



# Mekong Connection

Newsletter of the Mekong Institute

ISBN : 0859-7006 Vol. 9 No. 1 Khon Kaen, Thailand April 2005 - June 2005

## Alumni News

### An Invitation to Alumni/Friends of MI to Join The Mekong Institute Alumni Net

On May 23, 2005, the Mekong Institute Alumni Net was created at Yahoo Groups. URL: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MekongInstituteAlumniNet/>

All alumni/friends of MI who are not yet members are cordially invited.

The Mekong Institute Alumni Network (MIAN) is created for the purpose of maintaining contact between alumni from the GMS who have attended courses at the Mekong Institute (MI), Khon Kaen. In the GMS spirit of trust, friendship and cooperation, we would like to continue what you have learned and shared at MI through this virtual community.

You can share the latest news about yourself, whether in your careers or families. Get in touch with old friends and make some new ones. Please contribute any ideas about how we can further the GMS spirit, share information about job and education opportunities, or discuss development issues or training needs in the GMS with other alumni, friends of MI and MI staff. In other words, this is a forum for you and by you, the alumni.

This network is by invitation only to ensure that membership consists only of genuine alumni of MI. Since less than half of all MI alumni have current email addresses recorded at MI we encourage members to spread the word to other lost alumni to register with the moderator.

All they need to do is send an email to the moderator ([cavadasevilla@yahoo.com](mailto:cavadasevilla@yahoo.com)), providing the following details:

1. full name
2. country
3. name of course attended at MI
4. approximate month and year at MI

If you are a 'Friend of MI' please indicate in what capacity; i.e. as a presenter

*Continued on back page >>>*

## Mekong Institute Annual Meeting, 2005, held in Khon Kaen

*GMS country members stress the need to help each other*



**Mr. Somchit Inthamith, Director - General, Department of Economic Affairs, Lao PDR (center) presiding over the opening ceremony of the meeting. With him on the left is Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman of Mekong Institute Steering Committee and on the right is Dr. Anake Topark-ngarm, Director of Mekong Institute.**

**Khon Kaen - The Mekong Institute's (MI) First Annual Conference on 'Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Human Resource Development: Planning and Prioritizing' was organized this year from May 12-13 at Sofitel Raja Orchid Hotel, Khon Kaen.**

Representatives from six GMS countries on May 13 stressed the need to help each other solve economic constraints and social challenges related to regional development in the GMS area, at a meeting held here recently.

The MI Council, Steering Committee members and MI staff, coordinating agencies, MI Alumni, academic and research advisors, GMS organizations, funding and development partners and the GMS country representatives reviewed and made recommendations for MI progress after two days spent on discussing future directions and prioritizing human resource development needs.

The conference participants exchanged their knowledge, ideas and experience on regional human resource development planning among the GMS countries and also exchanged views on setting GMS priorities. Those participants also discussed topics for the MI program's focus for the year 2006, and reviewed results of GMS

in HRD activities over the past year.

The ten year-old MI hosted its first annual meeting in Khon Kaen from May 12-13, which was attended by more than 50 participants, including country representatives from the six countries of the GMS: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and the Yunnan province in China.

Meanwhile, Dr Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman of the MI Steering Committee, said after the opening ceremony that MI had been running courses and seminars for middle and high level managers and administrators from the six GMS country members to help provide knowledge during the past ten years. "They could learn more about the body of knowledge on economy and social issues so that they adapt themselves to survive in the growing market economy and business orientation in this sub-region", he noted.

Dr Narongchai told the press that MI alumni from MI courses and seminars could apply their new knowledge in various fields of their work with high efficiency in their own country and also bring mutual benefits and close cooperation with other countries.

One of the most important MI issues, he

*Continued on back page >>>*

## Message from the Director



**Dr. Anake Topark-ngarm,**  
**MI Director**

From May 11th to 13th, 2005 marked another great few days for Mekong Institute(MI), since MI stakeholders from all six GMS countries came back to Khon Kaen to participate in two special events, the "MI Steering Committee Meeting" and the "MI First Annual Meeting: GMS Human Resource Development(HRD), Planning and Prioritizing."

