

Press Review 11/2012 - Vietnam, Water and Environmental Technology,

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Short notice: Our new office address: 3rd floor – 170 Tran Duy Hung street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi - Tel/Fax: + 84 4 37835697

No	Title	Date	Source	Region	Catalogue	Description
1	Dong Nai River pollution rises	1/11/2012	VN News	HCM	Pollution	Pollution levels in the Dong Nai River have been increasing steadily since 2007, affecting the development of 16 southern provinces and its 16 million residents
2	Vietnam considering recycling sludge to stop sludge waste	1/11/2012	Vfej	Vietnam	Waste	HCM City local authorities are calling for the investment in the project to recycle sludge, which would not only help clean the environment, but also generate useful products.
3	World Bank approves \$200m loan for water	3/11/2012	VN News	Vietnam	Water	The World Bank announced yesterday that it had approved a US\$200 million loan to fund the Vietnamese Government's national target programme for rural water supply and sanitation.
4	Mekong tides cause severe flooding	10/11/2012	VN News	Kekong	Environment	The Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta's downstream areas, especially urban areas in Can Tho, Bac Lieu, Soc Trang and Vinh Long provinces, have experienced serious flooding caused by high tides.



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Vietnamese – German Office for Water and Environmental Technology

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5	World Bank helps VN slow ozone depletion	16/11/2012	VN News	Vietnam	Climate Change	The World Bank approved on Tuesday a US\$9.76 million grant to support Viet Nam's efforts in phasing out ozone-depleting hydrochloro-fluorocarbons (HCFCs) that contribute to global warming.
6	Climate change hikes flood risks	16/11/2012	VN News	Mekong	Climate Change	Latest research estimates 39 per cent of Mekong Delta and more than 20 per cent of HCM City would be flooded by the end of this century if sea levels rise by one metre.
7	Another earthquake hits Quang Nam hydro plant	17/11/2012	VN News	Quang Nam	Environment	A 4.7 Richter magnitude earthquake struck the central province of Quang Nam's Bac Tra My District and Song Tranh hydro-power plant yesterday.
8	HCM City seeks investors to recycle urban mud waste	21/11/2012	Vfej	HCM	Waster	HCMC Donre is seeking investors for recycling of its urban mud waste via the BOO method (Build-Operate-Own), which at present is a burden as not all of it is being handled efficiently.



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9	To avoid “grow first, clean up later”	22/11/2012	VN Net Bridge	Vietnam	Environment	Environmental sustainability is the main objective of the Government to avoid the problem of "grow first, clean up later," which is the development strategy of a number of other Asian countries.
10	Confidence vote gets thumbs up	22/11/2012	VN News	Vietnam	Other	Also yesterday NA deputies agreed to issue a Law on National Disaster Prevention and Control to fulfil legal corridors for activities to prevent, cope and tackle damage caused by such incidents.
11	Pollution chases, besieges, kills aquaculture	26/11/2012	Vfej	Ba Ria Vung Tau	Pollution	The aquaculture has been threatened by the uncontrollable industrial production development which has caused serious pollution everywhere.
12	Viet Nam acts on emissions	27/11/2012	VN News	Vietnam	Environment	Energy usage contributes up to 35 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in Viet Nam, Dr Nguyen Thi Hien Thuan from the Viet Nam Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment told an ASEAN+3 workshop here today.



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13	Passavant-Roediger wins Vietnam water treatment plant contract	27/11/2012	Vfej	HCM	Water Treatment	Passavant-Roediger GmbH, a German subsidiary of Drake & Scull International, won a contract to expand the Thu Duc water treatment plant, its first project in Vietnam.
14	Delta faces likely drought, greater seawater incursion	28/11/2012	VN News	Mekong	Water	With the rainy season to end soon, water levels in many canals in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta are much lower than normal, sparking fears among locals that this will hit farming and drinking-water needs.
15	Soai Rap River to be dredged for ship traffic	28/11/2012	VN News	HCM	Environment	Large vessels cannot travel directly from the East Sea into ports in HCM City because the Soai Rap River is not wide or deep enough. Instead, they must follow an 85-km route from Vung Tau to the Sai Gon River, taking up a lot of time.



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1. Dong Nai River pollution rises

Pollution levels in the Dong Nai River have been increasing steadily since 2007, affecting the development of 16 southern provinces and its 16 million residents, according to the HCM City Natural Resources and Environment Department.

The city's Preventive Medicine Centre has issued many warnings about the pollution levels, which have affected the quality of water supply for local residents.

"The cost of treating polluted water from Dong Nai river is very high, and that is impossible at this time," Truong Khac Hoanh, deputy general director of the Thu Duc Water Supply Joint Stock Company, was quoted as saying by the Sai Gon Giai Phong (Liberated Sai Gon) newspaper.

The city has found that the level of some micro-organisms and pollutants is 1.5 – 73 times over permitted standards.

Pollution comes from waste water from industry, breeding farms and hospitals in HCM City's Cu Chi and Hoc Mon districts, Binh Duong Province's Thu Dau Mot town and Dong Nai Province's Bien Hoa city.

