

Mekong River Commission

Regional Flood and Drought Management Centre

Weekly Dry Season Situation Report for the Mekong River Basin

Prepared on: 28/04/2020, covering the week from 21 to 27 April 2020

Weather Patterns, General Behaviors of the Mekong River and Outlook Situation

General weather patterns:

From 21 to 27 April 2020, there was no rainfall in the LMB. The weather outlook bulletins (3 months weather forecast) and maps issued by the Thailand Meteorology Department (TMD) were used to verify the weather condition in the LMB. They stated that from late April to May 2020, some low-pressure air mass cells develop around the Mekong Region, that can be strengthening to become depressions and tropical cyclones, resulting summer thunderstorms and rain in this period.

Moreover, coldly high-pressure air masses from China will meet hot air masses already prevailing over LMB, resulting in abnormal rainfall in April-May. **Figure 1** presented the weather map on 23 and 28 April 2020.

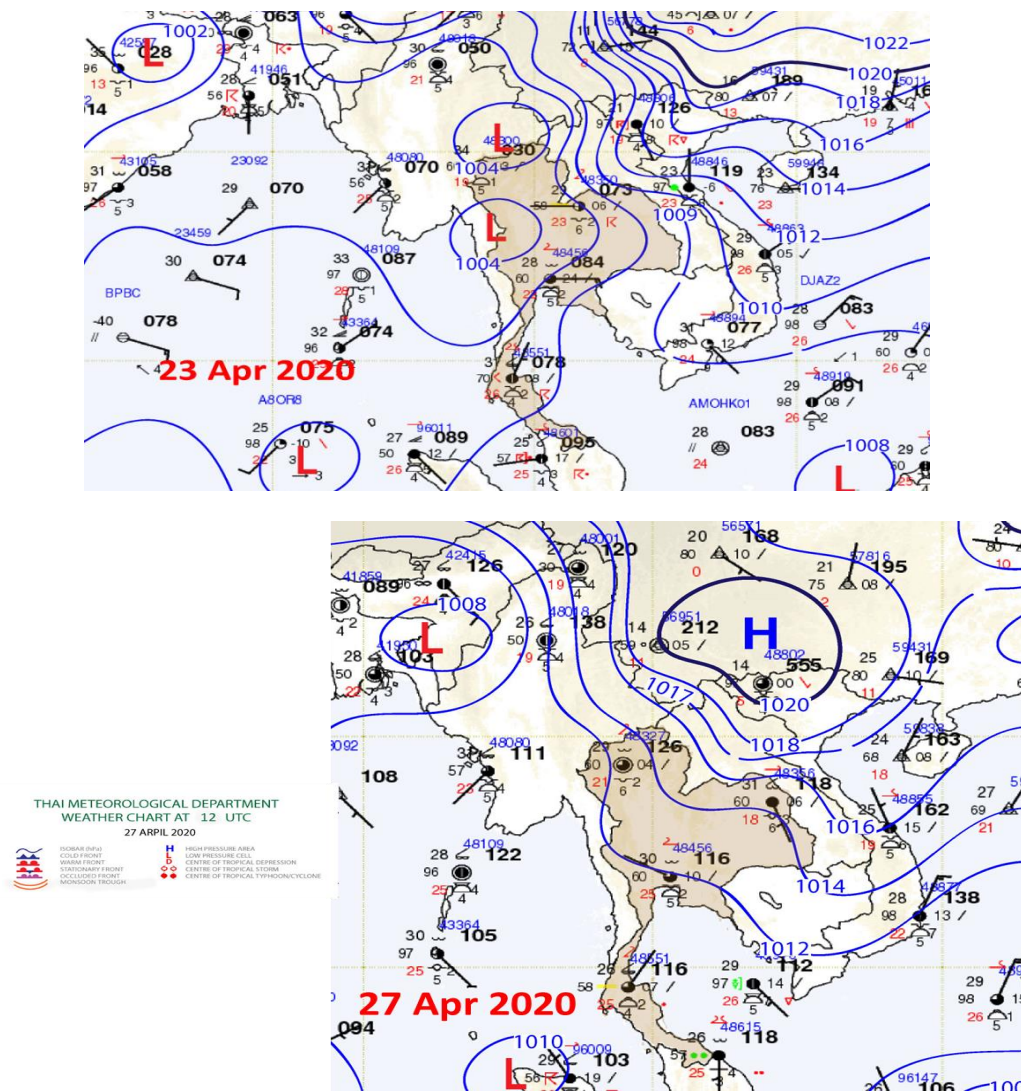


Figure 1: Summary of weather condition over the LMB from 23 and 27 April 2020

General Situation on water levels of the Mekong River:

This week from 21 to 27 April 2020, water levels at the upper most station of Chiang Saen were increased, varied from 0.08 m to 0.19 m (data from 20 to 27 Apr 2020). As normal practice, after the Sangkran New Year, the released flows at Jinghong have gradually increased water levels downstream at Chiang Saen.

Water levels at Luang Prabang and Chiang Khan are likely impacted by hydropower dam at Xayaburi and upstream hydropower dams. At Lung Prabang, water levels were fluctuated close to its maximum levels, followed the same trend as 2018-2019. Water levels at Chaing Khan (downstream of Xayaburi) were slightly increased but stay above its LTA, varied from 0.06m to 0.21 m. Water levels at stations in the middle part of LMB from Lao's Vientiane to Thailand's Nakhon Phanom were followed the same trends from last week inflows, which reached over their LATs.

Follow the same trend, water levels at Mukdahan to Pakse were reached to their LTAs, which considered back to normal condition. This week water levels at stations of Stung Treng, Kratie and Kompong Cham were above their LTAs, while at Chaktomuk, Phnom Penh Port and Prekdam slightly were decreased but still stay close to their LTAs.

For the 2 tidal stations at Tan Chau and Chau Doc, water levels are having been fluctuating below their LTAs due to the daily tidal effect from the sea. The attached hydrograph at each key station is showed in **Annex B. Figure 2** presented the stations for river monitoring with model application for river monitoring.

