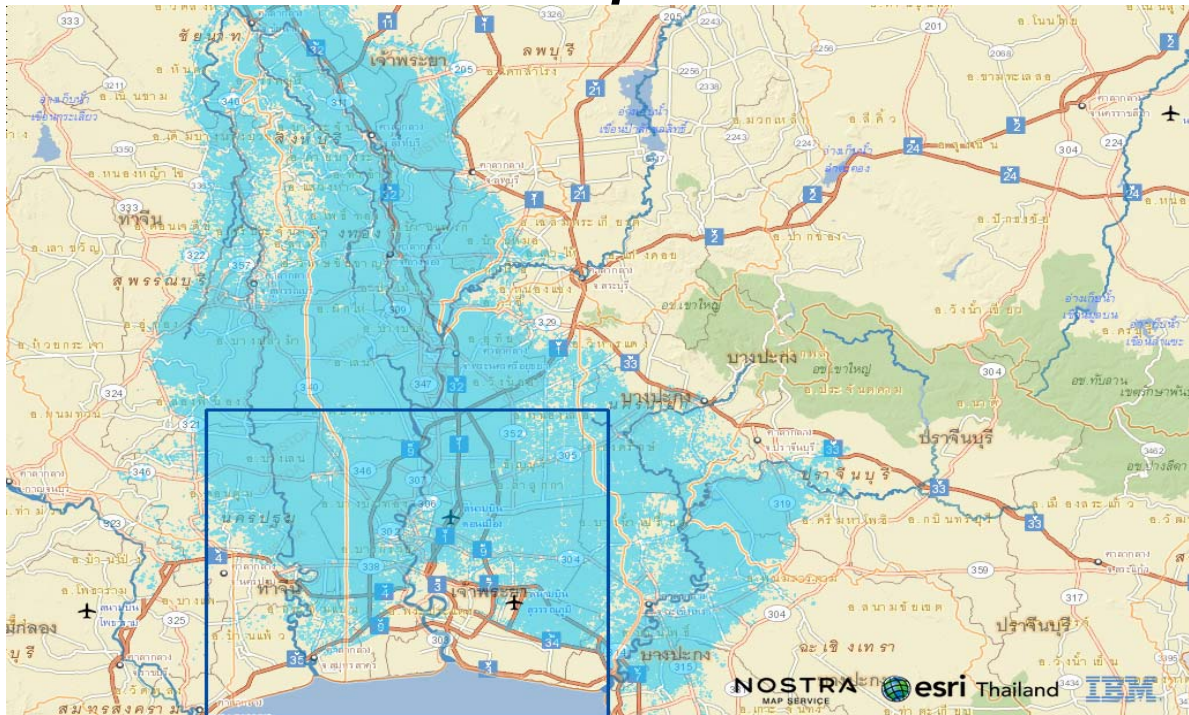


Fall 2011 Thai Flood Photos: Part 12

Latest Flood Map at Press Time

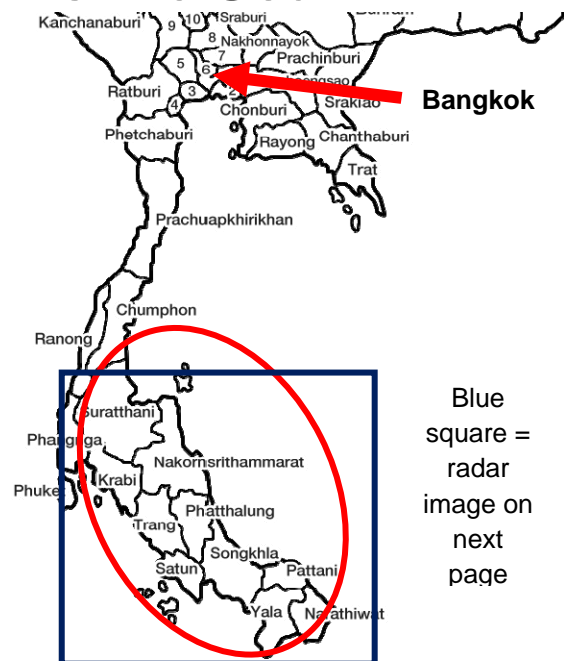


Screen capture 26Nov 2011 2213 Thai time

New Flooding Hits the South

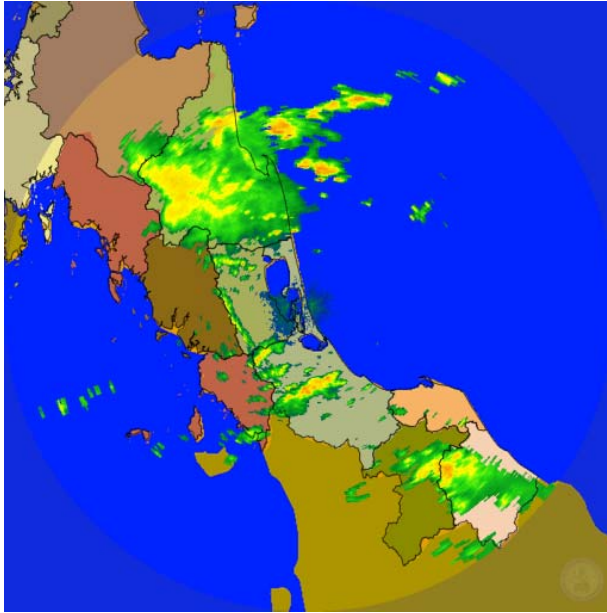
A strong NE monsoon brought heavy thundershowers over southern Thailand causing flooding for the second time this year. The areas include Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Trang and Satun.

In a 24-hr period spanning 24-25 Nov, Surat Thani got 7.9 mm of rain; Nakhon Si Thammarat 38 mm; Phatthalung 28.8 mm; Songkhla 17.8 mm with water 2 to 4 meters deep. Phatthalung reported 11



