



Three Major MI Meetings in the same month

The major meetings will be organized July this year in which participants will discuss the past year's activities and elect new committee chairpersons and members.

Mekong Institute (MI) will host an "MI Stakeholders Consultative Meeting: A Major Step beyond Hanoi Plan of Action" on July 18, 2007 at the MI Facility in Khon Kaen Thailand.

The Stakeholders Consultative Meeting will be followed by the MI Steering Committee Meeting in the morning of 19 July 2007, and the MI Council Meeting in the afternoon of the same day.

The stakeholders meeting will update key MI stakeholders on the progress of the MI 2007-2010 strategic goals and revised business plan, as well as solicit recommendations on how to achieve the MI strategic goals towards improved capacity for regional cooperation and transform MI from an assistance program to a sustainable knowledge service provider.

According to MI Director Dr Suchat Katima, the stakeholders meeting targets 60 participants

MI Stakeholders Consultative Meeting in July 2007



A file photo of the last Annual Meeting in May 2005

consisting of MI Council Members representing the 6 GMS member countries, MI Steering Committee Members, MI Foundation Members, MI partners, such as Country Coordinating Agents, implementing partners like Regional Operation Center, Khon Kaen University, Enterprise Development Center, MRC, GMS Business Forum, Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP), GMSTEC and development partners and sponsors such as New Zealand Embassy, the Rockefeller Foundation, UNIAP, UNDP, TICA, NZAID, World Bank, and

MI Potential Partners like AusAID, SIDA, ILO, Japanese Overseas Development Cooperation, and Devawongse Varopakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs.

MI Director Suchat Katima will present the meeting objectives and Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman of the MI Steering Committee will give the welcome speech. H.E. Dr. Tej Bunnag, Advisor to the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, and the Chairman

of the MI Council will deliver the keynote address. Reports on the MI Strategic Direction will be presented and the small group sessions will discuss recommendations on the operationalization of the Institute's Strategic Plan and to transform MI into a self-sustaining GMS-based Knowledge Provider.

MI Steering Committee and MI Council Meeting

The MI Steering Committee Meeting will receive the Institute's March-June 2007 Operations Report, updates on the learning programs and administration, nominations for the new Steering Committee Chairperson and members.

The MI Council Meeting, on the other hand, will listen to reports from the Steering Committee and the country reports from each member country, adopt the MI 2007-2010 Business Plan, as well as appoint the new MI Council Chairperson and the new Steering Committee Chairperson.

A Greater Mekong? Poverty, Integration and Development



A part of Mekong River

Australian Mekong Resource Centre and AusAID will host a conference on "A Greater Mekong? Poverty, Integration and Development" on 26-27 September 2007 at the University of Sydney, Australia.

MI Research and Library Unit Successfully Organized Training on "Assessing Sustainable Development in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)".

The Mekong Institute and Liphe4 Scientific Association organized a research training workshop on "Assessing Sustainable Development in the Greater Mekong Sub-region" on 21 May-1 June 2007 as a part of the project entitled "Integrated Participatory Analysis of Sustainability in the GMS." Nineteen participants from the six GMS countries and Japan attended the training. Eleven resource persons and facilitators delivered the two-week course.

The participants identified four research themes on sustainable development issues in the GMS, namely, Integrated Assessment of Community Based Tourism (Quality Tourism), Rural Development and Water-related issues; Rural Development and Changing Economies, as well as Options in Organic Agriculture Development. The Participants presented research proposals to demonstrate learnings acquired from the training.

A Greater Mekong? Poverty, Integration and Development

26-27 September 2007
University of Sydney, Australia

Preliminary Announcement

for a conference hosted by
Australian Mekong Resource Centre and AusAID

Development challenges in the Mekong hinge around integration of an economically diverse region and integrated management of a politically fragmented river basin. Australia has a longstanding involvement in the region, and the recent Australian Government White Paper signals a strengthened commitment to regional integration and integrated river basin management through the Australian aid program. Regional integration raises important issues concerning poorer countries and communities. Integrated river basin development and management raises issues of sustainable water use and management in an international basin facing ever greater development pressures.

