to deal with the steadily worsening problem of landslides and erosion, experts warn.

The problem gains added urgency as the region is highly susceptible to climate change impacts, including rising sea levels, in the coming years, they say.

They also say that one of the solutions that cannot be postponed is the building and strengthening of embankments and sea dykes in the most vulnerable localities.

The departments of natural resources and environment in several Mekong Delta provinces have reported that landslides and land erosion, mostly along the Tien (Front) and Hau (Rear) rivers, have caused increasing damage in recent years.

The provinces of An Giang, Dong Thap and Ca Mau are among the hardest hit.

In An Giang Province, many areas along Tien and Hau rivers are suffering from serious landslide and erosion.

The situation is the same in Dong Thap Province where the length of the affected area is estimated at about 200km. About 2,500 households have to be evacuated, according to local authorities.

Meanwhile, along the Cho Gao Canal in Tien Giang Province's Cho Gao District, more than 200 areas have been damaged and are facing a worsening land erosion problem. In many areas, up to 20 metres of land has been claimed by erosion.

To avoid from landslide, most of families living here have had to move their houses backward from the river at least 20-30 metres.

Many families are caught in a tough situation because they have no more land left to move further inland.

Nguyen Van Be of Tan Thuan Binh Village in Cho Gao District, said, "I have moved my house back from the river twice, but the water levels continue to rise and will reach the house soon, but we have no more land to move back further."

Local authorities have been warning that climate change impacts in Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta region have worsened every year.

In Ca Mau Province, the sea levels rose by 15cm, 16cm and 21cm in 2007, 2008 and 2011, damaging 4,890ha, 10,600ha and 19,700ha of arable land respectively.

To Quoc Nam, deputy director of Ca Mau Province's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, said if the sea level continued to rise at such rates, about 90,000ha of arable land in Ca Mau Province, especially in Nam Can and Ngoc Hien districts, face a serious threat of being inundated.

Since 2000, Ca Mau has been suffering more frequent land erosion, Nam said. At present, the erosion has been taking place on nearly 10km of the province's coastline, with four areas impacted particularly badly, he added.

The situation is similar in Bac Lieu Province where the sea level rise last year was reportedly the highest in the last 20 years.

Le Van Sa, director of Bac Lieu's Department of Hydro-meteorology, said the climate change scenario in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta region in general and the province in particular has become significantly worse over the last few years, impacting thousands of families living on the coast.

He said many families in the region face daily threats of sea erosion and other natural calamities as they wait for the Government's support to develop projects building and/or upgrading both sea dykes and embankments.

According to a report from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, during the last 50 years, sea levels have risen by 12cm. It is expected to rise another 12cm, 17cm, 30cm and 75cm by 2020, 2030, 2050 and 2100 respectively.

The ministry has asked each locality, especially those in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta region, to develop a long-term strategy and clear roadmap to cope with sea level rises for each decade from now until 2100.

Dam projects destroy environment

It is a serious mistake to build so many hydro-power dams around the country since they ravage the environment, a seminar on the subject held in the Central province of Quang Nam's Tam Ky City on Monday heard.

Le Phuoc Thanh, head of the National Assembly delegation from Quang Nam, told the conference named "Sustainable Development of Hydro-power Projects: Lessons and Warnings" that dams have destroyed forests, caused floods in the lower sections of rivers, and swallowed a lot of arable land.

Investors, and not common people, benefit mostly from them, he added.

Dinh Van Thu, deputy chairman of the Quang Nam People's Committee, said: "We made a big mistake by allowing the development of so many hydro-power projects. It is a little bit late to correct the fault."

Prof Vu Trong Hong, chairman of the Viet Nam Irrigation Association, said some 800 medium and small dams are blocking off and "killing" all the country's rivers, especially in the central and Central Highlands regions.

He laid the blame squarely on the privatisation of power generation for the massive investment in hydro-power projects.

"BOT (build-operate-transfer) investment in hydro-power projects is banned in other countries but allowed in Viet Nam," he said.

Dr Dao Trong Hung of the Viet Nam River Network (VRN) said around 16 hectares of forests need to be destroyed to generate a megawatt of hydropower.

"They were 'forest destruction' projects that were licensed in the name of hydro-power projects," he said.

Dams have also affected bio-diversity, he said, pointing out that 110 hydro-power projects are encroaching on 47 forests. The Cat Tien and Hoang Lien National Parks were alone home to 12 of them, he said.

People relocated to make way for dams too suffered he said, referring to the 1968 Thac Ba Hydro-power Plant which uprooted many who continue to lead a hand-to-mouth existence after all these decades.

Irrigation expert Le Tri Tap, who is also an ex-chairman of the Quang Nam People's Committee, said dam projects ignore sustainable resettlement of residents relocated to build them.

"That is how these hydro-power projects have impoverished people."

Authorities failed to carefully identify the adverse impacts of dams while investors had unscrupulously tried to alter the basins of rivers, causing a long-term threat to the environment, he said.

Do Tai, chairman of the province's Dong Giang District which has seven hydro-power projects, said: "I was heartbroken to see many residents in my district losing their land to hydro-power projects. They were forced to destroy forests to earn a living and were later prosecuted for [it]."

VRN urged relevant authorities to consider each dam project carefully before licensing.

Their benefits should be shared with residents and communities affected by them, VRN said.

Though invitations had been sent to hydro-power investors across the country, none attended the seminar which was organised by the Quang Nam NA delegation and VRN.