districts as disaster zones. In Surat Thani, one village was cut off when a bridge washed out.

Much of this area was hit by heavy rain, landslides / mudslides, flashfloods, and flooding in March 2011.

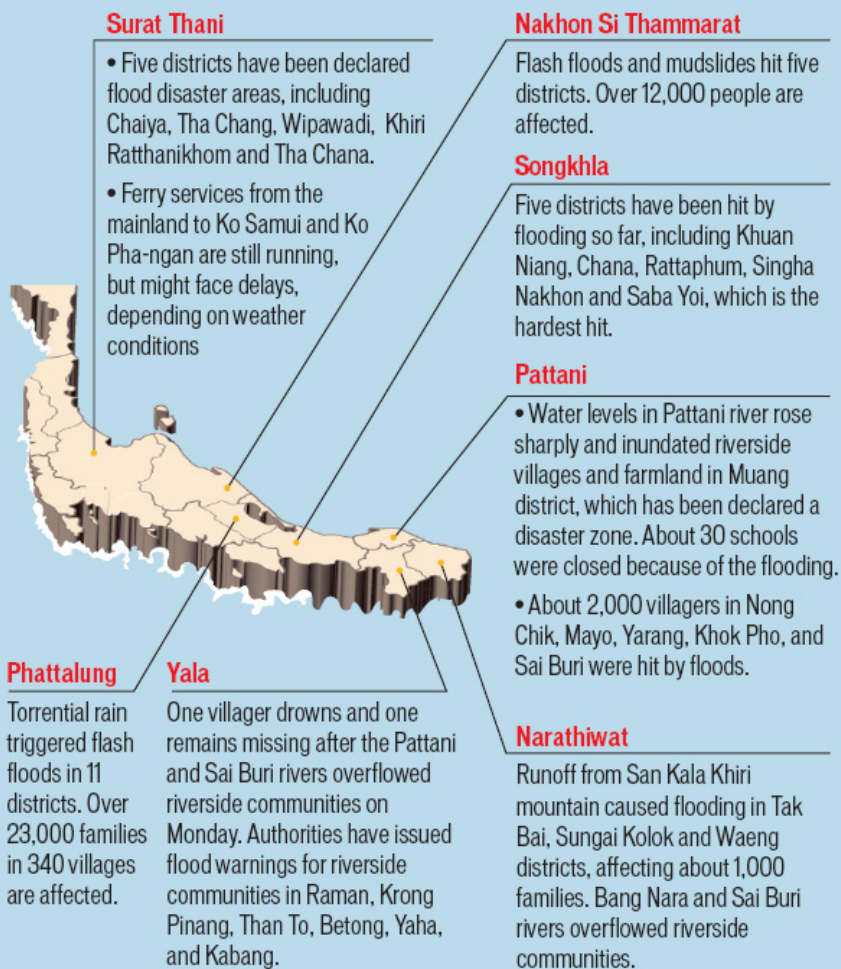


A weather radar image from 1500 Hrs Thai time, 25 Nov shows heavy rain over Surat Thani and Nakhon Si Thammarat. The NE monsoons strike the coast at nearly right angles to the area highlands creating orographic intensification of precipitation. Wind waves are also driven onshore threatening villages and home in low-lying areas.