In September 2007, the Australian Mekong Resource Centre and AusAID will co-host an international conference on regional integration, integrated water resource management and development in the Mekong. The conference will:

- contribute to public awareness, discussion and debate over the direction of Australia's aid program, in light of directions indicated in the 2006 White Paper
- provide an update on developments in the Mekong River Basin and Greater Mekong Subregion
- explore the implications of regional integration, infrastructure development and integrated water resource management for the sustainable well-being of the region's lower income countries and poorer communities.

Participants and speakers at the conference will come from academic, government, NGO, international organisation and community backgrounds, from around Australia, from Mekong countries and elsewhere. The conference will include keynote speakers, case studies, panel discussions and breakout sessions.

Proposals for short papers in eight thematic breakout sessions are invited. Please see the program outline below for details.

There is no fee for the conference, but prior registration is required to assist with catering and conference planning. A conference web page will be established by the middle of June 2007 and will be linked to the front page of the AMRC website www.mekong.es.usyd.edu.au. A full program and details of speakers will be announced at the end of July. For interim expression of interest and to join the conference mailing list, please contact Lindsay Soutar at lindsay.soutar@geosci.usyd.edu.au

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Program Outline

Wednesday 26 September

MORNING: *Keynote address on regional economic integration in the Mekong and its implications*

Mekong Update- regional integration and integrated water resources management

- Economic and development update of the Mekong Region since the 1997 crisis
- Situational overviews on regional economic integration and IWRM in the Mekong
- Australia's White Paper and the aid program
- Areas of critical concern

AFTERNOON: *Key issues in Mekong development*

- Regional integration and its implications for poorer countries and communities
- Integrated water resources management and river basin governance
- Case studies

Thursday 27 September

MORNING: *Keynote address on Integrated Water Resource Management and the Mekong and its interpretations*

Parallel small group sessions, including

- The AusAID White Paper and its implications for the Mekong
- Making regional integration work for the poor
- Poverty, sustainability and infrastructure
- Water governance and the Mekong
- Natural resources and the role of the private sector
- Civil society and regional institutions (MRC and GMS)
- China, the GMS and the Lancang-Mekong
- Energy futures for the Mekong

Small group sessions will consist of 2-3 short paper presentations, a moderating panel and group discussion. Submission of proposals for papers in each of these sessions is invited. Papers may be regional or country-specific in focus. Please contact lindsay.soutar@geosci.usyd.edu.au with expressions of interest and details of proposed paper including title and short descriptive paragraph.

AFTERNOON: *Looking back to look forward: lessons and opportunities*

Panel discussion and open debate

MI activities in pictures

TICA Evaluates MI Performance



On 21-22 June 2007 Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA)'s evaluation team comprising Dr. Surachai Sirikrai, Ms. Suchaphan Funghthammasarn, Mr. Phichet Khemthong, and Ms. Hathaichanok Siriwadhanakul, visited MI to evaluate the performance of the Institute.

The TICA team met with Dr. Ramon Sevilla, MI Academic Director, MI program managers, selected course lecturers and participants, as well as MI administration staff.

Thai Foreign Affairs at MI



The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul (3rd from right) and his team, officially visited MI on May 8, 2007. Mr. Futrakul met with MI Academic Director Dr. Ramon Sevilla (center) and MI senior staff to discuss cooperation and support to MI programs.

MI Makes a Donation



On 8 June 2007, MI donated 62 pieces of used beds and mattresses to Maree Niramol School, School for the Blinds and Sueksa Songkroao School in Khon Kaen province. Pictured above are MI Academic Director Dr. Ramon Sevilla, and MI Administration Director Pakpoom Teranantana, who presented the donations to School for the Blinds representatives.

Calling In On Mekong Institute for Close Cooperation



Ms. Ayumi Fujino, (right, front row) Head of UNIDO Regional Office in Bangkok UNIDO and UNIDO Regional Officers Mr. Khac Tiep Nguyen and Mr. Uaychai Nitising paid an official visit to Mekong Institute to meet on bilateral cooperation with MI Director Dr. Suchat Katima (2nd from right, front row) and his management team on April 10, 2007.

Integrated Curriculum and Learning Module Development



Dr. Betsy Joy Tan, Vice President for Academic Affairs of Silliman University, Philippines, is seen here conducting the training on "Integrated Curriculum and Learning Module Development." MI organized this short course for its academic team on 15-17 May 2007 at the MI Facility in Khon Kaen, Thailand.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes official visit to MI



Fifty officers and staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, led by Minister Counselor Mr. Bhakavat Tanskul visited Mekong Institute on May 21. MI Director Dr. Suchat Katima, and MI senior staff welcomed the visitors and briefed them on MI programs. After a video presentation on the activities of the Institute, the visitors were given an inspection tour of the MI offices and training facilities.