More than 50 MI Council members, Steering Committee members, coordinating agents, alumni and funding partners had a good opportunity to discuss strategic means to strengthen and improve MI programs to better serve the GMS.

The three-day meeting went very well, with better understanding and a friendly environment. Proceedings of this meeting are being prepared and upon completion an electronic version will be posted on the MI website. It should soon be interesting information for all MI family members to check out.

The next message is that after more than a year of searching, the MI Academic Director position has been filled. We have finally managed to get a high caliber person for the role.

Dr. Ramon C. Sevilla, from the Philippines, started working with MI as Academic Director from 1st May 2005. Dr. Ramon intends to lead the MI Academic team to meet their goal of producing high quality MI learning programs. He has already begun working very hard to meet that commitment.

However, another key position, that of Research Manager, to assist the Academic Director in his task, still remains vacant.

We have announced the position through the MI website and institute contacts, and hope to fill the position by the end of July 2005. The MI academic team will be strengthened and run at full capacity in the very near future.

One proud initiative of MI service to the GMS is setting up the MI Learning Resource Center (LRC). The LRC will not only automate the library services but also a GMS information collection, retrieval and dissemination center. Setting up MI-LRC will involve a lot of study equipment, expertise, skill and time, but we will be pleased to pursue this plan for the benefit of MI course participants, alumni and other stakeholders.

Through the end of 2005 MI will continue to offer quality Professional Development Series (PDS) courses as planned. At the same time we will implement the institute capacity building activities like research and networking. For those who are interested in these learning programs or other activities, details of such events can be found at the MI website: [www.mekonginstitute.org](http://www.mekonginstitute.org)

These days we would like to use our website as an effective means of communication with all MI friends and family as much as possible. Please join us in working for better GMS development and cooperation.

See you in the next issue,

Sincerely

**Dr. Anake Topark-ngarm**  
**Director**

### Announcement

# MI announces the appointment of Dr Ramon as Academic Director

*The New AD appointed effective since early May 2005*



**Dr. Ramon is committed to strengthening MI's 'value added' contributions**

Dr. Ramon C. Sevilla joined the Mekong Institute as Academic Director in May 2005.

He holds a Ph.D. in Urban Planning from UCLA, a Masters in City and Regional Planning from Rutgers University and a Masters in Human Settlements Planning from the Asian Institute of Technology.

He also has taught urban and regional policy courses in Thailand, Australia and the Philippines. Prior to joining MI, Dr. Sevilla worked for more than six years as Foreign Expert and Assistant Professor at the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Salaya.

During that time, he was also associated with AusAID's Thailand-Australia Social Protection Facility (2001-2004) as one of the long term academic advisors.

The AusAID SPF ran customized, responsive capacity-building programs designed to facilitate exchanges of experience and expertise across the region, focusing on the countries that face the most urgent impacts of the 1997 south-east Asian financial crisis (i.e. Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam).

Dr. Sevilla also worked as Director of Continuing Education, Dean's Unit, at the Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales in Sydney, where he organized international short courses for mid-level government officials and other professionals.

In the early 1990s, he was associated with the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) as Research Fellow in its Human Resources and Social Development Program.

Dr. Sevilla is committed to strengthening MI's 'value added' contributions by building its research center to initiate research and academic networks to help improve the substantive quality, relevance and timeliness of MI programs, both generic and customized. Moreover, he endeavors not only to improve the prioritization process of training programs but also to develop programs that respond to micro, institutional level needs in the GMS.

This can only be achieved by increasing the GMS countries' sense of ownership of the Mekong Institute.

His own research interests are in the urban and regional implications of economic integration and in particular, of the 'economic corridor' flagship programs of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) that will serve to create new spatial dynamics in Greater Mekong Sub-region development.

