

Press Review 8 /2013 - Vietnam, Water and Sustainability Research,

For more information please contact: Ms. Pham Thi Viet Ha (phamthivietha@vd-office.net / hapham2310@gmail.com)

Notice for new Office address: Room 409, 4th floor – 34T Building, Hoang Dao Thuy street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi - Tel/Fax: + 84 4 626 888 08

No	Title	Date	Source	Region	Catalogue	Description
1	City prepares for emergency	2/8/2013	VN News	HCM	Water Management	City authorities are planning several emergency response scenarios in case the main dam of the Dau Tieng Irrigation Reservoir in southwestern Tay Ninh Province collapsed or if the reservoir discharged too much water.
2	Mekong residents voice their concerns	2/8/2013	VN Net Bridge	An Giang	Water Management	Residents living in the Mekong River basin are expressing concerns over water degradation in the Mekong river and its impact on farming, aquaculture and the livelihood of the millions of people who live in the region.
3	World Bank supports Da Nang	3/8/2013	VN News	Da Nang	Others	The World Bank will continue to support Da Nang and is honoured to be its partner.
4	Storm kills 3, damages crops	9/8/2013	VN News	North VN	Environment	At least three people, including a teenager, were killed in the last two days as tropical storm Mangkhut brought strong winds and torrential rain to Viet Nam's north and central localities.
5	Resettlement blighted by poor water sanitation	6/8/2013	VN Net	Ha Tinh	Water	A lack of fresh water is seriously affecting the lives of families who stay in a resettlement area in the central province of Ha Tinh.
6	Two ministers queried over land management, law implementation	6/8/2013	VN Net	Hanoi	Land management	Deputies of Viet Nam's National Assembly (NA) yesterday grilled several government ministers during an online Question and Answer session as part of the Standing Committee's 20th session.



Vietnamese – German Office for Water and Sustainability Research

Funded by MOST and BMBF

Address: Room 409, 4th Floor, 34T Building, Hoang Dao Thuy Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi

Tel/Fax : + 84 4 626 888 08

Website: wwwvd-office.net

Press Review 8 /2013 - Vietnam, Water and Sustainability Research,

For more information please contact: Ms. Pham Thi Viet Ha (phamthivietha@vd-office.net / hapham2310@gmail.com)

Notice for new Office address: Room 409, 4th floor – 34T Building, Hoang Dao Thuy street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi - Tel/Fax: + 84 4 626 888 08

7	Viet Nam and New Zealand outline joint environmental goals	6/8/2013	VN Net	VN	Environment	Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong yesterday, Aug 5, said he hoped New Zealand would tighten co-operation with Viet Nam in the combat against climate change, rising sea levels and studies on clean energy.
8	HCM City combats pollution	12/8/2013	VN News	HCM	Pollution	Over the last 11 years, HCM City has resolved pollution problems at 1,400 manufacturers in the city by either relocating the factories or by suspending production operations.
9	Mekong Delta flood season to strike earlier than usual	16/8/2013	VN News	Mekong	Environment	The annual flooding of rice fields by the Mekong River is expected to occur earlier than normal this year, according to the delta's main disaster prevention agencies.
10	Power plant pollution engulfs residents	19/8/2013	VN Net	Quang Ninh	Environment	The four-month-old Mao Khe Thermal Power Plant in northern Quang Ninh Province's Dong Trieu District is said to be polluting the environment.
11	Sudden sinkholes scare Cam Pha City residents	23/8/2013	VN News	Quang Ninh	Environment	Residents in northeastern Quang Ninh province's Cam Pha City were surprised nastily on Wednesday when land subsidence suddenly created five sinkholes.
12	City rivers drowned in red tape	26/8/2013	VN News	HCM	Water management	Overlapping management of inland waterway traffic has hindered infrastructure development in HCM City and made it difficult to penalise violations and effectively tackle the problem of increasing accidents, local officials say.



V-D Office for Water and Sustainability Research

Vietnamese – German Office for Water and Sustainability Research

Funded by MOST and BMBF

Address: Room 409, 4th Floor, 34T Building, Hoang Dao Thuy Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi

Tel/Fax : + 84 4 626 888 08

Website: wwwvd-office.net

Press Review 8 /2013 - Vietnam, Water and Sustainability Research,

For more information please contact: Ms. Pham Thi Viet Ha (phamthivietha@vd-office.net / hapham2310@gmail.com)

Notice for new Office address: Room 409, 4th floor – 34T Building, Hoang Dao Thuy street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi - Tel/Fax: + 84 4 626 888 08

13	Environment plan creates new jobs	26/8/2013	VN News	Quang Nam	Other	Alang Thi Hoa once entered the forest every day to look for firewood to sell. Hoa, from central Quang Nam Province's Ma Cooih Commune.
14	Hydro-power plant to be built in national park	26/8/2013	VN News	Dak Lak	Power Plant	A small hydro-power plant project is going through the final .
15	Torrential rain sparks more northern region flood fears	27/8/2013	Vfej	North VN	Environment	Heavy rains are expected to continue battering the northern region this week, raising fears of further flash floods and landslides.
16	Pollution blamed on seafood processing	27/8/2013	VN Net	Nghe An	Pollution	Nearly 400 households with 1,900 people in Dien Ngoc Commune in Dien Chau District, Nghe An Province, have lived for five years surrounded by pollution from seafood processing enterprises.
17	Japan supports VN development: JICA	28/8/2013	VN News	VN	Others	Japan continues to support Viet Nam in achieving its key goal to become an industrial and modern country by 2020, said Japan International Co-operation Agency President Tanaka Akihiko.
18	HCM City to develop traditional craft villages under new programme	31/8/2013	VN News	HCM	Environment	Nine traditional craft villages in HCM City will be preserved and developed under a city programme that will last until 2015.
19	Residents at risk with resevoirs set to burst	31/8/2013	VN News	Quang Tri	Power Plant	Deputy PM Hoang Trung Hai has told all localities to make sure their resevoirs were safe following reports that several hundred are already showing signs of degradation.



V-D Office for Water and Sustainability Research

Vietnamese – German Office for Water and Sustainability Research

Funded by MOST and BMBF

Address: Room 409, 4th Floor, 34T Building, Hoang Dao Thuy Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi

Tel/Fax : + 84 4 626 888 08

Website: wwwvd-office.net

1. City prepares for emergency



Hoa Binh Street in HCM City's Tan Phu District was flooded after prolonged heavy rain. Most low-lying areas in the city will be flooded if the main dam at the Dau Tieng Irrigation Reservoir in the southwestern province of Tay Ninh collapses.

