

“1999 Top News on Environment in Asia”

Cambodia

Mr. Kol Vathana, International and Public Cooperation, Ministry of Environment (MoE)

1. Participation in the Second Regional Forum for Southeast Asia of the IUCN World Commission for Protected Areas

Recently, the Ministry of Environment of Cambodia sent a delegation to participate in the above forum, which was held from 6 December to 11 December 1999, in Pakse, Champassak, Lao PDR. The objectives of the Workshop were coping with unexpected problems and Opportunities for Protected Area Management in Southeast Asia at the turn of the Century. During the Workshop, Cambodia provided general information about its own terrestrial Protected Area Management. It drew attention from the region to focus on establishment of Marine Protected Areas and capacity building for management of these areas in Cambodia. Detailed information related to this matter is available at the Department of Nature Conservation and Protection, Ministry of Environment (MoE), Cambodia, the E-mail address of which is <moedncp@forum.org.kh>.

2. Workshop on “Awareness of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance”

It is known that the Cambodian Government received an official certificate from UNESCO for a designed Biosphere Reserve on 3 June 1998. In addition, Cambodia became the 166th contracting party of the Ramsar Convention on 23 October 1999. In conformity with this, Cambodia conducted a Workshop on "Awareness of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance" from 27 to 28 October 1999. Called the Inventory and Management of Cambodian Wetlands Project, the Ministry of Environment organized the Workshop with the financial support of DANIDA, through the Mekong River Commission, in Kampong Thom Province. The objective of the Workshop was to promote awareness of the Ramsar Convention at national, provincial, and community levels. During the process of the Workshop, there were discussions on three Ramsar sites in Cambodia, the role of related government agencies, community, and others and also on future actions to be taken. Further information on this is available by contacting Mr. Meas Sophal, whose E-mail address is <swamps@bigpond.com.kh>.

3. “Management of Forests and Elimination of Illegal Forest Activity” Begins

Following the completion of a Forest Policy reform study, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) issued a declaration on Management of Forests and Elimination of Illegal Forest Activity. The declaration assigned the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries and the Minister of Environment to report to the RGC on their achievements. A project proposal for forest crime monitoring and reporting program was prepared jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF), MoE, and the World Bank, and approved on 31 May 1999. Financial support for implementation and operation was submitted by interested donors. There are some funds supported by various donors such as the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, and the AusAID. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) accepted the responsibility for executing the project. The 31 May project proposal, approved by MAFF and MoE, was reformatted into an FAO project document and approved and signed by all necessary stakeholders on 13 August 1999. On 6 October 1999 the project was declared operational by UNDP and FAO. Detailed information related to the above matter can be found by contacting Mr. Has Vibol, whose E-mail address is <moe-cabinet@camnet.com.kh>.

4. Workshops on Development of Local Forests

In order to achieve the object of sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity conservation, the MoE of Cambodia gave high consideration to Community Forestry Development. In spite of this, the Minister of Environment has recommended to the Council of Ministers that Community Forestry Development is one of the most important strategies to help in sustaining forest resources in Cambodia. Following up on the above concept, the MoE assigned the Community Forestry & Buffer Zones Management Unit to implement and cooperate with other related agencies in Community Forestry Development. As a result, there were a few related Workshops conducted in Cambodia such as:

- Workshop on "Establishment of Guidelines for Community Forestry Development in the forests outside of Concession Forest and Protected Areas", which was conducted from 20 to 22 October 1999, in Siem Reap Province, Cambodia.

- Workshop on "Establishment of Guidelines for Community Forestry Development within and adjacent to Concession Forests", which was conducted from 10 to 12 November 1999, in Kampong Thom Province, Cambodia.

- Workshop on "Establishment of Guidelines for Community Forestry Development within and adjacent to Protected Areas", which was conducted from 7 to 8 December 1999, in Sihanoukville, Cambodia.

All the above Workshops were organized by the Secretariat of the National Committee to Manage and Execute Forest Management Policy; the Community Forestry & Buffer Zones Management Unit, Department of Nature Conservation and Protection, MoE; and the Community Forestry Unit, Department of Forestry and Wildlife, MAFF, with financial support from the Sustainable Management of Forest Resources Project (SMFP) and the ADB with collaboration from Concern Worldwide. Further information is available from Mr. Ken Serey Rotha, whose E-mail address is <ROTHA@bigpond.com.kh>.

5. Drafting of a "Sub-Decree on the 23 Protected Areas Management in Cambodia"

On the 15th of December 1999, there was a meeting in the MoE on drafting a sub-decree on the 23 Protected Areas Management in Cambodia. The meeting was organized by the Department of Nature Conservation and Protection, MoE. The Sub-decree has now been sent to the legal council for review and it will then be sent to the Council of Ministers for approval. For further information, please contact Mr. Meas Sophal, whose E-mail address is <swamps@bigpond.com.kh>.

China

Ms. Zhou Xin, Policy Research Center for Environment and Economy: PRCEE

1. Twentieth Anniversary of the Enactment of “The Environmental Protection Law of the People’s Republic of China”

A legal system of environmental protection has been established in China. By the end of 1999, China had enacted 6 environmental protection laws, 9 resource conservation laws, 35 administrative regulations, more than 90 sectoral rules, over 1000 local regulations and 6 environmental protection military regulations. There are also 430 national environmental standards. China has concluded/joined more than 1000 international or multilateral environmental treaties.

2. Highlighting Pollution Control: Evident Results Achieved

- i) Beijing implemented 22 measures to control severe air pollution in 1999, including the new charge rate of SO₂ emissions, strong enforcement of industrial emission control to attain environmental standards, construction of 40 coal-free heating areas, promotion of the use of clean fuel such as natural gas, LPG and light diesel oil, mandatory abandonment of 50,000 old automobiles exceeding emission standards, and increased green land of 600 km². The ambient concentrations of SO₂ and CO are lower than those in the same period last year.
- ii) The Phase I water treatment of Dianchi Lake, Yunnan Province, has been completed. Ninety-eight percent heavy polluting factories in the catchment have attained waste water discharge standards. Clear water has returned to Dianchi Lake, which provided a favorable environment for the successful China Kunming '99 International Horticulture Exposition held in Yunnan Province.

3. Increase of Investment in Environmental Protection

The nation raised RMB 6.7 billion Yuan for environmental protection and ecological construction with focuses on pollution treatment of “Three Major Rivers” and “Three Major Lakes”, including 123 water pollution control projects and construction of 119 waste water treatment plants. In 1999, the investment in environmental protection reached 1 percent of the GDP.

4. Ecological Conservation in the Yangtze and Yellow River Basins

To raise the environmental awareness of the public, alleviate the situation of ecological degradation in the Yangtze River Basin and sound the alarm to present as well as future generations, the State Environmental Protection Administration, together with China Academy of Science, Qinghai Provincial Government, Sichuan Provincial Government and the State Survey Bureau erected a monument to “the source of the Yangtze River” on June 5, 1999. The inscription was written by State President Jiang Zemin.

On Oct. 24, the Ministry of Water Conservation, Qinghai Provincial Government and the Water Conservation Committee of the Yellow River erected a monument to “the source of the Yellow River” which was also inscribed by President Jiang Zemin.

Ecological construction of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers has been listed in the national planning of ecological conservation. The State has made up its mind to recover vegetation and promote soil conservation in the middle and upper stream of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers.