## Some MI Alumni give their opinions about their experiences in MI professional development course:

**Ms. Sriporn Bhekanandana**, a Thai woman from Tourism Authority of Thailand, said: "Last year I was lucky to attend MI as a participant in the leadership course, and it was such a memorable experience for us. I can say that MI is not just a training institute, but is more [focused] on helping us to build a network and sense of region, especially GMS as a region.

"I think it's very important. And personally, my experience in attending a two-month course at MI, I can gain more knowledge and social experience, because as a Thai participant, we don't have much chance to mix with other neighboring countries. So I think this is a good chance that we can build understanding and trust among each other," she added.

Talking just about friendship alone, Ms. Sriporn said: "is already worth mentioning because it is a long-term relationship that will sustain in the long term future. And personally I think MI course is very useful in both public and private sectors,"

She also raised an example that: "from the course, especially our leadership course. For example, our presentation skills – I think this is very useful for everybody. This core subject helps us build the confidence which we all need. Especially if we have to go up from the middle level to the executive level, we need the presentation skills.

"Apart from that we have learned and strengthened our language skills – English language skills – because we have to communicate in English all the time. That's also very useful. And the management skills – this is I think very useful, especially in today's society. We have to at least know how to manage both our people and our work.

"I will definitely recommend MI to other people. Actually I have done that already, but more casually and passively. But I think from now, as a period of MI changing roles so as an alumni, since we are going to set up an alumni, we will truly promote MI more actively and more professionally. For myself, what I plan is like... I will consult with our PR director in our organization, and also our director who's in charge of HRD development, I think that's a good start – to make other people know about MI more," she noted.

"What I would like to give is my impression of staying in MI for two months last year: I can really feel that MI is a home away from home," she remarked.

**Mr. Pham Van Thanh**, an MI alumni man from Vietnam also gave an interview to us that: "There are a lot of interesting programs, to some field trip to some dam – had a chance to go to Laos on a field trip – [so] I've learned a lot of things from our neighboring countries which were quite interesting. And actually, in my opinion, there's a chance to apply professional skills in our jobs. For example, when I had finished crossing the dam line, I came back to the office and I know how to start with the new business, the new process. And as you know, last year I'm promoted to be the manager of Marketing and Corporate Affairs Department,"

In his opinion, he said: "if you have a chance to apply MI processes it's very useful. You come here; you can learn a lot of things and make a lot of good friends. They're very nice.....

"Finally, if someone asks me for advice [on] where to study, my advice would be a place at MI on a course at MI," he remarked.



**Ms Zhang Jing Mei**

**Ms Zhang Jing Mei**, a Chinese Woman from Yunnan, South China added that:

"Ladies and gentlemen it's an honor to have the chance to talk about my experience at MI to you. My name is Zhang Jing Mei; I was one of the Chinese participants at MI in September 2003. The content of my course was Private Sector Participation in GMS Groups and Development.

"I come from Kunming, Yunnan, China. I am engaged in the administrating committee of Kunming Economic Technology Development. In my opinion, the MI training had great effect for us. Such as the first week had many useful specific skills and knowledge of economics and management for our courses," she noted.

There is no doubt that experience is always conducive for my career enhancement. Second, we have been told [by] many international rulers knowledge that give us more chance to think with a global perspective. Third, it helps us to understand more about GMS countries and people.

"A very strong foundation for future co-operation in GMS. Next, a deep friendship has been built between MI and each participant.

And last but not least, the ability of English speaking and writing has been boosted greatly, as well as computer use. By the way, Mekong Institute (MI) is a nice place for study and training. Its service is very good substance with very good facilities and professional management. Even only one month of training at MI, those days were unforgettable for us. I could appreciate Thai culture and heritage at a close range, and made friends with other participants from each country. After we left MI we all missed MI and other participants very much.