Round Table Meeting of the MIRAC Research Consortium

The Mekong Institute Research Advisory Committee (MIRAC) research consortium presented the MIRAC-led research reports 2006-2007 at a Round Table Meeting held on April 8-9, 2007 at the Mekong Institute. Forty-one delegates from GMS member countries, MI officers and partners, as well as interested parties from outside the region attended the meeting. The Round Table Meeting aimed:

- ❖ to provide the opportunity for the researchers to present and receive feedback on the results of their studies;
- ❖ to validate research findings with GMS stakeholders;
- ❖ to recommend ways to link research initiatives with other MI programs.

Four invited papers and six MIRAC research papers were presented at the meeting. Based on feedbacks, the research teams revised and presented the reports at the follow-up regional policy meeting on "Regional Support to Address Social Impacts of Infrastructure Corridors". The follow up regional policy meeting was held at MI on 14-16 June 2007 with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation.

The six MI RAC research papers presented in the round table were as follows:

Overview of GMS Tourism Special Reference to Myanmar Tourism (Prof. U Myat Thein, Myanmar)

The paper presented the general condition of the tourism industry in Myanmar, outlining its potentials and constraints. GMS envisaged as single tourist destination, would require primary, secondary and tertiary infrastructure development in Myanmar. Poorly developed infrastructures, the prevailing economic sanctions and political constraints are perceived as among the principal reasons for the slow growth of the tourism sector in Myanmar.

GMS Economic Corridors in Yunnan: Progress, Problems, and Policy implications (Mr. Kong Jianxun, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences)

The paper gave confidence in the realization of potential benefits of the North South Economic Corridor (NSEC), mainly due to the high level of completion of the transport projects, government commitment and availability of internal funding in Yunnan Section.

Kunming - Laocai - Hanoi - Hai Phong: Potential Constraints & Possible Impacts (Dr Bui Quang Tuan, Institute of World Economics and Politics, Vietnam)

The paper acknowledged that infrastructures should be upgraded but raised concerns that full benefits may not be evenly realized given variances in the conditions and capacities between China and Vietnam. The goals associated with this corridor requires commitments and capacities of the countries concerned to develop "hardware", such as infrastructure and "software" such as, efficient border administration systems and ancillary services (logistics and trade services).

Contested Meanings and Expectations of the East-West Economic Corridor in Thailand (Dr. Yaowalak Apichatvullop, Khon Kaen University, Thailand)

This research aimed to identify the perceived values and expectations of various local stakeholders on East West Economic Corridor (EWEC). The EWEC was found to be generally valued as a support for the economy of the region. Stakeholders rarely think of it as a connection or link of cultural and social relations. They also have varying capacities and coping measures for the changes arising from developments in the corridor.

Impact of East West Economic Corridor (EWEC) on Tertiary Business and Social Development of Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR (Mr. Sivilai Butphomvihane, National University of Laos)

This study was undertaken in four districts traversed by Road No. 9 in Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR. It aimed to determine

the characteristics and capacities of tertiary business in the areas, preliminary impacts of corridor in social aspect, know their expectations of the benefits to be derived from EWEC, and to look into the government's support strategies.

Facts and Implications of the GMS Economic Corridors to Cambodia (Mr. Kov Phyrum, Economic Institute of Cambodia)

The study showed that 62% of the length of the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC) is in Cambodia; however the country is resource-constrained to support infrastructure development. Each sub-corridor along the Cambodian line has different potentials in terms of economic sectors at the same time faces major challenges such as, low population density, low skilled labor and high illiteracy rate, high poverty incidence low public awareness and weak institutional coordination. The paper is also concerned about potential environmental impacts and threats to archaeological sites.

The 2nd Mekong Institute Research Advisory Committee Meeting

The Second Meeting of the Mekong Institute Research Advisory Committee (MIRAC) was held on 10-11 April 2007 at the Mekong Institute. The meeting was attended by all MIRAC members composed of six GMS country members, three international research advisors, MI Director, MI Academic Director and MI Research Manager.