"Most of the waste water is discharged directly into the river without any treatment. In addition, oil spills and environmental accidents worsen the quality of water," said Tran Nguyen Hien, head of the HCM City Environmental Protection Agency.

Professor Lam Minh Triet of the Natural Resources and Environment Institute said that "the most important thing is the close co-operation of provinces in seeking a balance between economic development and environmental protection."

Several downstream provinces like HCM City as well as Binh Duong and Dong Nai provinces had refused to allow high-polluting industries, like textiles, dyeing and paper factories, to locate in their areas.

However, upstream provinces continue to welcome such industries for economic development.

Officials in upstream provinces like Dac Nong and Dak Lak said they were reluctant to take measures that would protect forests in order to serve the environment protection work of downstream provinces but limit their ability to attract investment for themselves.

They said they were trying to improve economic growth and narrow the development gap between upstream and downstream provinces.

2. Vietnam considering recycling sludge to stop sludge waste

HCM City local authorities are calling for the investment in the project to recycle sludge, which would not only help clean the environment, but also generate useful products.

Just some days ago did the public hear about the big amount of untreated sludge generated by the Binh Hung waste water treatment plant in HCM City. People had not been aware of the necessity to deal with domestic sludge until the day local newspapers reported that the sludge at the plant has been poisoning the lives of the 3000 households living nearby.

However, scientists have affirmed that the volume of sludge at Binh Hung is just a small part of the sludge generated every day in HCM City.

According to the HCM City Department for Natural Resources and the Environment, about 2800-3600 cubic meters of sludge is generated every day which has been classified into six groups – the sludge from dredging the water drainage system; from concentrated domestic waste water systems; from septic tanks; from concentrated waste water systems in industrial zones; from the waste water treatment stations at production workshops outside industrial zones; and the sludge from construction sites.

Also, the city also receives sludge from irregular sources, such as the sledge from dredging the Nhieu Loc – Thi Nghe or Tan Hoa – Lo Gom canals, about 900 cubic meters per day.

At present, only the sludge from the canal and water drainage system dredging has been collected by the HCM City Water Drainage Company and the districts' companies for public interest, which then carry away to the dumping grounds. Meanwhile, the sludge from septic tanks has been carried to the Hoa Binh solid waste treatment company in Binh Chanh district for treatment.

Le Tien Dung, Director of the company, said higher volumes of sludge have been carried to the factory for treatment after the city's authorities took drastic measures to clear sludge. However, Dung said that the volumes prove to make nothing if compared with the total volume of 300 cubic meter of sludge generated per day.

Nguyen Van Phuoc, Deputy Director of the HCM City Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, has admitted that the treatment of sludge has been ineffective, which has led to the serious environment pollution.

Sludge treatment – a potential market

According to Phuoc, sludge is a kind of normal waste, with no heavy metal; therefore, it is suitable for recycling.

The sludge with high organic matter, such as the sludge from sewage dredging, from the waste water treatment plants of dairy factories or food processing factories could be recycled for compost. Meanwhile, the sledge with low organic matter could be recycled to be used as a kind of construction materials.

However, to date, the only thing done with the sludge is collecting for storing, while the sludge still cannot be recycled for useful products as expected.

In the solid waste treatment program, the city has reserved 40 hectares of land in Da Phuoc

commune of Binh Chanh district for the project on building a station which receives, processes and treats sludge. The HCM City Water Drainage Company has been appointed as the investor of the project.

The project, once operational, will take the duty of treating all kinds of sludge to be carried from different places in the city. However, no further progress has been reported about the project.

Explaining this, the investor said it still cannot arrange capital for the project. The city's authorities have instructed relevant agencies to help the company check the urban development program and push up the site clearance works to be sure that the construction could begin in the first quarter of 2013.

The city's authorities have threatened that if the company keeps the project suspended, the project would fall into the hands of other investors.

3. World Bank approves \$200m loan for water

The World Bank announced yesterday that it had approved a US\$200 million loan to fund the Vietnamese Government's national target programme for rural water supply and sanitation.

The ongoing programme aims to provide clean water for 1.7 million people and improve sanitation for 650,000 people in the Hong (Red) River Delta.

The organisation said that it would use an innovative new approach to financing which linked funding directly to results, ensuring that benefits were delivered to people in need.

The new financing instrument called the Programme for Results is the first approved by the World Bank in the East Asia and Pacific region and the first in the rural water supply and sanitation sector.

Also yesterday, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced it would provide \$90m to help Viet Nam strengthen teaching skills and courses in biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics, and social sciences.

It is hoped that these measures will ensure upper secondary graduates have the skills to meet the country's labour needs.

The project builds on earlier ADB assistance to improve the sector, and will focus on introducing new training methods and materials in schools. Curricula will be upgraded with more investment in new textbooks, especially those that provide targeted support for students who are struggling academically. English language education will also be improved.

At present, fewer than 30 per cent of young workers in Viet Nam – an age group that makes up half the work force – have completed upper secondary schooling.

The ADB will also invest in improving laboratory equipment and teaching aids for physics, chemistry and biology, and developing classrooms and materials for students with disabilities. Targeted assistance for ethnic minority students will be provided. Opportunities will also be created for teachers to receive training abroad.