Just a few days ago the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment announced inspections of hydro-power projects in 22 provinces and cities.

They will be examined for land, environment, water-resource, and hydrometeorology issues.

Last year the Department of Industry and Trade of Quang Nam

Province had urged Quang Nam and the Ministry of Industry and Trade to scrap six long-delayed, environmentally harmful dam projects.

Experts discuss Agent Orange clean-up at Da Nang Airport

Vietnamese and US experts yesterday discussed in a seminar the use of In-Pile Thermal Desorption (IPTD) technology to clean up the Agent Orange/Dioxin contamination at Da Nang Airport.

Donald Steinberg, Deputy Administrator for the US Agency for International Development (USAID), said the IPTD environmental pollution treatment system would be used to clean up the dioxin at Da Nang Airport, as part of the co-operative project between USAID and the Viet Nam Ministry of National Defence.

IPTD, an advanced technology has been applied in the US, EU and Asia to clean up dangerous wastes and ensure safe environments for millions of people.

Deputy Commander of Air Force and Air Defence Major-General Le Huy Vinh expressed his hope that the contaminated land would be cleaned by using this new technology.

Under the project worth around US\$43 million, land of a 191,400sq.m area in the airport plans to be dug up and moved to IPTD to be treated.

Steinberg said the project to clean up dioxin at Da Nang Airport would be conducted very carefully to ensure the safety of both the project workers and the local people.

"We commit to clearing and dealing with AO/Dioxin at the Da Nang Airport."

Green theme for Environment Day

Viet Nam will celebrate this year's World Environment Day on June 5 under the theme of "Green Economy: Does it include you?" in Quang Ninh Province's Ha Long City.

The event will form part of Viet Nam's efforts in reiterating its commitment to pursuing green growth to transform current development patterns towards sustainable development.

This year's event will afford attendees an opportunity to learn more about green economies and assess the process as implemented by the Government, private sector, civil societies and communities.

Speaking at the press briefing yesterday, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Bui Cach Tuyen said Viet Nam was developing a green growth strategy for 2011-20 period with a vision towards 2050 and that many challenges lay ahead, including limited resources.

He said the next step would entail preparing relevant policies and mechanisms as well as the institutional framework to ensure the effective implementation of such strategy.

A series of events will be held in Quang Ninh on June 4-5 including a green economy forum and a national commemoration event with the participation of 3,000 people including Party and State leaders.

The United Nations Environment Programme defines a green economy as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. A green economy will be the umbrella theme of the upcoming Rio 20+ Summit held in Rio De Janero in June.

Polluting firm ends clean-up of canal

The Sonadezi Long Thanh Co in the southern province of Dong Nai has completed cleaning up pollution along Ba Cheo Canal, according to Le Viet Hung, director of the province's Natural Resources and Environment Department.

Untreated waste water discharged into the canal by Sonadezi Long Thanh caused damage to local farms.

The company has pledged it will compensate local farmers as soon as a scientific impact assessment of the damage is carried out by relevant authorities. "However, it takes time to define specific damage to local aquaculture and fruit farming," said Hung.

A report on the compensation is expected to be available by the end of the second quarter of this year.

Sonadezi Long Thanh's chief executive officer Nguyen Van Tuan said the company has improved its waste water treatment system and these upgrades have been checked by relevant authorities.

The company has also set up automatic observation stations to measure the volume of waste discharges and pollution indicators, said Tuan.

He said Sonadezi would take responsibility for compensating farmers for damages according to the law.

Provincial authorities said initial calculations estimated that the untreated waste water contaminated about 114 ha of 682.8 ha of the canal's basin, and the company will be responsible for compensating for 95 per cent of losses of local aquaculture production from 2008 to August, 2011.

However, the percentage of losses related to crops and breeding activities caused by the company has yet to be determined.

Huynh Ngoc Trai, chairman of the Tam An Commune's Farmers Association, said that more than 260 petitions have been submitted to authorities demanding compensation totalling VND16 billion (US\$768,000) from Sonadezi, which was responsible for treating the waste water of 42 companies in the province's Long Thanh Industrial Park.

The company was found to have discharged 9,300 cu. m of untreated waste water into the canal via three underground pipelines in August last year.

Water rates may rise by 35%

Clean water prices in Ha Noi are projected to rise by 35 per cent if a proposal by the Ha Noi Water Company Ltd receives approval from the municipal People's Committee.

The present prices are VND4,000 (US\$0.2) per cubic metre for the first 16cu.m, VND4,700 (\$0.22)/cu.m for the next five cu.m, and VND9,400 (\$0.44)/cu.m for an additional 35 cu.m.

Company director Nguyen Nhu Hai said that the current pricing, applied since the beginning of 2010, was not enough to make up losses incurred from rising production costs.

He also said that even with a 35 per cent hike, the company would still face problems as the price of electricity and chemicals continued to rise.

The company reported that in the first four months of this year, it suffered a loss of VND32 billion (\$1.5 million), and consequently had to cut workers' salaries by VND800,000 (\$38) per month.

Moreover, water prices in Ha Noi were much lower than in neighbouring cities and provinces, Hai said.

In Hai Duong City, about 60km from the capital city, water was being sold for VND6,500 (\$0.3) per cubic metre for the first five cubic metres.

Since 2010, the company had asked to raise prices three times, but had not received approval from the municipal People's Committee, said Hai.