Monument to “the source of the Yangtze River”



India

Dr. Maithili Iyer, Tata Energy and Resources Institute

1. Supreme Court Tightens Emissions Standards in Delhi

In a significant ruling on April 29, 1999, the Supreme Court of India ordered the automobile industry to adhere to stringent emission standards. In addition to restricting the sale of cars that comply to Euro I norms to 1500 per month in the National Capital Region (NCR), the Court has also advanced the enforcement dates for both petrol and diesel cars to June 1999, which were earlier scheduled for April 2000. Nevertheless, cars that comply with Euro II norms will not be affected by this order, nor will they be subject to any quota. While Euro I norms have been brought forward by nine months, Euro II norms have been advanced by five years, to April 2000. This order brings an unexpected bonus to environmentalists as the original hearing was to take a decision on the proposed ban on diesel cars only following the recommendations of the Environment Pollution Prevention and Control Authority (EPCA). Market watchers and other experts fear that quota restrictions on cars may bring about an increase in the two-wheeler population, which are more polluting than four-wheelers. There is also the fear of trans-migration of vehicles as this order is not applicable all over the country. For further information on this directive, refer to *Down to Earth*, May 31, 1999, Center for Science and Environment: New Delhi.

In a separate attempt to control emissions, the state government of Delhi is considering a ban on the sale of new two-wheelers fitted with two-stroke engines to take effect from January 2000. This proposal is generating a lot of debate as experts feel setting emission norms may prove to be a better policy instrument for pollution control as against restraining or banning any particular technology. Furthermore, there are limitations to strategies focusing only on changing automotive technologies and emission norms. Travel demand management or traffic management is an option that the Indian government could consider alongside policy instruments for controlling pollution.

2. Ministerial Directive to Use Fly Ash for Construction Purposes

Subsequent to the draft notification from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in May 1998, and a High Court order in October 1998, the MoEF issued a notification in September 1999 toward the use of fly ash for construction purposes. According to this directive, within a 50 km radius of coal or lignite-based thermal power plants, no person shall manufacture clay bricks or tiles for use in construction activities without mixing at least 25% of ash with soil on a weight to weight basis. This directive also requires thermal power plants to make ash available for free for at least ten years beginning from the date of this notification. For further information on this directive, refer to *The Gazette of India - Extraordinary*, September 14, 1999.

3. Negotiations for a Biosafety Protocol

The inter-governmental negotiations on agreeing to a biosafety protocol broke down during the Cartagena meeting in February 1999. Disagreement arose over the scope and strength of the protocol's provisions for Living Modified Organisms (LMOs). LMOs, which are developed and released for commercial use mostly by the multinational corporate sector using genetic engineering, are considered a threat to the environment, natural biological diversity, human health and agrarian economies. India is keen on developing a strong protocol on biosafety under the legally binding Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The major thrust of India's effort is to resist 'loosening' of the draft protocol as India perceives loosening may threaten biological diversity, lower food security, add to health hazards, and expose farming communities to risks. India's position on the protocol is to include agricultural commodities and LMOs intended for direct use for food, feed or processing, which are currently excluded from the scope of the protocol. For further information on this issue, refer to *ENVIRO NEWS*, September 1999,

Ministry of Environment and Forests: New Delhi.

Indonesia

Dr.. Mohamad Soerjani, National Research Council

1. PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the new era of democracy in Indonesia, there is a strong trend that the present 26 provinces of the over 17,500 islands of the archipelago will require full autonomy to have their own provincial rights to manage development while maintaining the quality of our natural resources and the whole country's environment. In response to this trend the government endorsed Act No. 22 of 1999 concerning Provincial Autonomy which will be implemented in two years time (2002). This is to promote community aspirations and democracy in development, to enhance the role of the community and participation in development, and to facilitate development benefits shared equitably among regions. The new act will also promote regional potential and diversity. This autonomy is followed by Act No. 25 of 1999 concerning the Monetary Balance Between the Central and the Provincial Governments. The new act will maintain the financial system of the government, namely

- by sharing the budgeting system with the provinces;
- by equalizing proportionally inter-provincial potential;
- by developing while considering the environmental conditions and needs of the regions;
- by improving financial management and supervision.

The implementation of this regional autonomy law, which applies to all provinces, districts and cities, urgently requires improvements in the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the human resources of all regions.

2. PROFILE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTER IN INDONESIA

Since joining the Stockholm Conference in 1972, Indonesia has had a National Committee on Environmental Matters under the leadership of Professor Emil Salim, the Deputy Chairman of the National Development Planning Agency. In 1973 Professor Salim was appointed as Minister of Transportation. The Committee was handed over to Professor Sumarlin.

In 1978, Professor Salim was appointed as the Minister of State for Development Supervision and Environment, then in 1983 the position was changed and he became the Minister of State for Population and Environment. In 1988 the office was split to become the Ministry of State for Environment, and Mr. Sarwono Kusumaatmadja was appointed as the Minister, while the other section became the Ministry of State for Population, and the Minister was Dr. Hayono Sujono, Chairman of the Family Planning Board. In 1997 a new Minister, who is a medical doctor, Panangian Siregar, was appointed under President Habibie. Mr. Siregar is known to be unpopular since there has been no dialogue with the community through leaders of the self reliance organization.

The present Minister, Dr. Sonny Keraf, was originally Senior Lecturer in Business Ethics of Atmajaya Catholic (Catholic?) Private University in Jakarta. He was born 41 years ago in Lembata, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. As an expert in philosophy, Dr. Keraf will base his policy and program in his duty as Minister of State in Environment with environmental ethics. Environmental management is closely related with human ethics, he said. He is committed to working in his new capacity with objective spirit, neutrality and a low profile. When the NGO leaders visited his new office, he said that he intended to be friends with the NGOs, and requested the NGOs to evaluate his work in 100 days. He hopes that serious environmental problems in development will be prioritized to be resolved in three months time, although he indicated that he must be careful as the big problems of some industries are closely related to the aspirations common people and their welfare.

3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY IN INDONESIA

After the peaceful general election in October 1999, a new cabinet was established with K.H. Abdurrachman Wahid as President and Mrs. Megawati Soekarnoputri as Vice President. In the meantime, two new Acts were enacted concerning Provincial and District autonomy. A new concern occurred among the regions that there will be many development sectors that should be addressed at once (as of 2000) as the responsibility of local government. These are: public works, health, education and culture, agriculture (including animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries), transportation, industry and trade, investment, the living environment, land use, cooperatives and manpower. Only certain matters are still the authority of the central government, namely foreign policy, defence and security, justice, monetary and fiscal concerns and religion.

For a long period after the top-down policy and guidance from the central government, however, all provinces and districts will have to promote activities in an entirely different way. Most if not all provinces and districts are facing this reality, namely that they must accept their rights while being unprepared to accept their responsibilities properly, particularly in terms of institutional and human resource capability. Therefore, to overcome and minimize this constraint, the Institute for Environmental Education and Development initiated an executive training course for development activists from the provinces and districts.

Four packages of course programs were offered in November 1999

- A. Sustainable Development
- B. Development and Regional Autonomy
- C. Risk and Impact Analysis and Management
- D. Environmental Management System

The executive course was conducted with the support of the Environmental Impact Central Agency of the Ministry of Environment, Directorate General of Regional Development of the Ministry of the Interior and Puri Fadjar Mandiri, Ltd. and included participants from several provinces.