The project will run for about seven years, with an expected completion date of December 2019.

4. Mekong tides cause severe flooding

The Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta's downstream areas, especially urban areas in Can Tho, Bac Lieu, Soc Trang and Vinh Long provinces, have experienced serious flooding caused by high tides this year.

Many streets in Can Tho in mid-October were 40-60cm under water because of high tides in the area.

In Bac Lieu Province, high tides on October 18 reached 2.23m, the highest level of many years, according to the province's Committee for Search and Rescue, Flood and Storm Control and Prevention.

Many streets, houses and aquatic-farms in Bac Lieu have been affected by high tides. In Bac Lieu's Dong Hai District, high tides flooded more than 300 houses and 2,270ha of aquatic-farm areas.

High tides in mid-October also breached a total of 106 dyke sections in Soc Trang's Cu Lao Dung District, inundating about 1,200ha of sugarcane.

This year, the water level that occurred during the Delta's annual flooding season was 0.9-1.1 metres lower than the average level of many years.

The flooding season normally occurs during September and December.

However, high tides this year caused the most serious flooding in 10 years in the delta's downstream areas.

Ky Quang Vinh, head of the Can Tho Climate Change Office, pointed out "Can Tho is located in a low-lying area, and only 0.4 per cent of the city's total area is located two metres above sea level."

With high tides reaching 2.05 metres in Can Tho last month, most of the entire Can Tho area of 1,400sq.km was under water, Vinh told Sai Gon Giai Phong (Liberated Sai Gon) newspaper.

Climate change figures over the past 30 years have shown that sea water levels have risen an average of 3cm a year. Can Tho has also been affected by higher sea water levels. In addition, Can Tho's soil has eroded, according to Vinh's surveys.

To deal with climate change, a zoning plan to prevent water inundation and saline water intrusion for the Delta must be set up, he said.

A map detailing the altitude of the entire Delta area must be updated accurately so development projects in the zone can be planned properly.

The zoning plan and other tasks must be done soon, and if not, high tides could seriously damage the Delta's urban areas in the near future.



Quang Trung Street in southern Can Tho City's Ninh Kieu District recently. With high tides reaching 2.05 metres, most of the 1,400sq.km area was submerged.

5. World Bank helps VN slow ozone depletion

The World Bank approved on Tuesday a US\$9.76 million grant to support Viet Nam's efforts in phasing out ozone-depleting hydrochloro-fluorocarbons (HCFCs) that contribute to global warming.

This initiative, which will extend from January 1, 2013 to January 1, 2015 with money from the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, builds on an existing programme in addressing other ozone-depleting substances.

Designed to help Viet Nam reduce its consumption of HCFCs in the polyurethane-foam sector, the project in its first stage will introduce the most current technologies to phase out about 1,275 metric tonnes of HCFC-141b in 12 large foam-production enterprises.

To help curb HCFC consumption, it will also offer support policies and regulations as well as technical assistance activities.

HCFCs are ozone-depleting substances with high global-warming potential and subject to consumption and production control measures of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

The Montreal Protocol requires gradual phase-out starting from 2013 and leading to a complete phase-out of HCFC consumption and production by 2030 for developing countries.

Viet Nam consumes several types of HCFCs for various industrial applications, including HCFC-22 for refrigeration and air-conditioning manufacturing and for servicing existing equipment and appliances; HCFC-141b for foam production; and HCFC-123 for servicing cooling equipment.

The HCFC phase-out in Viet Nam will be done in a manner that maximizes the climate co-benefits through the introduction of zero to very low global-warming potential alternatives.

This is in line with Viet Nam's national policy on industrialisation and modernisation to meet the overall objectives of continued economic growth and sustainable development.

The World Bank is one of the implementing agencies for the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and has been engaged in ODS phase-out activities in Viet Nam since the early 2000s.

6. Climate change hikes flood risks

Latest research estimates 39 per cent of the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta and more than 20 per cent of HCM City would be flooded by the end of this century if sea levels rise by one metre.

Director of the Viet Nam Institute of Meteorology Hydrology and Environment Tran Thuc said that the latest studies on the effects of climate change and rising sea levels also predicted the same problem would affect more than 10 per cent of the Hong (Red) Delta and 2.5 per cent of the central region.

"The new research is more in depth than the 2009 version, and has more detailed figures on temperatures, rainfall and rising sea levels," Thuc said.

The scenario would affect 35 per cent and 7 per cent of the population in the Mekong Delta and HCM City respectively, said Thuc, adding that more than 4 per cent of railways and 9 per cent of national highway systems would be affected.

Thuc was speaking at a conference held by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), the UNDP and the National Assembly's Committee for Science, Technology and Environment in Ha Noi on Monday to report to National Assembly deputies about the implementation of the national plan for climate change, which started in 2008.

Le Cong Thanh, director of MONRE's Centre for Meteorology, Hydrology and Climate Change, said that one problem in coping with climate change was the slowness in putting climate change issues into social and economic development policies.

"Many localities are still not ready to build their own action plans for climate change," Thanh said, adding that only 30 out of the total 65 cities and provinces nationwide had plans in place.