MI Director, Dr. Suchat Katima presented the MI Strategic Direction for 2007-2010 to the meeting. Dr. Suchat stressed the need to synergize the MI three program components, namely, Research, Training and Policy Formulation Programs.

During the meeting, the following proposals were approved for the MI Small Research Grant Program 2007 funded by NZAID. The proposals were selected based on content and design, relevance to emerging issues in the GMS and input potentials to the MI learning programs and policy formulation meetings. List of Proposals and Researchers:

Myanmar

- ❖ Clustering and Supply Chain Strategy for Myanmar Small and Medium Manufacturing Industries Development in Myanmar, Ms. Aye Aye Kyuu

Thailand

- ❖ Potentiality of Community-based Tourism in the Northern Economic Corridor of the GMS: Cases of Chiang Khong District in Thailand and Luang Namtha District in Lao PDR, Dr. Bussaba Sitikarn

Vietnam

- ❖ An Analysis on Vietnam's Capacity of Attracting Local and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), Ms. Nguyen Thi Mai Anh
- ❖ Social and Environmental Impacts of Border Trade in Sino-Vietnamese Border Communities: A case study in Laocai (Vietnam), Ms. Pham Hong Yen and Mr. Lai Lam Anh

Yunnan, China

- ❖ An Assessment of the Kunming Sunshine Homeland Project in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care in Yunnan, Ms. Mei Li

Cambodia

- ❖ Potentials of Garment Sector Investment of Rural Area in Improving Socio-Economic Conditions of Migrants in Takhmau District, Kandal Province, Cambodia, Mr. Sok Serey
- ❖ The Constraints and Potentiality of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development in the GMS: A Case in Cambodia, Ms. Chhim Ratha

Lao PDR

- ❖ Environmental Impacts of Rubber Plantation in Lao PDR, Mr. Kaisorn Thantathep and Ms. Boupavanh Keomixay

Note: For more details, please write bhoj@mekonginstitute.org

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"Assessing Sustainable Development in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)".

The training was sponsored by the Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) and organized by MI and Liphe4 Scientific Association in partnership with National University of Laos, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand and Wakayama University, Japan.

The objectives of this training were:

- (1) to provide capacity building and awareness to young researchers about sustainable development issues;
- (2) to train and enable participants to independently conduct research on crucial global change and sustainability issues; and
- (3) to provide an opportunity for networking among young researchers and concerned professionals.

Training topics covered the following:

- Integrated Assessment of Sustainability, a general overview;
- Multi-Scale Integrated Analysis of Societal Metabolism;
- Gender Issues and Participatory Development;
- Exploring Inclusive Solutions in Participatory Development;
- Biophysical constraints analysis: MFA, Land-time analysis
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applied to Integrated Analysis of Sustainability.
- Social and Environmental Impact Assessment
- Public Health and Globalization Issues in the GMS
- Sub-regional Sustainable Development Strategies (SSDS) of the GMS; and
- National Sustainable Development Strategy; A Case study of Thailand

The participants acquired new learning on the state-of-the-art research concepts and methodologies on global change that helped sharpen their research questions around GMS-specific issues on sustainable development. The training, moreover, opened opportunities for participant researchers to network with an advanced group of researchers and resource persons.

Group Outcomes

Group A: Integrated Assessment of Community-based Tourism (Quality Tourism)

- ❖ Empowerment of local community in decision making
- ❖ Empowerment of women in tourism sector
- ❖ Integrated assessment of different options (costs and benefits for different players in different scales) using Geographical Information System (GIS)
- ❖ Land Use Analysis and Environmental Impact Analysis in tourism

Group B: Rural Development and Water Issues in the GMS

- ❖ Governance in sanitation and water security
- ❖ Water use in the agricultural sector
- ❖ Integrated water resource management
- ❖ Water allocation in watershed management
- ❖ Freshwater distribution and management
- ❖ Comparison of water use across the GMS countries

Group C: Rural Development within a Changing Economy

- ❖ Impact of labor migration (internal migration: rural to urban)
- ❖ Urbanization: a model of pro-poor strategies in agriculture
- ❖ Upland cultivation and poverty reduction
- ❖ Farming land use patterns in the GMS
- ❖ Integrated assessment of urbanization
- ❖ Globalizing economy and a comparison of "trade off analysis" of existing trends and possible changes