Among the lectures of the course were Ingeneer A.R. Soehoed, the former Minister of Industry, Professor Emil Salim, the former Minister of Environment, Professor A.F. Moeloek, the former Minister of Health, and Prof. Selo Soemardjan, who for more than 30 years functioned as the Secretary of the Vice President since the late Vice President Hamengkubuwono, the Yogyakarta Sultan and the Special Province Governor..

Those who want to know more about the course and its syllabus should approach:

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4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS NEW REGULATIONS 1999

Indonesia enacted Environmental Law in 1982 with Act No. 4, which was recently revised with Act No. 23 of 1997. The Environmental Act was followed by Environmental Impact Analysis Regulation No. 29 of 1986. This regulation provides compulsory guidelines for important projects or activities conducted prior to 1986 to prepare an Environmental Evaluation Report, while proposed new projects or activities should complete the feasibility study for the Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) document. This regulation was changed in 1993 with Government Regulation No. 51 which differentiates among projects or activities as EIA single projects, regional projects (which refer to regional or interregional projects), integrated or multisector projects and zone development projects.

By most project proponents, this regulation is considered as rather complicated and providing confusing guidelines, in particular regarding the article concerning the regional EIA component. In 1999 a new regulation was enacted: Government Regulation No. 27 of 1999 which slightly simplifies the earlier complicated guidelines.

Since they were introduced in 1982 (or even earlier with some strategic development projects, namely coal-fired electricity Suralaya in West Java and Tangerang, Bekasi and Cibinong industrial zones) the EIA documents in general have not been effective in guiding most development projects in their feasibility studies, in particular when these are viewed from the social aspect and by environmental sustainability considerations. In most environmental education programs and environmental management as well as the EIA training course, additional components have to be included or stressed, namely the wisdom and ethical values that should be effectively incorporated in any development project, so that the feasibility of a project guarantees its environmental sustainability.

In any case, if the development program is also supported by ADB or IBRD, the environmental feasibility should also include Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) and Environmental Impact Assessment following the Banks's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) guidelines.

5. TIMBER PLANTATION IN INDONESIA

Indonesia has a total land area of 1,937,179 km² of land spreading over 17,500 islands. Out of the total area, 32.5% is man-made environment, consisting of settlements, buildings, infrastructures, agricultural land and industrial zones. The total forest area (67.5%) has various functions, namely national parks and preservation forest (9.9%), protected forest (15.3%), and convertible production forest (9.8%). The production forests consist of 15.3% limited production forest and 17.2% convertible production forest.

Since there is an increasing need for timber, Indonesia launched a policy to develop timber plantations two decades ago. Tree species commonly planted are, among others, *Acacia mangum* and *Eucalyptus*. The objective is to protect "virgin" forest, which has mega-biodiversity (approximately 17 of the biotic species of the world are found in this country). All wood industries, for pulp, paper, rayon or furniture must have these timber plantations, so that after 10 years or so these industries are not cutting virgin forest anymore. An example is shown in the following picture. Although in reality there is still illegal logging in virgin forests by illegal cutters, and they sell this illegal timber to nearby industries, in the future this illegal logging must be stopped.



A paper factory in Sumatra surrounded by virgin forest
and a timber plantation.

Japan

Dr. Yohei Harashima, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

1. Crested Ibis Hatching

The crested ibis (scientific name: *Nipponia nippon*) has been one of the most familiar birds to Japanese people since old times. Wild ibises began to disappear in Japan in the 1980s, however, because of hunting and destruction of their habitats. In the past, several unsuccessful attempts were made to breed them artificially. Consequently, only one Japanese ibis named “Kin” has survived at the Conservation Center on Sado Island, Niigata. On May 21, the eggs of a crested ibis hatched, making the chick the first ibis to be artificially bred at the Conservation Center. The egg was one of four laid by “Youg Youg”, who was presented by China to Japan along with a male ibis, “You You”. The baby crested ibis was named as “Yu Yu”, and is growing well under meticulous care.

2. Accident at the Conversion Building in the Nuclear Fuel Processing Plant

On September 30, a criticality accident occurred at the Conversion Testing Facility of J.C.O. Co., Ltd in Tokaimura, Ibaraki. The accident seems to have happened during the process of manufacturing fuel for the Experimental Fast Reactor “Joyo”, when three workers, in violation of regulations, were dealing with a solution containing 16kg of uranium (18.8% enrichment) and poured the solution into the precipitation tank. Three workers were exposed to a large amount of neutron radiation. Other than these three workers, 46 were exposed to radiation, though the dose level was not serious. The radiation level in the area returned to normal on the morning of October 1, and the Nuclear Safety Commission confirmed the safety based on the analysis of radiation data and its trends. Source is the URL: <http://www.sta.go.jp/genan/jco/jco-e.html>.

3. Law concerning Special Measures for Dioxin Contamination

Social concern for environmental contamination from chemical substances has arisen in Japan since dioxin congeners were reported to have been detected at incineration facilities. In response to this issue, on July 12, the Japanese National Diet enacted the Law concerning Special Measures for Dioxin Contamination. The purpose of the law is to prevent and eliminate dioxin contamination by establishing quality standards, drafting programs for emission reduction, and adopting necessary regulations, etc. The focal point of the discussion during this legislation process was the Tolerable Daily Intake (TDI) of dioxin, which is the base for formulating quality standards and regulations. In this regard, the law stipulates that TDI shall be decided by government ordinance, but it shall be less than 4 pico gram per day. This provision took into account international standards suggested at the expert meeting organized by the World Health Organization (WHO), and also resulted in harmonizing the different views between the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Environment Agency.

4. First Tripartite Environmental Ministers Meeting among China, Japan, and Korea

The Environmental Ministers of China, Japan and Korea met in Seoul, Korea on January 13 to hold the first Tripartite Environmental Ministers Meeting. At this meeting, the Ministers frankly exchanged their views on regional and global environmental issues regarding initiatives to promote close cooperation between the three countries and stressed that the area of cooperation should be given priority. The Ministers decided that, in principle, they would hold the meeting annually in turn.

5. IGES Hosts the 1999 Open Meeting of the Human Dimensions of the Global Environmental Change Research Community

From June 24 - 26, 1999, IGES hosted the 1999 Open Meeting of the Human Dimensions of the Global Environmental Change Research Community at Shonan Village Center, Kanagawa

Prefecture. This bottom-up style meeting, held every other year, is spontaneously organized by researchers involved in the Human Dimension aspect of environmental studies. The meeting this year was the first such meeting to be held in Asia, and was the third meeting following meetings in the USA and Austria, respectively. It was co-sponsored by IGES, the Japanese Environment Agency, the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change (APN), and other international organizations. The meeting was attended by more than 300 participants from 41 countries, and the latest research results were actively discussed. Further information is available from IGES's web site. (<http://www.iges.or.jp>).

Korea
Dr.. Seung Woo Kim, Korea Environment Institute

1. Reforming of the Greenbelt Policy

The Ministry of Construction and Transportation (MOCT) announced a final plan to reform its Greenbelt Policy in July 1999. The government plans to lift completely or in part the development ban on the greenbelt zones of 14 major urban areas across the country. The deregulation plan, which is also one of President Kim Dae-Jung's presidential campaign pledges, will affect at least 32 percent of the country's greenbelt areas, estimated at 5,397 sq. km.

Environmentalists are strongly opposing the government plan, saying that it is a major environmental policy failure of President Kim's Administration Offices. Environmentalists and many experts insist that the government deregulation plan will provide an impetus to devastate the environment in green areas which have been preserved for the last 27 years.