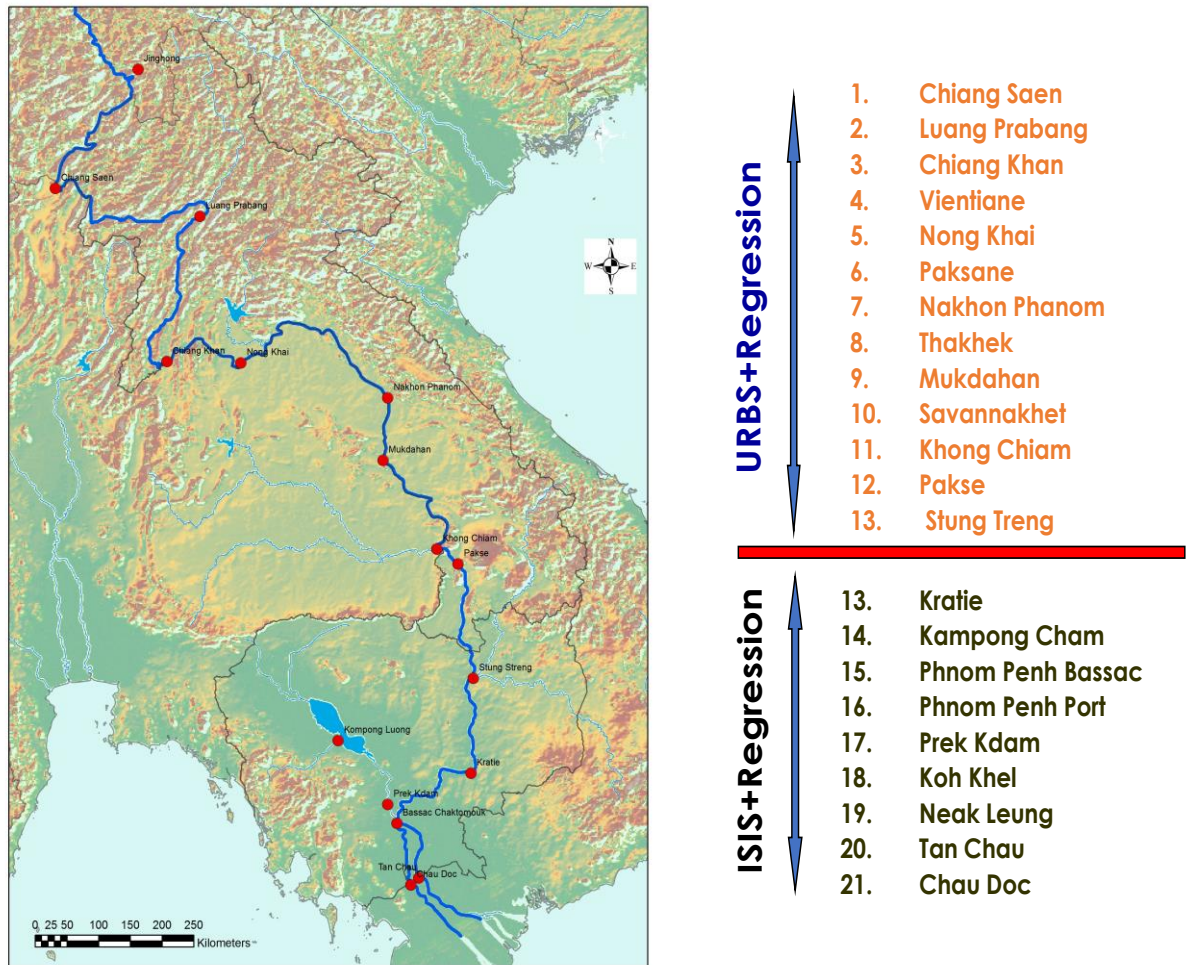


Figure 2 Stations for River Monitoring with Models Application

For stations from Chiang Saen and Luang Prabang

Water levels from 21 to 27 April 2020 at Chiang Saen station were increased, varied from 0.01 m to 0.16 m. At Luang Prabang station, water levels were also increased and stay close to its historical maximum levels. Water levels at this station are likely impacted by hydropower dam at Xayaburi and upstream hydropower dams.

For stations from Chiang Khan, Vientiane-Nong Khai and Paksane

Water levels from 21 to 27 April 2020 at Chiang Khan station were likely nominated by upstream hydropower dam of Xayaburi, which drastically increasing from 0.01 m to 0.46 m that bring more increase of water levels of downstream reach at Vientiane and Nong Khai. The current observed water levels at Vientiane, Nong Khai and Paksane were slightly increased and reached over their LTAs.

For stations from Nakhon Phanom to Pakse

Water levels from 21 to 27 April 2020 at Nakhon Phanom to Mukdahan stations were decreased followed the same trend from upstream, varied from -0.02 m to -0.05 m, while at Pakse were increased due to rainfall from upper sub-catchments. This week water levels at these stations were above their LTAs indicating of normal condition.

For stations from Stung Treng to Kompong Cham/ Phnom Penh to Koh Khel/Neak Luong

This week from 21 to 27 April 2020, water levels at stations of Stung Treng, Kratie and Kompong Cham were above their LTAs, while at Chaktomuk, Phnom Penh Port and Prekdam were slightly decreased but stay close to their LTAs. As observing water levels at Neak Luong on the Mekong and Koh Khel on the Bassac there are influencing by tidal from the sea due to the low water level of the Mekong from November 2019 to March 2020 (followed the same trends of 2015-2016).

Tan Chau and Chau Doc

From 21 to 27 April 2020, the 2 tidal stations at Tan Chau and Chau Doc, water levels are having been fluctuating and stay below their LTAs due to the tidal effect from the sea.

According to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), Sea surface temperature (SST) variability in the tropics Neutral, which has no major impact in to the South China Sea from March to April 2020.