Group D: Options of Agriculture Development through Organic Farming

- ❖ Integrated assessment of organic rice production
- ❖ The role of organic agriculture and alternatives to high external input agriculture
- ❖ Environmental sustainability of agriculture production
- ❖ Biodiversity Conservation Assessment

Note: For more details of the research papers please write bhoj@mekonginstitute.org

Upcoming events

The 3-month work plan for MI Programs to be held from July 1, 2007 - September 30, 2007 are mainly MI Human Resource Development Programs as follows:

July 22-28, 2007

Trade and Investment Potentials in Cambodia and Vietnam (in partnership with Regional Operation Center, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Khon Kaen University), 25 Thai government officials from 19 border provinces will attend the event aiming to orient and expose Thai officials, who are involved in trade facilitation with neighboring countries, on the socio-economic development plans as well as investment and development activities in Cambodia and Vietnam.

July 24 - August 11, 2007

Income Generation & Poverty Reduction (in partnership with TICA and Colombo Plan Secretariat, 25 participants from various developing countries, will attend the 3-week training course on SME development, leadership in competitive enterprise and participation of grass-roots stakeholders in poverty reduction. The course employs classroom -based discussions and structured learning visits to integrated rural development projects and SME development sites in Northeast Thailand.

August 20-28, 2007

Combating Human Trafficking in the GMS (in partnership with UNIAP) 25 participants will attend the series of professional development workshops where GMS professionals from the private and public sectors engaged in human trafficking and migration management mutually learn and share, examine issues and problems as well as formulate affirmative actions related to migration and trafficking in persons.

September 3 - 7, 2007

Training of Trainer Program on Improving Facilitation Capacities (in partnership with NZAID) 25 participants will attend the event seeking to develop competencies among MI staff as well as trainers and facilitators and to provide training to MI Key Staff as well as trainers/facilitators of development partners on Masterful Facilitation, Participation-centered methodologies and VIPP.

August - October, 2007

Young GMS Facilitator Program (in partnership with NZAID), 12 participants will attend the program aiming to improve MI human resource capabilities by recruiting and training 12 young promising individuals from the GMS countries on regional cooperation and masterful facilitation. Successful trainees will be absorbed by MI as "Junior Program Facilitators"

September 23-29, 2007

Enhancing Entrepreneurship Training (in partnership with SDC, EDC) 25 participants will attend the event that is one of the six entrepreneurship development training courses for entrepreneurs from the GMS countries in collaboration with the Entrepreneurship Development Center of India.

MI Program Activities

MI Holds MIRAC Meeting

2nd Meeting of the
Mekong Institute Research Advisory Committee
10-11 April 2007



The second meeting of the Mekong Institute Research Advisory Committee (MIRAC), sponsored by NZAID was organized on April 10-11, 2007 by the Mekong Institute. Pictured above, MI Director Dr Suchat Katima, standing 6th from the right, chaired this two-day meeting, at Conference Room II on the 4th floor of MI Building. 13 representatives from Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, New Zealand, and Japan attended the event.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation



Group pictured above, are 22 participants from 15 countries attending the learning course on 'Project Monitoring and Evaluation', which is organized by Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency and MI from April 23 - May 11, 2007. The opening ceremony of the course was presided over on April 23 by MI Director Dr. Suchat Katima, standing 2nd from the right, at MI Conference Room 1, Khon Kaen, Thailand.

MI kicks off research training for 19 representatives from GMS and Japan!



19 participants from the 6 Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) countries, which include 3 representatives from Japan are currently attending the research training on "Assessing Sustainable Development in the GMS", which began on May 21 with Mekong Institute (MI) Director Dr. Suchat Katima, presiding over the opening ceremony at MI Conference Room 1.