The summary graphic below give the initial toll from this storm. Strong winds raised small craft warnings along the East coast of peninsular Thailand.

SOUTHERN FLOOD ROUND-UP

Seven southern provinces have been affected by heavy rainfall and strong tides over the past week as a result of the Northeast monsoon over the south and the Gulf of Thailand.



This part of Thailand gets rain at the start of the SW monsoon and also in the NE monsoon. The ITCZ (Inter Tropical Convergence Zone) crosses the region as it moves north in March and south in November. Mountains in the area lay at right angles to the prevailing winds. This lifts the air and intensifies the rains in the area.

The monsoon cycle is well-known. But the intensity of rainfall for 2011 is unprecedented.

[Note: The southern-most 3 provinces (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat) are where Muslim separatists have been fighting.]

POSTgraphics

Ayutthaya Begins Clean-up

Pachyderms picked up flood debris as Ayutthaya started on the path to recovery. This city is north of Bangkok, so flood waters hit here and began receding earlier than in the capital. The city is a designated UN World Heritage site and top tourist attraction. The elephants are a highly visible symbol for this ancient Thai capital. Normally, the elephants provide visitors with a unique “taxi” ride and view of the city. Their presence in the clean-up is eye catching to say the least.



Flood Water: Receding for Some, Stagnating for Others

In Bangkok, flood waters receded enough for clean up efforts to begin. Naturally, the water recedes from the areas of higher ground first. Meanwhile, the nearby lower areas remain with water ranging from chest deep to halfway up to the knees. It must add insult to injury for those who have been inundated for more than a month to see others who experienced a much shorter period of flooding to start the cleanup process. After all, it was the flood control policy to protect Bangkok that led to flooding the lower (and poorer) areas.



Flood Relief

People in flooded neighborhoods stand in line at designated relief distribution points waiting for trucks to arrive. Some folks choose to wait at home and go out only when they hear the trucks have arrived. They are often farther from the main roads. Often, the need outstrips the supply and some unfortunate victims get no aid.



The Thai Army has been a prime beneficiary of the floods as well as a victim. Ironically they had to evacuate Bangkok area bases and move equipment to higher ground. It was counter intuitive to see military vehicles capable of driving in deeply flooded streets parked, unused, on highway bridges and overpasses.

They have managed to avoid confrontation by leaving the police to deal with civil unrest (e.g. flood barrier protests and sabotage). The Army focuses on rescue, evacuation, and delivering relief supplies. Their effort is rewarded by their warm welcome as saviors.



At the peak of the Bangkok floods, the military was also a victim; they had to evacuate equipment to higher ground.



This is a stark contrast to their role in the blood crackdown of the political protests that left 90+ people dead in the streets of Bangkok. And it seems when the supplies in the Army trucks run out, the ire of the people shifts to the Thai government.

In the end, don't be surprised when big budget requests and increased military spending appear.



In urban areas, relief food distribution can be as close as the sidewalk of a busy street. The volunteers in the above photos cook and prepare food in street side kitchens. It is very much like “business as usual” for street food vendors except the food is given out free. The recipients simply walk by, ask for, and get the number of portions they request. The food is provided by the government or by other volunteer groups contributing to the relief effort.

Breached Barriers: Bangkok's Bane



As officials struggle to come to grips with the flood waters, the frustration of local residents grows. Some flood barriers are being sabotaged, repaired, and then lowered as officials compromise to appease flooded protestors. But any lowering of barriers or opening of flood gates to allow water to drain also means possible rising waters in areas that were less flooded and increasing the ire of those citizens.

The simple fact is the system was incapable of handling the volume of water for 2011's rainy season. **[Note: A recent climate conference annuonced whe world should expect MORE frequent and extreme weather in the near future.]**

As the flood waters rose and obscured the landscape, it also increasingly exposed the disorganized patch quilt of flood control policies and agencies which lacked a comprehensive appraoch to dealing with the flood. The system must be improved. The likelihood of it happening soon is doubtful. How much can be done and ready for next year will tell if Thailand is on track with flood control.

Community Relations & Social Responsibility



We were pleasantly surprised to see this story in the news. A construction company making pre-cast units for an elevated expressway project allowed local area flood refugees to take shelter in yet to be delivered concrete structural units.