City authorities are planning several emergency response scenarios in case the main dam of the Dau Tieng Irrigation Reservoir in southwestern Tay Ninh Province collapsed or if the reservoir discharged too much water.

Most low-lying areas in HCM City will be flooded if this scenario occurred, according to participants at a meeting held by the HCM City People's Committee on Wednesday.

The country's largest irrigation reservoir provides water for agriculture and industry as well as household use in Tay Ninh, Binh Duong and Long An provinces and HCM City as well. It also controls salt-water intrusion into the Sai Gon and Vam Co rivers.

The reservoir, which is located upstream of the Sai Gon River, is designed to release up to 2,800 cubic metres of flood water a second. However, the reservoir has released only 200-600cu.m of flood water a second over the past few years.

Tran Cong Ly, deputy head of the city's Steering Committee for Flood and Storm Prevention and Control and Rescue, said at the end of 2008 the reservoir released water at a speed of 400cu.m a second, flooding many areas in HCM City within two hours.

The city at that time asked the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for assistance in controlling the discharge of water at the reservoir.

If the reservoir releases water at a speed of 2,800cu.m a second, about 26,000ha of land in 111 communes and wards in neighbouring Binh Duong Province and HCM City will be flooded, according to the ministry's Irrigation Department.

If the reservoir's main dam breaks, about 34,000ha of land in 125 communes and wards in Binh Duong Province and HCM City will be flooded, said the Irrigation Department.

Irrigation officials said that it was unlikely the reservoir dam would break, but warned that inclement weather or an earthquake could lead to collapse.

If a break occurred, the city's Cu Chi District would be 10.25 metres under water within three hours and 17 minutes, and the city's centre area would be 2.15 metres under water within 24 hours.

If such a break occurred with floods from upstream areas, Cu Chi District could be 12 metres under water within two hours and eight minutes, and the city's centre area 2.4 metres under water after 23 hours and 18 minutes, officials have projected.

Le Manh Ha, deputy chairman of the HCM City People's Committee, said the setting up of emergency-response scenarios would mitigate the damage caused to people and property.

Ha has asked the city's Steering Committee for Flood and Storm Prevention and Control and Rescue to set up detailed scenarios.

Various departments and city districts would then use these scenarios and base their plans to relocate residents to safe areas and deal with the consequences of flooding.

Built in 1981 and put into use in 1985, the reservoir's main dam is made from soil. It is 28 metres high, 1,100 metre long and eight metres wide.

The reservoir's secondary dam is 27 metres high, 27,000 metres long and five metres wide.

The reservoir's lowest water level is 17 metres and highest water level, 26.3 meters. When water reaches the highest level, the reservoir contains more than 2 billion cubic metres of water.

2. Mekong residents voice their concerns



A stretch of the Mekong River in Can Tho City. Local residents are worried about the impacts of water degradation in the Mekong River

Residents living in the Mekong River basin are expressing concerns over water degradation in the Mekong river and its impact on farming, aquaculture and the livelihood of the millions of people who live in the region.

People from Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam's Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta raised concerns yesterday at a forum held by the Viet Nam River Network, Save the Mekong, the Southern Institute of Ecology and An Giang University, saying that their lives have changed negatively due to the changes in the river's water level.

They asked scientists, policymakers and governments to find proper solutions to balance the use of water between countries and sectors in order to ensure their livelihood and the future of the basin in the coming decades.

There are currently five big dams in operation along the Mekong river with 12 more dams proposed, which are expected to take a huge volume of water from the river, change its natural flow and destroy the fish habitat.

More than 130 scientists, farmers and officials from related agencies joined the forum. Representing farmers from Ca Mau Province, in the country's southern-end, Huynh Thi Kim Duyen said she and local residents have observed more erosion to the river banks in their neighbourhood.

Duyen, who is a member of the province's Women's Association and also a farmer, is aware of the change of natural flow resulting in erosion, giving no conclusion in the changes over upper power dams or impact the impact on climate change.

However, she noted that a small dam built on Quang Lo - Phung Hiep has turned the canal into a dead one. "I think the bigger dams would worsen the impact of the rivers that are tributaries of the Mekong River," she said.

"Erosion and declining fish populations have affected the lives of locals. People have to migrate from the erosion prone sites and move to urban areas to find jobs," Duyen also said.

Kong Chanthy, a Cambodian farmer said similar situations have also happened in his community. Lower water volume in the Mekong River has affected his cultivation, while increasing pollution has hindered his aquaculture.

Research over the last five years has shown that income from agroproducts and fishing by residents living in the basin have fallen critically. Omboun Thipsuna, representing seven of Thailand's north-eastern provinces, blamed power dams for causing the unnatural, sudden floods and the unexpected droughts that happen in the provinces.

Thipsuna said changes in the water volume along the Mekong Delta has affected the livelihood of farmers and fishermen. In Bung Kan, for example, the average income from fishing declined from 37,000 THB (US\$1,200) to 5,000 THB (\$166) a year in the past five years. Meanwhile, agricultural income dropped from 3,800 THB to 28,800 THB a year.

Speaking at the forum, Dr Duong Van Ni of Can Tho University confirmed the phenomenon observed by farmers and fishermen. "Water in the Mekong River has shown signs of changes in water volume and water quality," he said.

"Fish populations have fallen by one third recently," he added, according to research he conducted in Cambodia and Viet Nam. Ni forecasted a critical shortage of water for cultivation in Cambodia's Tonle Sap and Viet Nam's Cuu Long (Mekong) deltas.

Experts at the forum said power dams have changed the water volume and water flow of the Mekong River and concerns by residents living in the river basin are reasonable. They are calling governments and policymakers to sit down together to reach an agreement on how to properly share water from the river.

3. World Bank supports Da Nang



Thuan Phuoc Bridge in the central Da Nang Province. The World Bank's \$218.4 million project has enabled the upgrading of urban infrastructure in the central province over the past five years

The World Bank will continue to support Da Nang and is honoured to be its partner, said acting country director of the World Bank Keiko Sato at the meeting to complete a report on the city's priority infrastructure project yesterday.