This research training will end on June 1, and is currently organized by Liphe4 Scientific Association, with MI, and in partnership with Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand), National University (Laos), and Wakayama University (Japan) as well as being sponsored by Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) - CAPaBLE. -

More than 6 Countries Join the Round Table Discussion



MI Director, Dr. Suchat Katima, seated centre, presides over the opening ceremony of the Round Table Discussion on MIRAC Research Consortium 2006 -07. The two-day discussion held on April 8-9, 2007 was sponsored by NZAID and organized by the Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen, Thailand. Group pictured above, are about 40 participants from the 6 GMS countries, New Zealand, and Japan. -

Project Monitoring and Evaluation



On May 11, Mekong Institute (MI) Director, Dr Suchat Katima, presided over the closing day and graduation ceremony of the 3-week-learning course entitled "Project Monitoring and Evaluation" which was held for 22 participants from 15 countries. The course was jointly organized by Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA), the Colombo Plan Secretariat, and MI from April 23 - May 11, 2007 at the MI Facility.

Upland Cultivation in the Context of Increasing Economic Integration in GMS



Group photo of workshop participants

Mekong Institute organized a workshop on "Upland Cultivation in the Context of Increasing Economic Integration in Greater Mekong Sub-region" on June 20 - 22, 2007. Thirty-one participants from six GMS countries attended the opening ceremony held on June 20 at MI Conference Room 1.

MI Program Activities

MI Alumni Meeting in Myanmar



MI Alumni Social Gathering jointly organized by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar and Mekong Institute, on May 28 - June 1, 2007 in Nay Pyi Taw City, Myanmar.

Closing Ceremony of the Research Training Held at the Mekong Institute



MI organized the closing ceremony of the two - week research training course on "Assessing Sustainable Development in the Greater Mekong Sub-region" on 1 June 2007.

Dr. Yaowalak Apichatvullop (seated center) Director of the Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region, Member of the MI Research Advisory Committee and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University presided over the closing ceremony held at MI conference room. Pictured with **Dr. Yaowalak** here are **Dr. Chaiyod Bunyagidj** (seated 3rd from right), Vice president of Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) in Bangkok, **Mr. Bhoj Raj Khanal**, MI Research Manager with 19 course participants (16 from GMS countries and 3 from Japan).

Expert Group Meeting on Trade Facilitation and Logistics Capacity Building Activities for the GMS



Regional Cooperation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region



30 participants from the six GMS countries attending the opening ceremony of the learning course on Regional Cooperation in the GMS, 25 June 2007.

The learning course on "Regional Cooperation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region" organized by Mekong Institute (MI) in Khon Kaen, Thailand was held on 25 June to 13 July 2007.

MI Director Dr. Suchat Katima, delivered his opening address during the June 2007 learning course on regional cooperation at the MI Conference Room 1.

MI Academic Director Dr. Ramon C. Sevilla, (top right), presenting the orientation and setting the context of the regional cooperation course, 25 June 2007.

Combating Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region



Dr. Susu Thatun, Senior Advisor, **Dr. Ramon C. Sevilla**, MI Academic Director, **Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT)**, delivering the opening remarks.

The Regional Training Programme to Combat Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region was jointly organized by United Nations Inter -Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion (UNIAP) and Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen, Thailand from June 19 -27, 2007.

Thirty-one participants from six GMS countries attended the opening ceremony which was held on June 19, at the MI Conference Room 2.

Mekong Institute (MI) hosted an Expert Group Meeting on "Trade Facilitation and Logistics Capacity Building Activities for the GMS" at the MI Facility in Khon Kaen Province on May 11-13, 2007.

Ten participants attended the meeting, representing ADB, GMS-BF (Bangkok, Thailand), GMS-BF (Vientiane, Lao PDR), AMEICC/JODC, TNT (Singapore), EWEC Research Director's Office, the North Eastern Strategic Institute, Khon Kaen University (Khon Kaen, Thailand), Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand), University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (Bangkok, Thailand), Japan Institute of Logistics Systems (Tokyo, Japan), Global Fleet Sales Co., Ltd. (RM Asia Group) Bangkok, Thailand and MI .

MI Director, Dr. Suchat Katima, (standing 3rd from left, front row), presided over the meeting which aimed to discuss GMS trade facilitation issues and draft action plans for the way forward.

GMS NEWS



Myanmar's most famous attraction is the monumental Shwedagon Pagoda, dubbed the "winking wonder" in Rudyard Kipling's *Road to Mandalay*, is one reason to add an extra day in Myanmar.

THAILAND READY TO PROMOTE TRANSPORT NETWORK CONSTRUCTION WITH CHINA, PM SAYS

BEIJING, May 29 - Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont said here Tuesday that Thailand is ready to work with China and Laos to promote the transport network construction in the region.