"We believe the group of MI alumni is a unique human resource for MI. With some effective guidance it will play an important role in long term economic co-operation and will have a group influence on MI.

"I want to say thank you to MI again. It is MI that gives all participants opportunities to enhance understanding and build more friendship among GMS. MI and alumni have done great for GMS co-operation and it will be more. I believe that the effects and influence of Mekong Institute will lead to a valuable fruitful future. Finally, please accept my best wishes to all of you, and I hope you and your friends can participate in MI in the future," she concluded.

**Mr. Chea Socheat**, an official of ASEAN and International Organization, Ministry of Commerce, Phnom Penh as a MI Alumni said that: "I am the Cambodian representative of Cambodia alumni. It's very interesting to join the very important meeting here. I am very pleased to tell you a little bit about the Cambodian benefits in co-operation with MI.

"We do get a lot of benefits because we have so far seen the inception of MI; we have seen a lot of participants to join the training course at MI. And we have developed human

*Continued on page 6 >>>*



**One of MI professional development courses**

## Deputy Governor Tells PM Participants to Listen Others' Points of View

*"Each of you will make every effort to get to know..."*

The Deputy Governor of Khon Kaen Province Mr. Seree Phichitsiri delivered his opening address to the Project Management for Infrastructure Development training course held on May 24th, 2005, at the Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen.

He spoke to about 26 participants and delegates from the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) country members, who were attending the Mekong Institute's six-week learning course during the opening ceremony held here.

He stated that, "Each of you will make every effort to get to know your fellow GMS participants better. Listen very carefully to others' points of view because their history, their culture and their language is a little different from yours.

"We can only learn and understand when we have open minds and open hearts. Try to make a virtue of diversity because there is much that we can all learn from our neighbors in the Mekong region," he remarked.

"This course was a very important one because it addressed a critical issue to the infrastructure development process itself. Most



**Deputy Khon Kaen governor Seree Phichitsiri is seen delivering his opening address to the Project Management for Infrastructure Development training course.**

growth, development and infrastructure programmes are broken down into a series of more manageable components which we call projects.

"If these projects are not completed in a timely, cost-effective and environmentally friendly manner, the program which they are

part of will almost certainly fail to meet its objectives.

"It is therefore important that each and every project be well planned and executed, be effective and efficient, and achieve the outcomes set. Of course, projects come in many shapes and sizes. No two projects are identical. But all share a number of common features and all must be subject to the same set of management disciplines."

These included good planning involving all key stakeholders, the selection of competent team members, careful management of financial resources, cost-effective delivery and regular monitoring and review.

"We all share a responsibility to help develop our GMS sub-region infrastructure as the backbone to growth and prosperity for all people. Good projects and efficient and effective project management are a great place to start. Each development project is a microcosm of the GMS country's infrastructure development strategy.

"We hope that this Project Management for Infrastructure Development course will help to raise your awareness of the importance of projects in transforming relatively poor GMS countries into growth economies.

And we hope that this course will assist you in becoming more effective project managers and team leaders so that your personal contribution to sustainable economic and social development is enhanced," he concluded.

## Conflict Resolution in Infrastructure Project Management is on the Move

*To experience firsthand conflicting community responses*



**Photo shows: The MI group of participants interviewing a villager while sightseeing in Ubon Ratchathani province during their field visit to Pak Mun Dam.**

From June 9 to 11, 2005, 25 participants from six GMS countries of the recent learning programme entitled Project Management for

Infrastructure Development travelled to Ubon Ratchathani province to experience firsthand conflicting community responses to an infrastructure development project.

Dr Suwit Laohasiriwong, Director of Institute for Dispute Resolution, Khon Kaen University, led the MI group in a critical analysis of the background to protests against the controversial Pak Mun Dam project. As part of this study tour, participants attended seminars at Ubon Ratchathani University and the Electric Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), and conducted an on-site inspection tour.