"Over the past two years, many other services including electricity, petrol, gas and bus fares have increased in price, but clean water – a daily necessity – has stayed the same. It's not fair," he said.

The climate was forecast to be hotter than usual this year, and combined with the economic crisis, the company would not be able to continue at the current prices, Hai added.

However, the proposal has met with complaints from economic experts and local residents.

Tran Dinh Thien, director of the Viet Nam Economics Institute, said the company's reasons were not convincing.

A few dozen dong for clean water per month was not a big issue for urban residents, but it would cause problems for rural residents, said Thien.

"The State does a lot to help rural residents access clean water, but the price hike may discourage them from using safe water and force them to turn to rain water instead," he said.

The Ha Noi Water Company Ltd is the city's sole supplier of clean water and has tried to take advantage of this by attempting to increase prices.

"The State should diversify clean water resources to abolish the monopoly mechanism," said Thien.

Vu Phuong Hanh, a resident in Dong Da District, said she could not understand why the costs of so many services were increasing.

"If this continues, our lives will become more difficult," she said.

Fresh water for all this summer

Residents in central Hanoi will have access to fresh water all summer long, says Nguyen Nhu Hai, general director of the Hanoi Water Company Ltd.

An additional 50,000 cubic metres of water would be pumped from the Da River and another 10,000cu.m of water would be drawn from seven new wells every day beginning in May, he said.

The company promised to supply 634,000cu.m of water per day to satisfy the demand of the 210,000 households in the city.

More than 46,000 households in the outer districts of Thanh Tri, Tu Liem, Dong Anh, Gia Lam and Soc Son would also receive fresh water from the company this year.

Hai ensured that workers would be on duty at all hours of the day and night to monitor water pipelines and fix any problems of quality or access that might arise.

However, many people have already been suffering from a lack of water for several weeks this summer.

Thousands of households in Dong Da District's Thanh Cong Residential Quarter have been faced with a water shortage for nearly a month.

Tran Ngoc Hung, director of the Dong Da branch of the Hanoi Water Company, said there were two main reasons for the shortage: first, this residential quarter was at the very end of the city's water pipelines and, second, the system was old and time-consuming to repair.

He said the company would ensure sufficient water supply for this residential quarter when it received more water from the Da River

Pham Hung, a resident in the Thanh Cong Residential Quarter, said water cuts had taken place several times already this summer, so the problem seemed to be a lack of water and not broken pipelines.

In February, about 40,000 households in southwestern Ha Noi suffered a water shortage for several days due to a broken section of water pipe.

Hai said that the company would ameliorate this situation by improving its pipe system and the operations of its subsidiary companies.

RoK-Vietnam Ministerial Meeting on Environment opens in Hanoi

Vietnam's environmental protection strategy aims to promote international cooperation to complete the legal system, improve environmental management skills, apply technology and create financial resources for environmental protection.

The Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Minh Quang said this at the 9th the Republic of Korea-Vietnam Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Hanoi on May 7.

Minh said the meeting is a forum for Korean businesses to boost cooperation with Vietnam towards the target for green growth, environmental protection and coping with climate change.

At the meeting, Korean experts shared experiences helping to show Vietnam how to revise the Environmental Protection Law and implement the national target program to deal with environmental pollution that has been approved by the National Assembly.

After the meeting, two ministers witnessed the signing of a cooperation document strengthening the legal framework and implementing activities to restore polluted land and underground water for the 2012-2015 period.

A Vietnam-Korea Business Forum on Green Technology 2012 was also held during the event.

Five city factories fined for pollution

The HCM City Environmental Crime Prevention and Fighting Police Department on Thursday discovered five factories in District 12 discharging untreated wastewater and emissions into the environment.

Anh Nhat Fashion Co. Ltd. and Phu Loc Fabric Private Enterprise, two of the five, have previously been fined in the past for the same violation but failed to clean up their act.

Anh Nhat discharged wastewater into the Tham Luong Canal while its emissions exceeded permitted levels.

The company, which has been in operation since December 2008, does not have wastewater and emission treatment systems.

In October 2011 it was fined nearly VND78 million (US\$3,800).

Phu Loc discharged around 60 cubic metres of wastewater from its dyeing unit every day into a reservoir and on to pipes that carried it into the Tham Luong Canal.

Its wastewater treatment system is out of order while the emissions treatment system fell below regulated standards.

In June 2010 the company was fined for polluting the environment.

The three others found causing pollution were the Minh Phung Co. Ltd., Vu Van Tuan Private Enterprise, and a dyeing facility called Nguyen Quoc Huy.

Youth speak out on environment

Young residents of big cities like HCM City and Ha Noi are expressing their concerns about pressing environmental problems by urging residents and authorities to actively take part in reducing pollution levels.

Nguyen Thi Kim Duyen, a second-year student, writing in an essay on green topics, said the careless use of plastics bags by urban residents could lead to what she called an unhealthy "invasion" of the environment.

Duyen said shoppers were relying on plastic bags for convenience, throwing them away after a short period of use and thus, heavily polluting the environment.

She said that improvements in usage should come from both residents and authorities.

"There is a lack of rubbish bins in my neighbourhood, and this drives residents to drop waste on the roads, even though many of them try to care about the dumping of waste," Duyen said, adding that there were not enough public rubbish bins in District 6, her neighbourhood.

"Many of my neighbours try to sort rubbish at their homes, but the public collectors mix the waste together in a basket so it is easier for them to carry," she said.