UNDP Resident Representative Louise Chamberlain said that Viet Nam should manage public finance to stimulate private sector investment in climate change plans since the State budget alone would not be enough while the national and international private sector held vast amounts of investment potential and modern technology.

"The private sector requires cohesive, transparent and above all a predictable policy and a level playing field in order to generate green investments," she said.

Chamberlain also said that increasing taxes on fossil fuels and enhancing the environmental tax law should be considered.

"The aim of such so-called green policies is to shift the market incentives to encourage more investment in renewable technology, which is now not yet feasible because the energy price in Viet Nam is still very low," she added.

7. Another earthquake hits Quang Nam hydro plant

A 4.7 Richter magnitude earthquake struck the central province of Quang Nam's Bac Tra My District and Song Tranh hydro-power plant yesterday, confirmed Nguyen Hong Phuong, deputy director of the Earthquake and Tsunami Warning Centre under the Institute of Geophysics.

With a seismic focus at a depth of 6km, the earthquake was the strongest of 20 earthquakes and tremors to strike the area, he said.

However, the quake only lasted for about 10 seconds, according to experts from the institute.

"Experts have concluded that the sequence of tremors in the area were due to seismic activity caused by water stored in the hydropower plant reservoir," Phuong explained.

The quake could also be felt 120km away in Da Nang.

"I felt the floor shaking while I was working in the office. It was like a big truck had driven past," said Vu Hong Thuy, a resident in Da Nang.

No injuries or damage to the dam and residential areas had been reported, Dang Phong, chairman of Bac Tra My district's People's Committee, told Viet Nam News.

"We have found cracks in the walls and beams or girders of over 100 houses, but I have yet to hear about any serious damage," he confirmed.

Experts from the institute also said at a meeting in Quang Nam Province last month that the sequence of earthquakes had not exceeded the reservoir's design limit.

The management board of the hydropower plant plans to repair the affected houses for local people.

8. HCM City seeks investors to recycle urban mud waste

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment in Ho Chi Minh City is seeking investors for recycling of its urban mud waste via the BOO method (Build-Operate-Own), which at present is a burden as not all of it is being handled efficiently.

Nguyen Trung Viet, head of the Climate Change Office in Ho Chi Minh City, said that since 2003 they have been seeking the right investors to undertake the responsibility of recycling the excess pile of mud waste.

So far, urban solid waste is being collected and treated by five investing companies and the HCMC Environment Company has a plant to burn a maximum of 21 tons of toxic waste per day.

However, no investor is as yet recycling the mud waste. About 1,500-1,900 cubic meters of mud waste is discharged every day from canal dredging, manholes and drains, production units, industrial and export processing zones.

Besides, millions of cubic meters of mud waste is being released in a year from nearly 1.8 million households, wastewater treatment plants and environment improvement projects.

According to the Department of Science and Technology, of serious concern is mud waste from canal dredging which comprises of sand, plastic, cloth, tin, metal, lubricant and oil.

At present, only mud waste from the drainage system of industrial zones and production units is being burnt.

Some mud waste from cesspools and wastewater treatment plants is being collected to make organic fertilizer in Hoa Binh mud treatment plant in Da Phuoc waste treatment complex in Binh Chanh District.

Mud waste from water supply plants and canal dredging as well as construction projects is being transported to unknown locations.

The total cost to treat mud waste is estimated at VND1 trillion (US\$48 million) a year.

However, the City has no financial resources to cover this expense and hence the waste is being dumped at the first convenient place.

Meanwhile, the Binh Hung wastewater treatment plant doesn't know where to dump 4,000 tons of mud waste which has not been treated properly and is now given off a stinking smell that is affecting surrounding areas.

Le Trung Tuan Anh, deputy head of the solid waste management division under the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, said that authorized organs are very confused in dealing with mud waste.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment is now calling investors to develop recycling plants via the BOO method. Investors will be paid to handle mud waste from public areas like drainage pipes and canal dredging.

HCMC will provide the investor with 20 hectares of land in Da Phuoc waste treatment complex to build a mud waste treatment plant, which will be ready in 3-5 years.

9. To avoid “grow first, clean up later”

Environmental sustainability is the main objective of the Government to avoid the problem of "grow first, clean up later," which is the development strategy of a number of other Asian countries.

No topic is closely related to land policy as environmental management. No activities of the Vietnamese Government to promote growth, increase competitive advantage, improve social welfare or to pursue the goals of modernization and middle income can be separated from environmental issues. And there is no aspect of the environment can be separated from the land and the space in which it is associated. Land and environment are linked and depend completely on each other. However, so far, in fact the link between environmental management and land policy is very weak.

It is difficult to assess environmental management in Vietnam. Vietnam has made impressive achievements and values in banning forest exploitation on a large scale, strong support of the State (including incentives) for forest restoration, efforts in the protection of mangroves, marine resource management, expansion of the national parks, nature reserves and special-use forests.

However, other activities are going contrary to the above results. Pesticides, herbicides are use rampantly, causing pollution in the Mekong Delta and Red River Delta. These areas are currently under pressure from industrialization and urbanization.