Participants were further able to interview representatives of conflicting village groups both for and against the infrastructure project. Dr. Suwit, a former Deputy Director of Mekong Institute, encouraged the participants to examine the issue from a number of perspec-

tives in order to try to learn how to proactively resolve conflict surrounding infrastructure development in their own countries.

Pak Mun Dam project was launched in the early 1990s but has yet to achieve its full potential due to protests by village groups asserting that the dam has destroyed their fisheries and ways of life. Some demand the complete decommissioning of the dam. The Thai Government, for its part, has had the difficult task of trying to reconcile the villagers' demands for compensation while ensuring the continued operation of the dam.

On the other hand, during the on-site inspection tour MI participants met a competing group of villagers supporting the dam and calling for closure of spill gates. They claim this is needed to conserve water during a drought year and to protect fish stocks.

Mekong Institute is neither for nor against any specific infrastructure project, but certainly strongly encourages all our participants to critically analyse the complexities of resolving conflicting perspectives in project management.

## GMS Countries Define Priorities for Building Capacity for Regional Cooperation

### *Mekong Institute to respond with demand driven focus in 2006-2010 Programming*

As reported in previous articles, the Mekong Institute held its first Annual Conference on Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Human Resource Development: Planning and Prioritizing, May 12-13, 2005, at Sofitel Raja Orchid Hotel, Khon Kaen. At this MI Annual Meeting, senior representatives of the six GMS countries presented the results of their national needs analysis and prioritization. These presentations identified the priority areas where they felt the need to strengthen national capacity for effective regional cooperation. The GMS country representatives then engaged in a discussion and consultation session to reach consensus upon 17 areas they felt were high priority. They emphasized that these areas were not in priority order, as priorities would vary from country to country and sector to sector, but were areas agreed by all six countries as being high priority for collaboration and cooperation. These topics were (not in priority order):

- Tourism
- Human trafficking,
- Rural employment,
- Micro-credit management,

- Cross-border health issues and communicable diseases (including HIV/AIDs)
- Cross-national projects with public-private participation
- IT application and management,
- Education management and cooperation
- E-Commerce
- Agriculture/forest product processing,
- Natural resource management/conservation,
- Labor management system (regional wide)
- Regional marketing of GMS goods,
- Agricultural trade
- Changing management
- SME management
- Economic corridor development and management.

In addition, five crosscutting issues should continue to underpin and be reflected in every MI Program: Poverty Alleviation, Good Governance, Gender Mainstreaming, Environmental Protection, and Regional Cooperation.

Many GMS development partners provided input into the meeting and several sent representatives to participate, including NZAID,

Australia's International Center of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Philippine-based Asian Development Bank (ADB), Bangkok-based Regional Office of the Rockefeller Foundation (RF), Kenan Institute, MRC and The World Bank (WB). These representatives met and discussed GMS regional needs and the potential role for MI in providing valued contributions, and they made useful recommendations to MI. They urged that MI choose key areas for MI to focus on, defining the details and specifics of GMS needs in these areas and clarifying MI's regional relevance in professional development. They also suggested that MI should take a leading role in facilitating regional policies and agreements in these focus areas. "MI should focus on a few areas in which MI has a niche, making it easier for development partners to provide support. We want MI to lay out what it wants to do with the GMS in a multi-year format," remarked a participant in the development partners' group discussion.

In response to the GMS countries' priorities and GMS development partners' recommendations, MI will prepare proposed programs for 2006 and beyond. These will be reviewed with GMS countries and development partners during the coming months, and announced by October 2005.

### *MI news in brief*

## Steering Committee meeting held in May at MI



*Some of SC members participating the meeting, from left to right, are: Myanmar representative Mr. U Hla Thuang, Vietnamese representative Mr. Hoang Viet Khang, Laotian representative Mr. Latsamy Keomany, and Chinese representative Ms. Tao Yihong.*

Mekong Institute organized a Steering Committee meeting on May 11, with Chairman Dr Narongchai Akrasanee extending a warm welcome to all participants representing GMS countries and MI management staff led by MI Director Dr Anake Topark-ngarm.