The local residents opted to set up camp in these units rather than go to government shelters. This way they could be closer to their flooded homes to look after them.

In a very compassionate move, the company (not named in the news article) provided electricity for the encamped folks. This way they have lighting at night for security, and can power small appliances (e.g. fans, TVs, radios, etc.) to be a bit more



comfortable and keep up to date of flood news and government announcements. A citizen's volunteer group delivers food to this group once day.

No mention was made about how many of these flood victims were company employees. We like to think this company practices "giving back to the community" especially in time of need. As you can see from the photos, the compartments are dry and spacious in contrast to the crowded conditions in shelters. Anyone with pets has the added bonus of being able to have their animals with them. Most shelters don't allow pets. Hats off to this company for setting a good example of social responsibility.

Bangkok's Booming Boat Business

Many entrepreneurial street vendors turned to selling boats in flooded Bangkok. And just as in any booming business, a short supply in times of high demand leads to rising prices. At what point are the prices deemed exploitive and profiteering? Well, a city government office takes complaints and promises to investigate.



To get a perspective, before the flood, a typical plastic boat sold for about 2,000-3,000 Thai Baht (THB). The street seller in the top photo displays a price of 3,700 THB. We didn't see any price information for the sellers in the left photo. But some news reports found prices for boats as high as 8,500 THB. To be fair, there was no data about the size of the boats relative to the ones in these photos, so we can't say much more.

City officials say that some complaints make it hard to investigate. Street vendors may not be properly licensed businesses. And because they have no

permanent address (or the complaint doesn't give specific location information), field investigators have little to go on.

Needless to say, being prepared helps avoid last minute purchases in markets with limited supply and high demand. Of course, many people in the city have no place to store a boat. Viable options are inflatable rafts / boats, mattresses or having tire inner tubes that can be inflated when needed. Given that flooding is an annual occurrence, it seems to be a reasonable precaution. It all comes down to awareness and attitude.

Creative Coping



They say necessity is the mother of invention. The floods in Thailand has also produced a flood of creative ideas to cope with the problems of protecting property, life, getting around, keeping dry and making do with what you have. Here are some photos of some of the interesting ways Thais

More Fall 2011 Thai Flood Photos: Part 12



addressed their needs and concerns in the flooding in their areas. This is another perspective of “Amazing Thailand.”



Commuting in a Flood

Some folks still have a job to go to in flooded Bangkok. Some trains and city buses are operating on alternate routes and schedules.

For some, the cost of getting to work has seriously eroded their income. Those living in flooded areas far from the main roads must either wade through the water or pay for “water taxi” service. In normal times, they would simply ride their motor bike to work. So the added transportation costs are a real burden.

In more normal times, some people use a combination of bus, skytrain / subway, motorcycle taxi, and walking to get to work. Since the floods, the “walking” segment invariably means shuffling on narrow wooden walk ways or wading.



More Fall 2011 Thai Flood Photos: Part 12



Buses and other motor vehicles can still drive on flooded streets where the water is about knee deep (0.5 m).



More Fall 2011 Thai Flood Photos: Part 12



Pumps to Purposely Move Water



As flood water levels stabilize or begin to recede, pumps begin to take center stage. The high demand / limited supply scenario means prices for water pumps are climbing. Profiteering is on the rise. The larger pumps are being ordered from overseas and will take time to arrive. Some have criticized the government for turning to the private sector to help get more big pumps. But considering the

unprecedented magnitude of the flood and the fact that the new government is only a few months old, it seems unfair to criticize them. They inherited the existing bureaucracy from all previous administrations.

Home owners and shop keepers need and use smaller water pumps to try to drain their property. One concern



is the bad mix of water and electricity. Most of the water pumps used by homeowners and shop keepers are small 220 VAC electric water pumps. Most residential and small enterprise facilities do not have properly three-wire grounded facilities. Few Thai homes and businesses have GFI (ground fault interrupters) for sockets outdoors or near wet areas of a house (e.g. kitchen, bath, etc.). Electrical safety standards are lagging behind those of more developed countries.

Add to this the amount of trash in the water and the potential for a clogged pump is high. So due diligence is required to monitor the pump while it is running. With so much trash, people cannot simply sit back and wait for city workers to clean up.



Pumps, large and small, are pressed into service to move flood waters from place to place. With relatively flat terrain, water doesn't flow very quickly on its own. The network of canals and floodgates enable people to close off areas to keep the water out, or to isolate an area to pump water out.