The excessive use of groundwater in the Mekong Delta region causes saltwater intrusion and land subsidence. Dams and hydroelectric plants as Son La, Yali ... have made negative effects locally and in the downstream regions.

Rapid growth of individual public means of transport makes the increase of urban smoke and dust. Waste treatment systems in industrial parks are slowly installed, making solid waste and hazardous materials spill into river systems and absorb into the soil. Upstream pollution has increased the cost of water treatment and water purification that consumers have to pay.

There are many projects, including the support of international donors, are underway or set up to deal with environmental issues.

Environmental sustainability is the main objective of the Government to avoid the problem of "grow first, clean up later," which is the development strategy of a number of other Asian countries. More importantly, sustainable environment is the foundation for objective to become a middle-income industrial country in 2020.

In recent years, many discussions focused on environmental challenges and consequences of climate change. The forecast shows that a large area of the two deltas and the coastal area will be flooded and the downstream areas and many forests will suffer from severe weather. In a few scenarios are given, the temperature increase will make a longer dry season and increase the frequency of drought, making farmers to change farming practices.

These potential threats show the need to have prevention plans from now on to ensure strategies for mitigating the consequences of natural disasters and adapt to climate change.

Although the effects of climate change are predicted to be very serious for many regions and countries, it is necessary to check the prediction. Vietnam currently has serious problems related to environment. The negative environmental impacts in the past should be handled while Vietnam still has to pay attention to the current problems.

There are two reasons for doing this. First, it will help to prevent or at least mitigate them from causing further damage. Second, the appropriate action today will create the conditions (policy, process, power, institutions, etc.) and the ability to help the country deal with the consequences of climate change when they appear.

Unclear environmental achievements bring many opportunities and pose challenges for Vietnam. Forest restoration and control of wood exploitation, renovation of bare hills, improving midland and mountainous land management create more spillovers.

The afforestation program has contributed significantly to the process of carbon absorption. Stable maintenance of watershed areas helps reduce the risk from frequent floods. Watershed protection also helps reduce sediment congestion and environmental pollution for the downstream areas, improving the performance of the operation depending on the watershed. Reducing the accumulation of sediment will extend the life of dams and reservoirs, limit river and port dredging. Wastewater treatment plants can work stably, reducing the operating, replacement and maintenance costs.

In contrast, the pollution problems associated with the abuse (and even irregular use) of pesticides, herbicides have made direct impacts on product quality, especially grains, seafood products and fruits. These toxic products adversely affect the health of Vietnamese consumers. When being exported, these products are tightly controlled by the health agencies in foreign countries, and this is affecting the reputation of Vietnam in becoming a responsible exporter.

Soil salinity due to the construction of dams on the upstream areas in Vietnam and due to land subsidence from groundwater exploitation has been warned. This reduces the area that is suitable for cultivation of two crops of rice and other crops that are inappropriate to salty soil. Farmers adapt to this phenomenon in the form of rotation of rice-shrimp farming. Thus, the change has partly brought about a positive benefit in terms of environmental and economic aspects.

The efforts to build dikes to block saltwater always has a negative effect. The deltas still need frequent floods to maintain the fertility and structure of farmland. Dykes and barriers whether they are operating well, still retain pollutants, leading to reduced soil quality and soil productivity.

The changes in land policy in Vietnam have made a significant impact on the environment. The forest restoration as being mentioned above has been encouraged by many forms in the land law. Afforestation program participants have access to land. Many legalistic restrictions have reduced (but not eliminate) the act of illegal deforestation. The allocation of land to farmers has promoted them to better manage land. In fact, poor management of the midland and mountainous land is mainly due to the distortion of economic incentives, lead to the circumstance of "everybody's business is nobody's business."

Vietnam's situation in the protection of environment is similar to many countries in the world. Promoting environmental protection-oriented activities requires worthy incentives and institutional preparation to push people to change their negative behavior.

The preparation of institutions is an important issue. The Land Law and legal regulations have to prevent the abuse, misuse of pesticides and exploitation of groundwater. To ensure compliance with the law, it is needed to have effective, transparent monitoring systems fair administration, along with penalties to deter polluters.

So how do the current law and land policies affect the land use dynamics in Vietnam? There are three issues emerging: keeping rice land forever; rural poverty exacerbating by compensation in

land acquisition process; and short-term agricultural land allocation.

When people have too few resources to generate the necessary income for them, poverty is for sure. While growing rice makes people poor, they can absolutely increase income if they are allowed to switch to fruit crops, livestock, aquatic products, vegetables and flowers. Abuse of groundwater and polluting rivers, ponds and lakes are forms of indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources.

When the common resource is not strictly controlled, farmers have no reason to preserve them. This is the truth in some cases; people expect their land to be revoked. The allocation of short-term agricultural land (20 years from November 1993) makes the reduction of the desire to invest more in production than some operations to quickly recovery capital in the short term.

Four other policies related to land create other negative effects. Reducing the cost of irrigation has led to the inefficient use of water and the overload of the irrigation system. Because of the discharge of wastewater from industrial and agro-processing zones into the water systems, contaminated water cannot be used for cultivation. Chemicals and antibiotics used in aquaculture often poison rice and fruit growing areas. Pesticide and fertilizer flow to the downstream areas, causing serious effects on health and creating conditions for moss, algae growth, interfering the flow and the survival of the plants that have the function of cleaning and filtering water.