The five-year project, with an investment of US\$218.4 million, 70 percent of which was funded by the World Bank, has enabled the upgrading of urban infrastructure, resettlement areas, the environment, waste water treatment, bridges and roads as well as personnel training and management, between 2008-13.

"We are glad to see the priority infrastructure project completed on time and of good quality. Over 400,000 citizens in the central city will benefit from the five-year project," said Keiko.

She said the World Bank will support the city with its sustainable development project – the first of its kind in Viet Nam.

"We hope that our experiences with Da Nang City can be rolled out across other provinces in Viet Nam."

The State Bank of Viet Nam and the World Bank agreed to undertake a major sustainable development project in the city, with an investment of \$272.1 million, of which \$202.4 million being donated by the World Bank and the remaining \$69.7 million being provided from city funds.

The chairman of the Da Nang People's Committee, Van Huu Chien, said that the World Bank's priority infrastructure project has played a key role in the city's socio-economic development over the past five years.

The improved infrastructure will help attract more investors to the city as it is situated on the coast at the end of East-West Economic Corridor, that links Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Viet Nam.

"The project also helps upgrade the urban environment, prevent pollution and manage the treatment of sewage and waste water," Chien said.

The director of the city's transport department, Dang Viet Dung, said that Da Nang has become the first city in Viet Nam to have a planned strategy for treating waste water thanks to the World Bank's project.

Da Nang is Viet Nam's fourth largest city and is widely regarded as a being well-planned and well governed, with a higher quality of infrastructure than other cities in the country.

Da Nang plans to turn itself a 'green' city by 2025.

4. Storm kills 3, damages crops



Tropical storm Mangkhut causes waves at Do Son beach in Hai Phong City late yesterday afternoon. At least three people, including a teenager, were killed by the storm on Wednesday and yesterday

At least three people, including a teenager, were killed in the last two days as tropical storm Mangkhut brought strong winds and torrential rain to Viet Nam's north and central localities, including Ha Noi, Hai Phong and Lao Cai Province.

In Ha Noi, a man was killed after being struck by a falling tree on Ba Trieu Street early yesterday morning.

According to local residents, the old tree had been partially uprooted a week ago. Residents had informed local authorities but no response had been given.

In northern Hai Phong City, the body of a 16-year-old boy was discovered this morning after he was swept away by seven-metre storm waves, whilst walking along Do Son Beach on Wednesday afternoon.

The teenager had visited the beach to see the big waves created by the storm.

In the Bat Xat District of Lao Cai Province, a 52-year-old man was also swept away by flash floods with rescue teams still unable to find the man's body.

In central Ha Tinh Province, local border police rescued three fishermen after strong waves lashed the vessel.

Lieutenant Colonel Dinh Ma Phong, head of Vung Ang Border Guard Post, said the men were suffering from exhaustion and a cold but were otherwise in good health.

According to Phong, rescue efforts had been "extremely difficult" due to the hazardous weather conditions.

In central Thanh Hoa Province, the storm caused widespread damage to homes and farms. Up to 14 houses collapsed and more than 700 homes had roofs blown off. Up to 4,000ha of crops were demolished in the storm

More than 13km of power lines were torn down with blackouts reported in many districts around the province.

In Hau Loc District, around 1,000ha of oyster farming was destroyed after being hit by storm waves.

In northern Ninh Binh Province, approximately 1,000ha of rice were inundated and 600 trees collapsed in the heavy rain.

Only in Ninh Binh Province, initial estimates have put the damage bill at VND167 billion (US\$7.8 million).

Provincial authorities have already begun assisting residents affected by the storm by pumping water out of flooded areas and connecting broken power line. Roads and dykes destroyed in the deluge are also under repair and authorities have commenced efforts to locate missing persons.

According to the National Centre for Hydro-meteorological Forecasting, the storm has weakened into a tropical low-pressure system with wind speeds now under 39kph.

Torrential rains will retreat in the northern region and several central provinces by the end of today.

Northern mountainous provinces are still on high alert, threatened by the possibility of flash floods and landslides.

5. Resettlement blighted by poor water sanitation

A lack of fresh water is seriously affecting the lives of families who stay in a resettlement area in the central province of Ha Tinh, while the local authorities have not yet introduced any effective measures to tackle the issue.

Located in Huong Son District's Son Tay Commune, the Tan Lap resettlement area opened its doors to the residents of hamlet Cay Tat in 2010 when the Government took control of their land to build the Cau Treo International Border Gate Economic Zone (CTIBGEZ).

The CTIBGEZ project's management board, the resettlement area's main investor, had originally promised to provide them with clean drinking water, but so far they have not kept their promise, according to local resident Dinh Thi Xuyen.

"Four out of 28 families have moved out due to the severe shortage of pure water," said Xuyen, adding that the rest had had to dig numerous wells but none of them managed to find fresh water.

Pointing out the yellow layer of scum lying on top of the well's water, Xuyen said that after boiling water from this well with green tea leaves, the water would turn black.

The local residents now have to get water from small streams for daily use.

Water pollution is also being blamed for the opening a new kindergarten in the area being delayed, even though it was built nearly two years ago.

In addition, the local infrastructure, including roads and irrigation canals, are badly in need of repair due to a lack of comprehensive planning, which put off even more residents from moving there.

A report compiled by the Ha Tinh Monitoring Centre last August said the water in the area is polluted with a range of dangerous substances including iron and harmful bacteria, which exceed acceptable limits.

"If the commune had known that the water in the resettlement area was contaminated, we would not have let our residents move there," said Le Dinh Vy, chairman of the Son Tay Commune.

The communal authorities have asked the district many times for problem to be addressed but so far they have not received any feedback, said Vy.

According to Tran Bau Ha, head of the GEZ project's management board, the water sources in the Tan Lap area used to be clean and pure but have become polluted due to geological changes in the locale.

"We are working out ways of solving the issue," said Ha .

6. Two ministers queried over land management, law implementation

Deputies of Viet Nam's National Assembly (NA) yesterday grilled several government ministers during an online Question and Answer session as part of the Standing Committee's 20th session.

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Minh Quang had a particularly tough afternoon with questions about delays in the issuance of land certificates to all households in the country, and sought reassurance that the problems would be resolved by the deadline at the end of the year.

Deputy Nguyen Thanh Thuy from central Binh Dinh Province claimed that legal documents about land use rights were not synchronised, hindering the issuance of certificates.

