

Bangkok is still sinking, and fast!

Urban planning and city development are crucial for making the capital more climate resilient, experts say, writes **Pratch Rujivanarom**



Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittipunt listens to complaints from locals in Bang Khunthian district about chronic coastal flooding problems that cause many difficulties in their everyday lives. BANGKOK METROPOLITAN ADMINISTRATION

Getting Bangkok ready for the consequences of climate change is crucial for saving this megacity from being submerged under rising sea levels, climate experts say.

They also called on the government and state agencies to come up with urgent efforts to reform urban planning and city development to make Bangkok more adaptive and resilient to dealing with climate hazards.

EXISTENTIAL THREAT

As global warming accelerates, Thanawat Jarupongsakul, president of the Thailand Global Warming Academy (TGWA), an independent climate think tank, said Thailand's climate risk has heightened during the past decade.

According to the annual Global Climate Risk Index by Germanwatch, Thailand jumped from 43rd on the

ranking of most affected countries by extreme weather in 2011 to ninth in the latest edition of the analysis in 2021.

"It is apparent that human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes throughout the globe, as during the past 10 years we have experienced increasingly volatile and violent weather, as seasonal patterns have become more and more erratic and floods and droughts are now regularly occurring," he said.

"No place has been spared from the impacts of extreme weather events."

As the densely populated Bangkok Metropolitan area, home to over 10 million inhabitants, is situated on the low-lying Chao Phraya River delta right next to the open waters of the Bay of Bangkok, the uppermost part of Gulf of Thailand, Prof Thanawat said this geographic location makes Bangkok even

more vulnerable to weather-related disasters, especially floods.

Although he said the impacts of global warming on precipitation patterns and weather-related disasters will be major concerns for Bangkok in the near future, he said the increase in the level of the world's oceans is by far the greatest threat to this megacity.

Melting water from glaciers and polar ice caps is raising the sea level and slowly submerging low-lying coastal cities globally.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), human-induced heating of the climate system has been responsible for about a 0.2 metre rise in the global mean sea level over the past century.

Under the current circumstances, IPCC warns that global mean sea level will rise at an increasingly faster rate over the 21st century and well beyond

into the far future.

It is estimated the global mean sea level may soar up to 0.5-1 metres by the end of the 21st century, while in the longer term, the global mean sea level may reach over 6 metres over the next 2,000 years.

Due to the grim prospect of sea levels rising in the future, Prof Thanawat said Bangkok is apparently the most vulnerable area in Thailand to the looming threats of climate change. The low-lying Chao Phraya River delta has an average elevation of around 1.5 metres above sea level.

"Considering the rise in sea level in local waters near Bangkok is about 1.2 centimetres per year, if nothing is done to protect Bangkok's shoreline, the waterline will slowly creep further inland by about 1.3 kilometres every year," he said.

"Eventually, it is likely that most of Bangkok Metropolitan will sink beneath sea level within the next 100 years. So, governmental agencies need to carry out immediate action to ensure the integrity of the shoreline."

Meanwhile, another report on the economic impact of extreme sea level rises in seven Asian cities by Greenpeace says almost all of Bangkok will be vulnerable to floods in the scenario of an extreme sea level rise by 2030. Under this extreme projection about 96% of the city will be below the mean sea level.

Greenpeace's report said the economic damage from such extensive coastal flooding in Bangkok would be phenomenal, as the impact to GDP could reach US\$512.28 billion (17 trillion baht) and affect the lives of millions of citizens.

SAVING BANGKOK

Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittipunt said the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has mitigation plans in place to address the issues of coastal erosion and a rise in sea levels.

"I admit that, due to global warming, our city is facing greater flood risks from extreme precipitation and rising sea levels. Although the flood threats are real, we are not without a plan to save our city from deluges," Mr Chadchart said.

The BMA plans to build a barrier system, similar to the Thames Barrier in London, at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River to stem flows of seawater into the river. Meanwhile, the roads

that run along the seashore will be elevated and have coastal dykes to protect the city from surging sea levels.

Other ideas have been suggested, for instance the Pheu Thai Party has proposed a megaproject to reclaim new land in the Bay of Bangkok as a way of keeping the encroaching sea away from the capital.