Although there have been a lot of encouragement, management, monitoring of the environment has still played a key role in dealing with acts of environmental vandalism. Vietnam has had a legal framework for the environment, but the environment is still being undermined in many places, and it is barely controlled because the stage of monitoring and dealing violations is weak.

A recent report by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has shown that less than 40 percent of the country's industrial parks have waste treatment systems that meet standards of environmental management. This pollution in turn generates other toxics as being mentioned above.

Along with strengthening monitoring, reduction of poverty is crucial for environmental protection and management of environmental resources. The poor have little choice but to take advantage of short-term opportunities (including vandalism resources) to ensure their livelihood. Preserving resources for the future generations is not reasonable behavior for them. So, to continue the eradication of poverty, eradicating poverty is the most effective solution for Vietnam to handle the environmental issues.

10. Confidence vote gets thumbs up

The National Assembly passed a resolution yesterday to hold votes of confidence for officials that held elected positions or were approved by the NA or People's Councils.

The resolution applies to those in positions of power including the State President, the NA Chairman, the Prime Minister and his deputies, ministers and other Government members, Judges of the People's Supreme Court, Head of the People's Supreme Procuracy and the Chief State Auditor.

Members of people's councils will also be allowed to apply a vote of confidence for positions including Chairman of the People's Council and Chairman of the People's Committee.

Confidence votes will commence from 2013.

Valuations will be based on the results of the politicians' work, morality and lifestyle.

The resolution points out that the people who were voted in must faithfully report back and answer all questions asked by Assembly deputies and members of people's councils.

Those involved will be able to express levels of high confidence, confidence and low confidence.

Those receiving low confidence votes for two consecutive years will have to undergo a final no-confidence vote.

Officials who receive a vote of no confidence at this stage will be asked to stand down from their positions.

Also yesterday NA deputies agreed to issue a Law on National Disaster Prevention and Control to fulfil legal corridors for activities to prevent, cope and tackle damage caused by such incidents.

The discussion focused on human resources, materials, facilities, equipment, finance and other necessities for prevention activities, and the State management's responsibilities, as well as the rights and obligation of organisations and individuals.

Deputy Do Van Ve from Thai Binh said the State must take the main role rather than "support" natural disaster prevention as the draft law stated, especially in improving forecasting, mobilising human resources, organising rescue activities, solving damage and compensating losses for people who took part in the activities.

Deputy Dang Ngoc Nghia from the central province of Thua Thien Hue shared the opinion. However, he said the draft law should be more concrete and clear, separating responsibilities between relevant bodies.



Floodwaters in the Mekong Delta's Long An Province last year. Besides passing a resolution on confidence votes for top leaders, National Assembly deputies yesterday also agreed to issue a Law on National Disaster Prevention and Control to better mitigate the impacts of natural disasters.

He also asked the State and authorities at different levels to direct prevention work. The work should be mixed into the State's socio-economic development plans and strategies.

Deputy Dang Thi Phuong Thanh said the State Budget was limited, and the work would be expensive. She proposed establishing a fund for natural disaster prevention and control with financial contributions from organisations and individuals.

People living in damaged areas and difficult areas would be exempt from fund raising, said Thanh.

Deputy Pham Thi Phuong from Ha Tinh Province said activities would be based on mutual support among sectors as well as donations from the international community. Vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, children, the elderly and women would be given priority during rescue work, healthcare and other services after disasters occurred.

Deputies also agreed a regulation on prohibiting the cutting and destroying of protective and riverhead forests.

Statistics showed that about 500 people were killed each year by natural disasters, and thousands more were injured. Losses were estimated at from 1 to 1.5 per cent of GDP.

Law on Capital City

Lawmakers yesterday afternoon agreed to pass the Law on the Capital City. The law contains the position and role of the capital city, and the responsibilities of the National Assembly, Government, ministries, branches and people in protecting and developing the city.

It also embraces regulations to protect the capital's culture, education, science and technology, housing development and traffic and land management.

Under the law, planning must be approved by the Prime Minister after the NA gave it the nod.

The law prohibits expanding hospitals within the inner city, and new industrial zones and industrial production enterprises, tertiary education and vocational training institutions are not allowed to be built in the inner districts.

The Prime Minister will decide measures and a road map to relocate some industrial enterprises, tertiary education units and hospitals from the inner city to outlying areas.

The city's architecture, landscape and construction must follow a master plan to ensure preservation and promotion of cultural and historical values and create a green area for the city as well as the two sides of the Hong (Red) River.

Given the city's budget can not cover important environmental, traffic, hydraulic projects, the State budget would compensate for the shortfall under a proposal by the Prime Minister.

Anti-terrorism law

The NA deputies yesterday discussed the draft law on fighting and preventing terrorism. Most of the delegates said a special task force to fight terrorism should be formed.

Deputy Nguyen Van Minh from the northern mountainous province of Bac Kan and Do Ngoc Nien from the southern province of Ninh Thuan suggested training counter-terrorism skills and supplying modern equipment for existing forces.