Le Viet Truong from the NA Committee for National Defence and Security said that the issuance of land use rights certificates for defence and security purposes was very slow. He declared his doubts over the possibility that they would now be completed on time.

According to Quang's report, the number of certificates issued by the end of June stood at 36 million for 20.12 million hectares, equivalent to 83.2 per cent of the total land, and more than 3.5 million certificates for over 2.2 million hectares of land are now waiting to be issued.

The report stated that these were located across 18 provinces, some of which were struggling to find room in their budget for the issuance process.

"We are also worried about the speed of issuance. However, if localities do not do their job on time then the ministry will also fail to meet the deadline," Quang said.

NA Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung asked the minister to name the slow localities immediately following the Q&A session so that appropriate measures could be introduced to ensure the deadlines were met.

Hung also urged the ministry to tighten measures to protect the country's environment and its natural and mineral resources.

Deputy Danh Ut from southern Kien Giang Province called for an explanation into cases where the wrong issuance of exploitation licences subsequently led to huge environmental damage. Quang again blamed localities

He was asked by NA Deputy Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan to hand over a list of any localities discovered to have incorrectly issued exploitation licences to the NA so that deputies could increase their supervision.

Legal documents

Earlier in the day, Minister of Justice Ha Hung Cuong also faced a tricky Q&A session, as he faced a barrage of questions about the delays in implementing some laws, disrupting the country's social and economic development.

"Many voters are furious when they must wait up to five years for guidance on laws, such as decrees and circulars. Can we see this slowness as a violation of the law as it goes against the NA resolution?" demanded deputy Bui Manh Hung from southern Binh Phuoc Province.

The lawmakers also raised their concerns over impractical and unfeasible guidance for some laws, such as granting Viet Nam's heroic mothers an advantage when taking university entrance exams or banning the use of small glass windows on coffins.

Cuong admitted that delays had taken place due to the high number of new laws requiring guidance. He said that the Government was compiling and would soon issue a resolution on law making, which would regulate the responsibilities of the minister and set up monthly, quarterly and yearly law making reports.

Regarding the unfeasible guidance, Cuong said that all documents which were not clearly in accordance with the laws they were said to represent would be adjusted.

Backing his governmental colleague, Head of the Government Office Vu Duc Dam said that the number of delayed legal documents had decreased this year.

"In 2006 there were 526 late guiding legal documents, but by 2012 there were only 163," he said.

The morning Q&A session also featured a number of questions about whether officials and enterprises had ever lobbied aggressively for a change in the country's laws, illegally influencing subsequent changes.

In response, Cuong said that all legal documents were carefully and strictly built up. However, he admitted that circulars and joint circulars among ministries and sectors did not receive such strident checks.

"Lobbying for policies is quite popular in other countries but it's difficult and limited in our country due to a difference in political systems," he said, adding that the issue of laws and policies aimed to institutionalise the Party's values, so they definitely were not affected or lobbied for by different political parties.

The Q&A sessions were organised online with connections to all NA deputy delegations, representatives of people's committees and people's councils from 63 cities and provinces nationwide. They were also broadcast live on TV and radio

7. Viet Nam and New Zealand outline joint environmental goals

Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong yesterday, Aug 5, said he hoped New Zealand would tighten co-operation with Viet Nam in the combat against climate change, rising sea levels and studies on clean energy.

Trong was speaking at a reception for New Zealand Governor-General Jerry Mateparae.

The Party leader said he appreciated New Zealand's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Viet Nam, which contributed to its socio-economic development.

Governor-General Mateparae said that New Zealand attached much importance to strengthening its comprehensive partnership with Viet Nam in all fields.

Viet Nam and New Zealand also agreed on measures to develop their bilateral partnership. The agreement was reached during the talks between President Truong Tan Sang and the visiting New Zealand Governor-General yesterday.

They agreed to maintain the exchanges of delegations at all levels and people-to-people exchanges and work on co-operation deals reached in the past.

At the same time, the two sides should keep bilateral co-operation mechanisms like political consultations, national defence dialogue, and a joint committee on economic and trade co-operation.

They also agreed to strengthen ties between the two legislative bodies via the Viet Nam-New Zealand Parliamentary Friendship Group and by co-hosting practical activities celebrating the 40th anniversary of their diplomatic ties in 2015.

In national defence and security, the two countries will implement agreements on training activities, exchanges of information, anti-terrorism and peace-keeping activities for the United Nations.

Regarding the field of economy, trade and investment, the two sides signed a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and agreed to hold talks on food safety and agriculture, forestry and aquaculture products.

They will make efforts to raise their bilateral trade turnover to US\$1 billion by the end of 2015.

Mateparae agreed to maintain financial assistance to Viet Nam for education and training, agriculture, risk management in natural disasters and the development of human resources.

The two leaders said they were pleased at the progress of relations in the past four years, especially since the establishment of the Viet Nam–New Zealand comprehensive partnership in 2009.

Two-way trade turnover last year reached \$600 million. New Zealand has 20 investment projects in Viet Nam with a total registered capital of \$77.8 million.

Governor-General Mateparae said he appreciated the role and prestige of Viet Nam in the region and the world.

The two leaders also affirmed the importance of peace, stability, safety, security and maritime freedom in the East Sea and shared the view that disputes should be settled by peaceful means in line with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and with the full implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea toward the early achievement of a Code of Conduct in the East Sea.

At end of the meeting, the two leaders witnessed the signing of the Viet Nam-New Zealand Action Programme for the 2013-16 period, and the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.

National Assembly Chairnan Nguyen Sinh Hung also met the New Zealand leader the same day, saying that the two countries' parliaments would boost co-operation in legislation and co-ordination at world inter-parliamentary forums.

8. HCM City combats pollution



The Binh Hung waste water treatment plant near the Tau Hu-Ben Nghe Canal, HCM City.

Over the last 11 years, HCM City has resolved pollution problems at 1,400 manufacturers in the city by either relocating the factories or by suspending production operations.

Nguyen Huu Tin, deputy chairman of the city's People's Committee, said both public and private companies had been encouraged to recycle plastics and make fertiliser from waste.

Speaking to the National Assembly's Science, Technology and Environment Committee recently, Tin said that waste had also been used as fuel for power generators as well.

Tin said the city had set a target to treat 100 per cent of its harmful waste by 2015.

Between 2013 and 2015, the city will focus on solving urgent waste and wastewater treatment problems associated with the city's canals.