(The Korea Herald, 23 July 1999; The Hankyoreh 21, No. 281, 4 November 1999)

2. The Dong-gang Controversy

Dong-gang is a tributary of the South Han River flowing 150 km along a serpentine course in northeastern Gangwon Province. Heated debates have continued among residents, government authorities and environmentalists over a dam construction plan which will turn the river into a huge reservoir. Conservationists call it South Korea's last ecological treasure that needs to be saved from systematic devastation by government developers.

Dam planners argue that the dam will have a capacity of 698 million tons of water, raising the agricultural, industrial and potable water supply by some 10 percent in the central region. Its flood control function will also be significant as the reservoir will hold down the water level of the Han River by more than 20 cm as it flows through Seoul in the rainy season.

Environmentalists claim that the government authorities' estimate of the increased demand for water is considerably inflated. They say that Dong-gang is a habitat for many endangered species and has valuable ecological qualities. Many opinion polls indicate surging opposition to the dam plan among the general public.

So the arguments go on, and the Dong-gang controversy on 'development' versus 'conservation' will not end soon.

(The Korea Herald, 17 March 1999)

3. New Plan to Improve Nakdong River Water Quality

The Ministry of Environment announced, in October of 1999, a six-year plan to improve the quality of the Nakdong River's water, a source of drinking water for about 13 million residents of the southeastern Gyongsang provinces. The Ministry will enforce regulations limiting the total volume of pollutants each local government or industrial complex may release. Daegu Metropolitan City will be the first target of the renewed enforcement policy. Buffer zones will be designated along the banks of streams flowing into the river. Within the buffer zones, construction of buildings and other facilities producing pollutants will be banned.

This new plan is facing strong opposition from both sides of Gyongsang Southern and Northern Provinces. Gyongsang Northern Province and Daegu Metropolitan City, where the upper stream of the Nakdong River runs, are trying to build a huge industrial complex near Daegu through

satisfying the regulations under the new plan of the Ministry of Environment. Gyongsang Southern Province and Busan Metropolitan City, where the downstream of the Nakdong River runs, oppose the new construction plan of Gyongsang Northern Province and Daegu Metropolitan city since they are worried about deterioration of the Nakdong River's water quality.

(Chosun Ilbo; The Korea Herald, 7 October 1999)

4. New System to Regulate the Use of Disposable Products

Consumption of disposable goods has been rapidly increasing in Korea. As a result, synthetic resins contained in disposable goods, such as plastic bags, shopping bags and styrofoam containers, constitute a large part of the disposable waste generated daily (1,035 tons/day, 380,000 tons/year). However, synthetic resins can not be easily recycled and do not decompose in landfills.

Revising the Act relating to the Promotion of Resources Saving and Reutilization, which is to save resources and to control waste generation, the Ministry of Environment implemented a new system for restraining the use of disposable goods in February 1999.

According to the new system, provision of plastic bags and shopping bags at stores is prohibited and restaurants are not allowed to use disposable cups, plates or wooden chopsticks. Disposable razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner, which have been provided for free at bathhouses and accommodations, can only be purchased by customers at those places. Food manufacturing and processing businesses are not allowed to use disposable lunchboxes made of synthetic resin. About 107,000 restaurants, stores, bathhouses and accommodations are regulated by the revised act.

(URL: <http://www.moenv.go.kr/english>)

5. Nuclear Radiation Leak Accident

There was a radioactive leak at a power plant in Wolsong, North Gyongsang Province of Korea on 3 October 1999. Radioactive water leaked inside a Wolsong nuclear power plant during repair work on a cooling water pump, exposing 22 workers to small amounts of radiation. The government said that the leak was negligible. All exposed workers, except two, were allowed to return to work immediately and the two who were exposed to more radiation than the others were temporarily assigned to clerical duties.

There have been four reactor accidents in the past in Korea, but this is the first time anyone has been exposed to radiation. Dozens of environmental and civic groups across the nation joined forces to protest against the government's lax safety controls on atomic power plants. Dozens of angry residents at Wolsong also joined hands with an anti-nuclear association and environmentalists in Gyongju, a city near where the radiation leak occurred, to issue a series of statements questioning the honesty of government announcements and denouncing the lack of nuclear safety measures by the government.

The Wolsong leak accident drew special attention because of an accident one week earlier at Japan's Tokaimura uranium processing plant northeast of Tokyo.

(The Korea Herald, 12 October 1999)

Malaysia

Ms. Wan Portia Hamzah and Ms. Norhayati Mustapha, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

1. National Coastal Zone Policy

A growing economy and increasing pollution have resulted in increased pressure on and demands for utilization of the coastal zone and its resources. Malaysia's coastal areas are often preferred sites for economic and development activities, despite the fact that such areas host a variety of ecosystems. While the subject of multiple use conflict has yet to be studied extensively, there is sufficient evidence indicating that conflicts between several coastal area uses do exist of which many are cross-sectoral in nature. In addition, there are also intra-sectoral conflicts. This year the public's attention has been drawn to coastal reclamation, which by its very nature is detrimental to marine and coastal ecosystems, biological diversity and water quality. Macro-EIAs for the on-going reclamation projects in Kedah and Malacca, although not mandatory under the law, were submitted following concerns about environmental degradation and the livelihoods of affected fishermen. Such reclamation activity is fast becoming a contributor to multiple-use conflicts in coastal areas. The Government thus saw the need for an integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and formulation of ICZM policy documents.

2. The Dugong – A Creature Threatened?

One episode in the first third of 1999 that touched the hearts of many was the discovery of a stranded wetland mammal, the dugong. Having endured the stress of captivity, it was set free to locate its maternal kin, but was found dead days later. By tragic coincidence, adult dugong carcasses were subsequently found in nearby waters. As seagrass constitutes the sole diet of the dugong, pollution and destruction of sea-grass beds pose a threat to its survival. Seagrass beds are located within shallow coastal zones, and are therefore directly affected by Man's activities on land and sea. Thus the increasing death toll of dugongs could be seen as a warning signal.

3. Hope for Biodiversity

On a brighter note, the Malaysian Cabinet this year approved the National Policy on Biological Diversity, whose conservation strategy includes in-situ measures to '... maintain plants and animals in their original habitats (and) take into consideration as many representative natural ecological habitats as possible to sustain breeding populations of flora and fauna'. In assessing Malaysian biodiversity, a country study conducted just prior to the Policy had identified seagrass beds as an important marine ecosystem, deserving of protection through integrated and cooperative actions by relevant agencies, e.g., the Fisheries Department and the Department of Environment, amongst others.

4. The Sungai Selangor Dam

The debate and controversy over the Sungai Selangor dam created headlines. In early 1999, the Selangor State Government announced plans to build a dam at the catchment area of Sungai Selangor. The approximately RM 2 billion project includes the building of a 110-metre dam wall and 600ha reservoir, two treatment plants, the realignment of 5km of Kuala Lumpur-Fraser's Hill road and relocation of the Pertak Youth Training Centre. The project, as the EIA itself noted, is not without problems. Ecologically, the habitat of the fireflies in Kuala Selangor is threatened as their food source, the *berembang* trees, could be depleted if water flow is regulated by the dam. In addition, the proposed dam site is encroaching on the land of the *Orang Asli*, an indigenous group. More importantly, it has been revealed that part of the 600ha reservoir is sited on metasediments which has raised concerns about safety. The project will be closely monitored and is expected to alleviate the water crisis but with increasing development in the state, water will have to be sourced from other states after 2007. Discussions on alternatives to dams are still on-going and pressures for greater emphasis on water conservation have been highlighted.