HCM City is developing a system of rubbish sorting and has piloted a sorting model in several residential areas. But, for the system to work well, collectors might have to receive training from the city.

Duyen won first prize for her essay in the recent writing contest, which attracted 400 essays judged on content and English writing skills. The contest was held by the US Consulate General in HCM City on the occasion of Earth Day in April.

The contestants raised their concerns about several issues, including air pollution, traffic congestion, canal pollution and overuse of fossil fuels.

Eleventh-grade student Chu Ha Thanh of the Ha Noi Amsterdam High School said transport vehicles contributed to about 70 per cent of pollution.

She said the city should develop a sustainable-development plan to reduce the number of vehicles as well as air-pollution levels.

Student Tran Huy Hung of the HCM City University of Technology also said that vehicles on the roads had polluted the air and contributed to overuse of fossil fuels.

He urged the city to build better traffic infrastructure and develop more means of public transport.

Bio-technology student Nguyen Bich Han, who won third prize, recommended that more research be conducted on producing biofuel so that residents could rely less on fossil fuels, which contribute to carbon emissions and global warming.

Recognising that formal clean-up programmes are proceeding at a snail's pace, students have become actively involved in activities that raise public awareness about the proper disposal of waste.

Han said that most of her classmates interested in recycling programmes were conducting research on the use of high technology for the waste recycling.

Meanwhile, Duyen, a banking and finance major, is active in a campaign run by the district to keep her neighbourhood streets clean.

She has been awarded a Certificate of Merit from District 6, where she lives.

"I'm creating a website calling for the participation of youth in environmental activities and improvement of residents' awareness of environmental protection," she said, adding that she would seek the help of friends majoring in information technology to create the site.

City to launch green energy programme

The country's most populated city has adopted a programme to save power and promote the use of renewable and environmentally friendly energies.

The HCM City People's Committee last week approved Green Energy, which eventually aims to save 2 per cent of electricity annually from 2015.

The target for this year is 1.2 per cent, which translates into 400 million kWh in a city with a population of over 8 million.

By 2015 more than 1 per cent of the city's total consumption, or 48MW, is expected to be provided by new and renewable energies.

To promote the development of renewable and environmentally friendly energies, the programme seeks to educate people about the importance of green energy and raise public awareness of energy efficiency.

The city, which has 150-300 hours of sunshine a month, has yet to take full advantage of its solar energy potential, with renewable energy generally failing to attract investments and the city lacking funds.

The generation of renewable energy is a meagre 3MW, which is produced by a plant fuelled by garbage.

Around 50,000 houses are built and renovated every year but only around 3,400 of them have solar water heaters installed.

The city plans to increase by 3 per cent every year the number of hotels, houses, and office buildings that use these heaters.

It also seeks to use advanced technologies to reduce the energy consumed by equipment and vehicles, and improve research in renewable and clean energies.

Since 2007 the southern commercial hub has taken many measures to improve energy efficiency, resulting in savings of more than 1 trillion kWh.

Last year was the best, with more than 391 million kWh saved.

Rising waters

Developing nations in the Asia-Pacific region must build up climate resiliency and shift towards lower-carbon pathways if they want to sustain hard-won human development gains attained over the past decades in the changing climate context.

The newly-released Asia-Pacific Human Development Report titled One Planet to Share highlights the urgent need to successfully deal with the trade-offs between economic growth and reducing emissions "because there is no choosing one over the other".

The report, sponsored by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), says that the Asia-Pacific region must do what has not been done before - continue to sustain growth, lift people out of poverty, but do so with reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

It argues that the region can solve the prosperity-emission dilemma because its unfinished development agenda allows it to do things differently.

The areas for changes, it suggests, include producing for the future, raising rural resilience, building greener cities and promoting fair and balanced consumption.

Speaking at the launching of the report in Ha Noi yesterday, Deputy Country Director of UNDP Viet Nam Bakhodir Burhanov said: "One thing that makes this report particularly distinguished is the coverage of sustainable lifestyle and consumption – an area which has not been covered extensively in international researches."

He said that sustainable consumption became an increasingly important issue due to the rising middle-income class throughout the Asia-Pacific region, including Viet Nam.

United Nations Resident Co-ordinator Pratibha Mehta said that in alignment with the report's recommendation, Viet Nam needed to prioritise disaster mitigation and investments in rural communities because the country was highly prone to climate-induced disasters, such as floods and storms.

"Repeated climate shocks reinforce inequalities and weaken human development. In order to help the poor to increase their resilience to climate change, much greater investment in infrastructure, institutions and capacities is therefore needed," she said.

Apart from that, Viet Nam should do more to promote energy efficiency and energy conservation.

Mehta said the UN noted that more than half of all electricity in Viet Nam would be generated from imported coal by 2030, which would bring high pollution whilst global market prices were volatile.

She said as the report suggested for countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Viet Nam should gradually phase out undesirable subsidies on fossil fuels to give way for renewable energies. "Such subsidies have a considerable negative effect on the environment and are incompatible with sustainable development."

In order to reduce heavy reliance on fossil fuels, Viet Nam also needed to reform energy prices, as well as measures to protect low-income groups, Mehta added.

The Journal of Vietnamese Environment

The Journal of Vietnamese Environment (J. Viet. Env.) is a scientific platform for researchers and stakeholders working on environmental issues in Vietnam and abroad. The journal was founded in November 2011 as part of an academic network initiated by the Technische Universität Dresden (TUD) in the framework of Vietnamese-German cooperation programs for training and education.