Discussion and Conclusion

From 21 to 27 April 2020, the trend of water levels at Chiang Saen were increased based on the inflows from upstream. As normal practice, after the Sangkran New Year in Aril, the released flows at Jinghong have gradually increased water levels downstream at Chiang Saen. Water level at Chiang Saen is relied from inflow at Jinghong Hydropower Station on Lancang and its catchment rainfall.

Luang Prabang stations is likely nominated by hydro power dam operation upstream (tributaries) and downstream (Xayaburi) in which water levels always fluctuated above their LTAs during the dry season 2020. It was observed that water levels at this station have been effected since the impounding reservoir at Xayaburi last year 2019 (October 2018 to May 2019).

Analysis of the Mekong River Commission's data revealed that the rises of water levels at some stations on the Mekong mainstream (Chiang Saen and Luang Prabang) are the result of the upstream dams' operation in Chiang's Hydropower Station at Jinghong for example and major tributaries upstream.

Water levels at stations in the middle part of LMB from Vientiane to Nakhon Phanom were slightly increased, following the trend inflows from upstream and early rainfall from sub-catchments. The recent water levels at these stations are reached above their LTAs, considering return to normal situation of flows situation.

From Phnom Penh Port to Prekdam on the Tonle Sap river and Chaktomuk and Koh Khel on the Bassac river, their water levels were raised close to their LTAs. These stations were also considered back to normal condition.

The Mekong river flow depends not only on the flow from the upstream, but also on the rainfall from sub-catchment inflows. The contribution to the Mekong river's flow from the Upper Mekong Basin in China (Yunnan component) is about 16% by the time the river discharges through the Mekong Delta into the South China Sea. By far the major contribution comes from the two majors 'left-bank' (eastern) tributaries between Vientiane – Nakhon Phanom and Pakse – Stung Treng, which together contribute more than 40% of the flows.

Since the beginning of this year, there were very low water level in the lower Mekong River, due to low rainfall in the basin in 2019. Like many parts of the world, the Mekong region has been affected by the prolonged El Nino phenomenon, the phenomenon that usually causes extreme heat and insufficient rain in 2019. The cause of below average water levels in the Mekong mainstream in Jan-Feb-Mar 2020 is likely due to unusual low rainfall in 2019 and the effected El Nino process over the Mekong region 2019.

The amount of water flowing from Jinghong dam in China could also be a potential contribution of the low flow. According to the notification from China, were decreased about 0.76m, due to the test of equipment of hydropower dam at Jinghong from 27 Dec 2019 to 4 Jan 2020.

Another potential important reason of low flow in the mainstream (Jan-Feb-Mar) was the contribution from major tributary dams. Potentially, there were storing waters that contributed to the Mekong river basin in time of no or low rainfall. This has impacted the basin situation. However, we do not have any official data to quantify their contribution.

The Tonle Sap Flow

At the end of wet season when the inflow of the Mekong is receded, the flow of the Tonle Sap Lake (TLS Lake) is being flow out. **Figure 3** showed the seasonal change of inflow/reversed flows and outflows, while **Table 1** showed the monthly change in volume of the Tonle Sap Lake, comparing the flow between its LTA, 2018, 2019 and the recent year 2020 (up to 27 April). The low inflow from the Mekong and the less rainfall in the surrounding sub-catchments caused the outflow from the TLS Lake in 2020 very low. Since last week, the recent outflows for the Tonle Sap Lake is returned to normal situation due to the rainfall from catchments.

The low outflow from the Tonle Sap could also affect the expanding unsaturated soil that may cause bank erosion, water shortage for agricultural production and increase salinity intrusion from the sea in the Mekong Delta.