Prof Thanawat cautioned these megaprojects may do more harm than good, as the adverse impacts will destroy the fragile marine ecosystems in the Bay of Bangkok that provide bountiful fishery resources for local communities.

"We cannot simply replicate coastal protection projects that work elsewhere and expect the same result here in Bangkok. We need to understand the environmental and ecological differences of each locality to deliver an approach that is compatible with the environmental context of the area," he said.

Since Bangkok has already lost most of its original mangrove forests that acted as a natural barrier against erosion, he suggested that one measure to protect the shoreline is to install clusters of triangular concrete poles at the seafront to mimic the natural function of a mangrove forest.

This would absorb the eroding force of winds and waves and help trap sediment behind the lines of defensive structures.

Prof Thanawat said this shoreline protection technique has proven to be effective in protecting the shoreline from erosion, according to an initial trial at Ban Khun Samut Chin in neighbouring Samut Prakan province.

CITY PLANNING

Apart from flood risks posed by rising sea levels, Wijitbusaba Marome, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Thammasat University, said rainfall and seasonal riverine flooding are two other prominent factors behind flooding in Bangkok.

"Most flooding in Bangkok is caused by the poor drainage system, which often has trouble draining water after heavy downpours, causing flash floods on the streets. This type of flood is a minor one, as it usually recedes within 24 hours though results in traffic disruption and inconvenience to commuters in the city," she said.

"Meanwhile, riverine flooding due

to high water flows in the Chao Phraya River and its tributaries, which normally occurs during late monsoon season from September to November, is behind the more severe type of flood, such as the major floods which the Chao Phraya River Basin witnessed in 1983, 1995, 2006, and 2011."

Asst Prof Wijitbusaba said Bangkok's poor urban planning is also playing a major part in the exacerbation of flood risks.

"Bangkok is expanding without a plan. So, the city is now encroaching into surrounding floodways in the east and west, blocking the natural drainage pathway of seasonal flooding and causing the problem to worsen," she said.

She suggested city planning should be upgraded to ensure the city will grow properly with a more efficient infrastructure to manage floods.

State agencies also should focus on helping vulnerable people cope with the impacts of the crisis.

"Building infrastructure is just another part of preparing for the climate crisis, but the more important issue is to build climate resilience among people to let our city deal with climate impacts in the long run," she added.

Note: This story is the first in a series of four stories about urban planning reform and city development.

GREAT WALL MOTOR OPENS EV LEARNING CENTRE



Great Wall Motor (GWM) recently opened a Electrical Vehicle Learning Center at the Chonburi Technical College by the Office of the Vocational Education Commission in an effort to promote the capabilities and learning of Thai youths.

The company said in a press release that it has provided an ORA-branded vehicle to support practical education at the centre, equipping younger generations with essential skills to serve future market requirements.

Additionally, GWM has signed a memorandum of understanding regarding EV vocational workforce production and development under the supervision of the Sub-Committee of Public-Private Sectors for Vocational Workforce Production and Development for EV-related careers.

GWM stated that the initiatives reiterated the company's mission and readiness to become the xEV leader with full commitment to thrive alongside society

and drive Thailand's transformation into the hub of EV manufacturing and exports in Asean.

The collaboration between GWM, the Office of the Vocational Education Commission and Chonburi Technical College will provide further opportunities to develop skills and capabilities through EV-specific experiences for vocational students, while teachers will have an opportunity to enhance and round out their curriculum.



GWM noted that in the future, this endeavour will equip Thailand with a quality workforce capable of driving forward the new energy vehicle industry, creating a full-fledged EV ecosystem, and transforming Thailand into the regional hub of the EV industry.

Since its entry into Thailand several years ago, GWM has been active in activities and collaborations with various agencies and schools. Its joint effort with Pridi Banomyong International College of Thammasat University is aimed at offering opportunities and practical experience in the electric vehicle industry to undergraduate students. The sponsorship for the world's second biggest business case competition — the Thammasat Undergraduate Business Challenge — allows undergraduate students from leading universities around the globe to utilise their knowledge, capabilities, and analytical skills.