5. Pesticide danger in rivers?

River pollution has been well highlighted over the years but pollution from pesticides may go largely undetected. The Department of Environment (DOE), currently, does not record the presence of these chemicals in the annual quality report. Concerns regarding increasing use of pesticides have been raised. This is so in view of the revised National Agriculture Policy's emphasis on increasing food production and whether conventional farming methods will prevail. Several studies have already indicated the presence of pesticide residue in some of the Malaysian rivers. Although laws exist such as the Pesticides Act of 1974, Food Regulations of 1985 and the Environmental Quality Act of 1974, pesticide leaching has continued because there are no laws to control the allowable limits of pesticides entering the rivers. The DOE has plans to monitor their levels in rivers under the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001 – 2005) and Malaysian companies are carrying out audits to determine whether workers adhere to safety measures and apply proper dosages of agrochemicals. The lobby of the pesticides industry is a very powerful one and there are calls for standards to be established to regulate the dosage of pesticides that will not only protect workers' safety but also the environment's long-term well-being as well as the need to overcome chemical dependency in agriculture.

6. Climate Change Scenario

Concerns over environmental issues among the general public in Malaysia vary widely. A 1998 survey indicated that Malaysians were not fully aware of the existence or functions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) despite efforts made by the Government. However, this year the impact of climate on health became an issue of concern and has taken on greater significance given our ability to modify the environment. Related issues such as the economics of climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy have been well highlighted. To meet Malaysia's obligations under the Convention, the Government established a National Climate Committee and initiated the preparation of Malaysia's National Communication (NC) to the UNFCCC. This NC sets out, *inter alia*, the national inventory of greenhouse gases (GHGs), to assess the possible impacts of climate change and to make suggestions for possible initiatives to address this issue. The NC also makes reference to several mechanisms and measures that represent policy responses to promote sustainable development efforts that the Government has been pursuing for many years.

7. Decisive Action on Toxic and Hazardous Waste

In 1995, drums containing potassium cyanide and contaminated soil were found illegally dumped at the tourist haven of Pangkor. The waste was transported back to the premises of the company responsible in Penang, to be temporarily stored pending treatment, while court action was being taken. Storage stretched on for four years on the company's claim that it could not afford disposal costs. Early in November this year the Department of Environment obtained approval from the Treasury to bear the costs of disposal and oversaw the consignment's trans-shipment to the country's integrated waste treatment facility further south. Costs involved would later be recovered from the company under Section 47 of the Environmental Quality Act of 1974.

Mongolia

Dr. Ayush Namkhai, Development and Environment Center (DEC)

1. Draft Law on the Fauna of Mongolia

The draft law on fauna worked out by the Ministry of Nature and Environment of Mongolia was published on November 17, 1999 in "Udriin Sonin" newspaper and is under public discussion.

The purpose of the law is to regulate the relationships related with the protection, rational application and reproduction of animals that inhabit the land, water and soil, whether having been acclimatized to the territory of Mongolia or migrating.

The law is composed of 5 chapters and 27 articles concerning the general substantiation and protection of the faunal diversity, ownership, application of the fauna and a fauna database.

The law is scheduled to be considered and enacted into law at the State Ikh Khural (Parliament of Mongolia) within December 1999.

2. Natural Disaster Mitigation Country Programme

The Natural Disaster Mitigation Country Programme submitted by the Ministry of Nature and Environment of Mongolia to the Government was enacted by Annex 1 of Resolution No. 25 of the Government of Mongolia, dated February 10, 1999.

The objective of the programme lies in formulating the basis for state policies designed to be consistent with the Constitution of Mongolia, which states that "the people are entitled to live in a sound and safe environment". The policies will enhance the national capability with respect to the prevention of natural disasters, the safeguard of human life and national wealth, the mitigation of susceptibility to disaster hazards, the diminishment of possible damages caused in the socio-economic sphere and ecology, relevant measures to be carried out for this purpose, and moreover, provide support to ensure the country's sustainable development.

The programme will be implemented in the following three stages:

First stage - 1999-2000

Second stage - 2001-2005

Third stage - 2006-2015

Natural disaster mitigation policies shall be carried out in the following fields:

-Prevention of natural disasters

-Ensuring preparedness for natural disasters

-Response to natural disasters

-Coping with the consequences of natural disasters and rehabilitation activities

The Natural Disaster Mitigation Country Programme, consisting of 6 paragraphs and 32 articles, is a document covering such matters as the prevention of natural disasters, definition of prevention measures, actions to be taken during the period of disaster, preparedness for disasters, providing preparedness, coordination with the actions and policies pursued in this sphere at the regional, continental and world levels, major fields of training, its organization and awareness raising actions.

3. Programme for Protection of the Air

The programme has been developed with the aim of ensuring the enforcement of section 1.1.1 of Article 3 of the law on the air.

The programme is scheduled to be implemented in two stages (1999-2004 and 2005-2010).

The programme has been formulated in keeping with the environmental strategy and policy documents of Mongolia, UN Environment Programme, policies and recommendations issued and enforced by international establishments on air protection and the agreements and treaties being developed in this field. The programme provides for diminishing the air pollution rate by using economic levers, in other words, the principle of payment to be provided by those being guilty of pollution shall be strictly followed.

Respective actions within the following major three frames are scheduled and a corresponding action plan has been worked out :

1. to create and build up the legal background for regulation of actions aimed at air protection, providing an adequate system of management;
2. to build up capability with respect to air quality monitoring technical facilities, means and personnel;
3. to provide a socioeconomic basis for actions intended for air protection.

The programme was adopted by Resolution No. 82 of the Government of Mongolia, dated May 25, 1999.

4. Regulation for Issuing Permits to Import, Sell and Use Ozone-Depleting Substances

The regulations are part of the actions carried out by the Government of Mongolia within the frame of the "Country Programme for Phasing out Ozone-depleting Substances" with a view to meeting the commitments undertaken by Mongolia as a party to the Vienna Convention on ozone layer protection and the Montreal Protocol on ozone-layer depleting substances. The regulations were adopted by Resolution No. 104 of the Government of Mongolia, dated June 23, 1999.

Any issues related to the issuance of permissions to import, sell and utilize, by people, business entities and organizations, any ozone-depleting substances or related products containing them as well as supervision to be imposed and respective activities, shall be regulated in conformity with the provisions specified in the above regulations.

Also the regulations specify such relationships as the import, sale and application of ozone-depleting substances, requirements to be met for granting permissions, prohibited actions, liabilities to be imposed, compensation, solution of disputes, etc. The regulations contain 16 articles and application forms for permissions to import, sell and/or utilize ozone-depleting substances are enclosed therewith.

5. Natural Disaster (Drought)

Approximately 50% of Mongolia's territory was recorded as of June 30, 1999, to be drought-affected or arid. Also, during the period from July 13 to 25, a fierce warming was recorded throughout the country, when the air's absolute maximum temperatures were recorded to be ranging from 36 C° to 44 C° degrees in some of the country's central and Gobian regions, and from 30 C° to 38 C° degrees for the rest which was 12-18 C° degrees higher as compared with their historical meteorological data, thereby breaking the absolute maximum records. Due to such unprecedented warming, the area of drought-affected localities has been expanded and the pasture and cultivated plant growth and development were suppressed throughout the country. As a consequence of the drought 39,476 ha of grains, 668.7 ha of potatoes and 113.7 ha of vegetables were affected and were eaten by the Brandt's vole.