The J. Viet. Env. is open for all kind of Vietnam-related environmental topics, from climate change and renewable energies to legislative framework and socio-economic aspects. The papers submitted shall describe new findings in the field of environmental management converged from fundamental research studies, experimental work, review and policy papers, as well as short communications and relevant event reports.

The novelty of our journal is the introduction of the “Thesis abstract” concept, a type of submission addressed especially to graduation students and university staff. After review and editing, the accepted manuscripts will be included in the journal content and published on the journal website. The J. Viet. Env. follows the Open Access policy and offers online content free of charge via its internet address <http://openaccess.tu-dresden.de/ojs/index.php/jve>.

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\$2.1 mil for medical waste treatment in Dong Thap

(VietNamNet Bridge)-The Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta province of Dong Thap has received US\$2.1 million in aid for a local hospital waste treatment project.

The money will be used to improve the management of waste in four hospitals, namely Dong Thap General Hospital, Sa Dec General Hospital, Hong Ngu Regional General Hospital and Thap Muoi Regional General Hospital.

The aid is part of the \$155 million hospital waste treatment project, launched by the Ministry of Health last December, with financial support from the World Bank (WB).

The six-year project aims to minimise environmental pollution due to medical waste from hospitals in order to improve people's health. It will help strengthen policies relating to medical waste management and establish solid and water waste treatment systems for at least 150 hospitals.

Dong Thap is among the five Mekong Delta provinces selected to initially be provided with medical waste treatment systems.

Recent statistics from the Ministry of Health show that more than 1,260 hospitals and over 1,000 medical clinics nationwide discharge around 350 tonnes of solid waste and 150,000 cubic metres of liquid waste per day. However, 56 per cent of hospitals nationwide have no waste water treatment system.

Delta gets \$2.1m to treat medical waste

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AKIZ Project satisfies requirement on wastewater concept for industrial zones

On May 24th, 2012, The Vice minister of Ministry of Science and Technology – Mr Tran Viet Thanh did come to have a talk and visit the pilot plant for treating wastewater of AKIZ Project in Tra Noc Industrial Zone (Can Tho City).

AKIZ Project (integrated wastewater management concept for Industrial Zones) is sponsored by German Ministry of Education and Research BMBF and Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology to develop and verify the integrated wastewater management concept in order to make sure efficient and sustainable disposal of industrial wastewater.

The project is implemented in 4 phases from 2010 to 2014, namely: basic and conceptual study, adaptation to local situation and set up of pilot system, optimization and evaluation and verification and transfer of result. Through that, decentralized and near – to- source technologies will be performed in some representative enterprises inside Tra Noc IZ as: pretreatment of wastewater (from pesticide production in order to detoxify toxic substances), regenerate energy from wastewater (from a seafood processing company), recovery of valuable substances and reuse of treated wastewater (from the brewery and biochemical company).

Currently the pilot plant for Sai Gon Western Beer (recovery of valuable substances and reuse of treated wastewater) and the experimental container for sewage sludge treatment are operated in Tra Noc IZ to check and adjust high tech solutions to be suitable to the local conditions. Other pilot plants will be operated in Can Tho Pesticide Co (detoxification) by the end of May, 2012 and Nam Phuong seafood processing company (anaerobic treatment and energy regeneration) in June, 2012...

During the visit of AKIZ pilot plant, Vice Minister of Ministry of Science and Technology Tran Viet Thanh highly appreciated AKIZ's activities in satisfying the requirement on wastewater concept for IZs. Vice Minister also wished that this project is exactly implemented as in the plan for each phase in order to give additional solution for the investment project so called Centralized wastewater treatment plant in IZs in Can Tho and duplicated in some localities of the Mekong Delta region.

New drainage system to be installed in HN

Ha Noi will install new underground drainage systems in 44 streets in seven inner-city districts from now till the end of next year, said Pham Van Cuong, director of the Ha Noi Drainage Project Management Board.

The project, with total investment of VND400 billion (US\$19 million), will cover Hoan Kiem, Ba Dinh, Hai Ba Trung, Thanh Xuan, Dong Da, Hoang Mai and Cau Giay districts.

"Most of the sewers in these districts were built 60-80 years ago, so they have deteriorated and no longer meet demand for drainage, especially when it rains heavily," said Cuong.

The new sewers will be more than 1m in width and height. Lo Duc Street, which can channel water into the Kim Nguu River, will have an even larger sewer 2.6m in width and 2.3m in height. The sewer system will have a total length of more than 21km.

On 29 streets that are narrow, workers would be assigned to work from 10pm to 5pm to ensure minimal disruption to traffic. On 15 streets that were wide enough for work during the day time, construction sites would be surrounded by corrugated iron barriers to ensure residents' safety, said Cuong.

It is expected that the drainage system in 21 streets will be completed this year, and work on the remaining 23 streets will be completed next year.

"The most complicated part of the work is installing the sewers on Lo Duc Street because the sewers are so big it will affect traffic there," said Cuong.

The management board is discussing plans to ensure traffic flow during construction work with the municipal departments of Transport and Police.

Work on Lo Duc Street is scheduled for October next year.

The city's old sewage system is being strained as the city's population increases. The city's current sewage system can only handle up to 50mm of rainfall per day, but during the wet season the city can experience rainfall of 150mm per day.

There were 21 flooding 'hot spots' in the inner city, said Cuong.