### **Financial Support for MI**

On December 14, last year, regarding MI financial support, MI Director Dr Anake said that MI had been able to secure financial support for another three years from the three main sources: from the New Zealand government's NZAID at NZ\$1 million per year or about 26 million baht for three years, the Thai government's TICA (Thailand International Cooperation Agency) at 10 million baht per year for three years, and from the Rockefeller Foundation from the US at US\$350,000 or 14 million baht for two years.

This financial support will go forward for institute building, Professional Development Series (PDS) course scholarship, new areas development such as social policy research, and networking. Also some support will go for administrative overhead costs.

### **MI International Status**

In December 2004 Director Dr Anake said that MI had submitted documents applying for international status with the Thai government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Mr. Piamsak Milintachinda**, executive director of Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) contributed to the discussion of MI's transfer to international status, and expressed TICA's willingness to assist MI in the process of obtaining international status. It might take some time to pass through the Thai government, especially the parliament. The whole process should take more than a year.

Other GMS countries emphasized importance of MI status, and desire for international status to be processed urgently.

In May 2005, MI's international status application was in process after MI submitted a request to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the documents are checked before submission to the Thai parliament for further approval around the end of this year.

Now the Cabinet refers the issue to the Office of the Council of State for final checking and to prepare the International Act. The Cabinet will then submit the International Act to Thai Parliament for legislation, and with strong support from TICA, hopes to finish final checks and preparation of the International Act by 2005. It is expected that MI will officially become an international organization in 2006.

## Center for GMS Learning Programmes on Human Trafficking opened

*To develop a special curriculum in the fight against human trafficking in the GMS*

Mekong Institute, as the recently selected GMS centre for learning programmes on human trafficking, provided the venue for a three-day working retreat on curriculum development from 6th to 8th June.

This retreat was the result of a request by the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Human Trafficking, a forum representing more than 35 agencies, to the UN Inter-Agency Project to develop a special curriculum in the fight against human trafficking in the GMS.

The eight participants in the three-day working retreat were from a wide range of regional and international agencies involved in anti-trafficking. They provided valuable insights on interventions ranging from economic development and non-formal edu-

cation to law enforcement and criminal justice.

Reasons for GMS trafficking range from poverty to abuse of labour in all its forms, even to a lack of access to education. Trafficking situations include forced prostitution, forced or unpaid labour, forced begging, domestic servitude and more. Throughout the three days the need for a coordinated approach in the fight against human trafficking in the GMS was emphasised.

The outcome of the three-day retreat was an endorsement of a curriculum outline to be piloted with the generous support of Asian Development Bank, perhaps as early as September this year. Courses will then be scheduled to run over the next one to three years. In the learning programmes, partici-

pants will gain:

- a foundation for understanding the GMS trafficking phenomenon and the implications of various interventions
- professional skills to actively engage in the development and/or delivery of efficient and coordinated responses to GMS human trafficking
- a common language on trafficking to promote the adoption of cross-border, cross-agency and interdisciplinary discussions/responses
- a GMS network of mid to senior level officials to strengthen regional responses to anti-trafficking.

The learning programmes at Mekong Institute will target representatives of government agencies, non-governmental organisations, donors and others involved in GMS anti-trafficking work.

Mekong Institute is excited to be a part of this important process and to be host to such necessary regional learning programmes.