Nepal

Dr. Bishnu Bhandari, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

1. Nepal Establishing a Trust Fund for Biodiversity Conservation

His Majesty's Government of Nepal has taken an initiative to establish a Nepal Trust Fund for Biodiversity (NTFB). This is one of several steps taken by the government to protect its dwindling resources in Nepal. Its objective is to provide financial support for the conservation of Nepal's biodiversity. The Fund will support such activities as conservation education, training, applied research, sustainable income generation activities, poaching prevention and control, women-focussed programs, indigenous knowledge and practices, and policy development in accordance with national priorities.

The Fund will act as (1) grant maker, (2) fund-raiser and manager, and (3) promoter of biodiversity conservation. It intends to serve local users groups, community-based organizations, local government bodies and non-governmental organizations.

In the process towards its establishment, the Government has formed a Design Working Group to develop the legal instruments, operational manual, asset management and fund-raising strategy. An advisory group provides technical input to the Design Working Group.

The Board of Directors will be responsible for overall management and direction of the Fund. The NTFB is expected to be operational from the year 2000.

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2. Vikarm Tempo Banned in Kathmandu

His Majesty's Government of Nepal has banned Vikarm Tempo, a diesel-run three wheeler, which is a major source of air pollution in Kathmandu Valley. Recently, the air pollution of the valley was becoming serious because of heavy use of these diesel-run tempos as a means of public transportation. Towards the middle of the year, the civil society of Kathmandu went to the streets for the enforcement of the government decision to ban polluting vehicles in specified areas. The same movement put pressure on the phase-out of the diesel-run three wheeler, popularly known as Vikram Tempo. The government later banned the use of Vikram Tempos in Kathmandu. It has given tax subsidies to buy micro buses to replace the Vikram Tempos. The government said such micro buses should meet Euro-1 standards. The decision has successfully been enforced in the valley.

3. Forest Fire in the Himalayan Region

Nepal experienced a serious forest-fire of great magnitude in 1999. Fire that caught the forest of Dhor Patan Hunting Reserve in western Nepal continued to spread for more than a week. Similarly, fire in Langtang National Park in central Nepal destroyed important habitats of many species of wildlife. These incidences also damaged both government and community owned forest patches. The reason for the forest fire is attributed to negligence on the part of people living nearby. Forest fires also caught houses in nearby settlements, destroying people's homes and property. Forest fires are common in the spring and summer seasons.

4. Drought in the Himalayas

Nepal experienced a different climate pattern this year. There was no or less snowfall at high altitudes and virtually no rainfall in the low lands this winter. As a result, rivers flowed in low volume. Agriculture has suffered much. Local people were forced to plant crops very late, which resulted in low production. Micro-hydro power stations built by local communities produced only one third of their normal capacity of electricity . If this pattern continues, it will have a long-term impact on the regional environment of the Himalayas.

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The Philippines

Prof. MERLIN M MAGALLONA, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILLIPINES

1. A New Comprehensive Clean Air Law

The Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 was enacted by Congress as Republic Act No. 8749 and signed into law by President Joseph Estrada on 23 June 1999. It became effective as of 17 July 1999.

Declaring as State policy the formulation of "a holistic national program of air pollution management", the new law has the objective of pollution prevention rather than control. This landmark legislation recognizes the citizens' "right to breathe clean air". It provides for the right to bring action in court "for compensation of personal damages resulting from adverse environmental and public health impact of a project or activity". Any civilian is empowered under the law to file in court appropriate civil, criminal or administrative action against "any person who violates or fails to comply with the provisions of this Act or its implementing rules and regulations". A fine of not more than 100,000.00 Philippine pesos for every day of violation is imposable against the owner of a stationary source of air pollution for actual excess of any pollution or air quality standards under the new law.

The Clean Air Act sets emission standards for motor vehicles, which will take effect by the year 2003. Registration of new, used or rebuilt vehicles is subject to compliance with these standards. It regulates the content of additives in all types of fuel for motor vehicles.

The new law directs the Department of Environment and National Resources (DENR) to phase out ozone-depleting substances in line with the demands of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. It also requires the DENR to prepare a national plan for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

2. Garbage Crisis ID Metropolitan Manila

Last January, in a rare protest demonstration on environmental issues, Crispin Santos, Mayor of the Municipality of San Mateo in Rizal Province, led protestors for six days in a human blockade to prevent garbage trucks from entering the landfill located in that town. The San Mateo landfill is the waste disposal site of Metropolitan Manila's garbage hauled by more than 600 trucks at the rate of about 5,600 metric tons per day. The garbage has grown into such a gigantic heap that, according to Mayor Reyes, it has stunk up his town and caused health problems.

The landfill, however, was established in 1988 as a joint undertaking of the national government and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority to solve the "garbage crisis" of Metro Manila. It started operation in 1990, and by 1995 it had absorbed more than 30 percent of Manila's garbage disposal, i.e., about 2.6 million tons of solid wastes. It turned out that it is located within the Marikina watershed. Later, the San Mateo municipal government and the Rizal provincial government, together with environmental non-governmental organizations, went to court to stop the landfill's operation and to declare invalid its establishment.

3. Policy of Sustainable Forest Management

As against the clamor for a total log ban, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has reiterated and clarified the policy of sustainable forest management. Articulated by DENR Secretary Antonio H. Cerilles last November, the policy applies a selective logging scheme and, in specified areas, entails a total log ban such as in proclaimed watersheds, national parks, national reserves and wildlife sanctuaries, and declared protected areas.

In a briefing letter of 20 November 1999 to President Joseph Estrada, Secretary Cerilles

explained the scientific and environmental considerations underlying the sustainable forest management policy, with the view to achieving a balance in competing interests of the present and future generations.

Singapore

Prof. Dr. Chia Lin Sien, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)

1. Policy Statements by Minister of the Environment, Singapore

In an Addendum, dated October 6, 1999, to the Presidential Speech, the Minister of the Environment, Mr Lee Yock Suan, made a number of statements on the problem of waste in the Republic, setting targets and mentioning a number of projects. He also made specific policy targets for improving the environment of the country. Among other matters, he said that a fourth refuse incineration plant will be completed by April 2000, and a fifth plant has been planned. The Deep Tunnel Sewerage System (DTSS) will meet the country's sewerage needs through the 21st century (see item 3 below). A study will be made of the feasibility of constructing a barrage across the mouth of the Marina Bay to reduce the possibility of floods in the marina catchment and provide a source of water for treatment to potable standards and enhance the aesthetics of the rivers and waterfront of the Marina Basin.

2. The Deep Tunnel Sewerage System (DTSS)

The building of this system has already started and constitutes a long-term solution to Singapore's need for wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal through the 21st century. The system consists of two cross-island deep tunnels as gravity sewers to intercept sewage flows from existing sewers. The tunnels will channel all wastewater to two new large wastewater treatment works to be located at Changi East and Jurong Island reclamation areas. The treated effluent would be discharged through long deepsea outfalls into the Straits of Singapore. With the DTSS in place, the existing six STWs, one sludge treatment works, and 145 sewage pumping stations will be phased out. This will free land occupied by these installations and the buffer zones around them for higher value land use. The liquid treatment facilities would mostly be underground and covered with a roof structure. Phase 1 of the system, with an initial capacity of 800,000 cu m/day, will cost a total of S\$3,274 million. The plant is scheduled for completion in 2008. Construction of Phase II of the DTSS will be completed in the year 2015.