Motorists along a flooded part of Nguyen Duc Canh Road in Ha Noi's Hoang Mai District after heavy rain. The city will invest US\$19 million in installing a new drainage system.

Flash flood kills two in Cao Bang Province

CAO BANG — Two people died and a house was destroyed yesterday when a sudden flash flood swept through Lung Muoi hamlet in northern mountainous Cao Bang province.

The flash flood in Quang Thanh village, Nguyen Binh District, also buried 2ha of farm crop, caused a landslide and halted traffic on Highway 34.

One body has been recovered.

Pollution levels raise public concern

People in Viet Nam have rising concerns about the effects of the environment on their health and well being, a survey released recently by market research firm Cimigo has found.

Pollution has residents in Ha Noi and HCM City particularly worried. "Seventy-five per cent of people surveyed describe their physical environment as their top concern for 'healthy living,'" Cimigo managing director Joe Wheller said. The survey polled 2,000 individuals spanning all socio-economic classes in the country's two largest cities. "We suspect this is driven by concerns over pollution of Viet Nam's natural environment. "Indeed, the results from another survey showed that 81 per cent of Vietnamese people list pollution as one of their strongest external fears." Interestingly, and in spite of trends toward urbanisation around the nation, the consensus among respondents is that the healthiest lifestyles are to be found in traditional village communities. "This relates partially to the cleaner environments of the smaller towns, where less traffic and lower levels of industrialisation lead to cleaner air, but also to the ready availability of fresh and healthy locally grown produce, which Vietnamese also place as a top priority for a healthy life," Wheller said.

Vietnamese are well aware of the need for a healthy diet as a key driver for a healthy life, and an increased intake of fruit and vegetables (64 per cent) is seen as the number one means to this end. Around half of the respondents identify exercise as important for their health, with men more actively involved in sports like badminton and football, and women preferring yoga. Walking is uniformly identified as the most common form of exercise undertaken.

Workshop on monitoring of wastewater system in urban regions

On May 25th, 2012, over 100 participants who are IZs management boards, scientists of universities in Can Tho, HCMC, wastewater treatment companies, environmental infrastructure companies did come to the Workshop on “Monitoring of wastewater system in urban regions”, organized by AKIZ Project and GIZ Project.

This workshop is in the scope of AKIZ Project (Integrated wastewater management concept) for IZs which is sponsored by German Ministry of Education and Research BMBF and Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology to develop and verify the integrated wastewater management concept in order to make sure efficient and sustainable disposal of industrial wastewater.

The workshop mentioned about legal aspect, regulations, technical requirements on wastewater management in urban regions of Can Tho city; legal framework of wastewater monitoring in Germany and Viet Nam, how to establish the indirect discharger monitoring system; technical requirements for monitoring and first experiences from the monitoring system of AKIZ Project in Tra Noc IZ, of GIZ's Wastewater Management Program.

The workshop aimed to improve awareness of dischargers, wastewater operators and management boards in environmental protection, ensuring the wastewater disposal to be in accordance with technical and analytical requirement in residential areas and IZs. The workshop also introduced into-depth knowledge and tools for monitoring thus develops capacity of management staff and technical staff of agencies, institutions in charge of wastewater management...

Ministry to curb illegal mineral exploitation

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is planning to raise fines for illegal mineral exploitation in a bid to curb rampant violations and reduce pollution from activities such as ore and coal mining.

The draft decree aims to strengthen management of minerals exploitation and raise fines for violations while also creating more effective legal framework to tackle the problem.

The latest statistics from the Steering Committee for Smuggling, Trade of Counterfeit Goods and Commercial Fraud Prevention showed that more than 124,000 tonnes of illegally mined ore and coal were confiscated in 2011, an increase of 25 per cent from 2010.

Nguyen Van Thuan, head of the General Department of Geology and Minerals of Viet Nam, said the draft decree has set the highest fine at VND500 million (US\$24,000), five times higher than the current top fine for violations such as unlicensed exploitation of hazardous minerals which caused environmental pollution.

Many shortcomings have been revealed in the current decree, which took effect in 1997 and mainly contains general regulations on mineral exploitation. In recent years the number of enterprises working in mineral exploitation has risen, and violations have become increasingly common.

Processing

Thuan said the draft decree has listed 20 specific violations related to mineral exploitation, processing of minerals and environmental protection. Fines range from VND1million (\$47).

Those who have made more serious violations might also have their mineral exploitation licence revoked and be taken to court, said Thuan.

Beside getting fines, all violators would be responsible for solving consequences caused by their illegal activities, said he.

However, rampant issuance of mineral exploitation licenses by local authorities has posed difficulties in detecting and punishing violation cases, said Thuan.

According to statistics from the general department, more than 4,200 mineral exploitation licences have been issued nation-wide, but each locality only has three or four officers to manage and inspect these license holders. Thuan said the Department for Control of Mining Activities was recently established to deal with the shortage of human resources devoted to policing mineral exploitation. Localities with a large number of violations will be subject to additional inspections, said Thuan. — VNS



A tunnel leading to an illegal tin mine in Da Lat Town, in central highland Lam Dong Province. Fines for illegal mineral exploitation are to be increased.

TAY NINH — Two mineral exploitation enterprises in Tay Ninh Province have been fined a total of VND150 million (\$7,100) for failing to pay taxes and violating regulations on the size of mines.