## 2005 GMS Programme Calendar of Events

As of July 2005

Month/Day/Week	Event	Venue
<b>July</b>		
2	Fifth Task Force Meeting for the Preparation of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> GMS Summit	Kunming
3-4	Business Forum (GMS Summit Side Event)	Kunming
4-5	<b>Second GMS Summit</b>	Kunming
11-22	E-Governance (Phnom Penh Plan)	Hyderabad
14-15	<b>Mekong Development Forum II</b>	Tokyo
26-29	Training on Customs related Annexes of the GMS Cross-Border Agreement	PRC
<b>August</b>		
2-3	ACMECS Ministerial Meeting	Siem Reap
8-19	Project Feasibility and Design (Phnom Penh Plan)	TBD

Continued from page 3 **Some MI Alumni give their opinions**

resources and human capacity of Cambodia at MI. We hope that through MI, through Mekong Institute, we will know a lot of activities of regional co-operations and other activities of GMS countries, so we hope we will use that for the benefit of Cambodia and the region.

"Not only the knowledge that I gained from MI but also some kind of feeling - a long-lasting feeling with MI - because we have the relationship with participants from other countries and also we hope that we will have some kind of operation in the future in terms of research project and so on," he added.

15-26	Effective Rural Leadership (Phnom Penh Plan)	TBD
22-26	Second Negotiation Meeting on Annexes and Protocols (Stage 3) of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement	TBD
29-31	1st GMS Forum on Communicable Diseases and other Health Initiatives	Guilin
Last week	13th Meeting of Working Group on West East Corridor Development	Chiang Rai
TBD	5th Meeting of the Subregional Investment Working Group (SIWG-5)	Cambodia
<b>September</b>		
5-10	Advanced Executive Development Program (AEDP) for Senior Level Officials (Phnom Penh Plan)	Phnom Penh
6-8	Second Tripartite Meeting on Initial Implementation of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement at the Mae Sot-Myawaddy & Mae Sai-Tachilek Border Crossing Points	Chiang Rai
7-8	4th Meeting of the Regional Power Trade Coordination Committee (RPTCC-4)	TBD

## MI activities in pictures

Mekong Institute (MI) hosted a welcome party for the 26 participants of the Project Management (Infrastructure) course held from May 23 – July 1, 2005. Here they were warmly greeted by MI Director Anake To-parkngarm and nicely treated to food and drink, as well as, entertainment with fun, games, dancing, and singing ..



*The group of MI staff and participants from six countries in the GMS posing for a group picture while attending the welcome party at MI conference room.*



*Enjoying the blind game.*



*Entertained by games, dancing, and singing ..*

GMS Food Festival organized by representatives from the six countries: Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam



*Khun Muay Jiraporn, a MI Staff, left, leads a group of participants shopping in the town fresh market*



*Preparing food*



*Cooking for all..*

Sight- seeing tour was also organized by MI for the course participants to relax at several tourist spots and so on.



*At the Pak Mun Dam in Ubon Ratchathani province*



*Having lunch on board a sight-seeing boat trip*



*Some course participants posing a photo while visiting a tourist spot in northeastern Thailand.*

**Continued from front page An Invitation to Alumni**

or guest lecturer, name of course, month and year.

Memberships must be approved by the moderator prior to acceptance, after verification of alumni status. This is to prevent non-alumni and unscrupulous outsiders from joining, whose only intention is to fill your mailboxes with spam, viruses and such.

Members are encouraged to use a personal email address from private email providers such as Hotmail, Yahoo or Gmail to ensure delivery, as some internal email systems (based on past experience) may be unreliable.

Once this information is received, you will then be sent an invitation through Yahoo Groups to join. Read instructions carefully. By replying to the invitation, you will automatically become a member. Let us all keep the GMS spirit alive in this GMS virtual community!

**Continued from front page****Mekong Institute Annual Meeting**

said, was the need to focus on development of the tourism industry as well as poverty reduction. According to Dr Narongchai, "Poverty particularly, has caused more relocation of labor skills and border crossing among these neighboring countries"

The members of the meeting concluded that there were about 17 course topics to be raised as top priorities for HRD work. Donor and development partners recommended that a few topics needed to be listed as top priorities for MI to carry out in the next few years.