3. Singapore Accedes to the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-Operation, 1990 (OPRC Convention) and Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as Modified by the Protocol Of 1978 (MARPOL 73/78)

On 10 March 1999, Singapore became a party to the OPRC Convention. The OPRC Convention will enter into force for Singapore on 10 June 1999. The Convention requires Governments to establish a national system for responding promptly and effectively to oil pollution incidents. This includes the creation of a national contingency plan. Also, seaports and oil handling facilities have to maintain Oil Pollution Emergency Plans (OPEPs). The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) has revised its Marine Emergency Action Procedure (MEAP) to incorporate the provisions of the OPRC Convention. In order to give effect to the provisions of the Convention in its laws, the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea (Amendment) Act 1999, which was passed by Parliament on 11 Feb 99 and subsidiary legislation made under the Act which prescribe the precautionary measures and contain the essential provisions to give effect to the OPRC Convention, will be brought into force on the same day.

Singapore has also become a party to Annex V of MARPOL 73/78. The Instrument of Accession to Annex V of MARPOL 73/78 was deposited with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) on 27 May 1999. Annex V will enter into force for Singapore on 27 August 1999. Annex V of MARPOL 73/78 contains regulations pertaining to the prevention of pollution by garbage. Garbage refers to all kinds of victual, domestic and operational waste, excluding fish and parts thereof, that are generated during the normal operation of a ship. Under Annex V, the discharge of plastic into the sea is prohibited while the discharge of other materials including dunnage, food wastes and rags is restricted. The Government of each party to the

Annex is required to ensure the provision of facilities at its ports and terminals for the reception of garbage, without causing undue delay to the ships. Existing legislation to prevent pollution of Singapore waters by garbage was put in place in 1971 under the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea Act. Annex V comes into force for Singapore i.e. 27 Aug 1999.

Source: Maritime and Port Authority, New Releases: 12 Mar 99 and 10 June 1999

URL: <file:///Y/ENVIRONMENT/MPA/sg-oprc.htm>
<file:///Y/ENVIRONMENT/MPA/sg-marpol.htm>

4. Annual Oil-spill Exercise

An annual joint oil-spill exercise was organised by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) and Mobil Oil Singapore Pte Ltd and was conducted on 3 September. The objective of this exercise was to maintain a high level of preparedness of all personnel involved in a clean-up operation in case of an oil-spill incident. The exercises helped to build and reinforce the communication links between the MPA and concerned parties and streamlined Mobil's oil spill response assets within MPA's framework of operations. The exercise involved a total of 20 craft from MPA, Mobil Oil Singapore Pte Ltd, Shell Eastern Petroleum Pte Ltd, East Asian Response Ltd (EARL), PSA Marine, Caltex Group of Companies, Esso Singapore Pte Ltd, Singapore Oil Spill Response Centre (SOSRC), Singapore Refining Company (SRC), Lita Ocean Pte Ltd, Tankstore Limited, Ocean Tankers Pte Ltd, and Oiltanking Singapore Limited, which were mobilised for this exercise. Other agencies such as the Ministry of Defense, Police Coast Guard, Ministry of the Environment, and Primary Production Department role-played on a tabletop basis.

Source: MPA, News Release: 3 September 1999

URL: <file:///Y/ENVIRONMENT/MPA/mpa-spil.htm>

5. Singapore Suspended all Import of Live Pigs from late March 1999 and Introduced New Licenses to Sell Chilled Pork from 1 November.

In March 1999, one abattoir worker died and eight others was hospitalised for encephalitis. Test results of the deceased so far show that his death was not due to Japanese Encephalitis. The Primary Production Department stopped the import of all live pigs into Singapore. The abattoir was closed and completely disinfected to remove possibilities of infection. The public was also advised to avoid visiting rural areas where pigs are farmed.

In a separate but related move, the Ministry of the Environment introduced new licenses issued to pork stallholders who have installed approved chillers for the sale of chilled fresh pork from 1 November 1999. Stallholders who do not want to install chillers and sell chilled fresh pork are allowed to switch to selling other market produce in the same market. Under the cold chain system, poultry stallholders are given up to 30 April 2000, and mutton and beef stallholders up to 31 Oct 2000 to switch to selling meat in chillers.

Source: Primary Production Department, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Health, News Release, 19 March 1999; and Ministry of the Environment, News Release No. 78/99, 26 Oct 99.

URL: <file:///Y/ENVIRONMENT/MEEnv/env-portk.htm>
<file:///Y/ENVIRONMENT/MEEnv/pig-imp.htm>

Thailand

Prof. Dr. Tongroj Onchan, Thailand Environment Institute (TEI)

1. Anchovy causes national conflict

The problem started when small-scale fishermen blamed commercial anchovy fishermen who used modern fishing equipment as the main cause of marine ecology destruction which then led to the protest and the closure of the deep seaport for several days in Southern Thailand. After intense negotiations and collecting all necessary information, the Government decided to allow commercial anchovy fishermen to continue their usual practices, including the use of spotlights to attract fish at night. This is despite the fact that the actual cause of the decrease in marine population was said to be over-fishing during the past decades.

2. A conservation angle from Zemin's state visit

One of the issues discussed during President Jiang Zemin's state visit was the joint venture between the two countries on a massive Pulp and Paper Project. This would involve finding approximately thirty-two thousand hectares of available lands for planting eucalyptus trees to feed paper mills in China. The scheme created a budding controversy between government officials, who gave enthusiastic support to this tree farming scheme on degraded forestlands. The environmentalists, on the other hand, claimed that the large-scale commercial plantations would result in ecological destruction.

3. A controversial movie "The Beach"

The controversy and protest by local people and NGOs would not be so great if it had not been for a film shot in the National Park when some changes were made in the natural landscape of Maya Bay, Southern Thailand. The Bay is a victim of its own beauty, and a rash and uncompromising decision by the Royal Forestry Department to allow 20th Century Fox to shoot the film there. The RFD granted Fox the right to remove native plants as well as to temporarily plant trees in the area. After the film shooting was over the film crew tried to return Maya Bay to its original pristine condition, but opponents felt the film company had failed to keep their promises in rehabilitating the area. Consequently, local authorities and residents have filed a lawsuit against those involved in this incident. The case is now before the court.

4. Confusion over public land encroachment near Sri Nakharin Dam

The Opposition in Parliament has claimed that influential people encroached on Kanchanaburi National Park. This later sparked the famous scandal when three houses overlooking the Sri Nakharin Dam were built. Although the house owners stated that they had completed all legal procedures to obtain rights to the lands, the Royal Forest Department has decided to press charges against them for taking possession of the land in the National Park. A committee chaired by a Police General has been appointed to investigate the case. The controversy centers around the map used to indicate the National Park's boundary. An investigation is being conducted (December, 1999) and political connections and vested interests are also being claimed by the Opposition.

5. Protest against the coal-fired power plant project

Local residents and NGOs staged a big protest against the construction of a coal-fuel power plant on grounds of coral, marine and coastal resources protection in Prachuab Khiri Khan Province. They also submitted an open letter to the Prime Minister to review the Environmental Impact Assessment Report of the project and to stop the construction of the power plant. Although a committee was appointed to conduct a public hearing at one of the two project sites, the opponents to the project were still not satisfied. They requested the Government to form a new committee and to call for all the previous approvals for both project

sites to be declared void. The case is under review by the Government, and the final decision is expected to be made within the next few months.