Works has been progressing on the basins of Nhieu Loc - Thi Nghe Canal, Tau Hu - Ben Nghe Canal and the Tan Hoa - Lo Gom Canal.

The city's is also improving its drainage system to help better control flooding.

All industrial parks in the city have their own waste water treatment systems.

In addition, Tin said waste sorting by residential households had been piloted in District 6 and Binh Thanh District.

Starting this October, solid waste generated by enterprises in industrial parks and export processing zones in HCM City will be sorted at source for recycling.

Under a plan prepared by the municipal Department of Natural Resources and Environment, solid waste will be sorted at source into three categories - organic waste, compostable and non-compostable waste.

Organic waste like vegetables, fruit and leftovers will be collected and recycled to make compost.

Enterprises will be required to use 240-litre containers to contain separated waste that are collected once every two days.

The department is working with the HCM City Export Processing and Industrial Zones Authority to provide training on waste separation at source for enterprises, waste collectors and processors from now through September.

A lack of legal documents has been blamed for the failure of many pilot programmes on waste separation at source in the city since 2002, department officials said, adding that the new plan aims to overcome this and other shortcomings.

9. Mekong Delta flood season to strike earlier than usual



A project to upgrade sea dykes is being implemented in the Mekong Delta's Tien Giang Province. The flood season is expected to hit the Delta region earlier than usual

The annual flooding of rice fields by the Mekong River is expected to occur earlier than normal this year, according to the delta's main disaster prevention agencies.

The Steering Committees for Flood and Storm Prevention and Control, Search and Rescue in upstream provinces said water levels in Dong Thap and An Giang last month were 8-28cm higher than last year.

The Dong Thap Hydro-meteorological Forecasting Centre also forecast the flood levels to be higher this year than last year.

Local authorities and residents in flood-prone areas are worried also because of the threat of land erosion during floods.

This year erosion has been less severe in Dong Thap, but the province still has hundreds of erosion-prone sites in 46 communes affecting 1,300 households, local authorities said.

Provincial authorities are building flood-proof residential areas on a war footing to move more people from flood- and erosion-prone areas.

In Hong Ngu, one of the districts hit hardest by floods every year, authorities have relocated more than 350 families to flood-proof areas this year.

Another 500 households are awaiting relocation.

But many families living in vulnerable areas do not want to move because they are afraid of not finding jobs in the new place. Most of them earn a living by fishing.

Another worry for the authorities is the lack of funds for the purpose.

Nguyen Van Binh, deputy chairman of the Dong Thap People's Committee, said the province has decided to build flood-proof residential areas in island communes in Thanh Binh District to move 600 households before the start of the floods.

Thousands of people in erosion-prone areas need to be relocated, but the province does not have enough funds and needs support from the Government, he said.

Dong Thap has taken several measures to reduce erosion, including building anti-erosion works and keeping close watch on vulnerable sites to promptly warn residents.

Do Vu Hung, deputy head of the An Giang Province Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, said 45 river sections in the province, mostly along the Tien and Hau Rivers, face the threat of severe and very severe erosion during the rainy season.

These sections measure a total length of nearly 100km.

In Phu Tan District, for instance, there are eroded sections that are 2.5km long in total.

Uncertain ground

Landslides are threatening dykes in many districts in My Tho City in the Mekong Delta Province of Tien Giang.

Concern over the danger has started to affect residents' lives and production.

A recent survey by local authorities found 152 potential landslides in Cai Lay, Cai Be, Chau Thanh and Tan Phuoc districts.

An estimated VND16.25 billion (US\$771,000) is needed to shore up the sites.

Authorities blame the number of slippages on stronger water flows, floods and illegal sand exploitation.

They have ordered local residents not to encroach on the banks of the river or illegally exploit sand.

Local households in serious landslide-prone areas will be evacuated to new resettlement areas.

The province spent VND85 billion (\$4.04 million) to fix landslides from 2005 to 2012.

10. Power plant pollution engulfs residents

The four-month-old Mao Khe Thermal Power Plant in northern Quang Ninh Province's Dong Trieu District is said to be polluting the environment.

Oil and waste water from the plant has affected the living conditions of hundreds of residents in Dong Son and Xuan Binh hamlets in Binh Khe Commune, Dong Trieu District.

Vu Thanh An, party committee secretary of Dong Son hamlet, said the pollutants started to flow into the Cam River days after the plant opened.

Dust generated by the plant also blankets the area, choking residents and seeping into houses.

Le Ba Cai, a resident in Dong Son hamlet, said his house 500m from the plant often shook when the plant was in full operation. Some walls were already cracked, he added.

Another resident, Ngo Thi Nhi, said coal dust covered her house every day. She said she often heard explosions from the plant at night.

The plant's director, Tran Van Giang, admitted that oil spills happened in early days of operation due to carelessness.

However, the plant had fixed equipment to stop the problem and also scooped waste oil from the river, he said.

Giang said the explosions from the plant often happened at night when steam accumulated and escaped from an automatic valve. But he said this problem was unavoidable.

Regarding coal dust and smoke, Giang said the plant's waste treatment system could handle around 99.8 per cent while the remaining 0.2 per cent would diffuse into the environment.

The plant planned to cover the coal storehouse to prevent dust from spreading, he said.

The director denied that the plant was dumping untreated waste water into the environment and said the plant had a self-contained treatment system.

However, local residents and authorities want the plant to take measures to put an end to the pollution.

The US\$557 million thermal power plant was opened in April.

Covering an area of 72ha in Dong Trieu District, it is equipped with two turbines that have a combined capacity of 440MW.

It burns the dust of coal transported from Mao Khe, Trang Bach, Khe Chuoi and Hong Thai mines to generate electricity

11. Sudden sinkholes scare Cam Pha City residents



Residents in northeastern Quang Ninh province's Cam Pha City were surprised nastily on Wednesday when land subsidence suddenly created five sinkholes, posing a severe risk to locals and forcing dozens of families to be evacuated

Residents in northeastern Quang Ninh province's Cam Pha City were surprised nastily on Wednesday when land subsidence suddenly created five sinkholes, posing a severe risk to locals and forcing dozens of families to be evacuated.

The first hole appeared around 5am in the morning in the Thuy Son residential area of Cam Son Ward. Local man Luu Dinh Son realised he could not open the front door of his house as the ground had sunk and blocked the door.

After some neighbours helped Son force the door open, a small hole formed underground and it rapidly cracked, forming a deeper one.