During his meeting with Qin Guangrong, governor of southwest China's Yunnan province, Surayud said his country will make efforts to boost the logistic and trade development via an international road from Kunming, capital city of Yunnan, to Bangkok of Thailand.

The 1,800-km-long road, which runs from Kunming to Bangkok via Laos, is a key project under Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) economic cooperation. Being the first land channel linking China, Laos and Thailand, the road is scheduled to be completed at the end of the year.

Surayud, who arrived in Kunming from Beijing this afternoon, also called for more enterprises with potentials to invest in Thailand and promised to provide favorable condition.

Echoing Surayud's proposal, Qin said Yunnan hopes to further push forward cooperation with Thailand, especially in tourism sector.

Surayud left for home Tuesday evening, concluding his two-day official visit to China. This is his first China tour since being appointed prime minister in October 2006.

He met with Chinese President Hu Jintao and held talks with Premier Wen Jiabao in Beijing on Monday. (XINHUA)

MEKONG RIVER COUNTRIES WORK TO REFINE FLOOD FORECASTING

HCM City, May 17 - The 5th annual Mekong Flood Forum opened in Ho Chi Minh City on May 17-18, 2007, with the aim of working towards a balanced flood management plan for the Mekong basin.

Dr Olivier Cogels, MRC Chief Executive Officer, pointed to the urgent need of enhancing information exchange and flood management. He noted that improved early flood warning and forecasting systems could avert loss of lives due to floods.

The governments of Netherlands, Japan, France, Denmark and the USA are providing technical and financial assistance to efforts of the Mekong riparian countries to mitigate impacts of floods are by the Netherlands, Japan, France, Denmark and the US technically and financially.

The forum brings together 150 delegates from the Mekong River Commission (MRC) member countries Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam, dialogue countries China and Myanmar as well as international scientists.- (VNA)

NGOS DON'T WANT DAM IN MEKONG RIVER

BANGKOK, May 3 - Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the Mekong region, East Asia, Australia, Europe and the United States are urging the Laos Government to abandon its plans to build the Don Sahong dam in the Mekong River.

In a statement Wednesday, the NGOs said Mega First Corp from Malaysia has been conducting a feasibility study, which is expected to be completed shortly, for the Don Sahong Dam Project

"Once the feasibility study and the draft Environmental Impact Assessment are received by the Laos Government, a public hearing should be scheduled in Vientiane," they said.

According to the NGOs, the 240 MW dam, the first to be

built on the lower Mekong and which could generate power possibly for export to Thailand, Cambodia or Vietnam, would block fish migration and undermine fisheries-based livelihoods in the four countries.

"We are concerned that the feasibility study will fail to adequately consider the extremely negative and widespread impacts that the dam would have on Mekong River fish and fisheries," the NGOs said in an open letter to the four governments.

NGOs are especially concerned that the Lao government and others would be deceived by claims of project developers that installing a fish pass on the dam would facilitate fish migration. (BERNAMA)

THAIS URGED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STRONGER BAHT TO INVEST IN CAMBODIA

BANGKOK, April 1 - Thai investors should take an advantage of the baht's appreciation to invest in Cambodia's construction and manufacturing industries, according to Foreign Trade Department Director-General Apiradee Tantraporn.

Ms. Apiradee said that a recent visit to Cambodia by a Thai trade and investment delegation as part of the economic cooperation framework of the "Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy" was very fruitful. The delegation comprising representatives of the private and public sectors explored opportunities for trade and investment expansion in Cambodia.

The construction and manufacturing industries in Cambodia are promising, she said, and investment would facilitate Thai product entry into the Cambodian market and boost recognition of Thai products over those of rivals such as China and Vietnam.

The Cambodian economy has grown significantly, with the construction sector expanding at more than 10 percent annually, creating a good opportunity investment. This is especially appealing in that Phnom Penh allows 100 percent foreign investment in projects, according to Ms. Apiradee.

To avoid local resentment, however, she suggested that Thais opt for joint ventures with Cambodian partners.

Ms. Apiradee said that the Association of Thai Business persons in Cambodia invited Thai investment now because of the strong baht, noting that the relative strength of the baht would reduce investment costs in that country.

More importantly, she said, investment in Cambodian manufacturing would make Thai product more price-competitive than those of rivals. (TNA)