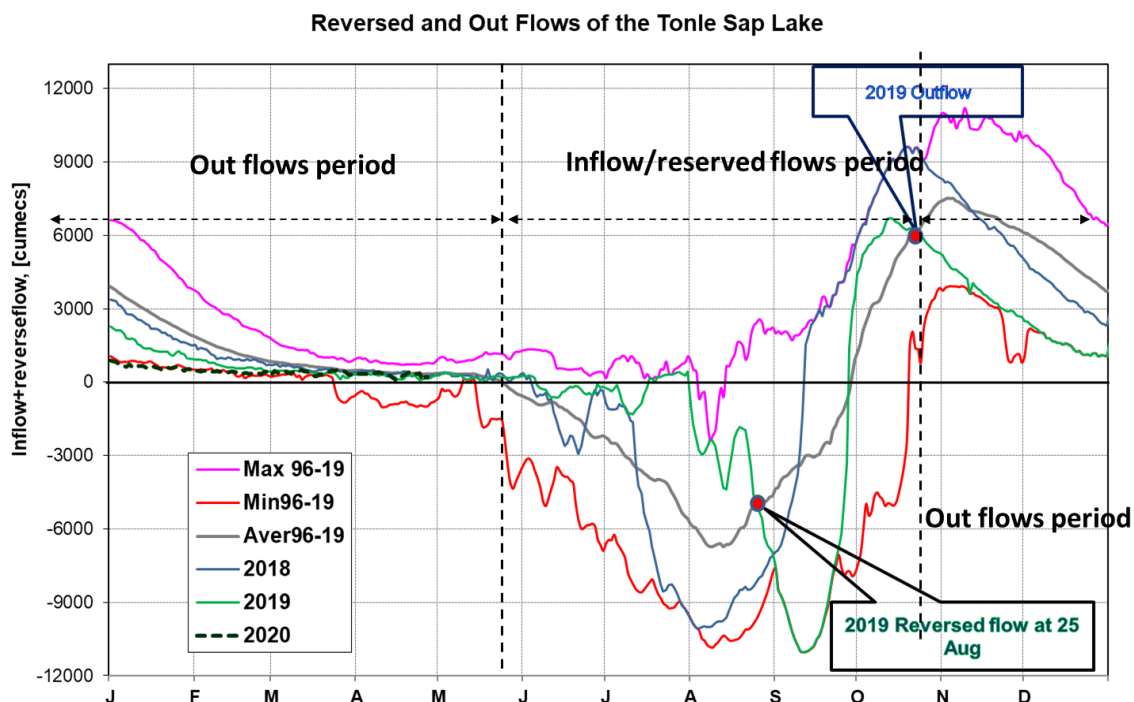


Figure 3 The seasonal change of inflows and outflows of the Tole Sap Lake

Table 1: The monthly change in flow volume of the Tonle Sap Lake.

Month	Average (97-18)	Volume2018	Volume2019	Volume2020
Jan	16452.95	13633.41	10285.31	5906.80
Feb	9392.13	7784.12	6057.31	4264.19
Mar	5868.92	5037.06	4387.48	3560.35
Apr	4502.51	3978.57	3688.09	3030.18
May	4154.68	3838.63	3266.43	
Jun	5919.22	5814.46	3508.31	
Jul	12179.21	11628.51	3979.76	
Aug	19275.58	21784.36	7364.72	
Sep	42196.41	53310.21	23434.07	
Oct	49773.40	48716.52	30680.83	
Nov	39996.78	31540.68	19471.72	
Dec	26537.70	18656.94	10697.45	
	Low-flow condition, compared with LTA (Long term average)			
	Normal condition, compared with LTA (Long term average)			

The Trend of water level and its Outlook

From 28 Apr to 4 May 2020, water levels along the lower Mekong River from Thailand’s Chiang Saen to Lao PDR’s Luang Prabang will continue to increase that can be varied from 0.10 m to 0.21 m. From Lao PDR’s Vientiane and Thailand’s Nong Khai, water levels will be increased, followed the same trend from upstream vary from 0.04 m to 0.25 m. From Thailand’s Nakhon Phanom to Lao PDR’s Pakse, water levels will be slightly increased, varying from 0.02 m to 0.06 m.

From Cambodia's Stung Treng to Neak Loung on the Mekong River, water will be slightly increased varies from 0.03 m to 0.07 m. The water levels of the Tonle Sap Lake at Prekdam will increase from 0.02 m to 0.06m.

For Viet Nam's Tan Chau on the Mekong River and Chau Doc on the Bassac River, water levels will be increased and fluctuated above their LTAs, follow the daily effect tidal from the sea.