According to the province's Environment Police Department, Hoang Tin Trading, Service, Import and Export Company and Dong Tan Phat Ltd Company were operating mines that were deeper than the allowed limit. The enterprises also failed to pay environmental fees and taxes.

Last month, the province revoked the licences of 10 enterprises for violations in trading and exploiting minerals.

Vietnam faces big challenges in treating electronic waste

With a loosened legal framework, Vietnam still cannot tightly control the electronic waste imports. Therefore, scientists have warned that Vietnam is turning into a big electronic landfill.

Scientists say electronic equipment all contain toxic chemicals, especially the six substances that can harm people when they become electronic waste and cannot be handled properly.

Electronic equipments may cause incurable diseases

Tran Quang Hung, Deputy Secretary General of the Vietnam Electronic Enterprises' Association, provided the information that “gave everybody the creeps” at the Green IT forum held in Hanoi on May 17, 2012, about the toxic chemicals in electronic products.

Hung said that in printing circuits, there are up to 15 kinds of chemicals such as copper, lead, iron, nickel, zinc, glass fiber, of which lead and cadmium are the two most dangerous. In batteries, accumulators, old-aged TV or monitor tubes, there are two very dangerous substances – cadmium and lead oxide.

Meanwhile, switches of different kinds, flat screens contain mercury, and capacitors, transformers contain PBB and PBDE, which are extremely toxic. Even plastic engine covers and insulator in cable also cause harm during the decomposition process.

Hung named six extremely toxic substances which can cause incurable diseases to people. Lead affects the nervous system, the agency creating the blood, affecting the development of memories of the children who often touch these devices. Mercury affects the skin and reproductive function. Cadmium harms liver, kidney, causes bone softening, lung cancer. Chromium 6 may cause skin cancer. PBB affects the nervous system and causes memory loss. Meanwhile, PBDE, like Agent Orange causes birth defects.

When the equipment goes into waste and undergo backward treatment process, the toxic chemicals would escape and harm people.

“Electronic waste itself is not toxic but it is harmful to humans and the environment when it is handled, dismantled, recycled improperly,” Hung said.

Big challenges for Vietnam

There have been no official survey and no official statistics about electronic waste. However, the report of an international institution said that every year, a Vietnamese person discharges one kilos of electronic waste. This means that Vietnam, with 90 million people, discharges 90,000 tons of electronic waste a year.

Besides the domestic waste, Vietnam also suffers the electronic waste imports as well. With the loosened legal framework, Vietnam still cannot strictly control the electronic waste imports, which has turned Vietnam into the world's rubbish dump.

The treatment of electronic waste has been mainly carried out at private businesses with small operation scale, backward technologies. There are a lot of businesses collecting electronic waste. However, their workers only use simple tools such as hammer, screwdriver, and bucket to dismantle to get parts and accessories for re-sale.

In principle, the procedures applied to treat domestic rubbish must not be applied to treat electronic waste. If burning the waste, the six extremely toxic chemicals would pollute the air, and if dumping the waste, this would cause the water resource pollution.

However, these remain the two only ways which have been used to treat electronic waste so far.

State management agencies have not paid appropriate attention to the electronic waste management, which can be seen in the poor legal framework on the issue. The temporary regulation on the allowed content of some toxic chemicals in electronic products released by the Ministry of Industry and Trade in 2011 remains the only legal document on the issue.

At present, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment is going to submit to the government the draft regulation on recalling and treating electronic waste.

Toxic medical waste incinerator planned

Central Nghe An Province will build a modern incinerator to treat toxic medical waste in Vinh City and adjacent districts during 2012-20.

The local Health Department will submit its plan to the provincial People's Committee in August, said Pham Van Thanh, director of the department.

If approved, the project is expected to be immediately carried out, Thanh added.

Construction costs are to be covered by official development assistance (ODA) and investment from local companies, he said.

The initiative is based on the overload of current toxic medical waste incinerators.

The new facility will be equipped with advanced microwave technology and have a daily capacity of 2.5-3 tonnes in solid toxic medical waste.

Advanced microwave technology is expected to minimise the impact of environmental pollution.

Le Thi Chau, head of the provincial Paediatrics Hospital's Bacteria Contamination Control Department, said the hospital had no specialised incinerator to treat its toxic medical waste, which it used to transport to the Tuberculosis and Lung Disease Hospital for treatment.

Cao Thi Hue, a technician at the tuberculosis hospital, said that since November 2011, it has treated the toxic medical waste of four other local medical centres, which has led to the frequent breakdown of its own incinerator that, according to reports, has dealt with around 2.5 tonnes of waste this year.

"In the short term, we will build medium-capacity incinerators in districts of Vinh City to counter current overload," Thanh said.

We will make every effort to operate medium-capacity incinerators as soon as possible, he said.

According to statistics from the local Health Department, the province has 39 hospitals with more than 7,300 sick beds.

On average, the hospitals discharge about 2.5-3 tonnes of toxic medical waste a day.

Sanitation falls short in rural areas

It is estimated that 20 million people living in rural areas do not have access to proper toilets, a report by the Economics of Sanitation Initiative (ESI) run by the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme revealed yesterday.

The four-year study was launched in 2007 in two phases.

Guy Hutton, a World Bank's senior economist, said the first phase of the study, which ended in 2008, showed that Viet Nam suffered economic losses of US\$780 million each year due to poor sanitation.

The second phase focused on analysing the benefits and costs of better sanitation in six countries – Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Lao, Philippines and Viet Nam.