At noon, more subsidence continued to occur, creating four more holes, the largest and deepest of which was 15 meters wide and seven meters deep.

Along with the sunken land, numerous houses in the area sustained cracked walls and foundation damage. Four of the homes could collapse at any time, according to local authorities. Damage was also suffered by 40 metres of road and 30 metres of household fencing.

The ward's people's committee helped seven affected households to evacuate people and property to safety.

Later on Wednesday afternoon the holes were filled with soils to bring them level and ensure traffic safety. Signs were also erected warning people not to enter dangerous areas. Vu Van Hien, chairman of the committee, reported that the cities of Cam Pha and Ha Long had seen black holes suddenly appear in the past two years.

He stated that scientists from central and provincial levels had arrived in Cam Pha to study the latest situation. Initial results of one geological survey revealed that there were many underground water reservoirs in Cam Son Ward, Hien said.

In the near future, further studies will be carried out to find a solution to the problem, he added.

12.City rivers drowned in red tape

Overlapping management of inland waterway traffic has hindered infrastructure development in HCM City and made it difficult to penalise violations and effectively tackle the problem of increasing accidents, local officials say.

Tran The Ky, deputy director of the HCM City Department of Transport, said at a conference on implementation of the Inland Waterway Traffic Law held last Friday in HCM City, that many agencies were involved in the management of inland waterway routes.

He noted that the city had more than 9,000km of rivers and canals.

He said 16 national waterway routes were managed by the Viet Nam Inland Waterway Administration while the Viet Nam Maritime Administration was responsible for seven routes and the municipal Department of Transport managed 87 city-level routes.

Colonel Vo Van Van, head of the HCM City Waterway Traffic Police, told the conference that the operation of hydrofoils on HCM City-Vung Tau route carried a high risk of incidents because the boats were outdated and failed to meet safety criteria.

Most of the 21 hydrofoils operated by four enterprises in the city had been in use for more than 20 years. Of these 11 had two engines and the others had only one engine, Van said.

Since June 2007 to date, hydrofoils on the HCM City-Vung Tau route had been involved in 34 accidents including collisions and engine breakdowns, he added.

In the first seven months of this year, there had been 14 instances of hydrofoil engines breaking down.

Strict management of these boats would be vital to prevent potentially tragic accidents, Van said.

Ky proposed at the conference that regulations should be issued to limit the period for which hydrofoils can be used as also ban the import of boats that are more than 10 years old.

The conference also heard that illegal wharves and encroachment of rivers and canals heightened the risk of waterway traffic accidents and worsened pollution of the waterways.

Huynh Thanh Lap, head of the HCM City National Assembly Delegation, said that the Inland Waterway Traffic Law, which has been in force since 2005, should be amended to eliminate shortcomings.

Overloading to blame

Overloading and travel in restricted waters are among the reasons for a boat accident on the Soai Rap River in HCM City which killed nine people early this month, announced the Viet Nam Maritime Administration.

Initial investigation results revealed that the boat was carrying 30 passengers at the time of accident, 2.5 times higher than the allowed number, while operating in restricted waters.

The investigation results also showed that the boat, under current regulations, was not authorised for use with passengers and the vessel was inappropriately controlled under conditions of high waves and overloading.

Additionally, the vessel's operator did not possess a high-speed boating licence, nor was the vessel registered to moor or leave port as regulated. The vessel was also found to have entered restricted areas.

Investigation results further found that certain individuals had violated inland water traffic regulations, particularly by hiding information relating to the accident and failing to inform rescue forces in a timely manner, thereby worsening the accident's consequences.

These violations were found to show signs of criminal activity and the investigation was handed over to the HCM City Police for further investigation.

The boat, owned by Ba Ria-Vung Tau Guard, sank on the evening of August 2 amid strong winds and high waves near Can Gio District in HCM City, drowning nine people.

13.Environment plan creates new jobs

Alang Thi Hoa once entered the forest every day to look for firewood to sell. Hoa, from central Quang Nam Province's Ma Cooih Commune, like many other locals, lives close to A Vuong forest.

But instead of collecting fallen branches, Hoa is now paid to protect the forest as an administrator.

She is paid under the Forest Environmental Services policy (PFES) after being allocated 20ha of forest to look after in 2010. The job brings her an average of VND 5.5 million (US\$262) per year. As a poor householder, Hoa has also received loans from the forest protection fund financed under the same policy to grow seedlings and plant acacias.

"I and many other households in the commune no longer have to go into the forest to find wood for sale," she said.

Quang Nam has a total of 276,000ha of forest. The PFES policy had helped generate stable jobs and income for local residents while encouraging them to protect and look after the forest, said Huynh Duc, the director of Quang Nam Provincial Fund for Forest Environment Protection Fund

PFES income from hydro-power and water supply plants in the province is about VND50 billion (\$2.3 million) each year. Of this, 85 per cent is used to pay local residents for protecting and managing forests.

The scheme has increased financial incentives for forest protection by creating links with the beneficiaries of such services – hydro-power facilities, water supply companies, and eco-tourism operators.

Director of Forest and Wetland Research Institute Nguyen Chi Thanh said while the policy had proved effective, payments were low, failing to match residents' efforts in protecting the forest.

He praised Quang Nam's initiative in allocating forests for groups of households for better management, which created conditions for local residents to discuss forest situation and mechanism-related issues while helping simplify administrative procedure.

During 2011-2015, an average of VND1 trillion (\$47.6 million) was collected from forest environment services policy annually throughout the nation.

In the first six months of this year, forest protection and development funds have collected more than VND400 billion (\$19 million) from the services. Of this, 60 per cent was used to pay local residents for forest protection.

The funds have enabled 247 contracts to be signed with locals to look after forest environmental services surrounding hydro-power plants, water supply plants and environmental tourism facilities.

The policy has helped reduce the theft of trees, plants, birds and animals from the forests by nearly half. The coverage rate of the scheme is now growing by 0.2 to 0.5 per cent a year.

To create higher income for residents involved in the scheme, the Deputy Director of the Administration's Planning and Finance Department, Pham Hong Luong, said relevant ministries and agencies should review the situation.

He said it was also essential to organise training courses for officials involved to ensure they had sufficient financial and environmental skills to implement policy.

Senior Climate-Change Adviser for USAID in Viet Nam, Rosario Chato Calderon, said PFES was a good example of "green action" reversing the trend towards degradation and deforestation for healthy watersheds and forests.