Perhaps even more expecting based on the historical hydrology phenomenon, the abnormal rainfall can be occurred in April and early May 2020, which can contribute to the flow in the Mekong River.

According to the Asian Specialized Meteorological Centre (ASMC), climatologically, the weather over the Mekong sub-region remained dry. Scattered hotspots were detected in Cambodia and Thailand, and isolated ones were also detected in Myanmar, Lao PDR and southern Viet Nam. With the prevailing dry weather over the Mekong sub-region forecast to persist, a further deterioration in the hotspot and smoke haze situation can be expected.

For details information on water levels and rainfall at each key station, **Annex A** and **Annex B** are presented as follows:

- Tables presents observed water levels and rainfall from last week (**Annex A**)
- The water levels hydrographs showing the observed water levels for the dry season (**Annex B**)

Annex A: Graphs and Tables

Table A1: observed water levels

Unit: m

2020	Jinghong	Chiang Saen	Luang Prabang	Chiang Khan	Vientiane	Nongkhai	Paksane	Nakhon Phanom	Mukdahan	Pakse	Stung Treng	Kratie	Kompong Cham	Phnom Penh (Bassac)	Koh Khel	Neak Luong	Prek Kdam	Tan Chau	Chau Doc
21/04/2020	-	2.12	8.42	3.72	1.30	1.44	2.88	1.01	1.59	1.06	2.48	6.87	2.58	1.51	1.56	1.20	1.03	0.77	0.94
22/04/2020	-	2.06	8.33	3.76	1.24	1.37	3.00	1.09	1.58	1.00	2.50	6.84	2.56	1.63	1.64	1.18	1.03	0.77	0.92
23/04/2020	-	2.05	8.28	3.86	1.28	1.29	2.96	1.18	1.66	1.02	2.46	6.86	2.55	1.75	1.66	1.14	1.02	0.72	0.87
24/04/2020	-	2.13	8.38	3.80	1.32	1.34	2.89	1.21	1.72	0.96	2.47	6.86	2.60	1.63	1.74	1.08	1.03	0.62	0.86
25/04/2020	-	2.06	8.64	3.74	1.35	1.37	2.97	1.22	1.72	1.04	2.45	6.85	2.62	1.99	1.9	1.16	1.04	0.48	0.7
26/04/2020	-	2.25	8.75	3.94	1.32	1.32	2.91	1.17	1.71	1.02	2.34	6.83	2.65	1.85	1.89	1.18	1.07	0.28	0.34
27/04/2020	-	2.34	8.79	4.40	1.36	1.34	2.84	1.16	1.68	1.10	2.50	6.78	2.63	1.87	2.13	1.20	1.06	0.09	-0.03

Table A2: observed rainfall

Unit: mm

2020	Jinghong	Chiang Saen	Luang Prabang	Chiang Khan	Vientiane	Nongkhai	Paksane	Nakhon Phanom	Mukdahan	Pakse	Stung Treng	Kratie	Kompong Cham	Phnom Penh (Bassac)	Koh Khel	Neak Luong	Prek Kdam	Tan Chau	Chau Doc
21/04/2020	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22/04/2020	-	0	0	0	0	0	51	14.4	0	1.04	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.3	0	0
23/04/2020	-	0	2.4	19.4	0.8	0	0	2.3	26.3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	10.5	0	0
24/04/2020	-	13.1	24.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
25/04/2020	-	6.3	65.2	0	12.6	12.2	4.9	0	0	1	0	1.5	1.5	0	0	0	61.7	0	0
26/04/2020	-	3.8	7.4	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	1.06	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27/04/2020	-	8.5	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2.3	0.8	0	0	0

Note: No data available from China during the Dry Season

Annex B: Season Water Level Hydrographs

This Annex showed water level hydrographs of each key station. These hydrographs distributed weekly water level for River Monitoring purpose.

HYDROGRAPH AT 7 AM OF MEKONG TONLE SAP AND BASSAC AT MAINSTREAM STATIONS IN DRY SEASON UP TO 27 APRIL 2020