"The benefits of using hygienic latrines include reduced disease-infection rates due to poor sanitation and improved water supply quality due to the decrease in open defecation," said Nguyen Viet Anh, the study's consulting team leader.

Better protection for the environment is also believed to be another benefit, Anh said.

Another result of the study showed that sanitation quality had a direct link to tourism and economic development.

Under a recent small-scale survey, general sanitation conditions in Viet Nam were perceived to be poor, scoring just 2.9 out of maximum of 5.0, the lowest acceptable score for an urban environment.

The quality of toilets available in public places such as bus stations also scored poorly.

The main hygiene concerns of foreign tourists relate to tap water and food safety.

Guy Hutton said the study aimed to provide sanitation-decision makers with useful information when it came to formulating better hygiene policies, especially in rural areas where more than 30 per cent of the population still lacked basic sanitation.

The authorised agencies are advised to raise funds to provide better sanitation services, he said.

He said he hoped the study would attract greater private investment in sanitation services.

Delta province expects more riverbank erosion

Authorities in southern An Giang Province have warned of more possible landslides caused by erosion along a 400-metre stretch of the Hau River in Long Xuyen Town's Binh Khanh Ward.

Eight houses and an ice-making factory slid into the river in the last three days, according to the province's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Vo Duy Cuong, chairman of the Binh Khanh People's Committee, said 40-metre-long cracks were also seen on the bank, adding all families in the threatened area have been evacuated to temporary shelters.

Officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development said on Monday that people losing homes would receive VND20 million in support.

However, getting a new house in a resettlement area is the latter's biggest concern at the moment.

Cuong said provincial authorities were seeking to move people threatened by landslides to clusters of residential areas built to help local people to avoid floods.

According to the Long Xuyen People's Committee, 97 families were moved to a new residential area in the city's Binh Duc Ward due to two landslides in March and May 2012.

Two hundred other families living in other areas threatened by landslides will also be resettled in safe places.

However, a giant residential area to be built in Binh Duc Ward is still on paper, and many relocated families live with their relatives' homes or in schools in the area.

City authorities said it would be built on 10ha at a cost of VND83 billion (US\$4 million).

Despite the huge cost involved, construction would be completed as early as possible, they said.

Flood-prone. The central province of Thua Thien-Hue has been allocated nearly VND4.2 billion (\$200,000) to resettle 330 vulnerable households at risk of floods and landslides.

The people in coastal and river areas would be moved to safe areas before the rainy season this year, provincial authorities said.

Thua Thien-Hue had 127km of coastline, about 25 per cent of which was hit by frequent landslides while Thuan An and Tu Hien estuaries were particularly susceptible to erosion, affecting socio-economic conditions and threatening lives, the authorities said.

Seawater had encroached more each year on the districts of Phu Vang and Huong Tra. In the area of Hai Duong-Hoa Duan, the sea had moved 100m inland over 4km of the coastal fringe. The resulting erosion had damaged local infrastructure, caused the collapse of lighthouses and, at Thuan An Beach, had washed several motels and houses out to sea, threatening the lives and livelihoods of local people.

Most localities had improved rescue equipment for volunteers, including boats and life jackets, as the rainy season was approaching.

But in the long run, the authorities said, concrete embankments would have to be built along rivers and in coastal areas or residents would have to be moved to safer places.

Medical waste plan proposed

The Health Ministry has devised a plan to collect all medical waste every day, with 70 per cent of solid waste to be treated by 2015, according to a source from the Health Environment Management Department.

In recent years, cholera and influenza A virus subtype H1N1 have reappeared, most of which are caused by environmental pollution, particularly improper treatment of medical waste.

Dr Nguyen Huy Nga, director of the department, said that Viet Nam had more than 13,600 hospitals and medical establishments, of which only 44 per cent had medical wastewater treatment systems.

In addition, most of the medical waste-water treatment systems at the hospitals were overloaded or in bad shape.

As a result, most waste was not treated but discharged directly into the environment, or was treated improperly.

Medical waste water often contains 20 per cent of hazardous substances that could cause disease if not treated properly.

Healthcare facilities each day discharge between 120,000 and 150,000 cubic metres of waste water and between 350 and 400 tonnes of healthcare waste, including 42 tonnes of hazardous waste, according to Nga.

"The figure is estimated to double by 2015," he said.

Although the 10-year-old Decision No 64/2003/QD-TTg requires organisations that cause serious pollution to treat their waste, 80 hospitals still remain on the list of serious environment polluters.

Directors of many local hospitals said that they acknowledged the importance of waste and wastewater treatment but did not have enough capital for the construction and instalment of such facilities.

In addition, other hospitals do not know how to properly treat solid waste as well as wastewater. Many of them do not have facilities to collect and classify solid waste to cut costs.

Only Ha Noi and HCM City have healthcare incinerators, while other localities treat medical waste by burying it together with daily waste.

To help Viet Nam settle its medical waste problems, the World Bank has lent US\$150 million to treat medical waste water for a three-year period.

However, Nga said that Viet Nam would need capital 10 times higher than the Bank's fund to build waste water and solid waste treatment facilities at all medical establishments nationwide.

The Government, he said, should develop a legal framework and allow healthcare experts to participate in the construction of hospitals to ensure that activities would not cause pollution.

Nga also emphasised the need to further educate medical workers, including doctors, about the importance of sorting rubbish at the source of discharge to improve environmental protection.