After the initial pilot phase ended in 2010, 27 out of 63 provinces worked to implement PFES in their areas, she said at a workshop last Tuesday.

"In order for PFES to truly succeed, we need to ensure that investments in natural capital, like watershed services, are delivering the expected results and are enhancing economic and environmental sustainability," she said.

This would require long-term and robust monitoring and evaluation of environmental services as well as efficient and effective administration of PFES, she added.

The policy on payments for forestry services was introduced in 2008. It requires hydro-power plants, water-supply companies, and environmental tourism using the forests to pay for the services.

14. Hydro-power plant to be built in national park

A small hydro-power plant project is going through the final procedures before being built in the Chu Yang Sin National Park in Dak Lak Province.

The project preparations have been progressing despite a call by the Central Highlands Steering Committee to stop all new hydro-power projects in the region.

In 2005, the investor of the Ea K'tour Hydro-power Project, in Cu Pui Commune, Krong Bong District, received approval from the provincial People's Committee to develop the project on an area of 70ha in the park, said Tong Ngoc Chung, director of the national park.

Afterwards, authorities inspected the area and decided to suspend the project, but last year the provincial People's Committee allowed work on the project to begin on an area of just 6ha.

On August 1 this year, the provincial Department of Industry and Trade proposed that the local government reduce the capacity of the future plant from the initial 7.5MW to 5MW.

Chung warned that if a hydro-power plant is built, the park will not only lose about 6ha of forest which needs to be protected, but will also see the loss of habitats for many rare and precious endemic species that are listed in both the domestic and global Red Book.

"The plant would disrupt the stream's flow, drying up a 3-km section, thereby causing the mass death of trees along its route. Many species of fish, reptiles, and amphibians will face extinction," he said.

The national park has sent an urgent letter to the provincial People's Committee to consider halting the Ea K'Tour hydro-electric plant project.

However, the project's investor Hoang Dinh Tuan, director of the Hoang Nguyen Co Ltd in Buon Ma Thuot City, insisted that the project will bring benefits to the park.

Tuan told the Tuoi tre (Youth) newspaper that the company has reduced the area of the project from 70ha to only 6ha, which was tiny compared to the overall area of the park.

Among the small hydro-electric projects in the province, this project will have the least impact on the environment, he said.

"The park covers hundreds of thousands of hectares, while the project occupies only 6ha of it. Construction of the plant will be completed in a year and will have no impact on the fauna and flora of the park," Tuan said.

He affirmed that many provincial agencies have studied the issue, and they have decided to let the company carry out an environmental impact assessment report for the project.

"The project helps prevent deforestation in the park, and when the plant begins generating power, it will pay taxes to the authorities and forest fees to the park. Therefore, the park will suffer no losses, and will benefit from the project," he said.

Huynh Bai, chairman of the Krong Bong District People's Committee, said that the amount of taxes to be paid by the future plant are estimated at VND2-3 billion (US\$95,200-142,800) per year.

This is a large sum compared to the budget of the mountainous district, but it is small compared to the damage it will bring to the environment and local life.

"The loss in terms of the ecological environment is huge, and largely unforeseeable," Bai said, adding that the committee has repeatedly issued documents objecting to the project and demanding that it be suspended to protect the biological diversity of the park and the Dak Tour Cave.

A small hydro-power project like this, which is expected to make a small contribution to the national budget and national power grid while causing great loss and damage for the environment should not be built, he said.

Commenting on the project, associate professor Bao Huy, from Tay Nguyen University told the Tuoi tre (Youth) newspaper that the construction of the plant will change the hydrological systems of both the stream and the Chu Yang Sin mountain, leading to adverse changes to the habitats of many species of plants and animals in the park and thereby damaging the biological diversity of the area.

Besides the Ea K'tour plant, the Chu Yang Sin national park also accommodates three other small hydro-power plants, one 11MW which is already operating, a 0.2MW which is under construction and another which is still in the site clearance process.

15. Torrential rain sparks more northern region flood fears

Heavy rains are expected to continue battering the northern region this week, raising fears of further flash floods and landslides.

Torrential rain, flash floods, landslides

Heavy rains are expected to continue battering the northern region this week, raising fears of further flash floods and landslides

The National Hydro-meteorological Forecast Centre said rain had already caused landslides and flooding in the mountainous provinces of Dien Bien, Ha Giang and Lao Cai, damaging property and blocking traffic for hours.

Rainfall ranged between 60-130mm (about three to six inches).

Tens of thousands of cubic metres of earth and rock crashed down on National Highway 279 in Na Nhan Commune, northern Dien Bien Province last Friday.

Over the weekend, local authorities mobilised equipment and staff to clear the road. A temporary 200m bypass was opened on Sunday.

In Ha Giang Province, a 28-year-old man from Tung Vai Commune, Quan Ba District, was killed after being struck by lightning on Sunday morning. His wife, who was injured in the freak accident, was rushed to hospital for treatment.

Heavy rains also triggered landslides in Xin Cai Commune, burying two houses and damaging property in Xa Nhe Lu Hamlet.

Chairman of the Quan Ba People's Committee, Nguyen Hong Hai, said local authorities had evacuated householders from landslide-prone areas.

The two households hit by the landslide were also given VND13 million (US\$619) each to help them recover.

16. Pollution blamed on seafood processing

Nearly 400 households with 1,900 people in Dien Ngoc Commune in Dien Chau District, Nghe An Province, have lived for five years surrounded by pollution from seafood processing enterprises.

Dien Ngoc Commune at Lach Van fishing port receives more than 70 per cent of the total seafood caught in the district.

Every day about 200 tonnes of fish are transported to the port, said Ngo Dinh Tiu, deputy head of Dien Chau District's Natural Resources and Environment Division.

Most of the processors in the commune were set up by households without proper planning and they did not pay enough attention to waste treatment, he said.

Tran Thi Hung, 63, who lives in Ngoc Van Village, told Nong thon ngay nay (Countryside Today) newspaper that the stinking smell of fish made people miserable.

"Besides, the burning smell from processors making fish powder makes all residents choke," she said.

Tran Van Hoi, another resident, said the processors also discharged their untreated waste water directly into residential sewers, which then ran into the Lach Van River, making the water inky-black.



Commune party committee secretary Nguyen Van Hoa said pollution had also made residents in Ngoc Minh Village upset.