They argued that a force specialising in counter-terrorism would require large investment in terms of human resources and materials.

According to deputy Huynh The Ky from the southern province of Ninh Thuan, a specialised anti-terrorism unit was needed to prevent attacks, rather than react to them.

He added that this force did not need to be large but must be ready for duty.

Some deputies asked for clarification of what actions constituted terrorism in order to avoid confusion with other crimes.

11. Pollution chases, besieges, kills aquaculture

The aquaculture has been threatened by the uncontrollable industrial production development which has caused serious pollution everywhere.

Farming barnacles and fishes in cages has been feeding thousands of households in the Long Son commune in Vung Tau City of Ba Ria – Vung Tau province.

However, the aquaculture has been attacked by the serious pollution caused by the processing factories and sand exploitation, according to Tuoi tre.

In the commune, there were once thousands of oyster trellises and hundreds of fish cages. However, many of them near the Cha Va Bridge have been left idle for the last many months. Farmers have left for other areas after the oyster crops failed, caused by the serious water pollution.

However, farmers now also do not feel secure in the new areas, also on the Cha Va River--but nearer to the seaport, and further from the seafood processing factories in Tan Hai commune of Tan Thanh district. The oysters now can avoid the polluted water, but they have been threatened with sand suckers.

Nguyen Van Cu, a farmer in Long Son commune, who has been farming oysters for the last 10 years, complained that less oysters have died in the new areas, but the income for farmers is very modest.

Another farmer in the commune said that everyone in the commune has had oysters, fishes and shrimps dying of the toxic water.

Nguyen Van Xuyen, a farmer, complained that he has four farmed ponds of grouper, but he still cannot harvest any kilo of fish.

According to Vo Van Mui, Chair of the Long Son Commune People's Committee, the commune reserves 700 hectares for aquaculture, but the area has been jammed between the two polluted areas. Therefore, farmers go from the frying pan into the fire: they escaped the waste water from seafood processing factories to go into muddy waters.

Mui said that the current sand exploiter on the Cha Va River is Hoang Linh Company Ltd, which was licensed by the Ba Ria – Vung Tau provincial people's committee, while the exploitation would get expired only in some more years.

Meanwhile, the seafood processing workshops in Tan Hai Commune have not only killed aquatic creatures, but harmed people. Local residents everyday have to breathe the terrible odor from the workshops. Behind the processing workshops are the reservoirs containing waste water which then flows to the Cha Va River. The trees around the reservoirs have been fading because of the waste water.

Truong Thi Xien, a farmer, who has a shrimp pond near the processing workshops in Tan Hai, said that the shrimp breeders worth 30 million dong could not grow up.

“There are only small tilapias in the pond, which can be sold at several thousands of dong per kilo.

“We now cannot live on aquaculture any more. Therefore, my husband has to take extra jobs to earn our living,” she said.

Le Tan Cuong, Head of the Ba Ria – Vung Tau Environment Protection Sub-department, has confirmed after conducting testing measures that the fishes died in Long Son Commune because of the polluted water.

Cuong went on to say that the polluted water came from the waste water from the seafood processing factories, the mineral mining in the Cha Va River areas and the water polluted by fish feed.

Cong Thuong newspaper has cited a report by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development as reporting that black tiger shrimp have died in masses on 78,796 hectares of surface water in coastal provinces since May 2012 due to epidemics and polluted water.

12. Viet Nam acts on emissions

Energy usage contributes up to 35 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in Viet Nam, Dr Nguyen Thi Hien Thuan from the Viet Nam Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment told an ASEAN+3 workshop here today.

The workshop on Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA), refers to a set of policies and actions that countries of ASEAN+3 have undertaken as part of a commitment to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

NAMA was first used in the Bali Action Plan as part of the Bali Road Map agreed at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007.

Nguyen Van Long, deputy head of the Ministry of Industry and Trade's Science Technology and Energy Efficiency Department said that in October, the Government had approved a target programme in the second phase of 2012-15 with a fund from the State Budget of VND350 billion (US\$16.7 million).

It aims to save 5-8 per cent of total energy consumption nationwide.

Long said the first phase from 2006-10 achieved the target of saving 3.4 per cent of total energy consumption nationwide.

Under the programme, companies that manufacture cement, steel, garments and textiles have been ordered to use energy-efficient equipment.

All public high-rise buildings being built in 2012 have to obey energy-efficiency regulations.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade has been told to encourage households to use solar energy, biogas, and compact lights.

According to Dr Thuan from the meteorology institute, Viet Nam's greenhouse-gas emissions are mainly from energy industries, agriculture, land use, land-use changes and forestry.

CO2 emissions are forecast to reach 300 million tonnes by 2020 and 516 millions of tonnes by 2030. This compares with 151 million tonnes in 2000.

Thuan said 15 energy solutions had been chosen to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including wind power.

Viet Nam has two pilot mitigation projects under ASEAN+3. The first project, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in cement production, is worth \$1.97 million. It has been sponsored by the Nordic Development Fund.

The Ministry of Construction has been assigned to implement the project, she said.

The second project aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in waste management. Worth \$67,000, it is backed by the Japanese Ministry of the Environment.