The partnership with the Office of the Vocational Education Commission and Mahanakorn University of Technology was initiated to study, design and produce modern vehicle training equipment from passenger cars. The initiative also covers other science-based technology vocational colleges under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission's supervision. The alliance with the Digital Economy Promotion Agency allows GWM to provide an ORA-branded vehicle for educational use throughout DEPA's network of vocational schools.



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BY SMMAG SMMAG ON FEBRUARY 5, 2023 PR NEWS

SMmagonline - จุดประกายคนรุ่นใหม่ประยุกต์ใช้ Data ให้เกิดประโยชน์สูงสุด...มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ โดย รศ. ดร. สุรนต์ ธีรภาวภิบาล (แถวแรก ที่ 4 จากขวา) รองอธิการบดี ฝ่ายบริหารท่าพระจันทร์ และวิเทศสัมพันธ์ และ ทูร ดิจิทัล โดย ณัฐวุฒิ อมรวิวัฒน์ (แถวแรก ที่ 3 จากขวา) ประธานกรรมการ บริษัท ทูร ดิจิทัล กรุ๊ป จำกัด ร่วมมอบรางวัลและของที่ระลึกแก่ทีมที่ชนะเลิศการแข่งขัน "Analytics Star, Data Hackathon"

ซึ่งเป็นกิจกรรมที่จัดขึ้นพร้อมการเปิดตัวหลักสูตรอบรม "TU x TDA Co-Certificate Program in Business Data Analytics" ภายใต้ความร่วมมือของ มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ และ ทูร ดิจิทัล อคาเดมี ในการพัฒนาหลักสูตรอบรมความรู้และทักษะด้านเทคโนโลยีดิจิทัล เพื่อเสริมสร้างขีดความสามารถให้กลุ่มคนรุ่นใหม่ นักธุรกิจ และบุคคลทั่วไป ใฝ่ทักษะด้านการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงธุรกิจ ดอกยี่อตามแนวทางการพัฒนาองค์ความรู้และทักษะของสองฝ่าย ที่จะมุ่งเน้นความร่วมมือในการพัฒนาทักษะดิจิทัลด้านการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลในระดับประเทศ

สำหรับการแข่งขัน "Analytics Star, Data Hackathon" จัดขึ้นเพื่อสร้างความตระหนักรู้และยกระดับทักษะในการนำข้อมูลมาวิเคราะห์และแก้ไขปัญหาขององค์กรธุรกิจได้ตรงจุดและสร้างความได้เปรียบทางธุรกิจ ทีมที่นำเสนอไอเดียโดดเด่นกว่ารางวัลชนะเลิศ ได้แก่ ทีม Abba ส่งไอเดียแพลตฟอร์ม "TUMRAIDEE" ในการบริหารจัดการสถานที่ในการจัดอีเวนต์ตามฐานข้อมูลของลูกค้า เพื่อลดการสูญเสียทรัพยากรและเป็นพื้นที่สื่อกลางระหว่างผู้จัดและผู้ร่วมงาน รางวัลรองชนะเลิศอันดับ 1 ได้แก่ ทีม 1 2 Sum นำเสนอไอเดีย "InvestPulse" ธุรกิจให้บริการข้อมูลเชิงลึกแก่บริษัทด้านการเงินและการลงทุน ให้สามารถเข้าถึงลูกค้าได้กว้างขวางและสื่อสารอย่างตรงเป้าหมายมากขึ้น และรางวัลรองชนะเลิศอันดับ 2 ได้แก่ ทีมทรงแบด ตัวแม่กรุ๊ป B ส่งไอเดียให้บริการกลุ่มธุรกิจที่ยานยนต์ที่สามารถระบุและเข้าถึงกลุ่มลูกค้าเป้าหมายได้อย่างตรงจุด ซึ่งทั้ง 3 ทีมได้รับรางวัล พร้อมคอร์สอบรมทักษะดิจิทัลจาก ทูร ดิจิทัล อคาเดมี มูลค่ารวมทั้งสิ้นกว่า 200,000 บาท เพื่อใช้ต่อยอดทักษะดิจิทัลอื่นๆ ให้สอดคล้องกับความต้องการของตลาดแรงงานยุค 4.0 ต่อไป

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