

MRC MEDIA MONITOR BRIEF – FEBRUARY 2018¹

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News Released by MRC are news published in MRC website.	5 articles
MRC in the News are news about MRC published by the media (international, regional, local newspapers)	5 articles
MRC mentioned/quoted in the news are news that refers, mentions, or quotes the MRC.	2 articles
Mekong News are news related to the Mekong or relevant to the MRC's work/interest.	

NEWS RELEASED BY MRC

[News – 02 February](#): Core mechanisms of bilateral water cooperation agreed for Sesan – Srepok and Mekong Delta

[News – 12 February](#): Knowledge and development experiences exchanged with Korean officials and private companies for better water resources management

[News – 12 February](#): Reporting findings and results from the Council Study to Member Countries

[News – 13 February](#): Cambodia, Thailand to finalise lessons and policy papers for better lake management

[Press Release – 15 February](#): MRC launches writing competition for Mekong citizens ahead of Summit – What does the Mekong mean to you?

Covered by: Lao Patthana Newspaper, February 2, MRC Summit to be held this April (*see clipped news attached*)

Covered by: Vientiane Times, February 19, River Commission launches story competition for Mekong region (*see clipped news attached*)

Covered by: Socio-Economic Newspaper, February 25, MRC launches story competition about the Mekong River (*see clipped news attached*)

Covered by: MRC launches story competition for Mekong citizens ahead of Summit ([Agence Kampuchea Press, February 16](#))

MRC IN THE NEWS



River festival comes close to capital for first time (The Phnom Penh Post, February 19)
(Phnom Penh Post, February 2)

¹ This brief covers period from 1 – 28 February 2018.

Article reports on the PDG Consultation meeting of the MRC, and highlights views of International Rivers and recent research by Stimpson Center on the issue. International Rivers (Maureen Harris) said the PDG can be ineffective because it is a non-binding procedure; and pointed to a lack of transparency surrounding the review process of the redesigned Xayabury dam by MRC.

(-) MRC: “...And while the **MRC** noted they are reviewing a proposed redesign of the controversial Xayaburi dam in Laos, Harris pointed to a lack of transparency surrounding that process.

The public was assured that state-of-the-art mitigation measures would be developed. Yet the full details of the redesign – and the results of any mitigation testing and impact monitoring – have not been made public.”

A recent report by the think tank the Stimson Center found that the impact of hydropower projects could put Cambodia and Vietnam on the brink of “a food security or economic crisis”, potentially affecting regional security. The report also noted that hydropower may prove more expensive than promised and recommended instead that Cambodia develop alternatives, in particular solar.



New Mekong guidelines lacking, government official says (The Phnom Penh Post, February 7)

Article states the limitations of the PDG not addressing food security, sedimentation and other significant concerns; yet, it does push for a better understanding on impacts of hydropower.

(-) MRC: “A Cambodian representative to the **Mekong River Commission (MRC)** said yesterday that new guidelines for hydropower development agreed to late last month don’t fully address threats to the health of the imperiled waterway.”

MRC MENTIONED/QUOTED IN THE NEWS

1. This month, news about the Mekong and MRC been low key and neutral.



The limits of minilateralism in Asean (The Straits Time, February 15)

Article highlights the pros and cons of minilateralism, and suggests that these institutions should be considered as one layer of cooperation within a wider network of relationship in the Asia – Pacific (like under the ASEAN framework), rather than being seen as a substitute to others. The MRC was briefly mentioned and inferred as being an example of a minilateralism institution.

(+/-) MRC mention: “Minilateralism is by no means new to the world or to South-east Asia. Within the region, though the bigger institutions within the Asean-led framework tend to get the most attention, there have been minilateral institutions emerging as well over the decades. These include the **Mekong River Commission** in mainland South-east Asia in the 1990s and the **Malacca Strait Patrols** in maritime South-east Asia in the 2000s.”



River festival comes close to capital for first time (The Phnom Penh Post, February 19)

For the first time in four years, the annual Mekong River Festival and multi-sport gala, a celebratory event to pay tribute to Asia's seventh longest river, is to be held from March 9-11, in Takhmao town, just 10-12km from Phnom Penh.

(+/-) MRC mention: *"In 1995, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam established the intergovernmental **Mekong River Commission** to assist in the coordinated management and use of the Mekong's resources. The following year China and Myanmar became dialogue partners of the MRC and the six countries now work together within this joint framework."*

MEKONG NEWS

2. News reported on two regional forums, the 5th GMS meeting held on January 30th in Chiang Mai Thailand and the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) meeting.



Greater Mekong states endorse joint five-year plan (The Nation, February 2)

The 5th GMS meeting endorsed the Core Environment Programme (CEP) Strategic Framework and Action Plan for 2018 to 2022 for member countries to work together on environmental issues and environmentally friendly development. The pact included more than US\$540 million worth of projects to spur green investment and increase environmental cooperation to help the sub-region achieve sustainable growth ([Khmer Times](#), February 2, 'US\$540 Mekong project endorsed').

The CEP, launched in 2006, is mandated to support environmental cooperation within the subregion and to fight poverty with sustainable development. The ADB will grant US\$10 million in technical assistance to support each country's operations in the context of the framework.



Mekong countries forge growth plan (Bangkok Post, February 24)

Member countries of the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) are working to develop a master development plan for 2019-23 to strengthen sustainable economic growth and enact better economic management, scheduled to be finalised in April before submitting it for approval to the eighth ACMECS summit scheduled for June in Thailand. The master plan comprises three objectives: seamless development of infrastructure projects in the subregion; economic development, especially for the joint establishment of the ACMECS infrastructure fund; and human and environmental development.

The group is a cooperation framework among Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam (CLMVT), using member countries' diverse strengths to promote balanced development. The Thai government initiated the establishment of the cooperation framework in April 2003. The areas of cooperation include transport, trade and investment facilitation.

3. Chinese dams again causes fuzz in Cambodia's Stung Treng (flood) and Thailand's Chiang Rai



Floodwater released by Chinese dam in Cambodia submerges village (Reuters, Feb 2)

Floodwater released by the recently opened Chinese hydroelectric dam in Cambodia aka Lower Sesan 2 Dam, has completely submerged Srekor Village of Stung Treng.

Hundreds of families from five villages in Stung Treng had moved several months ago to designated project resettlement sites, before the floodwater from the dam submerged the area.

More than 60 families have been forced to abandon their homes as floodwater levels have gradually risen around seven metres since the dam began operating in November ([Independent](#), February 4, 'Silent waterworld': Cambodian village submerged by floodwater from Chinese-built dam).



China's stoppage of water at Yunnan Dam affecting shipping on Mekong in Chiang Rai (Chiang Rai Times, February 25)

China's stall of its water discharge from Yunnan Dam into the Mekong River has affected boat services on the Mekong River in Chiang Rai Province.

The Mekong River which runs through China's Yunnan province has seen a significant drop in water levels in many areas after Yunnan Dam discontinued its water releases. Chiang Rai is one of many downstream cities that are affected.

In Chiang Saen district, rocks and sand dunes can be seen in the Mekong River as the reduced flow of water is at a critical level, forcing boat operators to build a wooden bridge to assist their boarding passengers.

4. The Don Sahong Dam, covered by Aljazeera pointing out the lack of thorough study of its environmental impacts.



Concerns over Laos dams' environmental impact (Aljazeera, February 20)