Commune party committee secretary Nguyen Van Hoa said pollution had also made residents in Ngoc Minh Village upset.

The commune had asked enterprises to build bio-gas tanks to treat the waste and reduce pollution.

Recently, residents in the two villages have been hit with outbreaks of trachoma (eye disease) and scabies (skin disease) - and children often suffer from pneumonia.

During the past two years, the department has joined hands with relevant bodies to treat waste and inspect the way enterprises control waste.

However, despite their efforts, pollution levels fell only slightly.

17. Japan supports VN development: JICA



Japan International Co-operation Agency President Tanaka Akihiko

Japan continues to support Viet Nam in achieving its key goal to become an industrial and modern country by 2020, said Japan International Co-operation Agency President Tanaka Akihiko.

In an exclusive interview with Viet Nam News yesterday, Akihiko said Viet Nam still needs various development demands that require financial and technical support despite becoming a middle-income country in 2010.

"Though Viet Nam has become a middle-income country – an important milestone – I acknowledge that the support principle of Japan to Viet Nam is unchanged," he said.

"Japan will continue to help Viet Nam achieve the key goal of becoming an industrial and modern country by 2020 and meet the country's 5 and 10-year socio-economic development strategies." confirmed Akihiko.

He noted Viet Nam had faced many challenges en route to achieving its goal of industrialisation and infrastructure improvement, plus greater human resource training, policy and institutional reform.

"Financial resources required for Viet Nam's basic infrastructure development will be a huge number, so besides foreign loans, Viet Nam should mobilise capital from the private sector and this will be a challenge requiring priority handling in Viet Nam" said Akihiko.

ODA priorities would be given to Viet Nam in three main pillars: fostering economic development and strengthening competitive ability through infrastructure building; enhancement of state management; and assistance for vulnerable groups through support of locality, health and health care development.

Japan would also help Viet Nam reform State enterprises and cope with environmental problems such as climate change and disaster prevention, according to Akihiko.

Explaining the role of ODA in Japan's economic foreign policy, the JICA president said in the current climate of globalisation, Japan believes it is necessary to foster friendly relations with other countries in the world. The development and peace of friendly countries retain a large impact on Japan's development and peace.

"Taking Viet Nam as an example, convenient economic development of Viet Nam would increase Japan's investment. This not only contributes to boosting growth for Viet Nam but is also an advantage for Japan's economy. Infrastructure development through ODA sources would contribute to promoting foreign investment," stressed Akihiko.

Japan has now become Viet Nam's biggest source of bilateral assistance over the past 20 years. Japan has supported socio-economic development in Viet Nam through infrastructure building, human resource training, plus mechanism and policy reforms.

Last year (2012) marked the 20th anniversary of Japanese ODA support to Viet Nam and Japan has provided 1,836 billion Yen (approximately US\$18.785 billion) in ODA loans to Viet Nam over the past 20 years.

18. HCM City to develop traditional craft villages under new programme

Nine traditional craft villages in HCM City will be preserved and developed under a city programme that will last until 2015.

The assessment made for the programme is that four of them do not have capability to develop on their own and needs government support.

They are Thai My village that makes bamboo baskets, chairs, tables, and others in Cu Chi District, Xuan Thoi Son in Hoc Mon District which produces bamboo baskets, Le Minh Xuan in Binh Chanh District which produces incense, and Ly Son village in Can Gio District that makes salt.

The other four existing ones, which can develop independently and sustainably, are Xuan – An – Loc flower and ornamental tree village in District 12, Thu Duc flower and ornamental tree village in Thu Duc District, Tan Thong Hoi in Cu Chi District that produces bamboo screens, and Phu Hoa Dong also in Cu Chi that produces rice paper.

One village is planned to be built on an area of 10-15ha in the Cu Chi Plant Garden along the Dong Canal to breed ornamental fish and offer tourism services.

The programme also aims at environmental protection and promoting traditional values.

The city government will help the villages develop infrastructure, train human resources, and use technology for production and protecting the environment.

The villages will also be provided with assistance in researching and promoting markets at home and abroad.

The city has solicited investment from all sources for preserving the villages, especially those are tourism attractions.

The city has 19 craft villages that employ 14,241 people earning an average of VND38.9 million (US\$1,800) a year, according to the Sub-department of Rural Development.

Some salt and rice paper producing villages hire up to 60 per cent of local residents.

But the development of the city's craft villages remains unplanned and they continue to use backward technologies and equipment.

More than 80 per cent of craftsmen do not have the resources to improve the technologies they use or expand production.

The designs and packaging of products made in these villages lack sophistication, affecting their competitiveness.

Almost 70 per cent of the heads of households making the products lack formal training and managerial skills. Only 2.6 per cent of them have a university degree.

The villages have also failed to tackle the pollution they cause.

19. Residents at risk with resevoirs set to burst



The Dakrong 3 Hydroelectric Plant's spillway in Quang Tri Province ruptured last year in October

Deputy PM Hoang Trung Hai has told all localities to make sure their reservoirs were safe following reports that several hundred are already showing signs of degradation.

Hai said action was necessary not only for public safety, but to guarantee energy supply and water. He told an online conference on Thursday that each reservoir could become a "water bomb", threatening the lives of thousands of people living in lowland areas.

In the past five years, the walls of several dams have broken, including those in Ha Tinh, Hoa Binh, Ninh Thuan, Son La, Tuyen Quang, Quang Tri and Kon Tum. In the latest case, the Ia Krel 2 hydro-power dam in central Highlands Gia Lai province collapsed in June, forcing hundreds of residents to flee.

Reports from ministries show that there are nearly 7,000 reservoirs of various kinds across the country with a total capacity of around 11 billion cubic metres.

Of these, a total of 317 with a capacity of below three million cubic metres have shown signs of degradation. In particular, 120 reservoirs needed urgent upgrading to ensure they are safe during this year's flood season.

Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Hoang Van Thang said most of the reservoirs were built in 1960s. Ministries admitted that several hydro-power reservoirs failed to meet safety regulations, including a failure to be able to handle big storms and floods, particularly small-scale hydro-power plants.

The deputy PM also instructed localities to punish companies that ignored taking safety measures. He told authorities to review reservoir planning to stop ineffective projects.

The Industry and Trade Ministry has already decided not to go ahead with 338 hydro-power plants that were said to be unfeasible.