Vietnam

Dr. Fam Hu Gi, National Law Institute, National Center for Social Science and Humanities

1. The year 1999 marked the first year to implement Administrative Order No. 36, “enhancing the environmental protection policy as the nation becomes modernized and industrialized” issued on June 25, 1998 by the Political Department of the Vietnam Communist Party Executive Committee.

Governmental organizations, social organizations and citizens have been engaged in various activities in order to realize the fruition of the Order No. 36 issued on June 25, 1998 by the Political Department of the Vietnam Communist Party Executive Committee. Their activities included the following.

1. Raising people’s environmental awareness through education and promoting environmentally conscious lifestyles.
 2. Establishing a legislative foundation for environmental protection.
 3. Actively preventing environmental pollution and related problems in order to reverse the current tide of environmental destruction.
 4. Protecting the natural environment through conservation and effective use of natural resources as well as preservation of biological diversity.
 5. Diversifying and increasing investments toward environmental protection activities.
 6. Developing administrative plans for environmental protection both at the national and local level.
 7. Expanding environmental protection activities to involve the global community in international cooperation.
2. In December 1999 Hoi An Ancient Town and the My Son Sanctuary were designated as new world heritage sites by UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee.

Hoi An Ancient Town (Quang Nam Province) is a port town with public buildings and fine examples of religious architecture that serve as places of worship for its citizens. The style of architecture resembles that of Hanoi or Hue and reflects the influences of China and Japan. In Hoi An there is a famous structure called Chua Kau (bridge temple). This covered bridge (the upper part is a house and the lower part is a bridge) was built by the Japanese. The 18 meter-long and 3 meter-wide bridge built across a small stream is entirely wooden and vermilion-lacquered with elaborate engravings.

The My Son Sanctuary (Duy Xuyen District, Quang Nam Province) consists of a series of tower temples constructed between the 4th and the 13th centuries. Out of the remains of seventy towers, twenty towers still remain standing. At the My Son Sanctuary the culture and history of the Champa Kingdom is reflected in the architecture. Various spirits, kings, dancing women, flowers, leaves, and animals are vividly and exquisitely engraved on stone walls and blocks.

3. In early November 1999 the seven central provinces of Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, and Binh Dinh surfaced from the worst floods in 40 years.

In early November 1999, all seven central provinces virtually sank in four days due to heavy rain and flooding. The serious damage caused by the worst flood in a century is reflected in the unofficial toll. The flood killed 592 people and caused 380 million dong in damage and left 1.6 million people in need of emergency food. Out of 600,000 families affected 15,000 were forced to evacuate. World heritage sites such as the ancient capital of Hue and Hoi An Ancient Town were also damaged by the flood. As the old Vietnamese proverb “a perfect leaf should cover a torn leaf” suggests, the Vietnamese provided victims with relief funds, food, emergency items and medical supplies. The Vietnamese government immediately established a relief committee under the direction of the Deputy Prime Minister in order to assist in the rescue of flood victims and provide them with food and medical supplies. On November 17, 1999 the Prime Minister

announced his commitment to aiding flood relief in the seven provinces.

Southeast Asia

Prof. Dr.. Chia Lin Sien, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)

1. UNEP Commissions Review of Marine Pollution of East Asian countries

The East Asian Seas Regional Coordinating Unit (EAS/RCU) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Bangkok has recently begun a review of land-based pollution of the marine environment as well as a separate review of the impact of sewage on the marine environment in ten countries: Australia (northern), Cambodia, China (southern), Indonesia (South China Sea portion), Malaysia (east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and the West Malaysian States of Sabah and Sarawak), South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The study began in October 1999 and is expected to be completed by the end of January 2000.

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2. Tenth Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials On The Environment, Bangkok

The tenth meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) was held from 15 to 16 September 1999 in Bangkok. The Meeting reviewed the Terms of Reference and proposed activities of the restructured ASEAN Working Groups on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, Coastal and Marine Environment and Multilateral Environmental Agreements as well as on-going activities of the Haze Technical Task Force and provided guidance in the development of their future programmes and projects.

The Meeting discussed the draft ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on the Environment (SPAEN) for the period of 1999 to 2004, to support the environmental components of the Hanoi Plan of Action. The activities of the SPAEN are grouped into the following main areas:

1. Land/Forest Fires and Haze,
2. Nature Conservation and Biodiversity,
3. Coastal and Marine Environment,
4. Multilateral Environment Issues, and
5. Other Environment Activities.

The Meeting approved a list of core parameters for the harmonization of environmental information databases within ASEAN and agreed to start compiling the relevant data from the year 2000 onwards.

Source: Singapore, Ministry of the Environment, News Release No. 89a/99, 16 September 1999

URL: <file:///Y:/ENVIRONMENT/MEEnv/ASOEN-10.htm>

3. Regional Consultative Workshop on the East Asian Seas (EAS) Programme to Discuss Issues Concerning Liability And Compensation for Oil Spill Damage and Clean-Up Claims

More than 20 senior maritime and environment officials from nine out of 11 participating governments in the East Asian Seas (EAS) Programme attended the Workshop held in Singapore on 3 September 1999. The Workshop was jointly organised and sponsored by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Regional Programme. The EAS Programme was launched in 1994 and there are 11 participating governments in the prevention and management of marine pollution in the East Asian Seas region. The participating governments include Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. A key objective of the Workshop was to examine ways of strengthening regional co-operation with respect to damage claims from transboundary oil spills. The Workshop also aimed to assist participating countries to accede to and implement the Civil Liability and Fund Conventions and the IMO Conventions on marine pollution.

Source: Maritime and Port Authority, press release on 3 September 1999
URL: <file:///Y|/ENVIRONMENT/MPA/EAS-mtg.htm>

4. An Update on the Regional Haze Situation in Southeast Asia

Meteorological Service Singapore (MSS) continued to monitor the haze situation using satellite imagery and revealed a significant number of hot spots in central Sumatra in the latter part of July 1999. The winds over central Sumatra were blowing in the direction of Singapore and some of the smoke haze has been carried over to Singapore. As a result, the air quality in Singapore has been affected. The Ministry of the Environment (ENV) has activated the hourly announcement of the 3-hourly PSI readings in view of the current smoke haze situation in Singapore. Air quality in Singapore and elsewhere in the region remained good for the rest of the year due to higher than usual precipitation.

Source: Ministry of the Environment and Meteorological Service Singapore, News Release No. 84/99, 26 August 99
URL: <file:///Y|/ENVIRONMENT/MEnv/ASN-haze.htm>

5. Nipah Virus Epidemic in Peninsular Malaysia

Veterinary experts at the 21st Conference of the Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania of the International Office of Epizootics (OIE) have reviewed the risks to pigs from epidemic diseases. The conference was held in Taipei from 23 to 26 November 1999. The conference reported that the Nipah virus epidemic is over and risk of spread to other countries is very low. The epidemic was first detected in October 1998 in the Malaysian Peninsula. It resulted in the slaughtering of more than one million pigs. By March 1999, 71 persons had died from viral encephalitis and in all more than 100 people who had come into contact with infected pigs have died from the Hendra-virus disease.

URL: <http://www.pighealth.com/News99/NIPAH.HTM>