Mr. Somchith Inthamith, Director General at the Department of Economic Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Lao PDR, also delivered in his opening remark that the meeting would focus mainly on ways to strengthen and improve MI support to the GMS. He recommended priorities and topics related to GMS, for MI learning, policy formulation, research programs and possible recommendations for MI sustainability for the following years.

"Of course these outputs will also provide the bases for each GMS country to put as a priority plan for the coming year's funding", he said, adding that this kind of meeting was very important and complied with the newly approved MI strategic management. He remarked that it took place in Khon Kaen at the first MI annual meeting, meaning that 'your active involvement is most important and welcomed'.

The meeting spent two days exchanging ideas and views on the nuts and bolts of MI's challenging role in developing teaching methods, curricula development and how to identify appropriate ways for MI funding support to meet the need of GMS development priorities.

He noted that on 4-5 July 2005, GMS leaders will gather again for a second time in Kunming. 'A stronger GMS partnership for common prosperity' would be the theme for the GMS leaders' deliberation. In other words, the leaders will spell out the framework for future GMS cooperation with 'Road Ahead Towards Sustainable Development'. So, 'Sustainable Development', according to our philosophy, is to be shared. All GMS economies are interdependent. Problems in one economy can have knock-on effects on neighboring economies. As such, GMS member countries consciously pursued 'prosper thy neighbor' policies to ensure the long term prosperity of the Greater Mekong Sub-region".

Globalization has brought about both opportunities and challenges. Over the last decade the GMS countries have enjoyed rapid economic growth but have also lived through a financial crisis that plunged many into poverty. However, erecting barriers and looking inwards is not the way to face the force of globalization. The GMS needs to look outwards and build bridges and partnership to this objective, "I am sure that MI can play a vital role".

"Another aspect, I'd like to share with you is that leadership is not just about a dynamic personality but is about lifting a person's vision to higher sights and raising a person's performance to a higher standard; the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations" he added.

MI, as an independent GMS organization, will provide specialized learning programs for key public and private sector personal in the areas of leadership, development and regional cooperation. Since its establishment The Mekong Institute has recorded over 1,600 alumni and is well developed with very good learning facilities. The Institute has gained experience in capacity building and training areas.

"Drawing on these experiences, the Institute has prepared a work program for the year to come by paying significantly increasing attention to issues on poverty reduction. Capacity building and training activities are formulated and organized with a view to maximizing synergy and complementation", he

said.

"We hope to have a chance to build upon a network of partnerships to be your suitable partner for capacity building of training supports. Our success depends on all of us and I am completely confident that given our joint energy and talent, it will succeed", he concluded.

Meanwhile, Dr Anake Topark-ngarm, MI Director, pointed out that this First MI Annual Planning Meeting was an important moment and a milestone in the Mekong Institute's development and history.

"During this past year, we have been getting to know each other much better, as we have worked together to develop and begin implementation of a new and expanded role for MI in region building. We are honored by the confidence and trust you have expressed in MI through your presence and participation here today," he remarked.

The Mekong Institute's charter and mission are to contribute to the building of the GMS as a region, building capacity for regional cooperation through relationships of trust, understanding and common objectives. "We are convinced that such regional cooperation is essential to accelerate the social and economic development for the well-being of our people, with particular concern for the alleviation of poverty and other human suffering", he said.

Dr Anake further emphasized that, "In order to make the most effective use of GMS countries' regional efforts and funds, we need to have you set out clearly regional needs and priorities for MI services. These needs and priorities will set the targets, and give us the measure of our performance in meeting those targets."

"Each of you are key to this region building, and we are excited and honored to host you all here today, to listen to your expression of the needs you have for MI to support region building activities in human resource development, knowledge development and policy formulations; to strengthen the effectiveness of our collaborative development."

One of the primary strengths of MI, he said, was the open and effective learning environments we are able to create; environments of honesty, trust and a sincere desire to learn together, understand and strengthen one another. "It is our intention that this will not be just another regional planning meeting, but a time of developing those same strong ties of trust and understanding", he added.