China paused for releasing water to drought-hit Mekong countries

BY SHU WEI
Due to a strong El-Nino effect, all countries in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin have been suffering from various degrees of drought since late 2015. According to a March 10 report released by the United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Vietnam is suffering in worst drought in 90 years, which has drained nearly one million people short of water for domestic use, while affecting nearly 169,000 hectares of farmland. Meanwhile, seawater intrusion has caused severe soil degradation in the Mekong Delta. By the end of this year, 500,000 hectares of rice paddies will have been already affected.

The drought’s development is threatening people’s production and ability to earn a living along the Mekong. In order to accommodate the concerns of Vietnam and other countries in the river basin, the Chinese government notified medium-sized Yangon’s Jinghong Hydropower Station to release water for downstream areas, effectively alleviating the persistent drought in Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

A report in Thailand’s The Nation quoted a Thai official saying that the action proved that China was putting action into the co-management agreement on the Mekong River basin, and confirmed China’s responsibility and the importance of the China-ASEAN cooperation in reducing Mekong River Basin dangers. Additionally, the Chinese diplomats went to notify the governments of involved countries. The Chinese government also paid attention to work more closely with downstream countries to address other issues.

On March 17, the Vietnamese News Agency published a report entitled Vietnam highly welcomes China’s move and applauded China’s decision to release water from the Lancang-Mekong River Basin.

The Vietnamese government released its statement on March 16, praising the Chinese government’s move and promising that the country would launch emergency water supply. Vietnam’s relevant ministry expressed their approval on the notice. A ministry official noted that “China’s move is full of goodwill”. Another ministry official “congratulated” also welcomed China’s move and hoped that it could eradicate the drought and halt seawater intrusion.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia issued a statement on March 17, praising the Chinese government’s decision to release water from the dam in order to help mitigate the drought in the lower Lancang-Mekong River Basin cope with the drought. According to the statement, water resource management cooperation is an important part of the Lancang-Mekong cooperation mechanism, and China’s decision to release emergency water proves that China is maintaining a good cooperative relationship with countries along the Mekong.

According to reports, colder, precipitation, less runoff from tributaries, and other factors have resulted in aquatic droughts in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin. Water regulation at the Jinghong Hydroelectric Station and other hydropower stations is of great significance for dry-season river navigation, irrigation and water-resource information.

In 2015, a regional water regulator in the Mekong Delta fixed control on the Mekong. (Source: Xinhua News Agency and China Daily)

CHINA-SOUTH ASIA EXPO
GMS cross-border e-commerce business alliance to be established

BY LUO RONGCHANG
The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) cross-border e-commerce cooperation platform business alliances expected to be established during the eighth GMS Economic Cooperation Week which will be one of the events of the 4th China-South Asia Expo to be held in Kunming in June.

With the support of GMS governments and the Asian Development Bank, the eighth GMS Economic Cooperation Week will be held in June 11 in Kunming. By then, within the GMS cooperation framework, participating countries will recommend alumni e-commerce promotion and training agencies and e-commerce businesses to establish the GMS cross-border e-commerce cooperation platform.

The countries will also be able to present the development of e-commerce; carry out e-commerce while sharing information regarding sub-regional consumer markets.

As the GMS Summit in December issued a joint ministerial statement, formally approving the proposal. In the future, the six countries will promote sub-regional e-commerce cooperation and development through policy exchanges, enterprise interaction and capacity building.

INTERCONNECTIVITY
Tracks laid for Yunnan section of Shanghai-Kunming high-speed railway

BY CAO JIE
When the last rail was laid, construction workers quickly tightened railway bolts, and track-laying work for the Yunnan section of Shang-hai-Kunming High-speed rail line was finally completed recently.

According to a construction manager, the completion of the work in Yunnan is an important milestone in the construction of the entire project, including laying and welding will be conducted in order to finally solid a foundation for the test run and the completion of the work in Yunnan.

The Yunnan section of Shang-hai-Kunming high-speed rail line, or line six of North Egypt, No.68, Songyang and South Kunming railway stations. It adopts the highest industry construction standards and has a design speed of 380 kilometers per hour.

The Shanghai-Kunming high-speed rail line consists of the Shanghai-Hangzhou, Hangzhou-Changsha and Changsha-Kunming sections.

Being an important part of China’s development strategy, the Shanghai-Kunming section, the Yunnan line extends for a length of 1,647 kilometers. China high-speed train runs the line after five years, a high-speed train trip from Kunming to Changsha and Shigatse will take four to 10 hours respectively.

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Although rail links to Nepal and cross- border economic cooperation have only just been laid, the railway is planned to be extended up to Kathmandu, by 2020. The railway should be extended up to Kathmandu," he said.

The railway is major to development. "Nepal should seek support from China to develop this railway," he said. Besides sharing information regarding the development of e-commerce, the railways will promote sub-regional e-commerce cooperation and development through policy exchanges, enterprise interaction and capacity building.

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