

Multiple game plan for ASEAN in tackling climate change



By analysing the collected news from the first half of the year, it is undefinable that climate change is a crucial issue and has become more pressing than ever in the region of Southeast Asia. Some of the member states of ASEAN are prone to climate impacts such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events like extreme drought and flood. Hence, to further mitigate such impacts and join the global pact in limiting the earth temperature below 1.5 degrees Celsius, ASEAN needs to stand ready in integrating the climate change commitment in shaping energy policy for their long-term planning. In this insight, we would like to share a summary from our ACE news clipping in the first half of 2019 on how climate change is impacting the Southeast Asia region.

Climate change effect is getting too real for some AMS

On March 2019, the Meteorological Service Singapore (MSS) just released the [2018 Annual Climate Assessment Report of Singapore](#) which indicated that 2018 was the joint-eighth warmest year since Singapore first began recording temperatures in 1929, with an average temperature of 27.9°C.

It also showed that during period of 2009 to 2018 is the warmest decade in Singapore. [A high temperature also happened in Vietnam](#). The scorcher recorded 43,5 degrees Celsius temperature in the community of Huong Khe, a rural district in Ha Tinh province which becomes the highest temperature that ever recorded in Vietnam. The heat stroke also experienced by another big cities in Vietnam as well, such as Hanoi, Da Nang, Hue, also Ho Chi Minh.

Some ASEAN capitals like Bangkok and Jakarta is threatened by the faster rate of sinking. While sea-level rise is one of the major impacts of climate change, this has causing the sinking cities became more vulnerable to the natural hazards. [More or less 10 million people living in Bangkok](#) will be affected of the implication while the sea level rises, making the ground level low and will leave the city vulnerable to urban flooding. On the other hand, according to the studies from the geodesy research division of the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), seawater could cover as much as 26.9 percent of Jakarta by 2025. If this issue is not mitigated immediately, [35.6 percent of ASEAN's largest city is foreseen to be completely submerged](#). This sinking threat is become one of the several reason that considered by the Government of Indonesia to plan to [move the capital to another city outside the Java island](#).



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Realising the Paris Agreement

During the 34th ASEAN Summit on last June 2019 in Thailand, [ASEAN leader determined to strengthen efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change](#), including building climate-resilient communities, as well as address natural disasters in “timely and systematic manner.” They have committed to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices to enhance the implementation of the Paris Agreement and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in order to build climate resilient communities in Southeast Asia.

In the latest biennial report that submitted by [Singapore to the UNFCCC](#), it was reported that in 2014 Singapore generated 50.9 million tonnes of greenhouse gases, it came from the burned of fossil fuels to generated energy for industries, buildings, households and transportation. It is an increase of 4.8 per cent from about 48.6 million tonnes generated in 2012. The emissions are increasing however, at a decreasing rate. This is in line with its 2030 climate target and commitment to the Paris Agreement. To meet its 2020 pledge to reduce emissions by 16 per cent below business-as-usual levels, carbon taxing policy is in effect since January 2019.

Climate actions in pursuing sustainability

As one of the biggest emissions is from the transport sector, and [one of the climate change mitigation strategies is switching from the conventional to the electric vehicle \(EV\)](#). A study commissioned by Nissan last year, titled ‘Future of Electric Vehicles in Southeast Asia’ found that a third of Southeast Asian consumers are open to buying an EV. Though the study also found that the EV sales in ASEAN are generally weak, consumers in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia were the [most enthusiastic about the future of EVs](#). Hence, ASEAN governments and EV car manufacturers need to offer more subsidies and tax incentives in order to accelerate the market development of EV industry.

In addition to climate change mitigation, the other co-benefits of EVs are such as reducing air pollution from the transport sector. In January 2019, Bangkok was facing a toxic smog battle, whereby one of the key contributors to the pollution was from the diesel-powered trucks and buses on the road. Diesel engines produce a significant amount of the PM2.5 that putting health at risk. This forced the Thai government to pursue the “low carbon economy” and put the higher taxes for the “dirty fuel” to reduce amount of vehicle on the streets. This air pollution crisis that chokes Bangkok for several weeks has pushed Thai government to take several policy measures such as considering [stricter emission regulation on transport fuel](#), increasing the biodiesel blend and push [transport sector transition to EV](#).

Another way is to promote the renewable energy (RE). To pursue the ASEAN aspirational target of 23% RE in its energy mix by 2025 and tackling climate change, a huge investment is really needed. Thanks to the global action shifting to RE, several major banks like World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation are in full support and [leading the way in renewable energy investment in the region](#) in helping to bring prices down by pushing RE demand to rise.

In tandem with a renewable energy policy, energy efficiency effort will also become key to solve the energy demand crisis and transitioning to the sustainable energy future of ASEAN. Under the ASEAN Plan of Action on Energy Cooperation (APAEC) 2016-2025, ASEAN targeted a reduction of energy intensity level through energy efficiency effort of 20% by 2020 and 30% by 2025, based on 2005 levels. The encouraging news is, today, we are on track to achieve the 2020 target. On the 36th AMEM in Singapore, ministers claimed a [21.9 per cent reduction in energy intensity achieved in 2016](#), compared to 2005 levels.



As energy also took big part in main contributors to climate change, ASEAN needs to start the energy transition. With [the expected energy demand to continue growing at 3.6% per year](#) through 2040, ASEAN should start include climate impact in designing its energy strategies toward sustainability. Multiple measures in any other sector than energy also need to be streamlined, hence ASEAN could significantly contribute in curbing global climate change. (MRK/NS)

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