13. Passavant-Roediger wins Vietnam water treatment plant contract

Passavant-Roediger GmbH, a German subsidiary of Drake & Scull International, won a contract to expand the Thu Duc water treatment plant, its first project in Vietnam.

The \$46 million project includes constructing a 300,000 cubic meter a day plant that treats river water, providing drinking water to area residents, the company said in a statement.

Passavant-Roediger will also be responsible for building the river water intake pumping station and pressure mains pipes delivering water to the plant.

14. Delta faces likely drought, greater seawater incursion

With the rainy season to end soon, water levels in many canals in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta are much lower than normal, sparking fears among locals that this will hit farming and drinking-water needs.

Le Van Lam, 61, of Dong Thap Province's Tan Hong District, said: "The weather this year was abnormal, with the lowest flood level in several decades, affecting agriculture."

In many water bodies in Tan Hong, an upstream district, levels are very low, 1-1.7 metres lower than last year.

Phung Thanh Hai, chairman of the local People's Committee, said: "The district may face water shortages at the end of the winter-spring [rice] crop. The summer-autumn crop may face even more acute water shortages."

This could raise costs of the winter - spring crop by four or five times and yields would be lower than normal, he said.

The Southern Irrigation Planning Institute has warned that the delta will face acute fresh water shortages in the dry season this year.

With water levels low in rivers and canals, seawater encroachment is expected to be worse than normal. So farmers have been told to finish planting the winter-spring rice crop by early December.

In 2010 some 100,000ha of rice fields, especially along the coast, were badly affected by the incursion of seawater.

According to the Southern Meteorology and Hydrology Bureau, the dry season has virtually ended in the south. The record high tides this year, especially in October, have brought seawater into the mainland.

But since water levels in rivers remain high, seawater infiltration has been kept in check.

But this is expected to change by December or January.

In the 2011-12 dry season, seawater penetrated 55-60km upstream into the delta. It is expected to be worse this year and occur earlier.

Tran Trung Hien, director of the southern Tra Vinh Province's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, said: "According to forecasts, as less floodwaters enter the rivers, seawater could enter the rivers earlier and affect the region more badly."

To mitigate losses, his department has told farmers to finish sowing 51,000ha of winter-spring rice crop earlier than usual. The province's irrigation works, especially the South Mang Thit System, are skilfully operated to conserve water and prevent seawater infiltration to better protect cultivated lands.

Tran Quang Cui, deputy director of the southern Kien Giang Province's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, said farmers have sowed nearly 85,000ha out of 269,000ha normally under the winter-spring rice crop, mainly in the West Hau River Area, U Minh Thuong, and the districts of Giang Thanh and Hon Dat. About 200,000ha will be sown in November and the remaining in early December. Meanwhile, 27 seawater-proof dykes have been closed to conserve water for rice fields in the provinces of An Giang and Kien Giang.

15. Soai Rap River to be dredged for ship traffic

Large vessels cannot travel directly from the East Sea into ports in HCM City because the Soai Rap River is not wide or deep enough. Instead, they must follow an 85-km route from Vung Tau to the Sai Gon River, taking up a lot of time.

But this distance will be cut in half when a project to dredge the Soai Rap River, now in its second phase, is completed. The project, which began on Saturday, will allow larger vessels to travel up the river into the Hiep Phuoc Port complex in HCM City's Nha Be District (No 24).

The project will dredge 54-km of water, increasing the river's depth to 11.5m, according to the Soai Rap River Dredging Project Investment Management Board, under the jurisdiction of the city's Transport Department. Originally, the river had a depth of 5-6 metres, but in the first phase (2009-10), the river was dredged to a depth of 9.5m, allowing vessels of 30,000-50,000DWT to traverse it.

After the second phase, the Hiep Phuoc Port complex will be able to receive larger ships with loading capacities of 50,000 – 70,000DWT.

The final phase of the project will dredge this section of the river to a depth of 12m, allowing it to receive vessels with loading capacity of more than 70,000 tonnes by 2015.

The second phase, with an investment of nearly VND2.8 trillion (US\$134 million) of which VND2.2 trillion (\$105 million) comes from Belgian ODA loans and the rest from the city budget, is expected to be finished in 16 months.

Nguyen Van Cong, Deputy Minister of Transport, said the project would help increase connectivity among seaports and enhance logistics and export services in HCM City in addition to boosting the sea economy of the Mekong Delta.

A representative from the Viet Nam Seaports Association said dredging the Soai Rap River would help not only reduce transport costs but also make Vietnamese products more competitive.

Soai Rap, together with the Cai Mep-Thi Vai River in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province, would help the southern economic zone become one of the country's most important economic zones and make Hiep Phuoc Port one of the major ports not only in the region but also globally, said Tran The Ky, deputy director of the city's Department of Transport.

According to Ky, the city also planned to improve the road system that connects to the port.

A 2-km road would be built to link Sai Gon-Hiep Phuoc Port with the road system. Then a 2.2-km road would be added to connect Hiep Phuoc industrial park with the Ba Chiem traffic circle in District 7.

These would be finished concurrently with the dredging of the Soai Rap River, he said.